

FUUSA Growth through Service Program Concept Paper

Presented to the FUUSA Board of Trustees for their consideration, April 2015

What is the purpose of Growth through Service?

Our vision is for all FUUSA members to be fully engaged and empowered partners in the Society's ministry. The Growth through Service Program is a process to help members discover service opportunities that best match their interests, strengths and personal goals. This will result in empowered, inspired volunteers who take on all levels of responsibility.

The objectives of the program include:

- Foster member growth and development;
- Make service opportunities more meaningful;
- Get people involved and keep them connected;
- Match volunteer opportunities with the interests, passions and talents of individuals;
- Build a culture of service and inclusion within the Society.

What does service look like now at FUUSA?

Our congregation benefits from many active volunteers teaching in the Religious Education program, ushering on Sunday morning, advocating for social justice, leading in appointed and elected positions, and serving in many other ways. Our annual report is a 68-page compilation describing the activities and membership of two boards, three councils, two task forces, 14 committees and 11 programs and activities.

And yet...

- Newcomers to our congregation can find the array of possibilities overwhelming, with no clear path to getting involved.
- Longtime volunteers can find themselves overbooked or burnt out, with no successor standing ready to take over a job.
- Nominating Committee finds people are often reluctant to run for our competitive offices.
- Volunteers with new ideas may feel as if our congregation does not have room for them.

The Nominating Committee is responsible for identifying candidates for competitive election to the Board of Trustees, the Endowment Trust and the Nominating Committee. They also propose an uncontested slate of candidates for president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, Religious Education Council and Social Responsibilities Council. The Nominating Committee has

developed job descriptions for these elected positions, and all have terms and term limits specified in the bylaws.

Our bylaws specifically call for the Board of Trustees to appoint members of Personnel, Finance and the Committee on Professional Ministry as well as the chairs of Membership and Stewardship. With the exception of the Stewardship Committee, the bylaws also specify term limits for these committees.

Typically the president consults with the minister, executive committee, Nominating Committee and other staff and volunteers to identify candidates to propose to the Board for approval. These positions do not have job descriptions, but the purpose of each committee is stated in the bylaws.

The bylaws also call for the Board to appoint chairs of all other committees. There is no systematic process; chairs tend to stay in office as long as they are willing to serve and then recruit their successors. There are no job descriptions or term limits.

Our congregation has tried a talent survey as a way to identify candidates for service, but participation has been low. For several years, a “Get Connected Activity Fair” has been held on a Sunday morning to provide information about committees, programs and service opportunities and to encourage new volunteers. Although it has been successful in raising awareness and enthusiasm, it has been less successful in developing volunteer commitments.

Why “Growth through Service?”, and the importance of service

Service is one of the best ways for members to become involved and to find commitment to FUUSA and its mission. We are fortunate that our congregation has a significant number of members who devote time to service opportunities and volunteer work. There are, however, many more members who could volunteer and who would benefit personally from it. With more FUUSAns engaged in service opportunities, our congregation would be more successful in fulfilling our mission:

We welcome everyone. Our Unitarian Universalist community seeks truth and deeper meaning, pursues justice through inspired action, and cultivates compassion and love for all connected by the web of life

“Growth through Service” is a way to help all members to live out their UU values more fully, and to draw closer in community to other FUUSAns. It is a process designed both to draw in those members who are not yet volunteering, and to nurture and grow those who are already volunteering. We hear from many members that they have joined FUUSA for the community and services we offer. Once members begin to be involved in service opportunities they will become stakeholders. As their active engagement increases their sense of ownership in our community rises and FUUSA is no longer a “they” but a “we”.

Active FUUSA volunteers understand how service is both personally rewarding, and often a transforming experience. By continuing to volunteer members may decide to seek opportunities or be recruited to become leaders at FUUSA; the “Growth through Service”

program will assure that many more FUUSAs will have this opportunity. We will become a stronger community, a wiser and more inclusive community, and a more activist community. As we become a better community in so many ways we will also attract more visitors, and more of those who come through our doors will want to stay and join.

What steps are needed to design and implement Growth through Service?

- 1) Steps that can be implemented by the Growth through Service Teams on their own:
 - *Build inclusivity into the Growth through Service program.* The manner in which we conduct Growth through Service should further us in our goal to become a truly welcoming congregation. From the very beginning of the design process, attention will be paid to possible barriers that are inherent in our approaches, and the appropriate changes needed to eliminate those barriers and to measure increased inclusivity.
 - *Create and implement a conversation process.* Each member will participate in an in-depth conversation every two years. A team of conversation leaders will need to be trained and supported.
 - *Develop a standard one-page service description template and an input process to include where the information is sent and how it is to be captured.* This process will start with reviewing the already existing templates and input process created by the UU Congregation of Delaware County.
 - *Create the needed web-based infrastructure, so all the information on service opportunities can be captured electronically and made accessible to all.* To facilitate the process of matching service opportunities with people's passions and skills, we must define the data to be captured, identify who needs to access the information and how they will go about it, and determine what technology will be best to use given the defined requirements.
 - *Measure the effectiveness of the program to ensure the program creates value for the congregation.* Identify metrics to collect prior to the start of the program, and periodically at pre-defined intervals.
- 2) Steps that will require close coordination by the Growth through Service Team with other parts of the FUUSA community:
 - *Develop a detailed implementation plan and schedule.* Identify the interrelationships and dependencies between the above tasks, including how the tasks fit together and what tasks are critical path tasks.
 - *Match members to service opportunities.* Create an ongoing, sustainable process to create successful matches between service opportunities and individuals. In order to ensure long term coordination, this may require staff involvement.

- *Educate and effect culture change.* To have a successful Growth through Service program we need to develop a culture of service and inclusivity throughout all aspects of congregational involvement at FUUSA. We want each person who is in the position of asking someone to serve to know that the “ask” is a gift and leave behind their fears of asking. And we want all those being asked to know that it is a gift as well, a gift of both opportunity and inclusivity. A key component of this step will be a short inspirational video starring FUUSAns describing how engaging in volunteer activities has enriched their lives. The intent of the video is to inspire others to seek out opportunities for meaningful service. It is hoped that the video will also inspire long-time volunteers to actively include new members in service to the congregation.

3) Steps that will require engagement with the Board of Trustees:

- *Create a process that includes diversity as one factor for leadership development and succession planning at FUUSA.*
This includes creating a process for identifying, training and mentoring potential leaders.
- *Define Term Limits.*
Term limits reduce burnout, ensure a rich set of experiences, and give the opportunity for new leadership – for other members to have the experience and for new ideas to surface in that area. Establishing term limits helps with filling positions, as the commitment is more clearly defined and thus more manageable.

Who is proposing this idea?

The Growth through Service Concept Team, whose members include Al Berzinis, Dick Dana, Donna Meixner, Barb Metz, Rev. Sam Trumbore, prepared this paper on behalf of the Growth through Service Design Task Force. In addition to the individuals above, the GTS Design Task Force includes Sue Berzinis, Patty Burch, Tim Burch, Dawn Dana, Charles Fisher, RoseAnne Fogarty, Michael Hornsby, Linda Hunt, Jim Hutchins, and Patti Jo Newell.

How will we move forward?

A three-member GTS Project Leadership Team, with assistance from all the GTS Design Task Force members, will organize design teams to plan, develop and pilot the major components of the program.