



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Miguel de Allende

ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE

The following document has been prepared by the Envisioning Our Future Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Miguel de Allende (UUFSSMA) in November 2020 as a potential guide for considering and designing future projects and programs. Final choices and timelines will be decided by the UUFSSMA Board, guided by the input and enthusiasm of the membership. Our charge has been to dream big and to share those dreams with the UUFSSMA Board... and we have not hesitated to do just that!

We dream that the UUFSSMA can become a renowned center for liberal religion and social justice, while supporting our members' spiritual and community needs, connecting deeply with our local Mexican neighbors, providing significant support and volunteerism to local NGOs, and using the international language of music to help establish a truly multicultural arts center. All these dreams are founded in the seven UU Principles, our own UUFSSMA Covenant, and our commitment to continuing as a lay-led Fellowship.

The document is divided into two main sections: Timeline and Structural Needs.

The Timeline organizes the proposed projects into the following categories: Programs that should continue or begin now, programs that could be developed within 2-3 years, programs that could be developed within 4-6 years, and programs that could be developed in the future (7 and more years from now).

The Structural Needs section of the document delineates what the staff, facility, and tech needs might be if these programs were to be created and implemented.

UUFSSMA Envisioning Our Future Committee

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Timeline

Although the below specific timeframes are proposed, committees and individuals within the Fellowship can of course explore projects in earlier time periods, as opportunities present themselves.

Continuing Programs

Members' Needs: Creating, Deepening, and Sustaining Community Connections

In response to previous input from members, we wish to continue and expand all efforts to sustain and create opportunities for connection and deepening of community. These include small group discussions, circle cenas and other community meals, affinity groups, and spiritual practice groups, plus the future launch of other connections, including a small group ministry program. These all can be both virtual and/or in-person.

We recommend continuing to reach out to those members who need support and care, both by the UUFSMA Care Team and Minister.

Social Action Program

We wish to continue to provide the highly successful support to carefully vetted non-profits located in San Miguel in the form of grants, volunteer pools, holiday events, and other ways of support that the Social Action Committee determines to provide.

Strengthen our Engagement with Newcomers

We prioritize developing a robust effort of greeting and welcoming friends to Sunday services and all our UUF activities.

Family and Ability-Inclusive Programming

It is critical to the future of the Fellowship that we become a place where the joy of intergenerational connection can be experienced and where children and young families feel at home. The creation of a Religious Education program has been a start.

On the other end of the time spectrum is care and accommodations for the aging, including welcoming the infirmed and disabled. (For example, the Hotel Aldea's facilities are structurally insufficient to accommodate mobility-challenged people.)

Welcoming Community for LGBTQ

This program has launched and will include small group gatherings, services, and education and offers assistance and support to the LGBTQ local community, with a specific welcome to Mexican and all LGBTQ individuals.

Anti-Racist and Multicultural Programming and Education

We recommend continuing to incorporate this perspective in our worship and all UUFSMA activities and social life.

UUFSMA Awareness in SMA

As a way to expand the UUFSMA and build greater awareness in the community about UU values, services, and events, we would aggressively develop present publicity outlets. This could include expanding the current email list, more articles in Atención and seeking publications, plus more posts on social media to groups, schools, and even other fellowships in Mexico.

For Immediate Consideration

Committee on Ministry

We affirm and acknowledge the need for professional ministry in the UUFSMA. Our recommendation is to establish a Committee on Ministry, to design ways to meet that need, including the proposed Minister Residency Program mentioned below, and address issues of fair compensation, housing, and health care, for our minister and for any consulting ministers in residence. The Committee would also begin to address a plan for ministerial succession.

Minister Residency Program

We recommend establishment of a Minister Residency Program to attract a consulting minister to work with Rev. Tom Rosiello for a period of 6 months – 2 years. Possible expertise areas of such a consulting minister would include children's religious education, small group ministry, Sunday service planning, pastoral care, adult education, and community work ... plus other talents to support organizational growth. Desirable qualities of a consulting minister might ideally include bilingual and bicultural experience.

Exploration of Congregational Development Grants

These are available through the UUA and private sources and should be thoroughly explored.

Prioritize Reducing our Carbon Footprint on the Planet

We recommend programming and activities which focus on reducing our carbon footprint. This includes thinking green when designing any new activities and to seriously consider, for example, launching a recycling service/center for San Miguel and our members.

Development of UUFSMA Archival System

We feel it important to capture our history and record our progress toward the future and recommend the Board appoint someone to steward this.

Within 2-3 years

Bilingual Multicultural Communication

The goal would be to have simultaneous translation for all spoken and written communication. This would include the need for equipment and/or the services of a professional translator and online/computer translation services, as well as additional staff time and extra time for worship prep by the minister and service participants.

This translation service would go both directions: the speaker could speak in English and it would be translated to Spanish or the speaker could speak in Spanish, which would be translated to English. Using multiple languages in some parts of worship and providing written translations to read along during the sermon could also be employed.

Network with Other UUs and Liberal/Inclusive Religious Organizations Here and Internationally

This includes establishing more contacts with other UU groups (and Liberal/Inclusive Religious Organizations) in Mexico, the US and Canada, by virtual meetings initially. Topics of interest might be sharing tech knowledge (virtual services), finances, administration, outreach, social justice, interconnectedness, plus creating partnerships with Canadian and US congregations. We could organize and host an in-person conference in SMA for UUs and other progressive organizations guided by similar values.

Social Action Educational Residency Program

The Social Action/Residency/Cultural Exchange Program envisions offering to individuals and groups (families, youth, single adults) from the US and Canada an opportunity to live, learn and participate in the hands-on social action projects with members of the UUFSSMA and one or more of the local NGO's serving our Mexican neighbors, migrants and persons who have been deported. The program will explore offering housing options with local Mexican families, with members of the UUFSSMA, or in local guest houses. The program may offer structured courses on Mexican culture, history, language, crafts, food/cooking as well as visits to near-by historic and cultural sites. Local Mexican citizens and university students will be engaged to offer guidance, teaching experiences and to participate in and help with these activities.

Intercultural Musical Arts Program

This program aspires to establish a local, then national and later international, multicultural musical arts - choral & instrumental - program, to be affiliated with the UUFSSMA. A bicultural, bilingual choral program (children's choir, youth choir, adult choir) would be Stage I of the program, yielding performances at Sunday services and annual public fundraising concerts. Any Musical Arts Programs could be combined with a social action and Spanish language program for a richer cultural experience.

Within 4-6 years

Establishing a Ministry Succession Plan

After the activation of a Committee on Ministry and the successful launch of the Minister Residency Program, the UUFSSMA would be well positioned for Stage II - to plan for the succession of the Fellowship's principal Minister.

Social Action Educational Residency Program – Stage II

In Stage II of this program development, one goal would be to offer an opportunity to our Mexican participants to visit the US or Canada on a reverse exchange experience, providing the UUFSSMA is able to enlist the support of UU Congregations north of the border. Financial assistance should be available to support these reverse exchanges.

Intercultural Musical Arts Program – Stage II

Stage II would be expansion of the choral program to a National (MX) Choral Camp (residential), including weeks rehearsing, culminating in public concerts.

7+ years from now

UUFSSMA Senior Co-Housing

This co-housing for our members would be senior-only and designed to support specific seniors' needs, possibly including transportation, meals, exercise classes, all enhancing a sense of community and an ongoing connection to the UU Fellowship.

UUFSSMA Intergenerational Living Collective

In light of the urgency of the global climate crisis demonstrating that the individualized family structure is increasingly unsustainable, we propose an intergenerational plan which focuses on an alternative "extended family" lifestyle while still maintaining a sense of privacy. It would offer all ages the benefits of other ages and strives for a more ecologically balanced way of life. An intergenerational community would offer deep relationships to families and individuals of all ages. Common areas might include a facility for sharing meals, a gym/spa, children's play space, gardens, and shared electric vehicles. This community could pursue such projects as organic horticulture, water catchment systems, and renewable energy.

Intercultural Musical Arts Program – Stage III

Stage III would expand the choral program to an international residential camp of coaching and concerts, featuring singers from MX/US/CA.

Stage III can also launch instrumental programs. Examples include a Brass Camp for teens and adults, focusing on brass repertoire for chamber and large ensembles. Another option is a Guitar Camp for teens and adults. Instrumentation would be driven by the availability of artistic leadership.

Structural Needs

Personnel

Ministry

- Minister Residency Program – consulting minister for 6 months – 2 years, to work in collaboration with Rev. Tom Rosiello
- Minister successor to Rev. Tom Rosiello

Other Staff (paid or volunteer)

- Sunday Service Manager
(to coordinate and produce all aspects of virtual and in-person Sunday services. Full-time)
- Visual Recording Engineer
(to oversee all video aspects of virtual services and work closely with Audio Engineer)
- Music Director
(to serve as Choral Conductor of Musical Arts Program and artistically guide the project)
- Communications Coordinator
(to considerably expand UUF visibility in SMA, MX, US & CA and produce all publicity)
- Administrator – (FT position)
(to assist Board/Minister/all Committees/all new Residency Programs when launching & expanding, also to act as liaison with Hotel Aldea)
- Social Action Residency Coordinator + assisting staff as expanding
(to coordinate and oversee the launch and running of this program)

- Musical Arts Residency Coordinator + assisting staff as expanding (to coordinate and oversee the launch and running of this program)
- Translation Coordinator to oversee the translation of Sunday services (and other meetings) in real time

Facilities

Acquire Expanded & Dedicated Space

UUFSSMA should consider acquiring a larger space for these envisioned plans, particularly as the Fellowship grows in terms of membership size and scope of activities.

- Space for Worship Services
- Office space for Ministerial appointments
- Office space for Staff
- Music Rehearsals
- Religious Education Programming
- Children's Programming
- Space for committee meetings and small group meetings
- Living Collective (Intergenerational housing)
- Senior Co-Housing
- Seminars/Conferences/Hosting of UU network events, and possible Conference Center for public (if subject matters are consistent with UU values)
- Community Coffee House for social and artistic events/concerts/lecture series
- Organic Gardening
- Space possibly available to other organizations which share our UU principles

Tech Needs

- Translation software and headset equipment for bilingual services
- Purchase of cameras for virtual services, additional microphones, mixer, and equipment stands for year-round broadcasting and recording of live Sunday services
- Purchase of choral music, as advised by Music Director, for Intercultural Musical Arts Program