



RIVER OF LOVE, ROAD TO JUSTICE

Discovering our power as a religious community

The 2006-2011 Strategic Plan

River Road Unitarian Church

6301 River Road

Bethesda, MD 20817

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SPG Members: Curt Adams, Scott Alexander (Senior Minister), Linda Gustitus, John Hansman, Kristina Heinemann, Patty Hill (Chair), Jeff Hollingsworth, Kathleen Madigan, Charlotte Moser, Judy Scott (Vice Chair), Doug Smith, Lynn Strauss (formerly Associate Minister), Katherine Tippett, Susan Winchell. **The Planning Framework Working Group:** Patty Hill, Steve Charles, Charlotte Carroll.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Best of Our Past

Founded in 1959 as an outgrowth of the expanding interest in Unitarianism generated by the wisdom and fervor for justice of Reverend A. Powell Davies, River Road Unitarian Church (RRUC) took root in Bethesda, Maryland; most original members came from the overenrolled Cedar Lane UUC. Using Radnor Elementary School as its first location, River Road founding members quickly set their sights on a permanent home for the congregation and dedicated our current building just six years later in 1965. We now are the beneficiaries of that foresight and courage, as well as the bearers of that flame for the call to social justice. That is why our mission, adopted in 1998 by the Board of Trustees, demands of us as a congregation that we "meet the spiritual aspirations of people of free faith in our community through inspiring worship, life-long religious education, a caring community, and opportunities to put our faith into action in society."

Over the 40 years since the dedication of our building, RRUC has grown to a community of almost 700 members and several hundred friends. We have served as a beacon for young and old who seek truth about the meaning of life and an understanding of our role in it; we have engaged in significant efforts to bring justice to those who by inadvertence or design have been denied or left out of the opportunities life can provide; and we have been a place of nurture and enjoyment for persons seeking a spiritual home. We have come from a congregation of 32 members in 1959, with approximately 60 to 70 friends, 161 children registered in the school of religion, and no minister, no summer program and just one service, to a congregation just last year with three ministers, two services, 325 children in religious education, and a complete summer program. In the process we have significantly expanded our programming and now offer a wide variety of activities and areas of interest to our Members and Friends.

As we have grown, our need for long-range planning has become more important. In 1997 the Board of Trustees adopted a five year strategic plan that established clear goals and specific steps in support of our mission. By 2002, most of the elements of that strategic plan had been implemented, including hiring an Associate Minister, having a full time Music Director, providing for an air conditioned sanctuary, increasing accessibility of the building and grounds, and endorsing the need for a long-term building expansion and renovation plan to meet future needs.

In a parallel effort, the 2020 Task Force established in March 1995 prepared recommendations that substantiated the need for and our ability to pay for an expansion of our physical facility. After a number of years of planning, in 2002 the Congregation conducted the Imagine the Difference Capital Campaign that raised \$2.6 million. One year later the Congregation voted to approve a mortgage of \$1.1 million. With these resources RRUC is now proceeding with the construction of a new addition with a larger fellowship hall and a new kitchen, and to conduct major renovations to our existing facility. The estimated completion date of the new building is February 2007.

It's been nine years since the Board of Trustees and the congregation developed the last strategic plan. In light of those facts, plus the realization by many Members that we need to operate less as a collection of many different activities and more as a congregation with a united focus, the Board decided it is time to develop a new strategic plan and to make strategic planning an integral part of our programming.

B. Where We Are Now

To know where we want to go, we need to know the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is evident to most of us that we are in a challenging time on many fronts - emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and politically.

The Nation & Beyond. We live in a country that is less respected world-wide than it has been in decades; we are engaged in a controversial war with no end in sight; our electorate is split and culture wars dominate the political agenda; the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed the failures of our social support systems and government infrastructure; a growing deficit looms as a debilitating legacy to hand on to our offspring; our environment is in jeopardy and we remain dependent on foreign oil; and we face a continuing and real threat of terrorism living and working next door to the nation's capital. Both nationally and globally, the divide between the haves and the have-nots is growing; health systems have experienced both great advancements in our knowledge, as well as great obstacles to expanding and using that knowledge; and advancements in technology have led to the potential for and expectation of instant communication, and a growing role of the media in our lives.

Our Communities. In our immediate communities we face a mix of exceptional prosperity and debilitating poverty. Most people in the well-to-do areas where we live continue to experience financial abundance. Many of us are able to travel as desired and send our children to the schools of our choice, as our homes escalate in value beyond our wildest dreams and with little effort on our part. At the same time, many of us feel stressed by the obligations we have and time often seems too short. Others in our region live several people to a room, dependent upon the week's paycheck and on public transportation, working several jobs to get by. This disparity of life experience and opportunity is something we wrestle with as persons of social conscience and liberal faith. We are aware of our abundance and our responsibility to share our skills and our money with those less fortunate.

Our Congregation. Within this community, River Road serves its Members and Friends both as an oasis for acceptance and wholeness, and as a launching point to take action and make a difference in the world. We are in the top 10 percent in size in the UU movement. We have a well-deserved reputation for our commitment to and action on social justice, and we have developed a nationally recognized lay-led pastoral care program. Being in the area of the nation's capital, our congregation has an unusual number of Members who are professionals engaged in, or once engaged in, public policy matters - as government employees, political appointees, members of the foreign service,

scientists and doctors at the National Institutes of Health and local academic institutions. Many members and friends from our congregation are exceptionally sophisticated about domestic and global social, political, technical, and scientific issues. We have a long track record of involvement in important matters of public policy and social justice. In a world that often shows not enough tolerance for differences we have committed ourselves to providing a Welcoming Congregation to all.

We also "do church well." We operate a successful religious education program; we have meaningful worship; we have inspiring music. We have a wide array of programming available -- from Adult Enrichment to Covenant Groups to Lay-Led Worship to Men's and Women's Groups. We are viewed by most visitors and outsiders as an energized, friendly, caring and competent congregation. We matter to countless families and individuals near and far because of the efforts we make, the time we take and the money we give. Over the past several years, our congregation has paid special attention to improving the welcoming experience for first time visitors and guests to our church by hiring a part time membership coordinator and increasing the activities of the Membership Committee.

C. RRUC Facts and Figures

In early 2005, 270 members, friends, and staff responded to the RRUC Congregational Survey -- the first since 1997 when the congregation was surveyed prior to calling our current senior minister. We are slightly older than we were in 1997: In 2005, 41% of us were age 60 years or older compared with 38% of us in 1997. In 2005, almost two-thirds (57%) of the congregation participated in RRUC activities at least 3 hours per week and 4% participated 15 hours or more per week. In both 2005 and 1997, the bazaar was the activity participated in by the largest percentage of the congregation (83% in 2005, up from 52% in 1997). In 2005, 40% of the congregation also participated in social activities and 37% in social justice activities - both up from 1997; between 1997 and 2005, our participation in most activities rose. When asked "What are the most important reasons why you continue to attend RRUC," 57% mentioned community in 2005, up from 49% in 1997, and 56% mentioned UU Beliefs down from 64% in 1997 (multiple responses were possible in both years).

In 2005, about 60% of the congregation had been a member or friend 10 years or less and 51% of us traveled less than 15 minutes to get to church. A celebration of common values (57%) and intellectual stimulations (52%) were the reasons cited by the highest percentages of individuals (multiple responses possible), followed by hearing, playing, or singing music (43%); a sense of belonging (41%); and personal reflection and meditation (41%). When questioned about their satisfaction with the name of our church 85% of our congregation said they were very satisfied with the name River Road, 75% with the word 'Unitarian,' but only 49% with the word 'church.' When asked to check one answer to the question "Which of the following viewpoints comes closest to your own." Humanist was cited by 36% of the congregation, mystic by 14%, and 'Open' agnostic by 13%; the remaining 37% mentioned other viewpoints - giving RUCC a wide diversity of theological viewpoints.

Additional information from the 2005 survey is available on the RRUC website under "Strategic Plan."

D. Background

In October 2004, the RRUC Board of Trustees approved the establishment of a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) to undertake a process leading to a five-year Strategic Plan and to make recommendations for integrating strategic planning into the congregation's regular procedures. A Planning Framework Working Group established by the Board developed a charter for the SPG, and the SPG met throughout the Fall and Winter of 2004-05. In March 2005 the SPG conducted a congregational survey to which 270 members and friends of the congregation responded. The results were used to inform the strategic planning process. On April 23, 2005 the SPG sponsored a Strategic Planning Summit, open to all members of RRUC and selected outside stakeholders, using the Appreciative Inquiry evaluation method to generate broad participation and to focus on what we do well and what we want to do in the future. Almost 100 people attended the Summit and identified ten themes for RRUC's future. These themes were the subject of ten subgroups that met over the following six weeks to develop a vision that would be incorporated into the strategic plan. The SPG then integrated the products of the ten subgroups into a draft strategic plan which the Board then reviewed and put in final format. This Strategic Plan is the product of all of these efforts. Additional information on the process used to develop the strategic plan and on reports from the subgroups is available in the appendix.

Our purpose is unchanged: RRUC is a religious community that welcomes and nurtures people from all walks of life; that affirmatively reaches out to others of all ages and cultures to share our faith; that acts on our Unitarian Universalist principles to make our communities and the world more just, loving, and peaceful. Our mission continues to be to meet the spiritual aspirations of people of free faith in our community through inspiring worship, life-long religious education, a caring community, and opportunities to put our faith into action in society.

In light of the state of our nation, our place in our community, and the purpose, desires, capability and programming of our congregation, we asked ourselves in this Strategic Plan: What and where do we want to be in five years? The following plan was created to answer those questions.

II. THE RRUC STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2006-2011

Our Vision for 2011:

RRUC empowers us to live and share our UU values, individually and collectively.

By 2011 we want to be able to say of RRUC --

- We are fully engaged in reaching out to the wider community to show the world the ennobling spiritual values and goals that we have to offer, and to make a difference through social action.
- As an actively growing religious community, we joyfully unite in nourishing the spirit, articulating and strengthening our values, and welcoming members and friends within a culture of caring and appreciation.

We are currently a congregation that has many strengths:

- We have an award-winning building and an upcoming new addition that provide us inspiring space to be together and carry out our mission.
- We have a competent, caring staff that provides meaningful worship services, inspiring music, and quality lifetime religious education.
- We have a congregation that is energetic, talented, resourceful, dedicated, and caring.

We have, of course, an ongoing responsibility to maintain our current building, complete construction on the new addition, and ensure that our staff is adequately rewarded and nourished. Those are fundamental elements of our stewardship of RRUC, and this Strategic Plan assumes the congregation's commitment to those responsibilities. But, as the time nears for our new building to be completed, and as the need for the voice and conscience of liberal religion to be heard in our world grows ever more urgent, the next five years are a time to focus our efforts on giving voice to our religious principles and sharing our UU values with the world.

We have identified four goals for the RRUC community for the next five years. They are:

- **Reach out** to the wider community: By 2011, the voice and values of RRUC are visible in the local community. We are a congregation that communicates well - both internally and externally.
- **Grow** our membership: By 2011, RRUC has a growing membership of 800 members, with a visible presence of young adults.
- **Unite** in the spirit of fun and a culture of caring: By 2011, we can say of RRUC that we have fun together, we are intergenerational, and are a community that demonstrates a culture of caring.
- **Nurture** spiritual growth: By 2011, RRUC has programs in place that intentionally nurture the spiritual health and lifetime connections of families and individuals.

Goal 1. REACH OUT TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The vision that many in the congregation hold for RRUC's future involves reaching out to the wider community as a way to share our values. For some of us this means adopting a wider world view and promoting UUism and its values in the larger community and growing more UU churches. For others, reaching out involves active participation in social justice issues both with other UUs and as part of interfaith movements -- to serve, to dialogue, and to diversify membership as well as to understand diverse viewpoints. In the RRUC survey, the largest number of comments in response to the question "What is the one main thing you would like to see our church achieve in the next 3 to 5 years?" related to some kind of outreach. In addition to outreach at the local and national levels, many survey respondents asked for improved outreach and communication within our own congregation. In creative presentations (see Appendix B.1.) of participants at the April 23rd Summit, some form of outreach to the wider community and to our own members energized and drove most of the skits. Many of the provocative propositions generated in the small groups meeting after the Summit also related to outreach (see Appendix B.2.).

By 2011, the voice and values of RRUC are visible in the local community.

- a. Report at each June annual meeting on an annual all-church social justice project to be carried out by the congregation as a whole in the following church year. A committee to plan how an all-church SJ project will be selected and carried out will be chartered by the Board of Trustees which will provide the chair for this committee. The planning committee should include participants from various program areas of the church and should be linked to the Social Justice Council. A plan for action should be drafted and an evaluation of the project built in at the end of each year so that the congregation has a chance to comment on the project and appropriate changes can be made to keep the program fresh. Projects should be of short duration, provide a visible result, and be intergenerational with activities for all ages. The intention would be to have a different project each year. This project is recommended to enhance an already vibrant social justice program that has some intergenerational projects.
- b. Develop a program of community outreach to publicize our wonderful worship, RE, music, social justice, and other programs. A Public Relations Committee has already been chartered by the Board of Trustees and a charter written. This committee is tasked to plan and implement a strategic and technologically robust marketing program of community outreach for the next five years. A charter has been written.
- c. Expand and improve the RRUC website, ensuring that it is current, engaging, welcoming, and informative. Create a web team to provide support for our volunteer webmaster and staff. Update the web site to be more visual and to reflect all of the activities at RRUC and provide routine maintenance. Better integrate routine web site updates into office procedures (calendar, newsletter, and Sunday Bulletin) posted by staff with the goal of providing additional information about events.
- d. Sponsor programs that attract people with diverse ideas and viewpoints. Recent 'provocative-type' programs have generally presented a single viewpoint and have attracted few individuals from outside RRUC. CC&C meets regularly on Sunday mornings, but limited time usually prevents presentation of alternative viewpoints and attendance is mostly RRUC members and friends.

GOAL 1: OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITY	WHERE WE ARE TODAY	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Reach out							
Annual all-church SJ project	New SJ Task Force --Board chartered	Numerous SJ projects; some are intergenerational	1 st project	→	→	→	→
Community outreach/Public Relations	PR Committee -- Board chartered	Charter for the committee has been written	Develop/ implement plan	\$2,500	Add \$1,000		
Expand RRUC website	PR Committee/volunteer	One volunteer webmaster and 1-2 hours/wk of staff time	Develop/ implement plan	→	→	→	→
Provocative programs	Ministers	None that draw many people from outside		Begin	→	→	→
\$ Above current budget			\$0	\$2,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500

Goal 2. GROW OUR MEMBERSHIP

Two theme subgroups to emerge from the April Summit were membership and young adult involvement. To attain the levels of commitment needed to sustain the work of a vibrant and active congregation, we need to focus on growing and strengthening our membership. An RRUC Membership Working Group Report in May 2004 included numerous suggestions for growing the membership many of which have been incorporated into the operations of the RRUC Membership Committee; the Committee is to be commended for their work in this area. The membership subgroup report from the Summit provides additional suggestions. The whole congregation must be involved in membership work; we all need to treat the yellow mugs seriously.

RRUC is not attracting young adults in the numbers needed to maintain congregational vitality. A paper on the demographics of RRUC and the Bethesda area by an RRUC young adult (see the RRUC website) indicates that UUs in the U.S. tend to be older adults; the membership of RRUC itself is older than the profile for UUs in the U. S. overall. A survey published in "Understanding Ourselves: A Report on the Faith Communities Today Survey for Unitarian Universalist Congregations" shows that young adult populated congregations are **more likely** than UU congregations overall to report that (1) their congregation is working for social justice; (2) they are trying to increase their racial/ethnic diversity; (3) they welcome new ways of doing ministry and worship; and (4) their members are excited about the future of the church. The young adult populated congregations are **less likely** to report that (1) their congregation is like a close-knit family; (2) their congregation helps their members deepen their relationship with God/the holy; and (3) new members are easily incorporated into their congregation. RRUC needs to be intentional in its focus toward attracting more young adults. By 2010, RRUC should be seen as the place to be for young adults interested in a creative liberal faith.

By 2011, RRUC has a growing membership, with a visible presence of young adults.

- a. Expand the Membership Coordinator function; include responsibilities for recognizing and bringing out the individual talents and strengths of members and friends. Seek additional volunteer help from the congregation with this task.
- b. Increase membership of RRUC to 800 members by 2011. Currently there are about 665 members. Over the past three years, we have averaged 36 new members per year, and 32 members removed from the rolls per year; thus, we've netted an average of 4 members per year. We will need to net 27 new members per year to achieve the goal of 800 by the year 2011.
- c. Increase young adult programming including experimenting with different types of worship and different times of worship attractive to young adults as well as current members. Add, as feasible, a part-time coordinator for Young Adult programs to build a strong young adults program through greater outreach and focused programs. Approach all activities to see how they can be enhanced to be inviting and attractive to young adults. Currently, we have a young adult as a ministerial intern which provides the opportunity for a young adult voice to be heard from the pulpit. Young adults have been included in leading several worship services and we have a young adult covenant group and young adult potlucks.
- d. Experiment with new programming that will be possible with our new facility addition. Create a safe space for the ministers, program staff, and lay leaders to try new things (changing service times, adding programming, etc). Evaluate overall Sunday morning schedule to make best use of new facilities and conduct pilot projects around new activities and times.

GOAL 2: OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITY	WHERE WE ARE TODAY	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Grow							
Membership -- office help	Board/volunteer	Occasional	Find volunteer	→	→	→	→
Increase membership	Membership Committee	665 members; need 27 new members/yr.	Increasing	→	→	→	800 members
Young adult programming	Worship, RE, music, all	Young adult intern	Continue	→	Expand	→	→
Experiment with new programming	Ministers, staff, lay leaders	Planning for using our new addition		Add new RE classrooms	Evaluate Sun schedule	Establish schedule	
\$Above current budget			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Goal 3. UNITE IN THE SPIRIT OF FUN AND A CULTURE OF CARING

Members view RRUC not only as a religious gathering place, but also as a social gathering place; there is a desire for togetherness and for growing together while we also grow individually. The Fun and Enjoyment subgroup from the Summit said: "We need to have more fun as a congregation! We need to make having fun - and enjoying each other - a more important aspect of our life as a community."

We need to take ourselves less seriously and have more fun as a way to build community. At the same time, many members suggested that RRUC nurture and develop an intentional, inclusive, and intergenerational culture as well as intergenerational opportunities, especially social justice activities that could include the whole family.

The intentional development of a culture of caring within our congregation will help us to grow and to live our values. Our activities should seek to create a deep recognition that while what we accomplish together is important, how we do it matters. In such an appreciative culture, we will communicate with each other more positively, value each other's contributions more, and enhance our abilities to deal with differences and conflict in a positive way. Energy will be released for our work in the world.

By 2011, we can say of RRUC that we have fun together, we are intergenerational, and are a community that demonstrates a culture of caring.

- a. Have fun and connect with each other, intergenerationally:
 - Provide a catered lunch on Sundays after services to provide an opportunity for intergenerational socializing. Currently, the Youth Group provides lunch once a month on Sundays as a fundraiser.
 - Continue and enhance intergenerational worship, religious education, and music projects that appeal to all ages. Currently we have numerous intergenerational programs which do attract a diversity of ages, but which are not necessarily advertised as intergenerational.
 - Address the unique needs of our elders keeping them actively connected to RRUC.

- b. Nourish a Culture of Caring:
 - Offer training to committee chairs, lay leaders, and interested members on how to nourish a culture of caring while conducting the work of the congregation. Support teambuilding that will enhance our abilities to deal with differences in a positive way. Setting up training programs should be the responsibility of the Leadership and Nominations Committee and the charge to L&L broadened to include more leadership development (sponsoring leadership programs).
 - Continue the outstanding pastoral care work being done by the Pastoral Care Team.

c. Unity of Purpose and Identity:

- Work toward unity of purpose and identity including evaluating our name for the future; a motion on the name of our congregation should be presented to the congregation by the 2007 annual meeting.
- Evaluate how we communicate to our own members and determine the best possible process for reaching our membership and friends on a regular basis in a variety of formats. Evaluate the newsletter, e-mail communication, and the Sunday Weekly.
- Review/develop appropriate governance structures and processes for RRUC. Board input is needed to address how the issue of governance fits into the Strategic Goals for the next five years, with input from the SPG and along with training focused on developing a culture of appreciation. In large churches, it is not practical or desirable for the Board of Trustees to be involved in every detail or decision in the organization. Instead, the board should concentrate on the big picture or the overall mission of the organization. Staff and committees would then be empowered to make decisions and run programs. RRUC has been moving in this direction for some time, but is still lags other large churches in the Washington DC area in governance structure.

GOAL 3: OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITY	WHERE WE ARE TODAY	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Unite							
Intergenerational programs	Board/Ministers	Many programs that include multi-age groups	→	→	→	→	→
Catered lunches	Board/Ministers	Youth group provides lunch after services once a month	Winter 07	→	→	→	→
Culture of caring and teambuilding training	L&N Committee	None	Set up	→	→	→	→
Evaluate our name	Board Committee	Committee being formed	June 07				
Internal communication	Board Committee	Sunday Bulletin, once a month Newsletter	Develop plan	Implement plan			
Governance structures	Board	Behind other large churches	Develop plan	Implement plan			
\$Above Current Budget			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

GOAL 4. NURTURE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A clear theme emerging from the strategic planning process is the desire for RRUC to function as a vital place to nurture and grow the spiritual life of its members -- we are drawn to RRUC because it is meaningful to us. We desire to continue excellent worship, and to strive to add fresh and provocative ideas into the mix for increased variety in services.

We also yearn for sacred space in our church facilities, and for some space to be reserved for worship and quiet reflection. In the high frequency hustle and bustle of Washington, RRUC can become a place for calming the mind and spirit - for evoking the American spirit of passion and energy that is grounded and centered, rather than overextended and exhausted. It is also an important place for study and practice - a source of spiritual growth and nurturing and a place where we follow the quest for meaning and give voice to the very different spiritual needs of our individual members.

The following is a quote from the report of the SP Summit subgroup dealing with "Religious Values made Manifest": "...this quest for meaning is what unites many people at RRUC. We would like to see more upfront acknowledgement of what is a core purpose of RRUC to many people, and the need to be playful, challenging and questioning as we attempt to craft a future that helps our friends and members in this particularly personal domain. This search can take many forms, and it is part of the role of our religious community to give structure, voice and meaning to very different individual spiritual needs."

By 2011, RRUC broadens programs in place that intentionally nurture the spiritual health and lifetime connections of families and individuals through worship, lifelong religious education, small group ministry, and hallowing sacred spaces.

Nurture Spiritual Growth:

- a. Continue the focus on and increase the number of covenant and other small groups. Currently RRUC has 5 covenant groups and numerous formal and informal groups such as book groups, continuing education groups, spiritual groups, and men's and women's groups. Adult education classes frequently function as small groups, although they may be short term rather than ongoing. Continue providing sermons that deal with spirituality.
- b. Begin the process for establishing a dedicated "sacred space" for spiritual reflection. Currently, individuals go to the sanctuary, the fireside room, the memorial garden and the meditation circle in the woods for sacred space--for worship and rites of passages such as weddings, memorial services, child dedications and quiet time with one's self. Nevertheless, many RRUC members and friends would like to have a 'special place' that is not a multi-use room to use for spiritual reflection.
- c. Establish a Memorial Wall and/or memorial spaces for the recognition of deceased individuals for whom RRUC meant so much and who meant so much to RRUC. Add the responsibilities for the Memorial Wall to the Memorial Garden Committee and revise the Charter.

GOAL 4: OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITY	WHERE WE ARE TODAY	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Nurture							
Increase small groups	Ministers	Five covenant groups and numerous other groups	Add 1 group each year	→	→	→	→
Sacred space	Ministers	No dedicated space			Explore		
Memorial wall	Memorial Wall Comm.	Charter written and working committee	Planning	Implement			
\$Above Current Budget			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

III. Lay Leadership, Staffing, and Building Maintenance Costs

--We wish to lift up a culture of caring for our building, our staff, and ourselves as we reach out to the wider world--

Resource allocations need to be in line with the Strategic Plan vision to live and share our values. The additional staffing and new programming initiatives in the Strategic Plan are ambitious and will require funding beyond our current budget. In addition, completion of the new building and the renovation of the old building will need to take priority in the budget. To achieve the goals presented in this plan, we call upon perhaps the single greatest resource at River Road - the commitment, energy and talents of our RRUC members and friends, our lay leadership. We view this energy as expanding with the exciting new activities and opportunities presented in this Strategic Plan.

With our current outstanding programs and ministers and our new building as a draw, and with the committed effort on the part of lay leadership toward outreach and growth, we believe RRUC will continue to attract new members and will see increased generosity in the financial contributions of members and friends. As we are successful in increasing both our financial resources and volunteer efforts, the initiatives in this plan will become not only possible, but an exciting reality.

A. LAY LEADERSHIP

By 2011, lay leadership provides an exciting opportunity for its members and an increasing resource for RRUC; that is, we have more volunteers discovering an opportunity to do more of what they love for RRUC.

Lay leadership at RRUC provides an opportunity for members to share their talents and give back to the community at the same time. This can be a satisfying and enriching experience, particularly as people experience the synergy of working together. As an example, many of the over 400 volunteers who work on the bazaar describe that as a peak experience in their lives at RRUC. And we do indeed have a talented, giving congregation, whose lay leadership makes our current level of programming as outstanding as it is. We currently have a strong volunteer commitment at RRUC. We are now proposing to take the opportunity for enriching lay leadership further, through the goals and activities described in this plan, and by encouraging the active participation of ALL members in the lay leadership of RRUC.

While some increased staffing will be necessary to meet the goals and objectives in this Strategic Plan, the development of skilled lay leaders and their nourishment will enhance our ability to meet these SP goals successfully. Both of our called ministers, Scott Alexander and Ginger Luke, have in place plans for this year that will facilitate this need. For example, one of Scott's goals is to increase the amount of time and attention he uses for mentoring/supporting/coaching both the RRUC staff and lay leadership. Similarly, one of Ginger's goals is to support the church strategic plan with a focus on life-span religious education, including promoting more inter-generational activity at RUUC. By 2011, we increasingly look to our ministers as a valuable resource for training RRUC members in leadership.

We, the members and friends of RRUC, will ourselves benefit from the mentoring and coaching provided by our ministerial staff, giving us an opportunity to grow and enhance our abilities while developing programming. It may mean less ministerial presence at meetings, but more guidance on program directions. As we all know, "there are never enough people to do whatever it is we want to do." We should no longer look to someone else, saying, "I hope they will do it." This Strategic Plan provides many opportunities for each one of us to get involved.

B. STAFFING

By 2011 RRUC will be providing yearly colas to the staff, health care benefits in line with UUA guidelines, and funding for staff positions in line with the demands on the office and custodial staff resulting from our new building, new rentals, and new activities.

RRUC has consistently been blessed with strong staff. Our Senior Minister, Rev. Scott Alexander, has just returned from a 6 month sabbatical and tells us he has renewed energy and is excited by the challenges of the next few years. Rev. Ginger Luke has been with the congregation for 11 years and as an ordained minister has taken on new ministerial responsibilities. She is now RRUC's Minister for Religious Education and Congregational Life. Dolores Miller, Director of Religious Education, continues to successfully lead the Religious Education effort and Jan Taddeo is our successful Youth Ministry Coordinator. We are currently adjusting to the loss of our third minister, Rev. Lynn Strauss, who was with us for five years but who left for another position in July 2005. Scott and Ginger both report, however that they are confident they can restructure their responsibilities to operate successfully based on a two-minister format. Because of Lynn's efforts before she left, we are now once again considered a "teaching congregation" and have on staff a half-time ministerial intern, Amanda Poppei. Dr. Clif Hardin continues to bring a rich and diverse musical experience to everyone, including several youth choirs.

In the past few years, we have as an institution experienced significant staffing changes. In 2004, we lost our church administrator and our office assistant, but have been able to fill those positions quite capably with Bill Ades and Ota Safertal. We also lost our publications assistant, Jan Taddeo, when she assumed a new position with the JPD and have hired a new publications assistant Noel Samoraj.

Other staff continue to serve the RRUC Congregation well. These staff include our half-time membership coordinator, Sheri Blanchette; our half-time bookkeeper, Diana Chimes; our full-time sexton, Richard Bishop; Dale Hamilton, Kye Han and Clarence Latta -- our three custodians; and our part-time nursery childcare provider, Nicole Scafone.

The Strategic Planning goals of increasing membership and outreach will require increased staffing. Reaching out for new members and increased rentals that we hope will come from the completed addition will increase the demands on all of the office and custodial staff. Specifically, we propose that over the next five years we work toward the following increases in staff as financially feasible. These are increases above our current operating budget.

Staffing Plan (given both as a percentage of full time equivalents and dollar amount of increases).

Priority has been given in this plan to increasing the hours for positions needed to care for the new building or facilitate rentals -- custodial, bookkeeper, etc., with the expectation that this will increase our income. To help meet our growth goals and as financially feasible, RRUC should accelerate the increase in hours for the membership coordinator position sooner than shown in the table below. Several desired staff positions are not part of this plan: an increase in time for the Administrative Assistant and Youth Coordinator, an increase in time for the music accompanist (or an Assistant Music Director), and an Assistant RE Director. These positions should be considered as funds become available. Regular colas and staff raises for merit are important and should become part of the regular budget.

POSITION	CURRENT TIME	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
From Operating Budget						
<i>Program Staff</i>						
Senior Minister	100%	---				
Minister of RE & Cong. Life	100%	---				
Youth Ministry	50%	---				
Music Director	100%	---				
Director of Religious Education	100%	---				
Music Accompanist	15%	---				
Nursery Care Provider	15%					
<i>Office staff</i>						
Administrator	100%	---				
Administrative Assistant	50%					
Bookkeeper (or assistant)	50%	---	75% (\$16,178)			
Communications Coordinator	85%	100% (\$4,603)				
Member Services Coordinator	50%	---		75% (\$11,265)		100% (\$11,720)
Young Adult Coordinator	Proposed new position	---	---	---	---	50% (\$20,241)
<i>Custodial staff</i>						
Building Engineer	75%	88% (\$5,515)	100% (\$5,626)			
Custodian (weekdays)	50%	---	75% (\$8,349)		100% (\$8,685)	

Evening Custodian	50% (paid by day care center)	---				
Sunday Custodian	18%	---				
\$ Above Current Budget*	-----	\$10,100	\$40,253	\$51,518	\$60,203	\$92,164
From Other Funds						
Ministerial Intern	50%	\$8,700**	***	***		

* Above current budget means proposed new costs for staff and building maintenance above current (FY06) levels, shown at current pay rates. Of course, all current costs will rise with inflation. The mortgage will grow a little in FY 07, but that is a commitment already made.

** In 2006-07 a half-time Ministerial Intern position will be funded from the principal of the Muriel Hoover bequest;

***In 2007/08 and 2008/09 the plan proposes funding a half-time Ministerial intern each year (or full time for one of those years) from Endowment Fund income. In subsequent years, a ministerial intern should be supported from the regular operating budget, if possible.

C. BUILDING MAINTENANCE COSTS

By 2011, the renovation of our award-winning building is complete and we have included in the budget provision for recurring major maintenance items.

Completion of the new building and the renovation and maintenance of the old building will take priority in the budget. The following table shows estimated long-term expenses for maintaining the building.

Expense Type	Estimated Cost	Frequency In Years	Estimated Annualized Cost
Replace Roof	\$60,000	25	\$2,400
Paint Exteriors	\$15,000	10	\$1,500
Paint Interiors	\$20,000	10	\$2,000
Refinish/Replace Exterior Wood	\$20,000	8	\$2,500
Refinish Interior Wood	\$30,000	30	\$1,000

Replace Exterior Concrete	\$80,000	40	\$2,000
Replace Furnace (2)	\$60,000	25	\$2,400
Replace Air Conditioning Units	\$45,000	15	\$3,000
Refinish/Retile Floors	\$60,000	40	\$1,500
Recarpet Floors	\$15,000	15	\$1,000
Replace Single-Glazed Windows	\$100,000	10 *	\$10,000
Recane Chairs	\$1,000	1	\$1,000
Repave Driveways	\$20,000	20	\$1,000
Upgrade Electrical Systems	\$50,000	25	\$2,000
Totals:	\$576,000		\$33,300

* One-time cost within the next 10 years

IV. EVALUATION and FUTURE PLANNING

A. Annual Evaluation

This Strategic Plan (SP) is our roadmap to accomplishment for the next 5 years; it also is a process by which we as a congregation revisit and renew our specific objectives on an ongoing basis year by year making changes to the plan as needed. This strategic planning effort reflects a determination that RRUC, from this point forward, be guided by a current, clear, and comprehensive SP.

1. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluating. The RRUC Board of Trustees (Board) has the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the SP. Each year, one incoming member of the Board will be assigned to work with the ongoing Board members assigned to the SP; one or more of the members (or an assigned evaluation/assessment team) will be assigned to keep track of ongoing SP activities. Ongoing feedback on the SP during the year may be obtained by one or more of the following:
 - Discussion of the SP activities at the September all-church retreat.
 - A summer or fall meeting of key church leaders for the coming year including committee chairs. This meeting shall include the following: (1) A discussion of the role of various groups/committees in the church responsible for various SP goals/objectives, (2) training for committee leaders on conducting effective and efficient meetings in a culture of caring, and (3) operational and logistic concerns -- how to do items, etc.
 - The completion of evaluation forms by committees, ministers, and staff (see IV. C. below).
 - Mini Summit -- a half-day meeting in January open to all church members and friends to evaluate progress of SP and listen to concerns and suggestions for tweaking the SP, setting priorities, and keeping the energy going.
2. Annual planning and assessment. All working committees, ministers, and staff at RRUC are asked to do some simple planning and assessment, in the form of responding to the questions on the evaluation forms in Section IV. C. (Evaluation Forms). The questions on the forms can help focus thinking and possibly provide a consistent report format for the January Mini Summit and /or other meetings where the SP is to be discussed. The Board will take the responsibility for drafting a letter to be sent to committees.
3. Annual update. Based on the evaluation forms and results of various meetings and the mini summit, a Board member or designee will prepare a brief annual report for inclusion on the RRUC website and in the packet mailed to members prior to the annual meeting. This report shall list accomplishments during the preceding year as well as changes anticipated in the SP. At the summer Board retreat, the Board will establish activities needed for the coming year related to the SP, establish priorities, and make provision for getting these activities done.

4. Budgeting. The Board, the Finance Committee, and the SP Evaluation Team should consider the drafting of a budget that reflects ongoing priorities as related to the SP and specify how the goals of the SP translate into priorities in decision-making.

B. Long-term Planning

In addition to such annual planning and assessment, every 5 years, a major planning effort will be undertaken with substantial congregational participation. This planning effort has several parts.

1. Assessment of Previous Strategic Planning Activities. A designated Board representative will call together an assessment team comprised of the lay leadership and ministry most closely connected to the Strategic Goals listed in the past/current Strategic Plan. This team will take on responsibility for conducting a descriptive assessment of progress of the past Strategic Plan.

Assessments should seek to describe:

- Results toward achieving the specific overall goals.
- A checklist of all activities that were recommended, whether they happened, and comments on specific activities where appropriate.
- An examination of any other unplanned, unexpected or unrelated "significant happenings" in the life of RRUC over the past five years.

2. Congregational Survey (concurrent with Assessment). To support the assessment and to better understand who we are and how we have changed as a congregation, a congregational survey should be conducted at least every 5 years, resulting in a regular 5-year publication on "Who are we as a congregation" that covers demographics, interests and visions of RRUC's membership and friends. To the extent reasonable, same questions should be kept in order to compare data over time; some questions will of course need to be added based on the current Strategic Goals. To do the congregational survey in 2005, we used www.formsite.com, a web-based interface for creating and publishing custom web-based surveys. This tool was straightforward, accessible, easy to download data, easy to train others in its use, and cost-effective. SurveyMonkey.com is another similar online survey tool.

3. Major Strategic Planning Effort. A major strategic planning effort should be done every 5 years. The process used for this Strategic Planning effort (detailed in Appendix A) was useful for involving the participation of a good part of the congregation. This process can be used successfully in future strategic planning efforts, particularly with the assistance of the to-be-created work group that will be helping RRUC develop more appreciative processes and culture. Lessons learned from the experience of this Strategic Planning effort (e.g., Begin the entire Strategic Planning Process in January, and plan for a September/October Summit) should be taken into consideration for future efforts.

C. Evaluation Forms

All committees, ministers, and staff are asked to answer the following questions at the beginning of each year, to assist with RRUC's ongoing SP efforts. The questions will help committees reinforce an emphasis on planning and carrying out activities that support the whole church's strategic plan. Forms for this purpose follow this page.

LOOKING BACK

- 1) What has your committee been involved in over the last year that you are most proud of?
- 2) Last year, your committee planned on doing the following [list.] To what extent has this been done?
- 3) What else (if anything) has happened in the last year both within RRUC and outside of RRUC that has made a difference to the work of this committee?
- 4) What are your wishes for this committee for the coming year?

LOOKING FORWARD

- 1) How do you envision the work of this committee being enhanced by and contributing to RRUC's Strategic Goals
- 2) What does your committee plan to do or accomplish over the next year in relation to the 4 goals?
- 3) What other priorities (if any) does your committee have for the next year?
- 4) What resources are needed from RRUC for the next year?
- 5) Any other comments?

LOOKING BACK FORM

1) What has your committee been involved in over the last year that you are most proud of?

2) Last year, your committee planned on doing the following.

[List.]	To what extent has this been done?

3) What else (if anything) has happened in the last year both within RRUC and outside of RRUC that has made a difference to the work of this committee?

4) What are your wishes for this committee for the coming year?

D. Suggested Questions for Evaluation

Below are questions and/or suggestions for each goal that can be used to evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Plan (SP). The priority for investigating these questions and our ability to do so will be determined by an evaluation committee. A table format for evaluation is suggested.

Table format

<i>Where we are today?</i>	<i>What we'll want to know?</i>	<i>Info we need to answer that</i>	<i>How we will get that info</i>	<i>Who will collect it?</i>

Goal 1. Reach Out To The Wider Community

- Development of an outreach database to track RRUC participation in outside meetings and events.
- RRUC members' satisfaction with internal communication to the congregational.
- Are more people outside of RRUC hearing about us? Number and type of mentions of RRUC in local media.
- Are our outreach efforts resulting in more visitors to RRUC?
- How are visitors finding out about us - presence in the community, media, other.
- Number of interfaith events sponsored by RRUC

Goal 2. Grow Our Membership

- To what extent has volunteering (for RRUC activities) increased within RRUC.
- By what percentage has membership grown since 2005?
- How many new visitors are coming in per month?
- How many new members sign the book per year?
- Are the new members staying?
- Are the new members getting involved?
- What is our retention rate
- What are the reasons people come to and leave RRUC?

- By what percentage has the young adult population grown since 2005?
- By what percentage has the young adult population grown since 2005?
- To what extent has programming for young adults increased? (And has it brought in more young adults?)

Goal 3. Unite In The Spirit Of Fun And A Culture Of Caring

Possible survey questions.

- Do people now have more fun at RRUC meetings and events? Possible survey question: Compared to previous years, would you say that meetings and events at RRUC are: A lot less fun than before, a little less fun, about the same, a little more fun, a lot more fun; Please explain.
- Do people now socialize more with others in the RRUC community? Possible survey question: Compared to previous years, would you say that you now socialize with others from RRUC: A lot less than before, a little less, about the same, a little more, a lot more. Please explain.
- Do our elders feel connected to the church? Either individual or group interviews of elders, or a possible survey question: How frequently do you feel truly connected to RRUC? What helps you to feel connected?
- Do members of the congregation feel that the RRUC community demonstrates a more caring culture? Possible survey question: Compared to previous years, would you say that the RRUC community has demonstrated a culture that is: A lot less caring than before, a little less caring, about the same, a little more caring, a lot more caring; Please explain.
- Are problems or conflicts at RRUC handled in a way that demonstrates more fairness and caring? Possible survey question: Compared to previous years, would you say that RRUC has dealt with problems or conflicts in ways that demonstrated: A lot less fairness and caring than before, a little less fairness and caring, about the same, a little more fairness and caring, a lot more fairness and caring; Please explain.
- Is RRUC communicating effectively with its own members?

Goal 4. Nurture spiritual growth

- Have more people taken part in small group ministry?
- How is small group ministry affecting people's spiritual health? Either include on congregational survey or (preferred) separate survey of those in covenant & other small groups.
- Are there recognized sacred spaces at RRUC? Are those sacred spaces respected?
- List of spaces that have been designated as a sacred space; percentage of people in the congregation who recognize these spaces as sacred spaces.

APPENDIX A. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

1. Planning

Background: Following the congregation's February 2004 vote to proceed with building renovation and expansion, the Board asked a small strategic planning framework group (Charlotte Carroll, Steve Charles, Patty Hill) to review alternative approaches, past efforts and comparative churches, and develop a strategic planning framework to propose to the board in the Strategic Planning Charter. On October 7th, 2004, the RRUC Board of Trustees approved the charge to the Strategic Planning Group to undertake a process leading to a five-year Strategic Plan and make recommendations for integrating strategic planning into the congregation's regular procedures. A group¹ of RRUC members agreed to join the SPG and met throughout the fall of 2004. The concept of Appreciative Inquiry was chosen by the RRUC Board as the method to be used for developing the five-year strategic plan.

Appreciative Inquiry: What is Appreciative Inquiry? In the 1980's a study by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University led to a new, positively focused method of helping organizations become their very best. Coined "Appreciative Inquiry", this "change methodology" guides an organization in identifying its "best" moments of the past, those peak experiences that give energy and power to the system. Through a series of interviews (inquiry), stories are told of times when organizational members felt most proud, energized and engaged, uncovering the capabilities for positive engagement known as the positive core.

Once this "positive core" has been identified, a vision of the future, grounded in the best of the past, can be developed. This vision gets its power from the knowledge that those activities or practices that have been powerful for the system in the past can be amplified upon to give the organization what it most desires in the future. A clearly delineated vision of the future then leads to action steps to make the vision a reality.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is based upon the belief that we can create our own reality. We can choose to focus on those things we have done best, our successes and triumphs as a group (rather than our problems or deficits). When we do this, we gain energy and momentum to continue to use our collective talents and energy in the direction of our most desired future. Today, AI is used globally for strategic planning, teambuilding, leadership development and many other change and growth opportunities found in large, complex systems. Increasingly AI is being seen as a vehicle for congregational development.

Stakeholders Meeting: The process began in December 2004 with a half-day stakeholders meeting to identify what should be the focus of an Appreciative Inquiry approach to strategic planning. In addition to the regular SPG members we invited staff, youth, and others presenting the diversity of activities at RRUC; about 25 persons attended. Using what was created in this meeting, the SPG developed the

¹ Curt Adams, Linda Gustitus, John Hansman, Kristina Heinemann, Patty Hill (Chair), Jeff Hollingsworth, Kathleen Madigan, Charlotte Moser, Judy Scott (Vice Chair), Doug Smith, Lynn Strauss, Kathy Tippet, Susan Winchell
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theme of "River of Love, Road to Justice: Discovering Our Power as a Religious Community" and laid the groundwork for the all-church summit in April.

Congregational Survey: In March of 2005, a major congregational survey collected anonymous data from 270 members and friends of the congregation. Much of this data can be compared with data from previous years. In connection with the survey, respondents were also asked to complete a skills survey that was not anonymous. A total of 121 individuals provided data on their skills and talents. This data went into the RRUC database and is already being used to identify potential volunteers.

2. The Summit

The SPG planned and carried out a major strategic planning summit on April 23rd, 2005. The Appreciative Inquiry approach was a means of generating broad membership participation focused on looking forward to a common future. Great efforts were made by each member of the SPG to ensure strong congregational attendance, diverse representation, drawing out participants' individual perspectives, and the development of outcomes that were useful to creating the Strategic Plan. Also considered important to this planning was that participants' experience of the appreciative inquiry process itself would be a growth experience that reflected the values of RRUC.

A total of 98 members and friends of RRUC attended this all-day strategic planning summit, actively participating in a complex but exciting process. Participants experienced community, personal relationship, fun, and exhaustion as they worked together in assigned diverse groups of 8-10 people for most of the day. Exercises included one-on-one interviews of each other around our best experiences at and greatest wishes for RRUC, and then small group work to capture the answers. The topics included discovering the best of RRUC in the past and visioning RRUC's future in 2010 if all of our dreams for the congregation have come true.

The plan for the day included a working lunch. Our facilitator, Meredith Higgins, asked each group to engage in a two-step plan: (1) to think about the ideas reported out in the morning and visualize RRUC five years into the future as the ideal, most supportive, energizing community possible, and (2) to develop a 10-minute creative presentation to describe this vision to the larger group, a presentation that describes what is actually happening, what the atmosphere is like, what programs are in place, and how RRUC is reaching out to the world. The creative presentations (skits) presented to all summit attendees enlivened the experience for participants and added energy and enthusiasm to ideas for the vision and future action for the next five years. (A DVD of these skits is available for loan from the Church Office/Library.)

Following the presentation of the skits, each working group worked to identify three or four common themes from the skits and these themes were placed on large post-it notes and put on the wall. All the summit attendees then worked together to condense the approximately 35 themes into 10 topic areas. In the last activity of the day, individuals who were interested in being a part of a group to develop materials related to one of the 10 topic areas met with others interested in the same topic and developed plans for meeting to discuss the topic during the following two months.

3. Small Groups

Based on the common desires and themes for RRUC's future expressed during the day, ten new subgroups were formed, and those who were interested (a total of 68 people) signed up for a subgroup to meet during May and June, 2005 to develop a vision that would be incorporated into the strategic plan. Each group received guidelines and was asked to provide a written vision and ideas related to their individual themes. Each group then provided a report; a list of provocative propositions from the reports is at the end of this report and the reports are on the RRUC website.

4. Compilation

Following the completion of the small group reports, the strategic planning group met to review all of what we had heard and learned from the congregation. Through the work at the Strategic Planning Summit, we learned that our Members have a strong love for and deep appreciation of RRUC. The energy and spirit at the Summit were palpable. It was also clear from the Summit that we want to be even more and do even better and that we dream of an ever increasing positive influence on the larger world. More than two-thirds of the 98 people attending the Summit volunteered to work in subgroups after the Summit on developing specific suggestions in their topic areas, and the result of that work was an inspiring list of creative and thoughtful suggestions for new programs and approaches for RRUC. It was the job of the SPG to distill those ideas into a workable plan.

The SPG was also influenced by the plan of the JPD Baltimore Washington Growth Committee. In January 2004 our Joseph Priestley District formed this Committee to grow the number of Unitarian Universalists churches in our area. The Committee, based on the input from the area's 27 UU congregations, developed a plan for growth that has been adopted by 18 of the 27 congregations, including RRUC. More congregations are expected to approve the plan over the next year. The plan calls for action in four specific areas to achieve Unitarian Universalist growth in the Baltimore Washington area over the next five years. These four areas are: making the congregations we have more vital; developing racial and cultural diversity in our congregations; creating an effective public outreach program from which all congregations can benefit; establishing new large congregations in our area. RRUC's strategic plan will assist in the realization of the Baltimore Washington Growth Plan through the goals developed and described below.

APPENDIX B. THEMES FROM THE SUMMIT AND SMALL GROUPS

1. Creative Presentations from the Summit

Joseph Priestley Table: Radio advertising—RRUC where all are welcome is the fastest growing congregation.... Do you believe (a variety of statements)—then you might be a UU; if you said yes to these questions then you are a UU. Spreading our beliefs! Check us out!

Pete Seeger Table : Reporter from Post doing a series on RRUC: Why do you like RRUC: Every Friday pot luck dinners are so much fun. Series on UUs -- there is no parking near the church, the cars are lined up. UUs have recaptured the moral majority. Why are you here - people in their 20s and 30s are here, men, programs, all the things people are doing in this world, strong leadership, ministers care about congregation, sound financial footing, events in both buildings. UUs represent true American values.

e.e. cummings Table: We've just finished the third, inspirational service. Up the ramp comes a new member with a yellow mug. Each member tells him: We are just headed out to do the church's work - telling the new member what everyone is doing in social justice - Beacon House, health care, installing solar panels. You came at an exciting time: We have paid off mortgage and need to decide what to do with surplus money. Common values meeting with 4th Presbyterian and with the Muslim community. We have a special newcomer's Champaign brunch.

Beatrix Potter Table: We build toward 2010 with the blessings of what we have today. We have programs for children youth, social justice opportunities, great ministers, spiritual energy, music, pastoral care, fellowship, and fun. Take all the blessings and they rain down on us. Increased financial abundance, friends giving more, a ministry in an A. Powell Davies context, understanding potential of green sanctuary, more spiritual grace and dedicated quiet place, where we have youth program that picks a partner school in se District of Columbia, a music contemporary program with youth, increased communication in different formats so everyone is connected, and our worship will be diverse worship that rocks and inspires. All invited under this umbrella.

Margaret Sanger Table: Welcome to RRUC annual meeting 2010: Reports on church wide support for social justice advocacy, paint houses, all 700 members to meet in parking lot for human rights campaign. Worship has greater variety in format. Communication via video live broadcasting of both worship services and CC&C and three feature articles in the local newspaper and an NPR program, more RE exploration and reaching out to world community - South Africa, Indonesia, Fiatfalva, trip to Mars. Treasurer - 98.1 % paid full pledge for this year, 99% pledged for next year and average pledge is up, mortgage payoff overshoots its goal. Membership - 230 new members, 100 in RE, sessions in Scott's office go to learn new path to membership, appreciation luncheon of longer members shared history. Make new friends, but keep the old.

Ralph Bunch Table: We've got the RRUC broadcast network for those people with visual impairments. Here is the content: Interactive network has a control to go through all the different options: report from the board - how to spend excess money, hiring of social justice minister. Save weekend at end of May for our new senior orchestra performing at Strathmore; director of media - RRUC media report - 3

events, RRUC minister will appear talking about family values, panel discussion on culture of life at CC&C - discussion between Cato and Heritage talking about constitution. Traveling reporter - crowd of 20,000 has come to airport to welcome youth group home from building bridges in the Middle East, elementary children back in 2 weeks from working with migrant workers on Eastern shore. Seniors have adult ed during the day in new building space. We can now afford the newsletter every week. More intergenerational programs.

Rachel Carson Table: Visitor --one greater speaks Spanish. We were just telling her how we have headsets for multiple languages. Welcome back - I need to tell you about all the things happening: new quiet meditation room, at least 4 Sundays each year are youth led services, drinkable coffee. Activities for young adults: schedule can be downloaded on palm from the web site. He is interested in affordable housing -we have a new program -- just bought a house that we are renovating and will be lived in by group of Hispanic immigrants. Rumors about RRUC - what goes on Sunday a.m. - people can choose what they want to attend - all come back together at the worship service. Didn't make the service, but watched in on TV. We serve lunch every Sunday.

Frances Harper Table: Reporter taking notes on contemporary religious institutions forum. See this beautiful building -- the parking lot is full of cars at 8:30 on a Saturday morning for an all community social action project. In lobby - sign says: meet here at 8:30 and our hydrogen fuel vans will take us to work on three social justice action projects for the year. Here at the site - at RRUC used to have 400 causes - now we combine some of them together and work together to renovate a new house for a homeless family to move in; foundation - 7 principles; I'm here with my sorority sister and we are putting a roof on a house - totally rocks; we sing along as we work and build a joint choir; use music to give a house blessing. What brought you here? The big lighted sign. If can't come back I can get services and info live on video, cable. We're on our 3rd annual social justice project.

May Sarton Table: Welcome to WWAA news where we are reporting on a small fire - it seems that RRUC has burned the mortgage. Impact - important event - we've worried every year if we can cover the salaries. Our pledges have now grown so we no longer need the bazaar and we have a \$10 million endowment. But, we are not going to give up the bazaar, since we don't need the money we will use it to fund numerous social justice programs. Reasons to celebrate - we have funded the new building and the grounds are a green sanctuary - no paper, efficient lights. We are a sanctuary where liberals and conservatives can come and have a safe conversation to help form a real community. Proud of process - consensus building. We have a new sign that reflects who we are. Every Saturday 200 people show up to do social justice projects: taking 30 youth down to Haiti and 40 to Fiatfalva. Lots of youth people here - interfaith softball league and Sunday night contemporary worship service. Place where people can participate in small group activities.

2. The Kind of Place We Want RRUC To Be: Provocative propositions from 10 small groups--*

River of Love: Strengthening our own RRUC community

A. A place for spirituality and personal growth

- The sanctuary is reserved for worship services; it is a truly sacred place and a place for calm reflection, regeneration, and personal growth for a congregation of multiple spiritual backgrounds! (1)
- RRUC supports a spiritual culture in which new members are welcomed, people are nurtured and everyone finds opportunities for growth! (2)
- Social Justice is a regular and visible part of Sunday Worship Services! (3)
- The quest for meaning has united people at RRUC! (5)

B. A place for lifetime connections

- RRUC is visible, welcoming, and engaging to prospective guests and prospective members! (2)
- RRUC members feel a deep sense of connection with the church community and a sense of belonging throughout their lifetimes! (10)
- RRUC has a critical mass of young adults who are members and friends of the congregation! (8)
- RRUC nurtures and develops an intentional, inclusive, and intergenerational culture as well as intergeneration opportunities! (9)
- Annual all-church social justice projects attract an intergenerational following! (3)

C. A place for fun and variety

- Members view RRUC not only as a religious gathering place, but also as a social gathering place where even serious-minded events are undertaken with a spirit of enjoyment! (4)
- Opportunities abound for fun events - which are well-attended! (4)
- Smiles radiate throughout the week, and friendships blossom! (4)
- Our musical repertoire has expanded to include a wide variety of music to be sung by the congregation including plainer, folk-based music! (1)
- Worship services are varied and the congregation enjoys experimenting with different formats and holding services at different times! (1)
- Lay leadership is encouraged to promote these opportunities! (9)

D. A place of open communication

- RRUC members are able to personalize communication modes and content to suit their needs and are as fully informed and engaged as they choose to be! (6)
- Neighborhood group meetings are active forums of two-way communication! (6)
- Working groups can easily document and share information on their activities! (6)
- Proactive communication of social justice opportunities is a reality! (3)

Road to Justice: Seeking together to put values into action

E. A place of generosity

- Members thrive on the attitude of generosity and support that is reflected in everything our church does! A culture of giving takes hold! (10)
- Members "buy into" the true costs of keeping RRUC operating at the expected levels. Members have a greater sense of church ownership - so that it's "our" budget and "our" staff, not "theirs." Members believe that RRUC is well-managed. There is widespread understanding of what's in the budget and why. Debt free, the church comfortably and equitably supports a ministerial team, staff and strong programming that operate within our means! (10)
- We have attained levels of commitment (including volunteer time and financial support) needed to sustain the work of a vibrant and active congregation! (2)

F. A place for putting values into action

- Social Justice holds us all together and makes religious values manifest! (3)
- Our planning is under girded by established principles! (5)
- We contribute to strengthening participatory, informed democracy and civic life! (5)
- Our focus on action and social justice is an expression of our UU principles, not partisanship! (5)
- RRUC commits a sizable percentage of church income to working towards a more just, equitable, peaceful, and compassionate world! (10)

G. A place for reaching out to the community

- We have a regular schedule of activities, several times a year, which are well-publicized, intergenerational, and hold a particular appeal for young adults! (8)
- RRUC is known as the church for young adults in the Maryland suburbs / Montgomery County area! (8)
- In the spirit of inquiry and welcome RRUC sponsors programs several times a year which are provocative and which attract numerous people outside the Congregation with diverse ideas and viewpoints. These programs are planned jointly by RRUC members and outside participants! (7)
- Unitarian Universalism is recognized throughout the greater Washington D.C. area for its liberal religious values, and RRUC is known in the community as a strong advocate for social justice. (6)
- RRUC is engaged with multiple community organizations including religious institutions of other faiths, in working for community change. RRUC "ambassadors" participating in these activities provide frequent reports back to the RRUC Congregation! (7)

*Ten small groups met following the April 23rd RRUC Strategic Planning Summit to develop provocative propositions for RRUC in the next five years. Each group represents a theme that emerged at the Summit. The numbers in parentheses following each statement above are keyed to the groups below.

1. Excellence in worship programs
2. Membership

3. Social action
4. Fun and enjoyment
5. Religious values made manifest
6. Communication
7. Building a diverse community
8. Young adult involvement
9. Intergenerational
10. Financial/stability Stewardship

APPENDIX C. The Strategic Planning Charter: October 12, 2004

Proposed Motion: That the RRUC Board of Trustees approve the charge to a Strategic Planning Group to undertake a process leading to a FY2005-2010 Strategic Plan and make recommendations for integrating strategic planning into the congregation's regular procedures. Work should be completed before the end of the current fiscal year, in accordance with the attached work plan.

Background: Following completion of the 1997-2002 strategic plan, further strategic planning was placed on hold by the then-Board until the outcome of the building process and capital campaign became clear. Following the congregation's February 2004 vote to proceed with building renovation and expansion, the Board asked a small strategic planning framework group to propose how to proceed. This group reviewed alternative approaches, past efforts and comparator churches. The following is the outcome of that effort.

Charge to Strategic Planning Organization: The Strategic Planning Group (SPG) will carry out a consultative process to develop a proposed strategic plan for the period 2005-2009 and recommend how to integrate regular updates to this plan into the ongoing functions of congregational governance (finance, program, staffing). Such process should be consistent with UU principles and purposes. The proposed plan should be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. A UU/JPD facilitator will be made available to work with the SPG.

The Plan should contain the following elements:

1. **Mission and Identity** - Drawing on the current RRUC mission statement (attached), the SPG will interact at appropriate levels to confirm or adjust that statement. Undertaking analyses of data regarding members, staff, friends and stakeholders and using congregational inputs as appropriate, SPG will develop a brief statement of the congregation's identity (Who we are). As part of this element, the plan should include an evaluation of our name.
2. **Vision** - SPG will facilitate the participatory development of a broad vision by RRUC stakeholders for the long term (what we dream of doing/being), and more specific goals, phrased as more detailed and measurable "ends statements," indicating what RRUC will look like by 2010.
3. **Plan** - SPG will facilitate the development of a general five-year plan for achieving those end statements (What we should do to realize these dreams). More specific objectives by program area (worship, church community, social justice, education, administration, financial, and physical/building) should be developed for the medium term - the next two fiscal years, with indicators to measure progress. The SPG should engage and empower Cluster leads and Committees to develop these program level plans. The Finance Committee should be able and willing to link its annual budget process to these objectives.
4. **Evaluating progress** - SPG will incorporate a proposed monitoring and evaluation process that will, again in a consultative way, assure that program leaders and staff regularly refer back to mission/goals/objectives to guide their decisions and to monitor progress toward such goals and objectives. The SPG will also suggest a process for carrying out a yearly "issues scan" to identify any outstanding issues that may impact on the ongoing plan and require review.

5. SPG, after consultation with the relevant entities, should make specific organizational and process recommendations for incorporating strategic (medium-term at least) thinking in regular governance, program and financial undertakings.
6. SPG should recommend a communication strategy that will assure that congregational members and stakeholders become aware of the mission/vision and plan, and that regular references are made to the mission and ends statements (website, newsletter, orientation of new members).

Methodology

The SPG, working with the facilitator, will involve the congregation, staff and other stakeholders (other principle building users, for instance) in the planning effort. The Planning Framework Working Group suggests that Appreciative Inquiry, which focuses on what makes things work exceptionally well and what is needed to sustain such excellence. However, to best leverage energy of the congregation, consultation should be coordinated with other participatory exercises, ideally eliciting needed information in an efficient and open way.

Coordination with the Board of Trustees will occur through involvement of the three Board liaisons, and with the Ministry and staff through liaison with the Associate Minister. Coordination mechanisms with the Program Council or similar entity, the Building Planning Committee and with the Finance Committee are also important, and ideally will occur through the participation on SPG of persons who have links to those entities. Furthermore, coordination with a parallel analysis by the Board of Trustees to look at RRUC governance should also be planned for, in consultation with the Board liaisons.

Time Frame: The SPG should aim to complete the development of a proposed plan before June 2005. See suggested timeline.

Current (1998) Mission Statement: "To meet the spiritual aspirations of people of free faith in our area by providing inspiring worship, life-long religious education, a caring community and opportunities to put our values into action in society."

THE RRUC STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2011

Joyfully unite
A free faith
Fun and Caring
Attain levels of commitment
Sustain the work
To make a difference
What holds us together,
The best of our past,
Sacred space, quiet reflection,
Talented giving
Imagine the difference
Building an appreciative culture
What we accomplish together is important,
How we do it matters
Reach out, grow, unite, nurture

--By Doris Brody, from words in the Strategic Plan