



UNIVERSITY CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

September 2007

Dear UCUCC Members and Friends,

Greetings to you in this season of new beginnings, as we enter the fall, begin a new program year, and move from the interim period of work and discernment.

The church council and leadership staff are excited about the information, challenges and opportunities that await us. Together we are committed to following up on the reports and recommendations from the interim period, and finding ways to be even more faithful and intentional as a congregation with all that God is calling us to do and to be.

Please join us for lunch and conversation **after worship** on **Sunday October 7**. We will share with you some of the impetus for our proposed vision statement “taking Love to hard places.” We’ll have an opportunity for reflection, feedback, and dreaming together.

*taking Love  
to hard places*

As the leadership staff, we join the church council in our commitment to learn, understand and grow from the interim time, and to find ways to respond to the recommendations that have come from that time. Enclosed is a summary of the recommendations and some background information about them. Additional information is available if you are interested: you are welcome to pick up a full report in the church office, or to download the sections that interest you from the link on the home page of the church’s web site: [www.universityucc.org](http://www.universityucc.org).

We look forward to the chances to share and move together these next months. We also look forward to Catherine Foote’s return from sabbatical on November 4 and her joining us in this work. We trust and believe that God is alive, moving and re-creating among us!

Blessings to you,

Your leadership staff

David Anderson

Don Mackenzie

Peter Ilgenfritz



## **Summary of Recommendations from the Interim Period, 2006-2007 September 2007**

The interim period began with the resignation of the Rev. Dave Shull in January 2006. Since that time we have been in a period of work and discernment. We are excited to share with you these recommendations from the reports of the interim period.

The first set of recommendations is from the interim advisory committee's (IAC) report to the church council. The church council adopted these recommendations at its August 2007 meeting. The second set of recommendations comes from interim minister George Meier. You will notice the connection, confluence, and overlap of recommendations. George Meier worked intensively with the IAC in the last year. George also worked intensively with the council and the leadership staff, and the common themes of the recommendations reflect that time with each.

There is a significant amount of additional information from the interim period available that will explain further some of the reasons for undertaking a time of intentional interim work, activities of the period, and insights and recommendations about our congregation and the ways that God might be calling us. You are welcome to pick up a full report in the church office, or to download the sections that interest you from the link on the home page of the church's web site:  
[www.universityucc.org](http://www.universityucc.org).

The church council and leadership staff are committed to following up on these reports and recommendations, and to finding ways to be even more faithful and intentional as a congregation with all that God is calling us to do and to be. Thank you for your interest, and blessings to you in the reading and understanding of this time and in the sharing of what lies ahead.

### **Interim Advisory Committee Recommendations to Church Council**

In concluding our term and charge, and based upon the substantial work conducted in the above noted interim activities, the IAC makes the following recommendations to the Church Council for consideration and action:

1. **Identity Statement:** Utilize and take seriously this unvarnished reflection of who we are as an important framework for building on our strengths and addressing areas that need healing or change, making use of the data and concerns gathered during this extensive internal process. Further, we recommend that Council direct the Communications Board to develop a short, concise identity statement for external use that can be posted on our website and other places to reflect the work we have accomplished over the past year.
2. **Vision:** Try out the Leadership Team's proposed Vision Statement (or a revision of it) joyfully in the coming months. We encourage the Leadership Team to engage the congregation in explaining it, testing its congruence with our Covenant and in places where people feel passion about the work of the church and the needs of our faith community. See how it fits for older

members, youth, families, and for both individual and corporate faith journeys. From the IAC's informal and rich discussions with more than 20 members we propose consideration of this revised phrase: **“Being God’s Love in Hard Places.”**

3. Staffing / Clergy Position\*: We recommend a fourth clergy not be called to serve University Congregational United Church of Christ at this time, and that the Leadership Team be comprised of the three ministers and a church administrator. We recommend the Council charge the Leadership Team with developing a clear description and rationale for this team model that provides strong, coordinated, and passionate leadership, making sure the congregation fully understands this model and how responsibilities are assigned.
4. Team Ministry\*: Keep team ministry strong. Build on the leadership development work by Interim Minister George Meier, ensuring opportunities for leadership development for both clergy and lay staff. Additional staffing changes proposed by the Long Term Staffing Task Force should be considered within the context of this revised team leadership model, ensuring that such changes make more effective use of the gifts of the Leadership Team and lay staff.
5. Church Growth: Focus on Church growth given our internal and external realities. Use the tools from the interim process to strengthen and clarify ways to more fully support our existing members and attract others in the community who are seeking a progressive, nurturing faith community.
6. Governance: Streamline governance within the church to use the talents and energy of staff and lay volunteers more effectively. Institute periodic assessment opportunities to ensure we are maintaining a balance of spiritual and material needs.
7. Priorities: Council should review our current priorities (2004 - 2009), reporting on what we have accomplished and what remains to be done. Ensure that current and future priorities are consistent with our adopted Vision and provide clear direction to staff and lay leadership.
8. Interim Time: Formally end the interim time and move forward with energy and joy as we engage in developing and testing a strong vision for the future.

*\* The IAC recognizes that the configuration of the team ministry and the team ministry itself may change in the future in response to vision, opportunities, and needs. Our recommendations are based on where we believe UCUC is at this point in time and where our vision may take us in the foreseeable future.*

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

University Congregational United Church of Christ has a long history as a progressive, caring Christian community of faith and action. We firmly believe this deeply rooted tradition will continue and that UCUC has the opportunity and capacity to play an even more vital role in healing the wounds – and spreading the joy - of a troubled and beautiful world.

Achieving this potential requires our willingness to change when called to do so through our own self-analysis and environmental changes. It requires a commitment to on-going and effective monitoring of the church's spiritual, organizational, and financial health. And most importantly, it requires us to be faithful to God's will for our church and to act upon the call we hear.

Change is often difficult and can be perceived as harmful and dangerous by some who may find comfort in the status quo. The required changes must be lovingly effected. The 115-year history of UCUC and long history of our denomination show that we are fully capable of embracing the important changes that keep us vital and at the forefront of where Christendom should be.

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## **Excerpt from Interim Ministry Final Report George Meier, Interim Minister**

### **Summary of Recommendations**

1. Celebrate the lay and clergy leadership provided over the past 15 years as what was needed for the church's well being. Proclaim recognition for a new day as to church leadership.
2. Develop a visioning strategy for the fall that enables the congregation to own and have passion for a vision, so that the vision will be sustained through any further changes in the Leadership Team. As part of this process, help members and friends imagine what the church and surrounding community will look like as a result of living the vision.
3. Test any vision or plan to implement that vision against the Internal Identity Statement. Expect change to produce active and passive resistance.
4. Intentional work should be continued to stay in touch with congregational realities as understood by members, those on the fringe, and those in the community. A small motivated task group should work with the Leadership Team to assess regularly environmental realities. For the next five years, it's suggested the Leadership Retreat acquaint leaders with the Internal Identity Statement and its implications in relation to the church's vision.
5. Consider an open, flexible way of doing strategic planning. Church Consultant, Tom Bandy, refers to planning as ministry mapping. Think of mapping like setting the contours or sides to a sandbox. Within a strategically mapped sand box, let creative Godly play reign. Help members and friends catch excitement for being changed, gifted, called, equipped and sent.
6. There is a golden sandbox rule. Keep your sand play in the sandbox. Meaning, the contour or sandbox sides set the appropriate broad boundaries for the work and life of the church. Members and friends have plenty of room to respond to God's call, but stay connected by keeping their ministry and mission inside the boundaries shaped by the church's vision.
7. Develop a membership strategy and approaches to worship that are clearly connected to and fed by the vision.
8. The church is currently at a transitional size, between a mid and large sized congregation. This suggests that the size issue should be evaluated over time in relation to where a vision might lead UCUC.

9. Current and future lay leaders need to be supported in discovering, practicing and honing their transformation gifts so that they will find a better balance between managerial and transformational lay leadership.
10. Continue developing the lay and clergy practices undertaken to make space for the interim process and leadership issues. Anchor the practices in the church's culture.
11. Leverage the way boards and clergy relate so as to empower the boards and free clergy for more transformational leadership.
12. Eliminate the Head of Staff Clergy Role as it currently functions. Redistribute the functions as suggested by the Leadership Team. Make clear the authority and responsibility of the Leadership Team at the Council level. Evaluate and make suggestions at evaluation time, but resist, as an ordinary matter, "managing" the Leadership Team.
13. Establish and support an effective Pastor Parish Committee.
14. Charge the Church Council with the central, direct role in evaluating the Leadership Team. Include evaluation criteria consistent with the chosen governance structure of the church, agreed upon authority and responsibility, and the leadership and management characteristics critical to the future of the church.
15. UCUC should live into the team model for the next three years, as clarified and defined. In three years, the lay leadership and the Leadership Team should do an evaluation of team ministry. Lay leaders and the Leadership Team may also want to anticipate the impact of changes to the team on the church and on the nature of team ministry. A very small group (three people maximum) might be established to anticipate and work confidentially on transition issues. I see these as substantive Executive Committee and Leadership Team matters and not human resource or personnel policy issues. The First Unitarian Church in Portland has such a team in place.
16. When collaboration is expected, be clear that all parties to the issue are collaborating.
17. Both the Leadership Team and lay leadership should work to resolve issues of authority, responsibility and church governance. Consider the governance model implemented by First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, its grievance procedure, and its method for evaluating the leadership team.

Finally, let lay and clergy saints of the past rest with Moses and Elijah in a booth at the top of the mountain in the presence of God. To all those who remain in the church, come down the mountain to be the radical message of Jesus that's needed today. Jesus is not on the mountain with Moses and Elijah. He is alive, casting out the demons of injustice and oppression in the valleys below. He beckons. Come and follow!

Blessings,

George  
Ps. It's all good!