



The Joseph Priestley District | Central East Region
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April 28, 2016

Dearest Congregational Leaders and Religious Professionals:

On April 9th, 2016, at the Joseph Priestley District Assembly in York Pennsylvania, the delegates of the congregations of the Joseph Priestley District (JPD) voted overwhelmingly to affirm the authority of the JPD Board of Directors to dissolve the District, on a timeline of the JPD Board's choosing, in favor of fully participating in the Central East Region of the UUA, by a 97 percent to 2 percent margin (with one percent abstaining). We want to thank all of the congregations who sent delegates to the District Assembly, and all of those who have participated in the discussion and discernment about transitioning from a District to a Regional structure over these last six or more years. Thank you for your faithful discernment, and for supporting the intention and planning of the District Board of Directors.

Based on the results of this vote, the JPD Board of Directors and the JPD Executive are now moving forward with the plan to transition to the Central East Region of the UUA, and to prepare for the dissolution of the Joseph Priestley District. Several preparatory steps had already been taken to facilitate this transition prior to the vote, including the decision to unify the District Staff within the UUA Regional staff structures as of July 1st of 2015. We can report that the Central East Regional staff is now fully unified across the four Districts of our region. We have also fully implemented the Regional Primary Contact Program, where every congregation is assigned one Central East Regional UUA Staff Primary Contact, who is the "first stop" for all congregational questions, concerns, and requests for support from the wider Unitarian Universalist movement and beyond. If you do not know who the UUA Staff Primary Contact is for your congregation, please visit <http://www.uua.org/central-east> to find out, as well as to access other programs of our region.

The JPD Board of Directors has authorized our District Executive to move forward with a plan to unify the JPD Budget with the Central East Regional budget by June 30th, 2016. This is an ambitious goal, but one we believe we will be able to achieve. Rev. David Pyle will be working with the Regional Financial Manager, Cristina Sanchis, and the Regional Lead, Rev. Joan Van Becelaere, to ensure that all elements of the JPD Operations Budget are successfully integrated with the other Districts of our region into one, cohesive, unified regional budget. This unified budget will continue Regional programming and staff to support our congregations, as well as provide the necessary support to our District and District Board of Directors during this time of transition. The JPD Board of Directors will also ensure that all of the restricted funds of the District (such as Chalice Lighters and Chalice Keepers) have continuing oversight and limitations based upon the intent of the donors to those funds prior to the Joseph Priestley District formally dissolving.

One of the responsibilities that the Joseph Priestley District Board of Directors has previously held is the responsibility to provide oversight and guidance for the District Executive and Staff. Under the plan for regionalization, this responsibility has been integrated in the work of the Central East Regional Congregational Life Advisory Council. The Advisory Council conducts

both interviews with and electronic surveys of our congregations to provide feedback and guidance to our Central East Regional Staff on the issues facing our congregations, and how the Central East Regional Staff can best support our congregations. The Advisory Council conducted an in-depth series of interviews with a select group of congregations in the Fall of 2015, and will be conducting an electronic survey of leaders in all of the congregations of the Central East Region in May of 2016. The feedback they have received from you in the Fall interviews has been invaluable to our Regional Staff in crafting how we can better serve and grow Unitarian Universalism within our region. We ask that you participate as fully as possible in the Spring survey that will come to you in a few weeks.

One of the most common questions regarding this transition that we receive from congregations has been what the effect will be upon the Annual Program Fund (APF) "fair share" dues that our congregations provide to support the District and the Association. For this coming year, the answer is that nothing changes. For the 2016-17 church year, the APF will function as it always has, with an ask for both District/Regional programming and for the wider Association. We project that in the 2017-18 church year these will be merged into a single ask to support all of the work of the Association, at the same level as the current two asks combined. There are a few other potential transitions relating to the Annual Program Fund that are unrelated to forming the Region, including moving away from calculating congregational contributions based upon membership numbers. As those develop, the Association and the Regional Staff will be in communication with our congregations about those possibilities.

One other transition that we are making very quickly is that the JPD Board of Directors is affirming the intention of our District Executive to lessen the amount he is using the "District Executive" title, and relate directly to our congregations as a Congregational Life Consultant and a member of the Central East Regional Staff of the UUA. Rev. Pyle will continue providing Executive services to the JPD Board of Directors through this time of transition and dissolution, and we encourage congregations to utilize their Central East Regional Staff Primary Contacts for all requests for information and support. If you have questions or feedback regarding the District's process towards dissolution and regionalization, please feel free to contact Rev. Pyle or the Board of Directors. If you have questions about the Regional Staff, please contact the Regional Lead, or the Congregational Life Advisory Council. For all other issues or concerns, we encourage you to contact and be in relationship with your Primary Contact, whether it is Rev. Megan Foley, Patricia Infante, or Rev. David Pyle.

The JPD Board of Directors anticipates that we will be in contact with you several times as we implement the plan to fully join the Central East Region, and dissolve the Joseph Priestley District. We do not yet know how long that process will take. We do expect inviting you and your congregations to join us sometime at the end of the transition to celebrate all of the history, culture, and vital work of the Joseph Priestley District. And we look forward to continuing to hear from you as this process towards dissolution and regionalization continues.

Yours in Faith,

Dr. Dennis Wellnitz – District President, Joseph Priestley District of the UUA
Rev. David G. Pyle – District Executive, Joseph Priestley District of the UUA