

OPERATION: "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS"

1-on-1 INTERACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL UNITARIANS

Background

In these troubling times, we believe that many in this world (and, specifically, our community of the Greater Toronto Area) would find meaning, vitalization and support in Unitarian Universalism: in its insights, its values, and its congregations.

Our greatest challenge to growth is that many people do not know that we even *exist*, either as a valid faith choice or as a religious community.

As radical freethinkers, we are typically vehemently opposed to aggressive proselytizing: borne out of our respect for each person's right to develop and pursue their own personal belief system. Yet research continues to show that the most successful method of attracting new members is for these "prospects" to be approached by an existing member.

Consequently, this makes each one of us a lean, mean marketing machine!

Our one-on-one "encounters" with prospective Unitarians can be at a variety of venues: over the garden fence; at dinner or cocktail parties; in the workplace; or at a public event. We may know the person well; we may have just met them.

For our purposes, we may define a SUCCESSFUL ENCOUNTER as one in which the prospect has learned enough about UUism to either discount it or have sufficient motivation to find out more (by visiting the CUC or a congregational web site, or attending a Sunday Service or other congregational event).

What do we need to make our "Close Encounters" more successful?

- Snazzy brochures?
- An eye-catching display/booth?
- More videos?
- More training for our people?

What are the "right tools" for the job? How will our people use them? And how do we ensure that everything works together to create a **cohesive and consistent image**?

This is the purpose of **Operation: Close Encounters!** - to answer these important questions.

Phase I of Operation: Close Encounters will be **research & planning**, and will:

- Identify our current experiences, strengths and weaknesses in 1:1 interactions;
- Identify the areas where we want to focus on getting improved results;
- Identify the resources, tools, etc. that we will need;
- Develop preliminary delivery plans, budgets and timeframes; and
- Recommend a process for congregational participation, approval and financing.

Phase II of the project will be the **execution** of the above plan.