

ALL SOULS ASPIRES

Strategic Plan
For Growth and Transformation

October 2009

WHAT WE VOTED TO AFFIRM

The Four Initiatives and Their Goals

Building on Listening Circle and survey responses, the All Souls Aspires team and summit participants identified the following four strategic initiatives that form the heart of our plan. These initiatives reflect themes we heard again and again. The goals that accompany them were developed by task forces that were appointed last December.

Articulating Our Faith: We will articulate a clear and compelling expression of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

- **Goal #1** We will make available a written expression of the religious values and practices that draw us together as Unitarian Universalists at All Souls, while recognizing that our liberal faith also values and encourages individual views.
- **Goal #2** We will become a more theologically literate and engaged congregation. Our members will continue to deepen their faith throughout their lives through integrated educational programs and opportunities to discuss, develop and express their own personal beliefs.
- **Goal #3** We will develop new resources for religious understanding, worship and individual spiritual practice to enhance our theological literacy and reinforce our shared commitment to Unitarian Universalism and our association of congregations.
- **Goal #4** We will become a prophetic congregation whose members embody the theological imperative to heal the brokenness within our own lives, in our community, and in our world.

Strengthening Our Community: We will build deeper relationships among newcomers, members and friends, of all ages, through programs that encompass all phases of congregational life from a visitor's first experience through eventual leadership roles.

- **Goal #1** We will enhance the Sunday morning welcoming process to make it warmer, more intentional, coordinated, and responsive to the diverse needs that worship participants bring.
- **Goal #2** We will create a path to membership that develops an appreciation for and understanding of the benefits, as well as the stewardship responsibilities, of membership and that leads to a formal commitment to the church.
- **Goal #3** We will ensure that every member who so desires finds meaningful relationships, deepens their spirituality, and embraces the greater community within the groups that All Souls offers.
- **Goal #4** We will create new opportunities for our members to learn about All Souls' outreach efforts and to become actively involved.

Deepening Our Capacity for Diversity: We will intentionally welcome people of diverse racial, ethnic and demographic backgrounds, sharing common spiritual ideals and celebrating our differences.

- **Goal #1** We will make diversity of race and ethnicity a key consideration as we develop our theological resources and program initiatives, as well as our staff team and congregational leadership.
- **Goal #2** We will cultivate an intentionally welcoming congregation. Church leadership, staff and members will encourage each other to welcome everyone who comes to All Souls.
- **Goal #3** We will increase the visibility of our congregation and our church among diverse communities. We will be intentional in our outreach to targeted groups through varied communication vehicles.
- **Goal #4** We will encourage new members of diverse backgrounds to remain in our midst. Our church will become richer and more vibrant as we strengthen community and celebrate diversity.

Spreading Our Message: We will communicate our transforming message to the wider world in both words and deeds, embracing new technologies and communication strategies to promote All Souls' mission and expand our outreach and advocacy efforts.

- **Goal #1** We will enhance our presence on the internet to communicate both within All Souls and to the outside world a clear understanding of who we are theologically and as a community.
- **Goal #2** We will embrace interactive online tools to encourage participation by members and newcomers alike, and to advance the goals of strengthening our community and broadening our diversity.
- **Goal #3** We will facilitate new ways for members to pursue social and political issues important to us.

Only the four initiatives and their goals listed above were presented for affirmation. The following information expresses a deeper understanding of the congregation's aspirations and the plan's intent.

Our Five Core Values

At the summit meeting, participants identified five core values that make concrete what our members say they most love about All Souls. These core values reflect the persistent themes, thoughts and feelings of the congregation as expressed during the planning process. They signify the essential characteristics, or ways of life, that make All Souls unique and that should be preserved.

Nurturing Spiritual and Intellectual Growth and Transformation

All Souls is a place of spiritual nurture and intellectual challenge and integrity that offers opportunities for growth, transformation, and self-awareness. Education at All Souls is transformative for adults and youth alike.

Maintaining and Expanding a Liberal Theology

The All Souls approach to spirituality is informed by the heart, the intellect, and the arts. It is marked by theological openness and a respect for liberal, diverse theologies.

Making A Positive Impact on the World

The community of All Souls is committed to social awareness, social justice, social service, and to the communities around it. In the service of these commitments, All Souls creates and maintains the highest quality outreach programs to embody its values, while also aspiring to have a greater influence and positive impact on the larger world.

Offering A Sacred Space

All Souls provides a deeply moving worship service and offers to all a place of refuge and community, a place that embraces families, a place that seeks to satisfy the yearning for a transforming and satisfying spiritual experience, and a stimulating and enriching religious education.

Inspiring Leadership

All Souls is congregationally governed. It offers inspiring leadership both from a pulpit that is independent, strong and possessed of a clear moral vision and from lay leaders who are similarly inspired.

Ideas for Implementation

To carry out the initiatives and their goals, four task forces suggested more than 75 different action steps that have been synthesized as follows. Some of them require few, if any, new resources. Some require considerable volunteer effort, or additional time and attention from staff. Others may require more research, additional funding, or outside services. Some of these ideas may lie beyond the five-year scope of our plan.

These proposed steps are intended to give an idea of the types of actions we could undertake to fulfill the goals and initiatives. As we learn and grow into the future with this plan, we may find they need to be reviewed and revised.

Articulating Our Faith

- Create a description of our purpose and shared commitments as a congregation (now printed inside Order of Service cover)
- Galen conducts seminar at the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly in June 2009 (completed)
- Establish post-sermon coffee hour discussion group for members and newcomers to stimulate spiritual dialogue
- Design and implement a course of study for new and existing members emphasizing Unitarian Universalist history and theology, All Souls' congregational history and mission, as well as personal reflection and commitment
- Create a Coming of Age-style program for adults to culminate in personal statements of faith that can be shared as a collection of credos on our website
- Galen writes a book on the challenge of being religious in a secular age and leads the compilation of a Book of Wisdom and a Book of Days

- As more theological resources are developed, review and update the Religious Education programming for children and the Coming of Age program for youth
- Establish All Souls lending library to enhance theological literacy
- Continue to expand the use of music and texts from other cultures and traditions in our worship, which may include instituting additional worship services beyond our Sunday morning, All Souls at Sundown, and All Souls at Mid-week services
- Develop a plan for expanding our repertoire of theologically-appropriate choral music by commissioning poets and composers to write new works and adapt, when possible, existing works

Strengthening Our Community

- Become a more intentionally welcoming community by:
 - Training greeters to recognize and assist newcomers;
 - Encouraging members and newcomers to greet each other and/or establishing an intra-service greeting;
 - Posting signs directing people to coffee hour;
 - Designating an area at coffee hour (in addition to the welcome table) for newcomers to meet people, hosted by volunteers and staff;
 - Posting notices of all Sunday activities in narthex and garden entrance;
 - Unlocking garden entrance doors on Sundays
- Create and erect a map of All Souls
- Create more effective coordination of volunteers, and volunteer needs and opportunities, including training for volunteer leadership
- Establish a small group ministry program to provide the intimate experience of a small church through closely-connected, spiritually-oriented groups within the larger congregation
- Begin planning and fundraising to expand and enhance our facilities to accommodate our growing congregation, including our need for: additional meeting space for children’s and adult religious education, and small group ministries; expanded office space to bring together staff teams; upgraded sanctuary infrastructure (audio, video, air conditioning, expanded multi-level chancel) to support dynamic and accessible year-round worship

Deepening Our Capacity for Diversity

- Make diversity a priority when hiring new staff, filling new leadership positions
- Begin an intentional dialogue about diversity
- Create new video for prospective members, emphasizing breadth of contemporary church life and diversity of our community
- Add up-to-date art and photograph displays in public areas to reflect the vibrancy and diversity of contemporary church life and aspirations for our community; cluster historical artifacts in clearly delineated spaces

Spreading Our Message

- Expand awareness of and participation in groups, programs and activities at All Souls, including magazine-like coverage—in the Bulletin and on the website—of guest speakers, events and activities during the past month

- Enhance and redesign website to:
 - Showcase All Souls groups and committees and communicate what they are doing to members and greater community; create a blog for each
 - Create a social networking area for members and groups, including photos, videos and text, highlighting diversity and range of activities;
 - Create a forum for discussions and post-sermon dialogues;
 - Be easily searchable
- Enhance and coordinate All Souls-branded webcasts, podcasts and radio broadcasts
- Advertise and promote our full array of services and programs on a variety of media, including radio, subway/bus ads and religious websites

We feel this strategic plan gives explicit guidance to a future that represents the hopes and aspirations you have expressed for All Souls. We hope you will share our vision.

The All Souls Aspires team would like to thank the following members of the congregation and staff who gave freely of their time and expertise:

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With warm regards,

Your All Souls Aspires Team:

Melinda Beck, Co-chair

Carol Emmerling, Co-chair

Jennifer Vermont Davis

Galen Guengerich

Kathy Ishizuka

Carolyn Jackson

Melanie Niemiec

Larry Reina

ALL SOULS ASPIRES

Strategic Planning Timeline

EVENTS TO DATE

February 2007	Congregation calls Galen Guengerich as Senior Minister
Fall 2007	Board of Trustees retains Susan Beaumont of the Alban Institute to guide strategic planning process
February 2008	Strategic planning team meets with Susan Beaumont; chooses All Souls Aspires as name for planning process
April – June 2008	Fifteen Listening Circles explore aspirations of All Souls community
May 2008	Congregational survey is sent to All Souls members and friends
Summer 2008	All Souls Aspires team analyzes Listening Circle and survey data
October 2008	All Souls Aspires team and congregational representatives identify five core values and four strategic initiatives at a weekend summit meeting
Dec '08 - Feb '09	Task forces devise goals and action steps for each initiative
Spring 2009	Summit meeting and task force results are synthesized into one plan by All Souls Aspires team
May 2009	Board of Trustees endorses plan; sends draft to congregation
Summer 2009	Dialogue sessions solicit suggestions
September 2009	All Souls Aspires team makes final revisions
October 2009	Board of Trustees endorses final plan and submits it to congregation
December 6, 2009	The congregation votes to affirm the plan