



Epiphany Community Church, Fenton, MI

Dean Drake

The first new UU Christian church to be charted in the UUA since the merger in 1961 is now 7 years old! After a two-year search for the nearly perfect minister, Epiphany has called the Reverend Peter Boullata as senior minister. Peter started his ministry in September.

Even though the congregation has gone two years without a minister, we remain the same size congregation as when the process started in 2001. Last year, in fact, the congregation grew by over 10%! We are hopeful that in the upcoming year, we will grow even more.

This year, we are offering a complete Religious Education program for the first time, with programs for all ages from infant to teens. We have also launched a building campaign, and have raised nearly \$40,000 so far toward the purchase of land.

The first Epiphany church has proved that new, viable UU Christian churches are possible. Furthermore, we have discovered that UU Christianity can attract people to UUism that would never otherwise consider our denomination as a religious option (2/3 of Epiphany's membership, for example, are people new to UUism).

But our ultimate dream was that Epiphany would be just the first of many. Too long, that has not been the case. In the last year, however, a number of promising new starts have appeared. The Magi Network now has the opportunity to nurture not just one new UU Christian

congregation, but many!!!

(read on ...)

Epiphany Church, Owasso, OK .. Rev. Ron Robinson

The new Epiphany Church is located in the Tulsa, Oklahoma area (currently meeting in its own space in the fast-growing suburb of Owasso). I am the church planter. You can learn more about the church's mission, vision, and values and keep up with its new church start activities and philosophy and worship and sermons through its webpage at www.epiphanyspirit.org.

The mission is simple and comes before all else—to transform the lives of people and communities through God's loving and liberating Spirit. The covenant recited in worship each week is this: In the light of truth, and the spirit of Jesus, we worship God and serve Freedom in the world.

The mission of the Magi Network is to ensure that everyone whose life would benefit from the practice of UU Christianity has access to and room in a nearby congregation

The non-creedal affirmation also recited in worship is the Greatest Commandment: To love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our energy, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The vision is to create a church based on progressive, inclusive Christianity and permission-giving ministry teams, one whose aim from the beginning is to plant other

churches as part of its reason for being, its spiritually healthy DNA. The values are to uphold the freedom of the pulpit and freedom of the pew.

Epiphany is following a natural church plant development cycle. Beginning on Epiphany Sunday last January it began a conception phase of planning and prayer and initial public outreach. It is now in its pre-natal development phase, meeting weekly in worship and outreach, sharing spiritual passions and forming relationships. So far more than 60 people, adults and children, have attended at least one of the weekly events. Its focus now and during the rest of this phase is on leadership development, need-oriented evangelism, and beginning to multiply small groups. This will all lead up to a planned Birth event next year.

Here is the church plant need list --

Prayers. Money. Mission Teams of individuals and from churches to come to Tulsa to support and work growing the new Epiphany. And More Prayers.

Every \$1,000 pays for a month's rent at their 2,000 square foot meeting space. For \$6,000 you can pay for their rent through their planned development phase.

Every \$500 pays for advertising in one of the area publications or for other promotional material for their upcoming Holiday Outreach Period. \$5,000 pays for a full-blown multi-media outreach.

Every \$250 pays for a month of musical support during worship. \$4,000 pays for launching their Sunday Evening "Common Ground Cafe" coffeehouse outreach.

Every \$100 pays for equipment for children's ministry or child care.
\$3,000 pays for part-time children and youth ministry staff.

Every \$50 pays for office supplies.
\$2,000 pays for part-time administrative support.

Please consider this call of mission in prayerful discernment as part of your own spiritual deepening and your connection with our ultimate call to spread the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ. Not only is the new Epiphany at a crossroads, but so is our world. Emerging times require emerging churches, and it is long past time for our faith to emerge again.

Ron can be reached at
RevRonRobinson@aol.com
or 918-274-0105.

The church's address is Epiphany Church, 11330 N. Garnett Rd, Owasso, OK 74055.

Thank you. And may you know what a blessing you are in life, to life, and that you are a part of the One who holds all souls in love and freedom.

P.S

The name Epiphany was chosen for several significant reasons: 1.) it has both spiritual and secular understandings which is important in our unchurched culture; 2.) epiphanies are part of a person's journey of transformation and that is key to the church's purpose; 3.) the holy day of Epiphany tells the story of our human search for truth and illumination and how we find it in unlikely places and people, particularly in the life and spirit of Jesus, and this is a path particularly relevant within Unitarian Universalists today; 4.) it connects the new church to the Magi founding church, Epiphany of Fenton, Michigan, and to our church-planting movement; and 5), it is a cool word that makes people stop and dwell on it and name the epiphanies of their lives. May you have such an Epiphany about Epiphany!

Faith Congregation, St. Petersburg, FL.

... Rev. Dee Graham

This start-up congregation currently has 10 – 20 people meeting on Friday evenings. The organizing minister, the Reverend Dee Graham, says of this congregation:

"I want to witness with you the soul-fire alive in Florida. Your (Magi) encouragement will bring hope into active ministry, and the reality of journeying with our greater Christian community with the assurance that we, too, are UUs, liberal religious people who can share communion AND community. Your support means ever so much. So far we aren't meeting regularly only because of space needs. Our size is probably more than 10 but less than 20. With real meeting space, I know we would blossom, more than doubling that in the first few months. What I want you to know is that I know there is a Christ-force working in this ministry at this time. My personal burdens (especially financial) hold me back, but the draw of the spirit and the opportunities presenting themselves affirm that Faith Congregation can, indeed, manifest with a new Christian ministry."

For more information, contact:

The Reverend Dee Graham
3600 - 56th Avenue North
Saint Petersburg, FL 33714
Study Voice/fax: 727-522-3907

Pilgrimage Uniting Church, Central Indiana

There is yet another new UU Christian church being planned for Central Indiana – Pilgrimage Uniting Church. A core group of organizers have been working toward the goal of launching this third new UU Christian start in 2005. More details to follow in the months ahead.

UU Christian Retreat .. Rev. Ron Robinson

On February 27, 2003, at Universalist National Memorial church in Washington, D.C the board members of the three organizations making up UU Chistendom – the UU Christian Fellowship, the Council of Christian Churches Within the UUA, and the Magi Network – met together to discuss their organizations and how we could all work more closely together.

Larry Peers, former head of the Extension Department at the UUA, was the facilitator, leading us in a telling of each organization's founding stories, and presenting the results of the pre-retreat survey where we looked at each others SWOT's (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). We then went through an exercise about how the different boards might work together on a single project. The one selected is on a common UU Christian website which would be up to date technologically.

There was a lot of talk about our strengths and the changes in the UU Christian movement, and how we are doing good things. There was a feeling of discouragement, however, that we all have so many great plans and ideas (that, a vision, never being a problem!) but so little gets done because of either perfectionism, revolving leadership or volunteer burn-out.