



October 30, 2009

Dear Members of the Board of the University District Ecumenical Campus Coalition,

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, and from our Savior Jesus Christ. We have been on a challenging and faithful discernment process together. We are grateful to each of the congregations, to each of you, and to UDECC as an organization, for walking with us as we have sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church Council of University Congregational United Church of Christ (“UCUCC”) would like to take this opportunity to respond to your request for permission to conduct a feasibility study on our “Lot C” and “Gold House” properties. We have spent several months in discernment and dialogue, culminating in an advisory vote from our congregation on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. Since that time, we have taken time to prayerfully consider the meaning of that advisory vote and the most faithful way to respond to your request. For your reference, the principles which guided our discernment, the specifics of the resolution passed by the congregation, and the results of our congregation’s advisory vote are enclosed with this letter.

Based on the very close advisory vote and the feedback the Council has received from the Task Force leading us in the process as they have engaged in extensive dialogue with the congregation and with UDECC, our response to your request is this: “Yes, with parameters”. The parameters are noted below. Specifically, our parameters concern the importance of dialogue regarding meaningful ecumenical partnerships, the timeline for the feasibility study and subsequent decision-making among the churches, matters related to parking availability, access and revenue, noting our playground as an exclusion to the study, depth of financial and risk analysis, a “fatal flaw” analysis in the first stage of the feasibility study, and a statement of several factors that would greatly influence our ultimate interest in the project at hand. Please allow us to elaborate:

1. **Meaningful Ecumenical Partnership:** The common life envisioned by UDECC is much greater than that of being tenants-in-common. It suggests a vital, collaborative relationship among the ministries associated with UDECC. We require and will take an active role in a substantial dialogue – moving in parallel with the feasibility study – regarding the nature of our current and potential (or future) ecumenical relationships above, beyond and separate from a building.
2. **Timeline:** We believe that a thorough feasibility study may not be able to be completed within the three-month period we have heard described. We suggest that the process be extended up to six months. More importantly, we believe the congregations involved will need more than twelve weeks to respond to the findings of the study. We would not be able to arrive at a faithful decision in less than six months, and possibly up to nine months after the feasibility study is completed.
3. **Parking:** The feasibility study should proceed with the assumption that UCUCC requires control of, access to, and revenue from parking equal to or greater than the status quo.
4. **Footprint:** The feasibility study should assume no use of the existing playground at the North end of our property.

5. **Financial & Risk Analysis:** We are concerned about financial risk exposure, for UCUCC and for all members of UDECC. Accordingly, we will place significant weight on the potential of risk exposure on all decisions (regarding either the feasibility study or the proposed project, itself). We expect the feasibility study to include a thorough and detailed analysis (including revenue modeling, cash flow forecasting, risk analysis, proposed sources of financing, and need for interim financing) for a realistic range of project sizes.
6. **Fatal Flaw Analysis:** Out of concern for the interests of all parties involved, we will require the feasibility study to identify and treat, in the earliest stage, any issues that could ultimately become “deal breakers” for any of the UDECC member organizations. We expect to be actively involved in this part (and all parts) of the feasibility study.
7. **UCUCC Priorities:** The likelihood that UCUCC would eventually come to support the ultimate project will be directly related to the degree that the following concerns are satisfactorily addressed:
  - A. We expect a large component of the project to be for social justice, social service, subsidized day care and low-income housing (noting that low-income housing is more likely to be developed on other UDECC church properties, but a direct byproduct and part of the larger vision of this initiative)
  - B. Sensitivity to interfaith hospitality in building design, together with a commitment to programming that would foster interfaith dialogue and relationships
  - C. Commitment to advancing multi-racial and multi-ethnic relationships and programs
  - D. Clear and reasonable articulation of the proposed model of governance
  - E. Architectural design that will enhance both the neighborhood and the UCUCC building, including attention to light and open space

We believe this important work is about much more than a study of a particular facility proposal. We know, as do you, that the Church is much more than any building and, in fact, can exist without a building. We also affirm the process offered by our leadership staff team for our next steps. A copy of their letter to our congregation is included here.

We want you to know that we take seriously our ecumenical commitments and the relationships we have together. We take this so seriously that we chose to share with you the concerns that are deep in our hearts, that these concerns might better help and inform all of UDECC as we explore and consider together the significant questions and opportunities before us. We want to be clear that the risk for this process and project now shifts back to UDECC, and that we will continue to actively participate in this organization.

We look forward to growing in ecumenical partnership: with this work, and in any other ministry or program that may compel and call us. Thank you for your careful and thoughtful process thus far, and for the opportunity to continue to be faithful people in this time and place.

Faithfully,  
Leadership of University Congregational United Church of Christ:

Christian Halstead  
Asst. Moderator

Marty Curry  
UDECC Representative & Chair,  
UDECC Response Task Force

Catherine Foote  
Leadership Staff Liaison  
to UDECC Response Task Force

Enclosures: • Document containing guiding principles for UCUCC’s discernment, the question moved for the congregational advisory vote, and the results of that vote.  
• Pastoral letter from UCUCC leadership to the congregation

cc: Congregation of University Congregational United Church of Christ



## University Congregational United Church of Christ Response to UDECC Request

The guiding principles for our own congregation's discernment were these:

### *Our shared discernment...*

- ... will demonstrate faithful, prudent stewardship of our resources.
- ... will be inclusive, strengthening our community and not depleting it.
- ... will be grounded in our faith, vision and values, as well as our understanding of the church in the 21st century.
- ... will foster meaningful, collaborative partnerships, both ecumenical and interfaith.

*We understand that faithful discernment in other congregations may lead to different outcomes among or between us. We honor and celebrate those differences.*

The question moved for the congregational advisory vote:

**The University District Ecumenical Campus Coalition (“UDECC”) requests permission from University Congregational United Church of Christ (“UCUCC”) to conduct a feasibility study (to include economic, financial, zoning, and architectural components) of UCUCC’s “Lot C” and “Gold House” properties. The purpose of the study would be to assess the feasibility of developing this lot for collaborative use by several neighborhood Protestant churches, churches that describe themselves as progressive, open and affirming, and as having similar values on matters of social justice and environmental concerns.**

By this request, UDECC specifically ***is not*** requesting the following:

- a commitment to fund the study
- a commitment to sell and/or donate “Lot C” and the Gold House based on the results of the study
- any implied consent to follow the recommendations of the study

By this request, UDECC specifically ***is*** requesting the following:

- a commitment to actively participate in the study effort, including participation in the work of UDECC committees
- a commitment to conduct, concurrent with the other UDECC member organizations, a process to receive and examine the completed study, concluding in a UCUCC decision on further participation beyond the feasibility study

UDECC understands that UCUCC – together with all UDECC member organizations – will make an independent decision, at the conclusion of the feasibility study, regarding the matter of whether to participate in the actual development of the proposed Ecumenical Campus project.

The vote was the following:

YES 96

NO 84

Abstain 3



October 27, 2009

Dear Congregation,

Thank you. Thank you for being a congregation that can have deep conversations. Thank you for being a congregation that cares. Thank you for being a community where people can disagree and still know they are loved. For the last five months our congregation has been in a discernment process, considering a request from the University District Ecumenical Campus Coalition (UDECC) to conduct a feasibility study (to include economic, financial, zoning, and architectural components) of our Parking Lot C and Gold House properties (on the corner of 45<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>) for potential use as a site for several University churches who are exploring the possibility of co-locating within one building. We are writing to report to you the results of that discernment, and to outline our next steps in response to what we have learned.

We begin with gratitude to all who have led us in this time. Thank you Marty Curry, who chaired the Task Force that guided our discernment process, and thank you task force members: Bob Bingham, John Coleman, Tim Croll, John Lewis, Don Mallett, Mary Elizabeth Maltman, Mary Paananen, Kathryn Robinson, Arlene Strong, Valerie Thiel, and Patty Whistler, with Catherine Foote as the Leadership Team Liaison. Thank you Peter Drury of DZO Strategists, our congregation's consultant in this process. Thank you Kathy Kripps, our church moderator, for your excellent leadership throughout. And thank you again, congregation, for being faithful to this process.

At the congregational meeting last Sunday we voted 96 to 84 (with 3 abstentions) to advise our church council to allow the feasibility study. On Monday night the church council met to receive the advisory vote of the congregation, as well as the report of the task force. At that meeting, the council outlined a letter to the UDECC Board, which grants permission for a feasibility study and sets out clear parameters for that study based on all that we have learned over the last several months. Those parameters include ways we as a congregation will inform any project, based on our vision, values, and understanding of what it means to be church. It includes a report of significant concerns our congregation has about this project as it relates to our ministry (including justice and social action, interfaith work, ecumenical vitality, strong communication, timing of next steps, and the future of our congregation) and about wise stewardship of our current facility and property (including financial stability, parking and traffic issues, property values and building and community enhancement). That letter will be sent to the UDECC Board and to you as soon as it has been finalized.

After the UDECC Board receives the letter from the church council, they will decide whether or not to pursue the feasibility study. Should that be their choice, this congregation will have some significant work ahead to prepare to participate in the study, and to respond to its results.

As leaders of this faithful congregation, there are things we know about what it means to be a vital, energized church, and things we have learned about ourselves in the last several years of work together. In addition, there is work we already know we are called to as a congregation. We want to be sure this work remains a focus in any conversation with our ecumenical partners. We offer you these observations and priorities here so that we might all move forward together. In the end, we expect that we will be a stronger church for taking this journey.

In our next steps together, we begin with who we are as a faith community. Our vision as a church is to "imagine love and justice" in a way that is Jesus-centered and radically welcoming. Our wide open and informed imagination about what it means to be church and about the love and justice needs in the University district will always be our starting point. In this case, that means letting go of assumptions about buildings until we fully understand what shapes the need for a building. Any compelling project utilizing our property on the corner of 45<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> will be grounded in our vision.

Secondly, we will take the time we need to explore the vitality of our ecumenical connections with the U district churches. We have seen some signs of what might be possible to do together, for example, the social services now offered co-operatively by churches in the U district, such as food, financial help, and shelter, as well as the new and energizing University District Conversations on Homelessness. But the real substance of our partnerships has not developed sufficiently to inform us regarding building needs. We must understand the shape of future meaningful, collaborative ecumenical work in the University District before we build something together.

A third major issue we are clear about is of the role of social service agencies in the church's work. We must make room for a justice ministry that incorporates the good work of the Justice and Social Action Task Force report of last spring. From that starting point of faith we must clarify our support of and relationship with social service agencies before we finalize a plan that presumes those relationships. We also know that our faith journey is both an inward one of deepening relationship with God, and an outer one of expressing God's compassion for all of creation. Our work will support both of those aspects of our growing faith.

We believe that faithful, prudent stewardship begins with our sense of mission and ministry, and also carries us into the future. As we move forward, we will strengthen the ways the younger voices in our congregation are engaged, and make sure all voices are heard in any plans for a church beyond our own time here. Our Family Friendliness Task Force has given us some important direction regarding the ways we bring everyone to the table for worship, Christian formation, and outreach. So we will continue to ask, "What kind of faith community do we envision ten, twenty, or fifty years from now and what kind of resources will we need then?" We will use our resources in this congregation in a way that shapes a sustainable project, both for our faith community, and for the future of our planet. That means our ecumenical conversations must ask both "What do the churches need?", and "What might the University district need that the churches could offer?" That means we will put a priority on developing an agile and dynamic network of relationships and resources rather than simply building another building.

Being a large, progressive church presence in the University District is not necessarily about having a larger church, or even being a large, co-located collection of faith communities. Moving forward on a feasibility study with UDECC means we will work to build an ecumenical plan that will reflect an imagination that goes beyond "bigger building." In addition, because of our compelling visions of some vital needs of our world, we will include a genuinely collaborative interfaith component in any plan for the use of our property.

Clearly, such work will take time. Please know that we will not rush this process. We will engage the entire congregation in a way that helps participants feel informed, heard, strengthened, and empowered. With UDECC, we will work in such a way that our voices will be a significant part of the study, and that a deep, imaginative, and thoughtful conversation about what it means to be "church" together will be at the heart of our own continuing discernment about participating in a co-location project.

Wherever you are on this journey, please know you are all held in prayer. Whatever our future holds, this we know. We build on the faithfulness of those who have come before us, and God holds us as we move into the future.

Blessings,



Catherine Foote  
Pastor



Peter Ilgenfritz  
Pastor



Amy Roon  
Pastor



David Anderson  
Church Administrator