

# First Unitarian Society Growth Initiatives



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## Newcomer and New Member Ministry Team

**Goal:** Our research has found that 1-3 years is a critical period in determining whether parishioners in this category stay in our community. Our goal is to encourage our congregation to be more welcoming and intentional in helping folks falling within the above categories feel more at home at FUS.

**Description:** To improve outreach and retention, we propose to target three groups with appropriate approaches (1) New Members; (2) New UU participants; (3) Newcomers

### Activities:

#### New Members

- Develop mentoring program with long-time parishioners normally attending the same service who would take the initiative to connect with their new members mentees at least once a quarter
- Develop name badges new members can use for up to 3 years or until they feel comfortable they have found a place in our community
- Offer annual new member gathering for reconnection and new connections or other activity ideas

#### New UUs

- Invite long time members of the church to join new UUs at a New UU session to expand new UU's circle of contacts
- Check in with New UUs who haven't joined after 6 months. Develop a questionnaire so we can develop a better understanding of why folks choose not to join.

#### Newcomers

- Invite Newcomers to take a Newcomer packet.
- Encourage parishioners to take more time to connect with folks with either a newcomer badge or no badge at all. Develop a script. Train parishioners to ask "What brings you to church." If they want more information, steer them to appropriate table. Take care with those not wearing a name badge. Not everyone wants to be noticed. Simply welcome them and let them know if they need anything to just ask.
- Encourage members to wear their name badges
- Put information newcomers are likely to want to know out on the website.

### Resources Needed:

- Core group of 6 or more members of varied age ranges
- Unlimited number of additional volunteers
- \$50 budget

### Next Steps:

1. Establish team
2. Advertise our existence
3. Gain members
4. Team members and staff develop projects
  - Review items from growth task force, and previous groups
  - Yearly review of progress

## Service to FUS Learning Event

**Goal:** Increase engagement of current FUSers by teaching how to fill the needed weekly roles that help service run smoothly.

**When:** The beginning of the Church year (Late August or Early September). A two hour block on a weekend day that doesn't conflict with a service. Alternately we could offer this event between Sunday services AND before Saturday service.

**How:** Participants will choose which activity or activities they would like to learn.

- Worship Associate (announcements during service)
- Usher
- Sound Operator
- Hospitality
  - Coffee making
  - Running the dishwasher
- Greeter
- Discussion leader (new role)
- Parking assistant (possible new role)

Event will start with an opening facilitated by a minister.

Have at least one person who is an "expert" on each of those tasks available to train people who have never done the task. For tasks that differ significantly by Saturday or Sunday service, have an expert for each service.

Expert will have 15 minutes to present the task and answer questions.

Expert will have printed handouts summarizing the training for attendees to take home.

Attendees will rotate through multiple trainings. Trainings will take 15 minutes with a five-minute break in-between sessions

Training Locations:

- Worship Associate– Pulpit
- Usher – Usher stand and/or back of landmark
- Sound operator – sound board
- Hospitality – Kitchen
- Greeter – greeting stands
- Discussion Leader – TBD
- Parking Assistant – Walking tour of parking lots?

Participants can attend three (?) trainings and after everyone will gather in one spot to learn how to sign-up to volunteer. We will also show them the online location where they can review the task instructions.

Finish with a closing by a minister and adjourn to enjoy all the coffee and lemonade that we made during hospitality training.

**Resources needed:**

- Staff time for the event (Jeanne and a Minister).
- Refreshments.
- Written descriptions of each task for distribution in print and posted on the web.

## Friends and Family Service

### Goal:

- More people consider becoming part of our congregation
- When friends and family visit, they already have a natural “mentor” at FUS and may be more likely to continue involvement

### Description:

Designate one weekend for Friends and Family Services. Each service that weekend would have a reflection focusing on something more introductory. Members would be encouraged to invite friends and family who might be interested in FUS to attend.

Additional volunteers would need to be visible and available to discuss FUS after service. Lots of written information should be available as well.

FUS could provide various ways to invite friends and family to the services – social media posts to share, a sample email, postcards, etc.

### Resources Needed:

- Marketing the event—sample email, others to pass on to f&f, possibly a small budget for print material (ex: postcards to hand out)
- Music, invite one of the choirs
- A staff member or volunteer to coordinate the plan for the day
- Ministers would need to provide a special reflection
- A group of volunteers willing to talk with visitors

### Next Steps:

1. Planning services begins in June, so would need to begin developing plan before that
2. Determine a coordinator for the day

## CRE Parent Connections

**Goal:** Provide Opportunities for CRE parents to develop relationships with each other

Activities; Needed Resources; Cost

- Continue to offer regular meetings during RE class time for parents of students in the Coming of Age classes. Currently Kelly Crocker facilitates these meetings along with a volunteer. Little if any financial cost for this activity.
- Start to offer regular meetings during RE class time for parents of students in Mind Body Soul (8<sup>th</sup> Grade). Need staff and/or volunteer(s) to facilitate these meetings. Potentially target former RE teachers whose children are "too old" to be taught by their parents. Little if any financial cost for this activity.
- Offer week-day use of the child-care room or the Library for story time or other activities for parents and kids of children aged 0-3. Need volunteer to facilitate this play group. Need to be mindful of parking availability during the week. Little if any financial cost for this activity.
- Facilitate monthly meetings of parents of young children so they can discuss common issues. Need either staff time or volunteers to run the meeting; need space at FUS or elsewhere? Little if any financial cost for this activity.
- Continue to offer programs to the Madison community relevant to parenting. A recent example of this was the very well-attended program on talking to children about race. It drew many people from outside FUS. These bigger events take considerable staff time in planning, promoting, and executing. Along with the time staff spends on this additional cost may include paying child-care workers and any refreshments.
- Develop an Adult RE series of classes on parenting issues, similar to the ARE "Evolution Forum." To help decide what topics might be of interest we could collect suggestions from current RE parents via email. This would need staff time for deciding which topics are important for parents and we would need a facilitator for the class or a series of expert facilitators for individual topics. Cost would include staff time for planning.
- Contact parents when their child completes COA. Send a late August letter to parents whose child completed COA the previous May. The letter can welcome parents to continue with FUS and include information about the variety of ways for them to stay involved and to develop spiritually. Repeat this outreach at the time we would expect the COA child to be leaving home after high school graduation. We would need a small amount of staff time to create mailing labels and print letters for the appropriate parents from the CRE database. A FUS volunteer has already committed to work with Kelly to create the mailing materials.
- Invite parents to have coffee in child's CRE class room for 15-20 minutes. Rotate which classes do this each week and plan on having each class participate once per semester.
- Develop opportunities for parents to chat without children outside of classroom. E.G.: Explicitly invite CRE parents to reflection discussions via email.

## After-service Playgroup

### Goal:

- A low effort way to allow parents to make connections
- An easy way for visiting parents to connect with members

### Description:

There is already a small group of parents that gets together on the playground after 11am service. There is an easy opportunity to expand this group and add the idea to other services.

During warmer months, invite parents with their children (any age, participating in CRE or not, members or visitors) to gather on the playground after service. FUS could provide a coffee cart. Parents would be encouraged to bring a snack to share potluck style. There may be an opportunity to do this in the childcare room as well.

A coordinator would need to check on weather and the facilities schedule each week to determine whether the group could be on the playground.

### Resources Needed:

- A Coordinator to create an announcement and check with staff on facilities schedule
- Perhaps signs pointing to the playground or childcare room from the auditorium
- Add to the projected announcements before and after service.

### Next Steps:

1. Recruit a volunteer coordinator
2. Check with facilities staff and hospitality to ensure there are no issues with this plan

## Grow 20s/30s Group

**Goal:** Increase opportunities for engagement among the 20s/30s Group and grow membership.

### **Activities:**

#### Increase marketing

*Internal:* Signage in commons, table in commons staffed after worship, more mention from the pulpit, more print materials, increase mentions in publications, dedicated space.

*External:* Dedicated web page, make part of FUS marketing strategy (including social media).

Resources needed: Staff time to create materials.

#### Increase FUS staff support and leadership

*Provide additional FUS leadership:* Recruit additional volunteers to help manage the group, provide template structure for leadership. Perhaps create a ministry team.

Resources needed: Staff time, up to eight hours/one day per week. Additional volunteers.

#### Recruit members for visible volunteer positions, such as church worship activities

*Communicate to 20/30 group opportunities for volunteer positions*

Resources needed: Members of the groups looking for volunteers or staff member to attend an event to describe the volunteer opportunities and sign people up.

#### Hold activity at FUS immediately after worship

*Provide opportunity for the 20/30 group to meet at FUS immediately after worship*

Resources needed: Staff and/or volunteers to organize; Expenses for event such as refreshments and snacks; Space at FUS.

## Social Media Education

### Goal:

- Offer a valuable adult education class and tips that help people connect
- Create an opportunity for interaction across age groups
- Expand FUS's outreach by enabling members to share information to their social networks

### Description:

1. Provide social media tips in each newsletter that relate to sharing posts about FUS.
2. Offer an adult RE class on using Facebook/Twitter (or other platforms eventually). This would be a beginner class that would focus on the basics that allow people to be in touch with family and friends via Facebook and share posts/Tweets with a portion focusing on sharing posts about FUS.

### Resources Needed:

- One or two volunteers to create and lead the class
- A group of volunteers to circulate during the class (20s and 30s group or teens?)
- For newsletter: staff would need to come up with a tip each week

### Next Steps:

1. Recruit volunteer leaders
2. Add to next round of adult RE classes

## Improve FUS Wikipedia Presence

**Goal:** Ensure that people who are researching FUS online receive information about who we are and what we do

### **Description:**

The Wikipedia page for FUS could provide more information about our community. A group of volunteers would update the page to include a focus on our community, values, and religious tradition. A linked page might contain more of the information about each of our buildings. We would also ensure that any Wikipedia pages about Unitarian Universalism included links to FUS as one of the largest congregations in the country. This effort could have a group that met and discussed. It also could primarily be done through email.

### **Resources Needed:**

- A volunteer to coordinate the effort (20s and 30s group?)
- A small team of volunteer writers to create content

### **Next Steps:**

1. Recruit a volunteer coordinator
2. Bring together friends of meeting house

## Improve Wayfinding and On-site Communication

**Goal:** Improve communications and reach of our events to our members and the public and enhance our reputation as a community where everybody is welcome to take part.

**Description:** Enhance the ways (depth and breadth) we communicate with the drive-by public, our members and outside folks that attend events at our church about the tremendous range of spiritual, social, intellectual and cultural events that are available to our community.

### Activities:

1. Improve permanent signage on University Bay Drive so folks not familiar with FUS can see (a) it is a house of worship and (b) when services are
2. Develop moveable signage to be placed outside the entrances on Saturday and Sunday to help newcomers find where services are being held
3. Use a similar sign to designate where tours start on weekdays during the summer tour season and Sundays and the times offered.
4. Develop a more permanent and effective display/kiosk on the upper floor entrance of the Atrium/Landmark providing literature on our denomination, information about our church and its services and highlighting upcoming needs, reminders and activities and activities.
  - Explore possibilities for providing information to those here for events outside of FUS
  - Signs or materials in auditorium (walls, back of chairs, etc)
  - Cards with purposes and principles to hand out
  - Hand out events taking place at FUS (Ex: Dec services at Art in the Wright Place)
5. Make more use of projector and screen before and after services in Atrium Auditorium and flip chart/white board on Saturdays in Landmark and at Noon Musicale.
6. Develop display on upcoming events of interest at the center doors inviting parents of Meeting House Nursery and Shaarei Shamayim to take part.

### Resources Needed:

1. The wayfinding/kiosk/display portion of the project will require the active involvement of the Church Administrator and Facilities Manager as well as several volunteers. The Budget for the project would be \$1,500.
2. The Communication portion is likely to be very resource intense which is why a ministry team of committed people may be necessary. Possibly we could also ask Reception Desk volunteers to update the Friday/Saturday white board.
3. Three to Four Volunteers to rotate duties and work closely with Communications Mgr.

### Next Steps:

1. After getting approval, work with Communications Mgr. to create team
2. Develop a work plan

## Reflection Discussions

### Goal:

- Provides another way for people to enjoy our community after service.
- Members and visitors share space and thoughts.
- Visitors learn more about our faith tradition.

### Description:

A coffee hour with no structure is a wonderful way for some people to interact and build community. However, for some who want to be part of our community, this type of activity can be undesirable and even anxiety producing. Organize a brief, drop-in discussion group after each service with a structured discussion about the reflection. The discussion could be led by anyone but it might work to recruit certain groups like Lay Ministers. Announce at the beginning (and possibly the end) of service.

### Things to Consider:

<i>Space</i>	While a separate room may be nice for a discussion, holding it in the auditorium directly following service maybe more welcoming and more feasible for fitting in with other programming. This would be something to gather feedback on to guide the choice. Another good option would be the space outside the choir room.
<i>Hospitality</i>	Coffee and refreshments could be served right at the discussion site to allow more time for discussion.
<i>Length</i>	This should be a low-commitment opportunity to engage with others, like coffee hour. Limiting the discussion period to end when RE classes end would allow parents to engage and let people stay for a short period if desired. The leader could make it clear that the "official" discussion is over but people are free to stay and continue the discussion.
<i>Location of Discussion Questions</i>	Providing discussion questions in a place that all can access would allow those who don't join the official discussion to reflect more on the message as well. 2-3 questions could be placed in the bulletin or on the auditorium screen.
<i>Instruction to Leaders</i>	The coordinator may want to develop a quick document that would outline the role of discussion leader. This role should be relatively simple, with low commitment.

### Resources Needed:

- Minister (or discussion leader) would need to write 2-3 discussion questions each week
- Coordinators (volunteer) for each service to recruit and instruct discussion leaders, secure space, organize hospitality, and keep a pulse on any needed changes through feedback. Coordinators would need to meet occasionally and find a way to communicate.
- Discussion Leaders (volunteer)

### Next Steps:

1. Pilot the idea for 2-3 months in one service. Determine if successful and what adjustments are needed.
2. Recruit Coordinators for each service and meet to plan.

## FUS Elevator Pitch

**Goal:** Assist members with expressing why FUS is important in their lives while improving the non-FUS community's knowledge and understanding of FUS.

### **Activities:**

#### Personal "elevator pitch"

Enable members to have an *at the ready*, short (45 second) description of FUS and their personal experience, "what FUS means to me."

Resources needed: Volunteers to train/help people create their personal pitch.

Questions: Has FUS developed an elevator pitch, an "opener" of a few sentences that present the overall FUS idea to precede the personal description?

*NOTE: UUA has elevator speech pamphlet; COA template "What's your pitch" and curriculum.*

#### Record personal pitches

Video vignettes: Record members' personal pitches to share on FUS website, Facebook page, and other places.

Resources needed: Video equipment with people to record, edit and create videos. Staff member to place on website, Facebook, Tweet.

#### Elevator pitch book

Create a collection of members' elevator pitches

Resources needed: Staff member or volunteer to collect and compile

### **Next Steps:**

Options on how to accomplish:

- During a service
  - Lay led
  - Service to FUS Saturday/Sunday
  - Friends and family
- After a service discussion, part of *Reflections Discussion*
- Through an adult ed course
  - Integrate into existing classes that include outreach into the community
  - Could be incorporated into New UU
  - Start a new adult RE class--What is your personal pitch?

## Improve Parking Experience

**Goal:** Ensure a visitor's experience at FUS is welcoming and convenient

### **Description:**

Through conversations with members, we have determined that the lack of parking at FUS may be a growth issue. While most members feel comfortable finding the other lots available, we want to make it as easy as possible for those visiting FUS to find parking.

FUS staff has worked hard on this issue and have found alternative lots. A small, ad-hoc Parking Committee could come up with some simple ideas to make sure that our parking plan is welcoming to visitors.

### **Ideas to Consider:**

- Designating visitor parking in our lot
- Asking members to “pledge” to park in alternative lots or find alternative transportation to FUS (bus, carpool, bike)
- Volunteer shuttle service from alternate parking lots to FUS
- Parking parties—teach people to park at further lots; celebrate those that do
- Station someone at parking lot entrance when full, showing people where they can park
- Continue discussion with Ronald McDonald House re: stairway from Marshall Court

### **Resources Needed:**

- A coordinator to lead the effort
- A small group of volunteers

### **Next Steps:**

1. Discuss this idea with staff to determine whether a group like this would be helpful
2. Recruit group leader and volunteers

## UU Education for Existing Members

**Goal:** Ensure that members know our background, values, and resources/opportunities available at FUS.

**Description:** Change “New UU” class name to “UU 101” and make it explicit that anyone is welcome to join, even as a refresher course for those who have been coming to FUS for a while.

## FUS Outreach Toolkit

**Goal:** Make it easy for members to conduct outreach for FUS at events by making a toolkit available.

**Description:** Create a box with banners, flyers, event lists, and an instruction sheet that could easily be given to members who identify an event where an FUS presence would be helpful. Members would contact our Coordinator of Member Programs when in need of supplies.

### FUS Outreach Materials Available

- Large Banners/Signs
  - FUS Banner
  - Tri fold panel that can be custom made for group
  - Standing on the Side of Love Banner- small and large
- Pamphlets and Handouts
  - We Are Unitarian Universalists by Marta Flanagan- red intro to UU
  - Our Unitarian Universalist Faith- Frequently Asked Questions
- Bookmarks
  - Bookmark about FUS All Music Sunday
  - Bookmark- Rainbow with Principles and Sources
- Unitarian Universalist – A Religious Home for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender People by Barbara J. Pescan
- Unitarian Universalism A Welcoming Place for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender People by Scott W. Alexander
- Current newsletter- The Madison Unitarian
- First Unitarian Society Social Justice Program
- UU Religious Education and Your Child by Gaia Brown
- Copies of FUS Adult Education Brochure

### **Next Steps:**

1. Publicize the availability of the outreach box and to contact the coordinator of member programs when needed.