

Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston

Strategic Plan for 2010-2015

Know, Thrive, Grow

*Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time.
We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.
- Barack Obama*

Purpose of the Plan

This five-year strategic plan is our roadmap to guide us into this future, clarifying our priorities and providing a way for us to keep our strongest commitments front-of-mind during the coming five years. As an active part of a larger strategic planning process, this plan will help us focus our efforts on what matters most to us, balance our ambitions with our resources, produce greater impact in our church's priority causes, and make our efforts and progress more visible to ourselves and to our community.

This plan is the result of months of research, reviewing various church documents (including results of church surveys over the last few years), engaging the congregation in group dialogues and written responses on key questions, and integrating the data into the most central commitments and goals.

In that research, we discovered that we as a congregation are clear about our commitments to one another and the larger world. This plan presents the strongest trends in the data in the form of three commitments:

Commitment #1: Know – Hold Up a Mirror

We commit to increase our understanding of ourselves, including our history that has influenced us, our present state, and the future we declare we want as a congregation.

Commitment #2: Thrive – Ensure a Strong Foundation

We commit to support our minister, staff, members, friends, and infrastructure to sustain the sacred community of which we are a part.

Commitment #3: Grow – Nurture Joy and Transformation

We commit to create joyful and meaningful relationships and experiences so that we can be a source of inspiration, growth, and generous service within our congregation and in the larger community.

Overview

We take a non-traditional approach with this strategic plan, keeping it concise and flexible, and using the word “commitment” to highlight those areas where the congregation is most willing to dedicate talent and time.

This is a living document, intended to be used to guide a larger process. Linked to each of the three commitments are goals and specific tasks or activities to accomplish those goals. Although we list 2-4 sample tasks under each goal, this plan is intended to leave plenty of room for the various church committees and groups to bring these commitments and goals to life (by adding their own tasks each year).

The plan will be revisited annually to review progress and take into account changed circumstances or focus. More on how this process will work appears at the end of the plan.

This Plan follows a very simple structure:

- Purpose of the Plan
- Overview
- UUCR’s Vision and Mission
- Our Commitments and Goals (Priorities for the next five years)
- The Implementation Process
- Appendix – Report Templates

UUCR’s Vision and Mission

You will see that one of the “Know” tasks articulated in this plan is to revisit UUCR’s Vision and Mission statements. However, we would like to honor “what is” before we move on to explore “what could be.” In that spirit, we are including the complete text of UUCR’s current Vision and Mission statement, which we created and approved as a congregation in 2004:

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston has a rich heritage as a progressive, vibrant, and active congregation, serving the intellectual and spiritual needs of its community.

Vision

To be a religious community of unlimited opportunities for personal and collective growth, serving as a beacon of free and liberal faith in a changing world.

Mission

To inspire responsibility in achieving social justice. To care for each other, the larger community, our environment and the interdependent web of life. To serve the children, youth, and adults of our congregation through creative, stimulating programs and activities that reflect and promote the principles of our faith. To encourage laughter and joy.

Who We Are:

We are the link. We are the provisional caretakers of our church and our faith. We are the ties that bind heritage and future – the bridge between our founders and our successors. We are the witness of change and we are the change.

We are paradox. We are fulfilled, yet hunger. We are sanctuary and fortress, vulnerable and strong. We are solemn and spirited. We are roots and wings.

Our Commitments:

Following are the three highest priority commitments for our congregation for the next five years. The sample tasks were reported in survey data and are being provided to give the committees and other groups a starting point for implementation ideas. We attempted to provide a balanced sample of key tasks across the spectrum of our recognized interests, but this is by no means a comprehensive list.

Here are our primary commitments to one another and to our community for the next five years:

COMMITMENT #1: *KNOW – Hold Up a Mirror*

We commit to increase our understanding of ourselves, including our history that has influenced us, our present state, and the future we declare we want as a congregation.

Goal #1.1: Understand our past

- Complete a thorough record of our history as a congregation so that we know what got us here and what will carry us into the future.
- Celebrate our 40th Anniversary.
- Offer educational programs that explore our religious history (e.g., within the context of world religions, UU'ism, science).

Goal #1.2: Recognize our present

- Describe our collective identity and purpose (who we are, why we worship, and what we stand for) by revisiting and possibly rewriting our Mission (done in conjunction with the Vision review).

- Create a means for maintaining “institutional memory,” to keep a record of what we are doing (e.g., activities completed, committee charters, building records, Board policies, financial procedures).
- Inventory our member capabilities to identify where to go for a skill or interest.

We have to learn to reconnect with ourselves so that we can stand for something that is greater than ourselves.
- Dawna Markova

Goal #1.3: Declare our future

- Articulate the future impact we want to have by revisiting and possibly rewriting our Vision, focusing on mutual trust between minister, Board and congregation (done in conjunction with the Mission review).
- Set priorities and revisit them regularly to clarify and provide focus for our most important activities, programs, and causes.
- Examine and possibly adjust our organizational structure and governance, considering whether our current structure and governance matches where we are in our church development.

COMMITMENT #2: THRIVE - Ensure a Strong Foundation

We commit to support our minister, staff, members, friends, and infrastructure to sustain the sacred community of which we are a part.

Goal #2.1: Sustain the essentials

- Maintain healthy relationships among the minister, the staff, the Board, and the congregation.
- Take care of our church home. Maintain our physical structure, grounds, and operations (including attending to the building expansion), with a “Green” emphasis.
- Be good financial stewards, understanding and planning for financial needs based on infrastructure, program and service decisions.

Goal #2.2: Minister to our current members

- Create inspiring, provocative, and moving worship and music experiences that draw from our diversity and involve children and adults.
- Be good stewards of our volunteer time.
- Be attentive to those among us in need.
- Continue to support Covenant Groups and the Lay Ministry program.

Goal #2.3: Support and draw from our diversity and interconnectedness

- Support faith development and provide educational experiences on topics such as interpersonal communication, listening, right relations, diversity, and conflict – to strengthen our interconnectedness and reinforce respect across differences.
- Create and agree to a congregational Covenant of Right Relations.

- Enhance our internal communications through the use of various tools (e.g., face to face conversations, printed books and documents, the UUCR website, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter).

COMMITMENT #3: GROW – Nurture Joy and Transformation

We commit to create joyful and meaningful relationships and experiences so that we can be a source of inspiration, growth, and generous service within our congregation and in the larger community.

Goal #3.1: Listen to, involve, and inspire long-term commitment from newcomers and members

- Welcome visitors and newcomers, ensuring they feel included and helping them get connected (e.g., with existing members, with programs and services of interest).
- Inform newcomers and members about sermons, art, music, small group activities, and other opportunities available at UUCR.
- Identify a means of staying in touch so no one is forgotten.

I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people who are convinced they are about to change the world. I am more awed by those who struggle to make one small difference after another.
- Ellen Goodman

Goal #3.2: Nurture joy and transformational growth for adults, children, and youth

- Provide opportunities to create and deepen our connections with one another and with our outer world (through, for example, dialogues on topics of mutual interest).
- Create and sustain inter-generational services and activities, specifically for our children and youth to deepen their connections with one another and with adults in the congregation.
- Cultivate fun and joy in all our activities, possibly re-establishing the “Frivolity Committee.”

Goal #3.3: Increase our positive influence in the community

- Continue to reach beyond UUCR through social action and social justice activities and through our participation in other community organizations and activities.
- Reevaluate our programs and activities to ensure that they are consistent with UU values, our mission and vision, and our priorities as a congregation.
- Improve our connections with other UU churches, with JPD and with the UUA.
- Ensure our visibility in our community, through improved written communications (e.g., in press releases, announcements, or advertising), enhanced web presence, and improved signage and physical appearance.

The Implementation Process

Approval of the Plan

At the May 16, 2010 Fiscal Meeting, the President shall present the Strategic Plan to ask for congregational approval. Once approved, the Strategic Plan will provide the overarching commitments and goals for the coming five years. Specific activities to help accomplish those goals will be determined annually.

A Living Document

This is a living document that is to be used interactively. It will inform many conversations, including an initial dialogue with our new minister to clarify roles and coordinate efforts. This plan is flexible and will help keep everyone aligned and headed in the same general direction.

Using the plan's commitments and goals as a starting point, the UUCR Board, committee chairs, program directors, and lead volunteers will create two short reports each year: (1) an Implementation and Budget Plan for the year ahead and (2) Annual Report Input, for the year just completed.

These reports are not new to the committees (since the committees have for many years been submitting budget reports and annual report inputs). The change is simply in what is included in the two reports, with a more deliberate link between our activities and the strategic commitments and goals.

These two reports will help us track our progress in accomplishing our goals and our success in keeping our commitments. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) will provide support as needed in creating the Implementation and Budget Plans and Annual Report inputs. The Appendix provides templates for these two reports. Finally, the SPC will also check in periodically with the congregation, to keep the congregation engaged and to ensure we are on track.

Implementation and Budget Plans

The Implementation and Budget Plans will be short, simple documents that should aid in coordinating efforts, communicating what we are doing, and inviting people to participate. They will include:

- A listing of the principal tasks and activities to be completed during the coming church year (in a publishable format),
- A general schedule of when and where different activities or tasks would likely be done,
- A listing of associated volunteer, budget, and other requirements,
- A description of how these activities will support the larger strategic commitments and goals.

Annual Report Inputs

Committees and key volunteers will also complete an annual review of highlights of the year to be used as input for the Annual Report. This Annual Report Input will include:

- A description of successful and unsuccessful efforts during that year and
- Lessons learned from all events and activities, including what we would do differently for the following year.

Both the Implementation and Budget Plans and the Annual Report Inputs will be submitted to the Board, copying the minister and the Strategic Planning Committee. The Strategic Planning Committee will maintain a big picture perspective, considering the plans and reports as a whole, looking for gaps or opportunities and for cross-program support.

Additional Data

In addition to the data provided in this strategic plan, the Strategic Planning Committee collected many suggestions for possible tasks that support these church commitments and goals. These suggested activities will be provided to the UUCR minister, staff, Board, committees, and key volunteers who may find them helpful in creating their Implementation and Budget Plans. They will also be available to the congregation.

Timeline: How the Process Will Work

Following is a timeline of the steps in the strategic planning process for UUCR, beginning with dates unique to church year 2010-2011, followed by steps applicable for all church years:

FOR 2010-2011 CHURCH YEAR ONLY	
DATES	GETTING STARTED WITH THE PLAN – <i>The first three dates are set for the 2010-2011 church year only</i> (since the plan is being introduced mid-year).
May 16, 2010	Fiscal Meeting: Vote on the strategic plan.
June 30, 2010	Committees and groups submit their 2010-2011 Implementation and Budget Plans. (Note: as of the date of this Strategic Plan (May 2010), the Budget Plans have already been submitted for FY 2010-2011. The SPC will support committees as needed with using the new Implementation and Budget Plan format.)
July 1, 2010	The Strategic Plan goes into effect for FY 2010-2011.

FOR ALL CHURCH YEARS

DATES	FOR ALL CHURCH YEARS, STARTING WITH 2010-2011 (Each succeeding church year will follow this schedule.)
August (Starting with August 2010)	The Board will hold its Annual Planning Retreat to complete its plans for the coming year.
January (Starting with January, 2011)	Committees and groups submit to the Board their Implementation and Budget Plans for the next church year, with copies to the Minister and the SPC. (For example, in January 2011, Plans are submitted for FY 2011-2012.)
April (Starting with April, 2011)	Committees and groups submit their Annual Report Inputs for the current church year to the Board, with copies to the Minister and to the SPC. (For example, in April 2011, Inputs are submitted for FY 2010-2011.)
April (Starting with April, 2011)	The Board holds a Deep Chair Board Meeting for Budget Review.
May Fiscal Meeting (Starting with May 2011)	The President presents the Fiscal Report to the congregation for its approval. The President will also review the accomplishments of the year and recommend adjustments to the Strategic Plan for the coming year.

Summary

UUCR's Strategic Plan is just one element in an active strategic planning process and would be ineffective if simply put on a shelf to collect dust. This document aims to provide general guidance about our top priorities as a church, to put in motion key activities and programs, and to provide a mechanism to support our committee members and other volunteers so we can continue for many years the legacy begun in our first 40.

APPENDIX – REPORT TEMPLATES

Following are general guidelines for what to include in Implementation and Budget Plans and Annual Report Inputs.

Implementation and Budget Plan

For _____
[Committee, Program, or Activity]

By _____
[Authors and Contact Information]

- Principal tasks and activities to be completed during the coming church year (in a publishable format):
- General schedule of when and where different activities or tasks would likely be done:
- Associated volunteer, budget, and other requirements:
- Description of how these activities will support the larger strategic commitments and goals:

Annual Report Inputs

For _____
[Committee, Program, or Activity]

By: _____
[Authors and Contact Information]

- Description of successful and unsuccessful efforts during that year:
- Lessons learned from all events and activities, including what we would do differently next year: