

## The Challenge of The Decade

- a five-year summary report from Rev. Peter Newport & Rev. Patricia Hart,  
UUCL Co-Ministers

In June 2011, we completed our fifth year in service as your ministers. At this beginning of a sixth annual cycle, our ministry becomes the longest UUCL has seen in more than two decades, and longer than most of the ministries in this church for the past century. Hanging on to ministers isn't the only indicator of congregational success, but it is one item on that list. Many brief ministries in a row make everything harder in the life of a church.

We're glad that we are still here, and grateful for the perspective we now have on the longer story into which you invited us in 2006. Many challenges greeted us on our arrival - but though we started working hard with many of you from the first day, we couldn't really know how our efforts and ideas might best fit into the evolving story of this church. Some things fell into place quickly, and others seemed to resist everybody's best efforts. Many hours and lots of energy led to some good results and a good bit of frustration, too.

### To really understand what has happened and why, it helps to take a longer view.

This report begins with a summary of events and patterns that happened long before we arrived, and ends with our perspective on UUCL's current challenges and opportunities. In between, we've constructed a table to compare key aspects of Membership, Stewardship, and Leadership/Governance in 2006, 2011, and our hopes for 2016. Whether you are new to UUCL or have been here all your life, we hope that you will read this report and notice what rings true, what surprises you, and what else you want to know. We hope you'll make a list of your questions, because we would love to talk with you about them.

### WHAT CAME BEFORE:

Prior to 2006, **our church spent many years working hard just to maintain the status quo.** Rev. Robert Payson's last years here were difficult, and his departure put emphasis on divergent views about his ministry. From 1991-1996, Rev. Kit Howell served as the "glue" holding together a congregation that was experiencing dramatic growth in numbers. His untimely death in 1996 was a hard blow to the church; made harder by a relatively weak organizational structure and little sense of future direction. A 1997 capital campaign succeeded in raising a million dollars, but created some predictable stress on church finances. Those events may have contributed to Rev. Susan Milnor's departure in 2002, when the pledge drive once again fell short of its goal and did not allow for a promised addition of ministerial staff. (Ironically, a \$1.5 million bequest in 2002 from Art Walters added to lay leaders' stress, while doing nothing to help budget shortfalls.)

**Conflicts over governance, finances, and ministerial style** led to more significant departures: the Rev. Valerie Mapstone Ackerman left after a 7-month ministry in 2004, and long-time Director of Religious Education Anna Thomas resigned under pressure in 2005. **Moving to "Policy Governance"** seemed to offer a solution to overworked Boards and

chronic volunteer shortages, but implementation of this change was delayed and contentious. Perhaps because the energy for this major governance shift came from lay leaders and included little ministerial involvement, questions about the changing role of the minister under Policy Governance remained largely unexplored.

Significantly, the congregation's membership never fell to pre-Kit Howell levels; **as some members left, new people continued to join the church.** Staff members Anne Mason, Nadinne Ziegler, and later Kate Prisby provided essential programmatic and administrative direction, and valiant lay leaders stepped up to serve on the Board, oversee the endowment, and run several program committees.

**Annual contributions have continued to increase**<sup>1</sup> almost every year. This remarkable achievement has gone largely uncelebrated, probably because revenues almost never rose far enough to keep pace with expenses. Additional facilities costs combined with "fair compensation"<sup>2</sup> for all church staff added significant expenses. **Since 2002/03, every budget year has seen threatened deficits of up to \$36,000.** Cash flow has been managed by short-term access to UUCL's restricted funds; deficits have been averted by extra campaigns and special contributions, or covered by undesignated reserves.<sup>3</sup> Despite these operating budget woes, the church's endowments and trusts have continued to grow<sup>4</sup> - another achievement worthy of celebration which has been largely missed.

In sum, **a tenacious congregation survived throughout this time with inconsistent and inadequate professional leadership, chronic shortages of cash, and no discernible vision.**

**New ministers and a new governance structure might help, but no "quick fix" was available.**

We have wondered what a church consultant might have replied if asked, in 2006:

***How long might it take for this congregation to turn things around?*** Even with generally favorable circumstances, the prediction would probably have been about ten years. We are now halfway through that decade. As the following chart shows, the last five years have seen significant improvement in some areas, less in others.

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<sup>1</sup> Total contributions from members and "friends" grew almost 60% in a decade, from \$256,358 in FY00 to \$407,187 in FY10.

<sup>2</sup> In 2005, the UUCL Board and congregation committed to a policy of paying all employees according to UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines.

<sup>3</sup> Up to 5% of the operating budget in each of the last several years has come from income from endowments and trusts. With new Endowment Resolutions passed this spring, that percentage will decline for several years.

<sup>4</sup> No funds' principal was used during this period. With conservative investment and new gifts the total value of UUCL endowments and trusts has increased significantly. In May 2011, the church's invested funds totaled more than \$2,365,000; excluding the Walters Trust, the church holds over \$584,000 in several different trusts, some of which were created to generate income for the operating budget.

# Getting From Here to There

## UUCL'S TRANSITION DECADE (2006-2016)

2005/06	2010/11 (end of year 5)	Targets for 2015/16
<p>MEMBERSHIP &amp; PROGRAMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“certified” membership: 503</b></li> <li>• visitors on many Sundays, but few joining</li> <li>• new members 05/06: 8</li>   <li>• <b>attendance down across the board:</b> worship &amp; programs; adults, children</li>   <li>• <b>Religious Education</b> regarded as strong asset, but anxiety and anger affect RE Committees, teachers and families. RE registration: unknown (179 in 06/07)</li> <li>• membership split into many subgroups, with little contact.</li> <li>• Caring Connection helps some afflicted members; no training or staff support. Older people receive little attention beyond major life transitions.</li> </ul>	<p>MEMBERSHIP &amp; PROGRAMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>membership: 543 up 9% (similar to mid-90’s)</b></li> <li>• visitors weekly, w/ minimal advertising, static website.</li> <li>• new members 2010/11: 37</li>   <li>• <b>program attendance averages 300/week</b> (worship, multi-generational Faith Dev). New Sunday model planned for 11/12.</li> <li>• <b>consistent positive feedback on Faith Development (RE)</b> Child/youth Registration lower (129); attendance up. Adult participation increased, w/ new offerings.</li> <li>• <b>pastoral care</b> shared by all senior staff; coordinated by Co-Ministers &amp; Pastoral Care Dir. Connections re-established with elders; lay pastoral visitors team. Elder Feast lunches initiated. Off-site worship anticipated in 2011/12.</li> <li>• congregation still includes many subgroups, though now with significant numbers of new people. Membership Development Council forming.</li> </ul>	<p>MEMBERSHIP &amp; PROGRAMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>40-50 more new members (+10%, net)</b></li> <li>• many visitors; dynamic web presence.</li> <li>• new members: 30-35/year (average)</li>   <li>• <b>attendance up 25%</b> (375/week overall); new &amp; long-term members attend regularly. Wed or Sat worship service.</li> <li>• <b>children/youth FD registration &gt; 200.</b> Adult (non-worship) programs expanded and well-publicized</li>   <li>• <b>pastoral care programs widely- used and well-regarded</b></li>   <li>• UUCL is more diverse, w/ sub-groups serving as “sanctuaries”</li> <li>• UUCL is seen as a stable, welcoming, successful church, with clear religious values.</li> </ul>

2005/06	2010/11 (end of year 5)	Targets for 2015/16
<p>STEWARDSHIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual stewardship in maintenance mode: a few volunteers run annual pledge campaign mostly by phone.</li> <li>• resistance to talking about money; little receptivity to “celebrating” what UUCL is, or might accomplish.</li> <li>• <b>Total contributions from members &amp; friends: \$329,000</b></li> <li>• One household contributed a 5-figure gift</li> <li>• <b>One-year budget plans</b> limited to anticipated pledge proceeds. Deficits are common, and managed by extra appeals and/or use of unrestricted reserves.</li> <li>• Poor general understanding of size or purpose of <b>UUCL’s Trusts and Endowment</b>, including Walters Trust.</li> <li>• Widespread perception that the church is “poor”: chronically short of funds.</li> </ul>	<p>STEWARDSHIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “New Stewardship” program: year-round, many ways to give, targeted approaches; no ending date on pledges.</li> <li>• Membership and Stewardship working together. Overall “Pledge Season” anxiety is reduced, but participation is slow.</li> <li>• <b>Total contributions: \$412,000 (up 25% since 06)</b>, from 313 households (30+ new in 10/11)</li> <li>• 6 households contributed \$10k or more.</li> <li>• [2010]: Executive Team and Board developed a <b>multi-year budget proposal</b>, calling for revenue growth to fund new Pastoral Care position, and a line of credit to avoid deficit. Congregation approved, May 2010.</li> <li>• <b>Endowments divided into 2 funds</b>, to insure consistent income for both facilities needs and program initiatives.</li> <li>• <b>Walters Trust Program Committee</b> now works with a clear charge and substantially increased visibility among UUCL leaders.</li> </ul>	<p>STEWARDSHIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• year-round stewardship systems well-established, with effective staff support and strong volunteer involvement.</li> <li>• 30+ new members/ year yield 15+ new contributing households annually.</li> <li>• <b>Total contributions: \$520,000</b> (up 26% from 2011), from 355 households</li> <li>• 10 households contributing \$10k or more annually</li> <li>• <b>Balanced budgets</b> every year; revenues equal expenses. <b>Line of credit/bank loan in repayment</b></li> <li>• <b>Endowments grown through bequests and gifts</b>; adequate income for both operating budget and facilities is within sight, even with imminent end of Walters Trust Building funds.</li> </ul>

2005/06	2010/11 (end of year 5)	Targets for 2015/16
<p>LEADERSHIP: Minister, Staff, Board</p> <p><b>Significant recent losses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8 different ministers in 10 years (1996-2006): interns, associates, 3 settled, 3 interims; various theologies, worship &amp; mgt styles</li> <li>- controversial departure of a long-term, respected DRE; key RE volunteers leaving</li> <li>• <b>administrative &amp; program staff morale low.</b> Several positions cut (2005); relationships between staff, lay leaders damaged by distrust</li> <li>• committees in transition: members leaving, charges changing; many “old hands” switching seats.</li> <li>• General crankiness about church tasks – frequent disputes about ushering and coffee hour</li> <li>• <b>Policy Governance is new, untested;</b> Board members and others are uncertain about its use and impact</li> <li>• <b>Board members are wary of contact with members,</b> fearing return of unpleasant congregational meetings</li> </ul>	<p>LEADERSHIP: Ministers, Staff, Board</p> <p><b>Professional leadership stable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- co-ministers since 2006; at least 1/3 of active congregation has known only their leadership.</li> <li>- much-appreciated Director of Music chose to remain at UUCL with new responsibilities directing pastoral care.</li> <li>- multi-generational Faith Development program led by experienced religious educator.</li> <li>• <b>administrative staff grown in depth and competence;</b> relationships with members &amp; friends strong, friendly</li> <li>• leadership positions held by mixture of new, long-term people. Some “old hands” may be feeling left out.</li> <li>• <b>Policy Governance well-established:</b> Ends, Policies in place for most areas. PLT led by Convener; new energy for coordinating vision.</li> <li>• <b>Co-Ministers, Administrator function as “Executive Team”:</b> drafting budgets, monitoring financials, supervising staff.</li> <li>• <b>Board meetings well-run; members demonstrate responsibility in taking on large challenges.</b> “Linkage” policies with congregation not yet developed.</li> </ul>	<p>LEADERSHIP: Ministers, Staff, Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional and administrative staff continues to be stable, well-known and trusted among leaders and congregation.</li> <li>• <b>Ministers, administrative staff, and many lay leaders involved in denominational programs, development opportunities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Leadership development “tracks”</b> are established and highlighted.</li> <li>• Members compete to serve in leadership, including Board positions.</li> <li>• Walters Trust Program funds are used in full every year, to “promote Unitarian Universalist values in Lancaster.” Lay program leaders look for opportunities to use Walters’ money to promote UUCL’s vision and leadership in the community.</li> </ul>

## WHERE WE ARE NOW, AND WHERE WE NEED TO GO:

Looking back over these five busy, difficult, exciting years, several things seem clear:

**UUCL has many resources necessary for growth, and the capacity to establish healthier patterns of relationship.** We can create programs to meet the needs and interests of both current and future generations - the fact that the majority of our newest members are younger adults is evidence that UUCL offers an effective religious message for this time. Developing confidence that we have what we need to succeed in our mission is a real challenge, however: some of us urge caution, focusing on concrete evidence to be convinced; others of us feel inspired by our vision and want to move ahead without delay. - "Acceptance of one another" is one of our Unitarian Universalist principles... one that we need to foster so that we can work in our different ways to assure our community's success.

**Governance remains a thorny issue.** Policy governance is hard for Board and staff members to grasp, and even harder to explain to members and friends, who mostly just "want things to work." Many at UUCL are still getting used to the idea that the Ministers and staff are now responsible for developing the budget - not just for one year, but looking ahead to the future. When conflicts arise, like our current budget difficulties, questions of who is really in charge and who gets to make decisions can become intense and confusing. It is important to follow our new policies; it is even more important to "create sanctuary for one another."

**Money isn't everything, but it can't be left out of the conversation.** Current budget projections are that with continued effective programming for all generations, stability in our staff, and net growth of 30-35 new members annually, contributions can increase by approximately 5% each year. In five years, if we meet our new member and contribution goals, we will be able to fully support the operating budget.

Clearly, we will only be able to reach and maintain those ambitious goals if we're working together - and that's a challenge. Radically different views on debt, on the possibilities of growth, and even on how well we have met our goals so far will likely continue for a number of years. We will need to get better at listening to one another. But it's clear that we can do better on Stewardship, and we need to continue to make it a priority. In 2009, the Board hired Stewardship Consultant Mark Ewert to assess UUCL's stewardship program; with his help we recognized "first, we are a strong and growing congregation in all areas *except stewardship*, and second, unless we develop stewardship to the same level as our other ministries, we are unsustainable."

**We need goals for our future, and an ongoing conversation about how we're doing.**

We are honored to be your ministers, and take all of our responsibilities very seriously. Over the last five years, and along with a wonderful staff and some extraordinarily hard-working lay leaders, a great deal has been accomplished at this church we all cherish. There will be many opportunities for more of you to get involved in the future, and there's no doubt that we'll need your help. Together, we can make UUCL the church of our vision!