

Northeast Cluster of Florida
Unitarian Universalist
Congregations

The Reverend Kenneth
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District Executive

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One Generation From Extinction

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The Prime Directive of Any
Organization or Organism:

To Survive

The Central Tenet of Systems Theory:

Every System is Organized to get the

Results it gets.

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The Question for Our Time Together:

**Will Unitarian Universalism Survive
Another Generation?**

*How Do Our Systems Get Results
That Make Our Survival Unlikely?*

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A Healthy Religious Community Routinely
Assesses It's Ministries.

The Questions:

- ➔ Why are we here? [Mission/Purpose]
- ➔ Whom do we serve? [Mission Field]
- ➔ Where are we going? [Vision]
- ➔ Do we have the resources we need to do the job?
- ➔ How much energy goes to self-maintenance versus service?
- ➔ What impact are we having? [Outcomes]
 - ➔ *What did we set out to do?*
 - ➔ *Where are we now?*
 - ➔ *What next?*

“Ministry is where your gifts meet the world's needs.”

Frederich Buechner

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So, How Are We Doing?

Unitarian Universalism's Not So Good News

- 1961: ~ 163,000 roughly unchanged: 2009: ~ 164,656
 - Stay even: ~ 225,000; U.S. Population: > 50%
- 2003 Gallup Poll: 800,000 self-identify as UU's.
- 2003 - 2009: an average of 539 growing congregations while 458 are contracting in size.
- Last year, adult membership in our Association of Congregations declined from 164,730 to 164,656 or -0.02%.
- District membership declined by 140 members, 156,403 to 156,223 or -0.1%.
- Worry: Over 50% of clergy will retire in next 10 years.

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Florida Unitarian Universalism's Not Good News

- 2003 ~ 2009: 4920 ~ 4977
- Children: 878 ~ 904
- 1998: 4554
- 44 congregations: +1 in 6 years
- 19 full-time ministries; 9 partial time
- No large, no breakthrough congregations.
- 90 - 175 = comfort zone.

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Florida District Northeast Cluster

UU Congregation of Cocoa	28	19	17	17	12	12	-16
First UU Church of W Volusia	41	41	47	45	49	42	1
UU Fellowship of Gainesville	230	252	276	268	291	301	71
UU Church of Jacksonville	323	301	260	274	278	251	-72
Buckman Bridge UU Society	76	75	80	82	85	102	26
Community U U Church	46	57	39	38	38	41	-5
Mosaic UU	0	0	0	30	28	30	30
UU Society Daytona Beach	116	109	107	129	133	133	17
Friendship Fellowship Pineda.	74	76	80	84	84	88	14
UU Fellowship St Augustine	65	68	75	69	69	78	13
UU Fellow Marion County	37	58	78	91	97	113	76
UU Fellowship of Vero Beach	143	154	171	164	153	154	11
UU Church of Brevard	39	39	42	25	22	21	-18

NE Cluster Totals **1218 1249 1272 1316 1339 1366 148**

Geographically Nearest to NE Cluster:

UU Cong Lake County	38	40	41	40	46	49	11
1st Unitarian Church Orlando	262	271	291	305	288	228	-34
University UU Society Inc.	103	104	121	137	125	119	16
UU Church of Tallahassee	178	178	174	172	176	173	-5
UU Fellowship Valdosta GA	32	28	24	20	18	21	-11

613 621 651 674 653 590 **-23**

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Why might this be so?
What does it say?

Every system gets the results it is designed to get.

- Lack of a coherent religious center.
- Greater comfort with secular, social/political/psychological language.
- Theological narrowness and incipient dogmatism.
- Neglect of the Elder's role, confusing management with leadership.
- Utter failure to pass on the heritage to our children.

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Why might this be so?
What does it say?

Every system gets the results it is designed to get.

- Truncation of ministry to meeting member needs.
- Unwillingness to see faith development as a discipline.
- Unwillingness to hold members and congregations accountable.
- Embedded class and white privilege consciousness.
- Reactive social witness.

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The Reverend Peter Morales, President, Unitarian Universalist Association

The message of the election is clear: We Unitarian Universalists want our movement to change. We want to embrace the possibilities inherent in these uncertain times. We are not reconciled to being a declining part of American religious life. We have too much to offer. The world needs our prophetic and compassionate voice.

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The Reverend Peter Morales, President, Unitarian Universalist Association

As your president, I hear your desire for an Association that is a more effective partner with our congregations. I hear your longing for leadership that builds on Bill Sinkford's legacy of public witness. I understand your hope for a movement whose cultural diversity matches our intellectual and theological diversity.

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The Reverend Peter Morales, President, Unitarian Universalist Association

The first great test for us is whether we are willing to **let go** of those things in the past that no longer serve us. We must learn to “do church” and our associational life in new ways.

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The Reverend Peter Morales, President, Unitarian Universalist Association

The second great spiritual test for us is **relational**. Can we open our hearts, our lives, our doors, and our congregations to the millions of seekers looking for a religious home? Ultimately, the test is whether there is enough love in our hearts. Love reaches out. Love is vulnerable. We must dare to love.

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*"If you don't like change,
you're going to like
irrelevance even less."*

General Eric Shinseki
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

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Where Do We Go Next?

Leadership, Leadership, Leadership

Faith Communities Today Study: FACT 2008 found three leadership variables are key to future survival:

Promoting vision

Evangelism

Training lay leaders

This was true regardless of denominational family.

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What are our Gifts?
What are the World's needs?
Where to they meet?

How do we need to change?
Who is missing from our community?
What is our place in the public square?

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Small Groups:

1. Identify practices that we need to consider letting go of.
2. Ask: How are we structured to make change unlikely?
3. What new initiatives might we consider to get off the plateau of gradual decline?
4. What gifts does your congregation uniquely offer to our hurting world?
5. What new resources can you bring to bear to give your ministries a sense of urgent passion?