

Interim Ministry

Congregational Report

Lee Anne Washington, M.Div., J.D.

July 2021

Dear Ones,

At the beginning of my ministry with you, I promised you a congregational assessment based on my experience with you. I had initially envisioned breaking down various aspects of congregational life and sharing my impressions about what was working well and what could be improved. I held that vision until just a few days ago, when I realized that the pandemic had so altered normal congregational life that I am unable to make a meaningful assessment of most aspects of it.

I came to you as an interim minister with a standard interim ministry agreement and a set of five tasks to work on during a standard two year period. So, in this report, I will focus on your progress toward completing those tasks and on two aspects of the UCE's culture that are impeding its progress. Most of this material has been shared with leadership, much of it has been shared with you in emails and newsletters, and it contains a fair amount of original content from me. The interim training that I received made clear that no congregation completes all five tasks in the interim period and that congregations should continue working on interim tasks with their subsequent minister.

Since our time together has lasted but one year, there are many interim tasks that have not been addressed and should be. The UCE would benefit greatly from courageously continuing its self-reflection and transformation of systems and programs. Even though we have been at this for less than a year, I am delighted with the progress you have made as a congregation under the leadership and guidance of the Interim Task Team: Louise Charach, Graham McFarlane, Yvonne Mireau, John Pater, Ruth Patrick, and Lynne Turvey. The ITT developed its own statement of its purpose and priorities during my ministry with you:

The Interim Transition Team supports the congregation in defining and implementing a revitalized UCE by examining our heritage, leadership, mission and connections. Priority actions to achieve this renewal include:

- regular and ongoing dialogue with congregation in redefining our new vision and leadership
- establishment of two task teams to examine Good Governance and Best Practice Financials
- development of a strong vision for volunteerism for the UCE (majority of church work force)
- Providing support to Interim Minister implementing "letting go" and History (heritage) work

Understandably, some work is best done congregation-wide and some work is best done, at least initially, by a smaller group of people who are willing to spend considerable time and energy getting educated, doing a study, and preparing a report with recommendations. This year, both types of work have been done.

All of the task teams were made up of an ITT member, a board member, and at least one member at large. The Good Governance Task Team included Louise Charach, Karen Mills, and Sue Lynch. The Best Financial Practices Task Team included Lynne Turvey, Doug Eastwell, and Susan Ruttan. The Volunteer Best Practices Task Team was made up of Yvonne Mireau, Brandie Moller-Reid, and David Rae.

The good governance and financial best practices task teams have completed their reports, which contain information about the best practices in certain areas, their observations of the UCE's way of doing things, and recommendations for improvement. Having completed their work, these task teams have been disbanded. Members of those teams are now working together as an implementation team that will begin a process of congregational and small group meetings designed to facilitate your education about, discussion about, and adoption of their recommendations so that you will also have a say in what changes and what stays the same.

The Volunteer Best Practices Task Team continues its good work. Similar to the other two task teams, it will prepare a report. Then, having completed its work, it will be disbanded. An implementation team will be created. The implementation team will follow a similar education/discussion/adoption process.

Among certain congregational leaders there has been a great deal of anxiety around the need to restart so much of congregational life once the pandemic is over and people can begin congregating again in person. They seem to think it appropriate to shut down all interim work. As long as the UCE does not have a called minister, it is in transition. Also, I am confident that as a congregation you can, as they say, "chew gum and walk at the same time." I would hate for you to lose the momentum that you have gained or the benefit of continuing to work on the interim tasks. Your next minister, Rev. Rosemary Morrison, is a trained interim minister and is well-suited for facilitating the UCE's emergence from the pandemic restrictions while continuing to work with you and the transition team on interim tasks. I suggest that this is a question that should be put to the entire congregation after Rev. Rosemary's arrival.

I hope that after you read this report that you are as proud of you as I am. I have witnessed your dedication to the interim tasks and a growing self-awareness. I will look upon this time that I have had with you as one rich with caring relationships and lessons in ministry. Your resilience in the face of the pandemic, your deep caring for one another, and your commitment to the well-being of this beloved community we call the UCE, have inspired me. You have inspired me.

Thank you,

And may you be peaceful and at ease,

Rev. Lee Anne

TABLE of CONTENTS

Heritage	5
How Heritage Has Been Addressed	5
Resources For Further Development	6
Leadership	7
How Leadership Has Been Addressed	7
Resources For Further Development	9
Mission	10
Observations	10
How Mission Has Been Addressed	13
Resources For Further Development	15
Connections	16
How Connections Have Been Addressed	16
Resources For Further Development	16
Future	17
How Future Has Been Addressed	17
Resources For Further Development	17
Conflict Avoidance & Denial	18
Observations	18
Resources For Further Development	19
Ministerial Authority	20
Observations	20
Resources For Further Development	26
APPENDICES	27
Appendix A	27
Appendix B	29
Appendix C	31
Appendix D	33
Appendix E	34
Appendix F	38

Heritage

Reviewing how the Congregation has been shaped and formed; encouraging and hearing all of the stories about the Congregation's past, as the foundation upon which the present rests; and embracing the rich variety that makes up the Congregation. *The congregation must deal with "letting go" of the former pastor and preparing for a new one, regardless of the reason for the former pastor leaving.*

- Create History Timeline
 - Provide opportunities to preserve
- Gather Congregational Stories of Significant Events
 - Provide opportunities to address lingering grief
- Gather Information about Religious Diversity
 - Provide opportunities to recognize and celebrate religious diversity

How Heritage Has Been Addressed

During September, I had one on one conversations with Board members and committee chairs, from whom I elicited stories about how each person found their way to the UCE. In the process, I heard some stories about and personal reflection on the history of the UCE.

In April, a congregation-wide event to celebrate the UCE's history was held immediately following services on 4/25. Ruth Patrick and Louise Charach led a review of the congregation's history from its renaissance in the 1950s to Rev. Brian's retirement. This review was supported by the ongoing and robust preservation of the UCE's history.

During the history celebration, we heard personal remembrances from various long-time members. Everyone was invited to share their own remembrances in the chat box, the contents of which were edited and shared with the entire congregation as part of the May newsletter.

Immediately after the service on May 23rd, the congregation was invited into facilitated small group discussions about Rev. Brian's tenure at the UCE. Members of the ITT will lead the small group discussions using a recommended set of questions and a recommended process for creating a brave space for all involved in sharing their stories. This exercise assisted those who need to let go of any

negative feelings around Rev. Brian's retirement, the interim period, and the prospect of eventually having a new settled minister.

Resources For Further Development

Writing the History of Your Congregation: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/writing-history-your-congregation>

Circle Processes: A Continuum: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/circle-process-continuum>

Healing Community: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/small-group-ministry-creates-sacred-time>

Engaging Our Theological Diversity:

<https://www.uua.org/files/documents/coa/engagingourtheodiversity.pdf>

Engaging Our Theological Diversity, The Curriculum Guide:

https://www.uua.org/files/documents/coa/theodiversity/0506_re_curriculum.pdf

Widening the Circle of Concern: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

Widening the Circle of Concern, Study/Action Guide:

https://www.uua.org/files/2020-10/widening_study_action.pdf

Leadership

Reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership; providing opportunity for individuals and the Congregational organization to examine the types of leadership needed for new leaders to emerge, and for seasoned leaders to recommit or to refocus their gifts. Congregations can get bogged down in familiar patterns, or congregational systems may malfunction. When a pastor leaves, there is opportunity for new patterns of lay involvement. Sometimes those who have been active step back and others step forward. A new dynamic emerges and a different set of pastoral skills may be required.

- Assess corporate governance structure
 - Recommend best practices
 - Recommend modifications to policies and new policies
 - Recommend changes to structure, if necessary
- Assess financial stability, processes, and procedures (with Finance Committee & Board Treasurer)
 - Recommend best practices
- Assess Leadership Development (With Leadership Development Committee)
 - Recommend best practices

How Leadership Has Been Addressed

In September, I invited each Board member, each committee chair, and each staff member to have a one on one conversation with me as a way of getting to know the UCE's organizational structure and leadership. I have met with each of the Board members and with the following committee chairs:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Audit -- Larry Charach | ● Finance -- Doug Eastwell |
| ● Chaplain -- Rev. Audrey Brooks | ● Human Resources -- Larry Charach |
| ● Canvas -- Andrew Mills | ● Leadership -- Beth Jenkins |
| ● Chorealis -- Gordon Ritchie and Karen Mills | ● Library -- Ruth Patrick |
| ● Church Services -- Gordon Ritchie | ● Social Justice -- Ali Hammington |
| ● Communications -- Karen Bilida | ● Sunday Volunteers -- Jennifer Hinchcliffe |

I asked each board member, each committee chair, and each staff member to identify three things that the congregation did well and three things that the congregation could improve. The following items were identified:

What the UCE does well --

- Chorealism/Music (5)
- Welcoming & Supportive (5)
- PotLuck Meals (3)
- Social Justice (3)
- Social Events (3)
- Long Term Relationships (2)
- Zoom Services
- Involving Membership in Services
- Financial Stewardship
- Managing Resources
- High Participation Rate
- Walking Group
- Youth Group
- Sermons

What the UCE could improve --

- Committee Structure (4)
- Attracting New People (3)
- Pastoral Care (3)
- Signage/ Communication (3)
- Public presence for social justice (3)
- Organizing Volunteers (2)
- Attracting Families (2)
- R.E. Program
- Adult Religious Exploration
- Connections with other liberal organizations
- Long Term Vision
- Website
- Hiring Practices

The Good Governance Task Team was created to review foundations and structures of the UCE from governance, administration, human resources, programming point of view and will provide a comprehensive report to ITT, board and congregation with recommendations (See Appendix A).

The Financial Best Practices Task Team was created to support sound fiscal management by ensuring that the board fulfills its fiduciary and ethical responsibilities through the support of strong and effective financial systems, policies and procedures that advance the UCE's vision and principles (See Appendix B).

The Volunteer Best Practices Task Team was created to ensure that practices involving volunteers at the UCE are in line with Unitarian principles and values while ensuring that policies and procedures that support our volunteers are clear and effective, and reflect best practices in non-profit volunteer management (See Appendix C).

The Board and the Interim Transition Teams had training retreats. The Leadership Committee has become aware of the leadership training resources offered by the UUA and available to the UCE. At various times over the course of the year, members of leadership and I brainstormed methods for ensuring that those who take on leadership positions at the UCE will understand what is expected of

them. We also discussed ways to provide regular leadership training for volunteers, once they assume a leadership position.

Resources For Further Development

Harvest the Power Curriculum (Free): <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/harvest2nd>

UUA Leadership Development Learning Center: <https://www.uua.org/leadership>

- Board Member Training (Free): <https://www.uua.org/leadership/programs/board-training>
- Leadership Development (Free): <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/developmentguide/train-ldt>
- Centered Leadership Part I (\$30): <https://www.uuoinstitute.org/courses/centeredleadership1-001/>
- Centered Leadership Part 2 (\$30): <https://www.uuoinstitute.org/courses/centeredleadership2-101/>
- Claiming Our Spiritual Leadership (\$30): <https://www.uuoinstitute.org/courses/spiritualleadership-305/>
- Strategic Leadership (\$30): <https://www.uuoinstitute.org/courses/strategicleadership301/>
- Adaptive Leadership (\$30): <https://www.uuoinstitute.org/courses/adaptiveleadership401/>

Mission

Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction; clarifying the faith community's identity and core values; working to develop, update, and revitalize mission and vision statements; and reviewing strategic and tactical plans including stewardship and the financial health of the congregation. This is a time for congregations to step back and re-examine their self-understanding, current realities, real possibilities, and goals. Often new insights, new directions and even a fresh vision emerge in the interim period.

Observations

The Unitarian Church of Edmonton is a congregation openly and honestly searching, learning, connecting, and serving. How you are currently are living into the UCE's mission:

Searching for spiritual meaning in our lives

- Sunday Worship Services

It has been a pleasure working with the Church Services Committee. You have talented and dedicated people ensuring that you have meaningful worship services. The Worship Services Committee and I enjoyed a professional, warm, and creative relationship. I felt well-supported and appreciated.

In addition to the Church Services Committee, another group of people coalesced around ensuring that our Zoom services ran smoothly. When I challenged them with something out of the ordinary, they rose to the occasion. I witnessed the concern that our Zoom tech team had for each other and for the congregation. There were many acts of kindness, patience, and encouragement. All of us learned skills we didn't have, or ever think we'd need, before the pandemic and we got creative in adapting to the limitations of Zoom based worship.

It was gratifying to have over 20 congregants participate as readers during services this year. I enjoyed working with all the participants in worship services. I especially enjoyed working with the slide creators and runners, whose patience and creativity were much appreciated.

Learning to understand ourselves and others

- Wednesday Lunch & Learn

Since January 8, 2021, I have been offering a Lunch & Learn program from 12-2 MT. It is designed to be a casual drop-in opportunity for congregants to learn something and then to discuss it. Most often, I break up the subject matter into 3-4 segments (which facilitates a person's ability to drop-in and fully participate in the discussions). Each segment contains some educational material -- an article, a Ted talk, a short video -- followed by a group discussion about what we learned, how the values reflected in the educational material either do, or do not, reflect the values that we hold dear as Unitarian Universalists.

Subjects that we have explored thus far include:

Our Seven Principles: One and Two, more to come
Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression related topics such as:

- What is an ally
- What are microaggressions
- How we can live into being an ally in real life situations

Perspective: How it determines our lived experience

Becoming: What that means, what fosters our ability to be our best selves

Polyamory: What it is, How to live into being a welcoming congregation with respect to polyamorous individuals and their families.

Topics may be chosen based on the basis of the monthly theme, recent events, or my interests at the moment. Those who have been participating regularly tell me that they enjoy our time together and often learn something new.

Connecting to build fair, just, caring communities

- Breakout Rooms after Sunday Worship Service
- Tues & Thurs Lunch Bunch
- Wednesday Lunch & Learn
- Tuneys Tuesdays
- Chalice Circles
- Saturday Night Socials
- Social Justice Work

Many of the ways you connect with one another were unavailable to you during the pandemic -- no in-person Sunday morning worship service followed by coffee hours, no potluck meals, no fundraising

activities, no congregation-wide events. In the face of these restrictions, you exhibited concern for each other when you began the pandemic with phone calls to everyone.

You also demonstrated considerable resilience when you learned to connect with whomever you found in the randomly assigned breakout rooms after Sunday morning Zoom worship services. Not to be deterred, you continued to connect with each other over Zoom in small groups for committee meetings, Tuney Tuesdays, and Chalice Circles. Even the walking group was able to transition to online Zoom meetings. Some of you also participated in the Saturday Night Socials that were offered in January.

Serving each other and our communities near and far

- Share the Plate Offering
- Recording & Posting Sunday Worship Services
- Pastoral Care (upon request)

Caring for one another is a core spiritual practice for Unitarian Universalists. Pastoral care is the term we use for the ways we offer support and compassion to each other in community. We promote offering pastoral care to all ages knowing that it can be as simple as sending a card for a birthday or as challenging as helping someone who has suicidal thoughts. Since Rev. Audrey's retirement as the congregation's Pastoral Care Chaplain, a way is needed for congregants to work with the minister to provide for the emotional and physical needs of congregants when they face loss, injury, or illness. Gloria Krenbrenk has taken the lead in investigating ways to accomplish this. She has identified the Westwood Compassion Bank model as a model compatible with the needs and resources of the UCE. She is calling the UCE version "Caring Connections." I have met with her a few times to offer support and assistance. Gloria has initiated a plan and has issued a call for congregants who are willing and interested in participating in this vital program. (See Appendix E)

During the pandemic, it was difficult to observe the way in which the UCE members welcome newcomers, mostly because conversations are highly structured in the Zoom environment and randomly assigned breakout rooms for coffee and conversation after Sunday service are not necessarily indicative of how a newcomer would generally be welcomed upon arrival at the church.

I did witness several newcomers being recognized and welcomed warmly as they entered the Sunday morning Zoom worship space. I know that newcomers who stayed for coffee and a chat after a Sunday service were also warmly welcomed.

How Mission Has Been Addressed

The congregation has been asked five questions on four separate occasions and the answers were compiled and shared with the congregation. The responses are rich and informative and should be referred to often as the congregation revisits its mission, vision, and strategic plan in upcoming months with Rev. Rosemary Morrison. The following are excerpts and adaptations of the original write-ups provided by Ruth Patrick:

Question: What do we stand for?

Thirty-one responses resulted in the following expressions of the UCE's values predominating:

Respect, support, acceptance, choice, equity, inclusion, worth and dignity, interdependent web, pluralism, responsible search for meaning and truth.

A number of the respondents noted a particular Principle in their response. Thoroughly considering all the responses, it appears that each of them relates in some way to the Seven Principles.

Question: What brought you to UCE?

Fifty-four responses indicated that many members were introduced to the UCE by family, friends and members of the congregation. Some were actively searching for something they felt missing or needed in their lives. Others were seeking a place which allowed independent thought and freedom to develop one's own belief, supported interfaith relationships, social activities and good community involvement of all ages. Many sought an accepting, nonjudgmental, comfortable group where they felt they wanted to be and would fit. A number were looking for good RE for their children and some looked for a place to be married. Additional factors included:

- The sermon or sermon text,
- The choir,
- What UU's believed,
- Inclusion,
- Dynamism of congregation
- Creedless principles, and
- Questioning and thoughtful people in the congregation.

Question: What keeps you here?

Thirty-three responses indicated a strong sense of community. Some expressed their comfort in sharing common values. Many indicated that which had attracted them initially is what keeps them here. The choir played a major role for many. Other factors include:

- Friendship with those who share the same values and provide support.
- Freedom to speak one's own belief and find acceptance.
- The opportunity to work and build the kind of church to which one wants to belong.
- Authentic connections keep some here.
- A safe place to unwind.
- The shift to Zoom services.

Question: What is missing for you?

Sixty-three responses clearly indicated being together. There is a hunger for interpersonal contact, the direct feeling of support, and meaningful interaction between the generations. You miss the energy of in-person interactions, the physical space, and especially the choir.

Other missing elements include:

- Good adult programs,
- Small groups,
- Adult religious exploration,
- Deep discussions,
- Greater exploration of philosophical questions,
- More heart-led spirituality,
- Compassion in actual deed,
- Meditation, and
- Activities for younger people.

Some also indicated the lack of a shared purpose, a need to understand key priorities and to share a collective identity. An assessment of neighborhood needs was also mentioned.

Question: What keeps the UCE from being the UCE?

Thirty-nine responded and many mentioned the lack of: a clear, shared vision or purpose; a lack of coordinated leadership; of shared priorities and broad participation. There was some mention of more training for volunteers and more follow up needed.

Concern regarding welcoming in theory but not attracting much diversity in terms of age, gender, cultural background or race. The following were also mentioned:

- Lack of Youth involvement,
- Lack of Adult religious education,

- Need for member conversations on meaningful topic
- Complacency,
- Scant community outreach, and
- Committee structure

Many responses indicated a desire to achieve a more vibrant community. There was concern about volunteer burnout and a desire for more congregational participation going forward.

Resources For Further Development

Lay Spiritual Care Training: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/spiritual-care-training>

- Part 1 Discernment (free): <https://www.uuinstitute.org/courses/spiritualcarediscernment/>
- Part 2 Training for Congregational Leaders: <https://www.uuinstitute.org/courses/spiritualcare/>

Simple Online Pastoral Care: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/simple-pastoral-care>

Ideas for Care Teams: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/care-team-ideas>

The Membership Journey: <https://www.uua.org/files/documents/congservices/membershipjourney.pdf>

Soul Matters *Starting Point*: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/starting-point.html>

Harvest the Power Curriculum: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/harvest2nd>

From Visitor to Engaged Member: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/visitor-engaged-member>

UUA Worship Web Library: <https://www.uua.org/worship>

Soul Matters Sharing Circle: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/about.html>

Hymnal Blogger & Worship Trainer: <https://farfringe.com/>

Building a Worship Associates Program:

https://www.uua.org/files/documents/koylerick/worship_associates.pdf

Worship Associates Training Sample: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/worship-associates-west-shore>

Worship that Works: <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Search.aspx?k=worship+that+works>

Connections

Discovering and revitalizing all the association, interfaith, and community relationships a congregation builds outside of itself; and re-assessing old links and considering new ones. *Many congregations have a tenuous or distant relationship with the whole UU denomination. The period between pastors*

often brings the congregation into closer and more frequent contact with their Congregational Life person and the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Unitarian Universalist Association resources and activities and thus into a more real sense of shared identity and ministry.

How Connections Have Been Addressed

Generally, the UCE has been well connected to its region and has participated in region wide events. It has also been well connected to its sibling congregation, the Westwood Unitarian Congregation. To some degree, the UCE has also been connected to the Canadian Unitarian Council through its participation in region wide events and national worship services.

The UCE has not been so well connected to the many resources offered by the Unitarian Universalist Association -- written articles, written reports, training programs, and video presentations. This has changed considerably over the course of this year as the Board, the Committee on Ministry, the Interim Transition Team, and the Church Services Committee have all taken advantage of many of those resources.

And, as the UCE's interim minister, I have continued a ministerial connection with the ministers in the region through their monthly "Wood Buffalo" meetings. I have also taken several courses offered by the CUC and established a good working relationship with the congregation's CUC staff person, Joan Carolyn, who has been working with me and the Board.

Resources For Further Development

The Congregational Handbook, A Guide to Congregational Health & Vitality:

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/handbook>

UUA Leadership Development Learning Center: <https://www.uua.org/leadership>

Future

Developing congregational and pastoral profiles that position the congregation for its next ministry, including a healthy and honest assessment of the other focus points so that the congregation can turn its energy toward proactive decision-making for the future. *This is a time for congregations to step*

back and re-examine their self-understanding, current realities, real possibilities, and goals. Often new insights, new directions and even a fresh vision emerge in the interim period.

- Examine Strategic Plan and Congregation's Process
 - Congregational reassessment of vision and mission
 - Leadership guidance as to how to implement strategy
 - Congregational commitment to follow leadership's guidance

How Future Has Been Addressed

The Committee on Ministry (Appendix D) has begun a process of reviewing each action item in the UCE strategic plan and determining to what extent those actions have been taken. It is generally recommended that a congregation revisit its mission, vision, and strategic plan every five years or so. It is about time for such. This would be great work to do with Rev. Rosemary.

Resources For Further Development

Strategic Plans are Key to [a] Congregation's Future:

<https://www.uua.org/interconnections/22629.shtml>

Guided By Vision, Mission, and Covenant: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/handbook/vision-mission-covenant>

Conflict Avoidance & Denial

Observations

My experience has been that the culture at the UCE is extremely conflict avoidant. I have been told that this has not always been the case. Despite having been told that “we don’t have any conflicts at the UCE”, I have been in several and I have been informed of several more that did not involve me. A few have been in place for years. These conflicts have been magnified by the fact that the UCE does not have three important elements for congregational health and vitality:

- A Congregational Covenant,
- A Right Relations Team, and
- A Disruptive/Destructive Persons Policy

Without the above elements, or something very much like them, there is no way for someone to voice the harm that another has done to them without it becoming either a grand public affair or an underground current of negativity and rejection. As the minister, I have become aware that some members fear that if they express themselves in an authentic way, holding others accountable, they will suffer severe backlash.

Conflict is normal, healthy, and inevitable within any group of people. The existence of conflict is not determinative of the quality of relationships within a congregation, it’s how the congregation deals with conflict that matters. Suppressed conflicts fester and conflict avoidance often enables those who are acting in disrespectful, spiteful, and otherwise emotionally and spiritually immature ways. Embracing the existence of conflict and providing a healthy and productive way of dealing with it opens up the possibility of deeper and more meaningful relationships among members of the congregation.

From *Conflict Management in Unitarian Universalist Congregation*:

Conflicts can be scary when they threaten to rupture or divide our precious community connections and relationships with one another, and we often seek help to resolve these issues.

Yet we've learned that conflicts actually present great opportunities for building community by examining together what we value the most, and clarifying our purpose and mission as a community.

Conflicts arise naturally simply because of the basic fact that we are different from one another! As Unitarian Universalists, we honor and celebrate difference, but often struggle with how to negotiate these differences when it comes to making decisions or taking positions. Congregational growth, perspectives on ministry, staffing decisions, budgetary issues—all provoke sometimes wildly varying viewpoints among us. It would be strange if we didn't have conflicts about these very important concerns.

The UCE has experienced the result of unaddressed conflict -- congregants avoid active participation, leaders become the targets of disaffected congregants and leave, membership numbers decrease. I recommend that the UCE consult with CUC staff and begin a process of education and training on managing conflict.

Resources For Further Development

Safe Congregations Handbook: <https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant/dealing-disruptive-behavior>

A Comprehensive Guide to Congregational Covenants:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/congregational-covenants>

An Example Right Relations Team Charter:
<https://www.uufg.org/attachments/article/971/rrt-charter.pdf>

Destructive Behavior Policies: <https://www.uua.org/safe/destructive-behavior-policies>

Policies for Handling Disruptive People: <https://www.uua.org/interconnections/21966.shtml>

Tolerating Bad Behavior in the Church: <https://www.congregationalconsulting.org/tolerating-bad-behavior/>

Defining Disruptive Behavior: <https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant/defining-disruptive-behavior>

The 6 paragraph article on Self-Differentiated Leadership found here:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/self-differentiated-leadership>; and

This 7 minute video on self-differentiation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgdcljNV-Ew&t=56s>.

Ministerial Authority

Observations

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation, the UCE enjoys congregational polity, however, the polity and the practice of that polity at the UCE is not at all reflective of my understanding of the UUA's or the CUC's recommendations for the appropriate relationship between the congregation, the minister, and the board. This has created a significant disconnect between the terms of my interim ministry agreement with the UCE and the way in which I have been treated by some congregational leaders. This disconnect has been the source of much of the conflict that I have experienced this year.

Realizing that I cannot expect congregants who don't know the terms of my interim ministry agreement to abide by them, I have sent several emails out to various leaders quoting the position defining and authority granting provisions of my agreement, which I share with you now (See Appendix F). Generally, congregants, once informed, have worked with me to continue collaborative and effective work on behalf of the congregation. I recommend that everyone at the UCE be informed of the position defining and authority granting provisions of Rev. Rosemary's agreement with the UCE.

The good governance task team has done an in depth study of good governance organization and practices, and will be working with you and the Board to evaluate the existing governance structure of UCE against this new knowledge. Good governance within a Unitarian Universalist congregation begins with a clear understanding of congregational polity and shared ministry, and there are many different ways to draw an organizational chart that reflects Unitarian Universalist congregational polity and shared ministry. The main idea, which is not currently reflected in the way that UCE operates, is that the congregation is the genesis of the authority for both the board and the minister. So, congregational polity at its most basic core looks like this:

Congregation

Board

Minister

Imagine one way arrows from the congregation to the board and to the minister. The board and minister have been delegated different aspects of congregational life and exist as distinct loci of authority. Those congregations that have have done the work of developing a mission statement look like this:

**Mission
Congregation**

Board

<Communication & Mutual Accountability>

Minister

Imagine the line of Communication and Mutual Accountability between the Board and the Minister also appears diagonally between Board and Congregation and Minister and Congregation. It is important to understand that the congregation is also guided by board policies and is held accountable to fulfilling the mission, through such things as a congregational covenant, a right relations team, and the board's supervision of membership requirements and participation.

This organization portrays a congregation that exists to fulfill its mission -- a well documented statement of the values it holds and purpose of all of its actions. Most mission statements include both an inward focus (what we want to offer each other) and outward focus (what impact we want to have in the world).

In this model, the board, which is elected by the congregation, is guided by and held accountable to the congregation in fulfilling the mission (1) by making policies that will guide actions taken by the minister, all committees, and all congregation members and (2) by managing the congregation's resources.

The minister, which is either called by the congregation through election or hired by the congregation through a board process, is also guided by and held accountable to the congregation in fulfilling the mission by adhering to board policies and by implementing the mission through appropriate means (programs, day-to-day decisions, appropriate team work).

Both the board and the minister are guided by and held accountable to the congregation. This does not change if a board member is appointed to fill another's unexpired term (without direct

congregational election) or a minister is hired through a contract with the board (without direct congregational election). The board and the minister are always two distinct centers of congregational authority guided by and held accountable to the congregation for fulfilling the mission.

Think of it this way, the congregation wants to fulfill its mission and it needs a means of doing that which doesn't require constant congregational meetings, debates, and voting to make decisions and to take actions as a congregation. It delegates the management of resources (money and facilities) and the overall health of the congregation (policies and procedures) to the board. It delegates the management of its ministry (spiritual development, membership care and connection, worship services, and social justice programs) to the minister, who additionally delegates certain responsibilities to paid and volunteer staff.

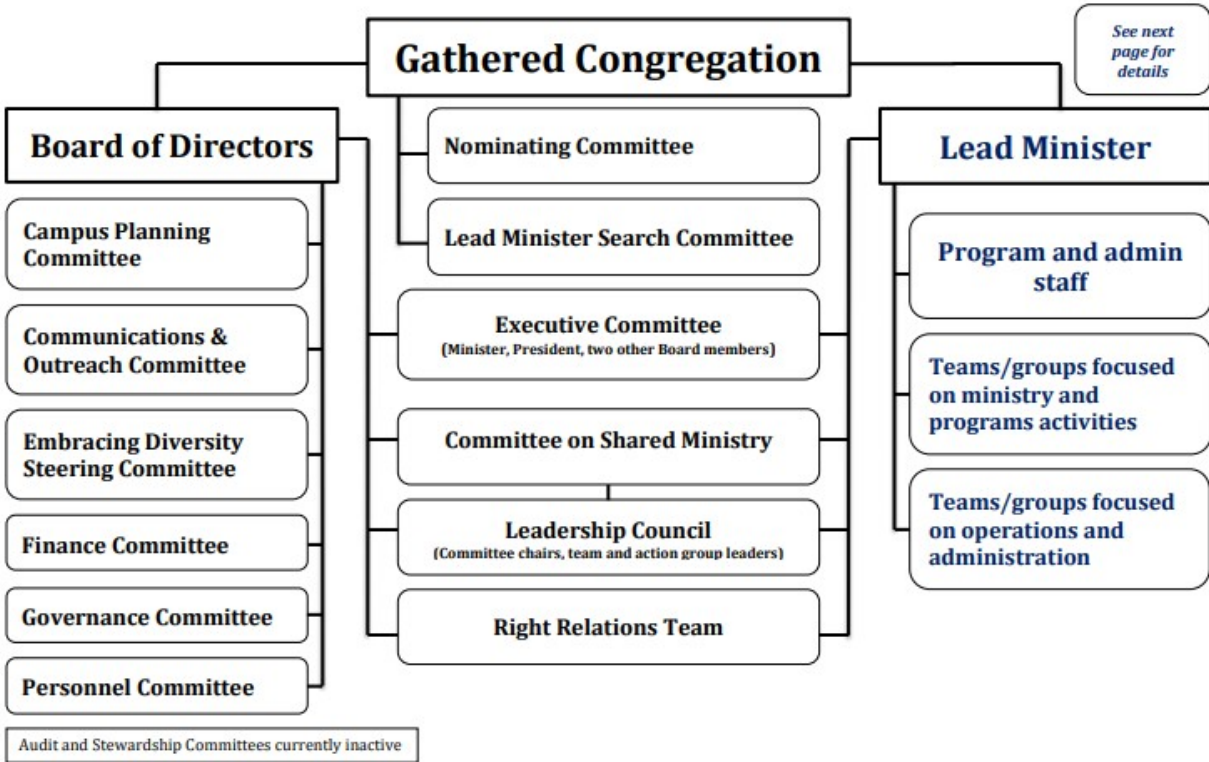
After this basic structure is in place, there are various ways to conceive of organizing the rest of the congregation's structure. Many congregations find it helpful to consider "committees" to be those semi-autonomous groups of congregants who are focused on supporting the board function and "teams" to be those semi-autonomous groups of congregants who are focused on supporting the ministry function.

Whether a group is a board committee or a ministry team is determined by its function. A good way to determine that is to ask the question: "When a group finds that it needs guidance, additional information, or clarification of its role with regard to fulfilling the mission, with which authority locus does it need to collaborate?" For instance, when the worship team meets, with whom does it need to collaborate -- the minister or the board? When the buildings and grounds committee meets, with whom does it need to collaborate -- the minister or the board? There may be some committees or teams (such as a right relations team or a Committee on Shared Ministry) that fall under both the board's function and the minister's function.

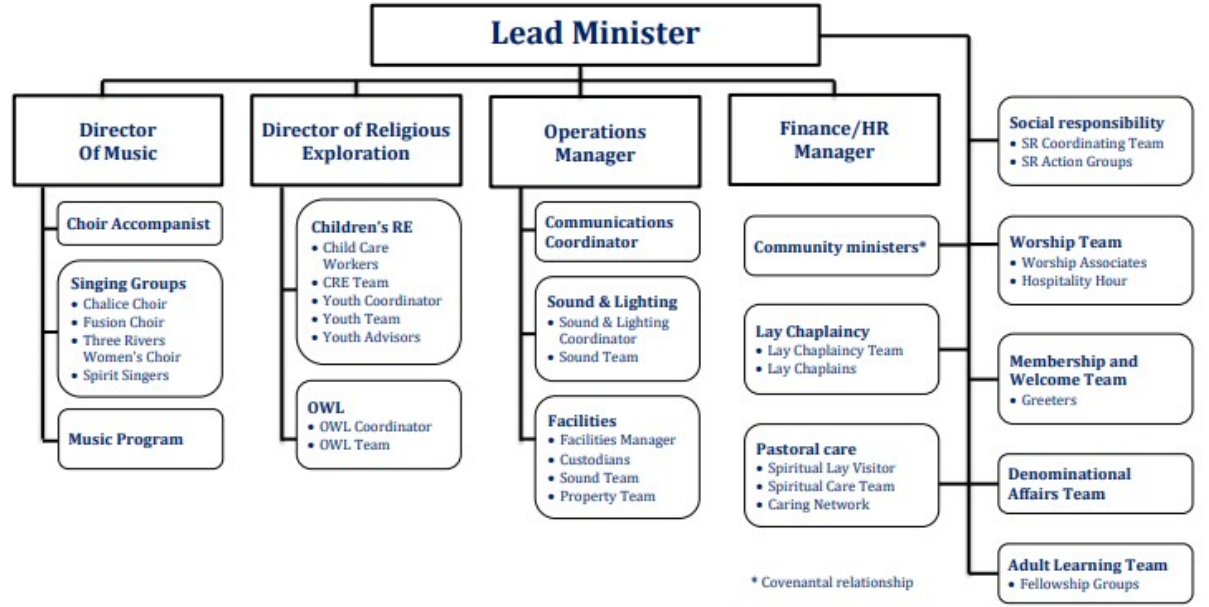
The professional minister is an *ex officio* (by virtue of the office of minister) member of the board and all committees and teams. This puts the responsibility for (1) facilitating a shared understanding of the mission and (2) working with those implementing the board's policies and fulfilling the mission on the paid professional. Similarly, and for the same reason, the director of religious exploration is an *ex officio* member of any teams working on implementing the spiritual development aspects of ministry.

Below are organizational charts of various UU congregations that reflect congregational polity. The first chart is from the First Unitarian Church of Ottawa. Below that are various other examples from UU congregations in the U.S. As you can see, there are many different ways to depict congregational polity. Please note that some charts assume the presence of the Mission and Congregation at the top of their structures:

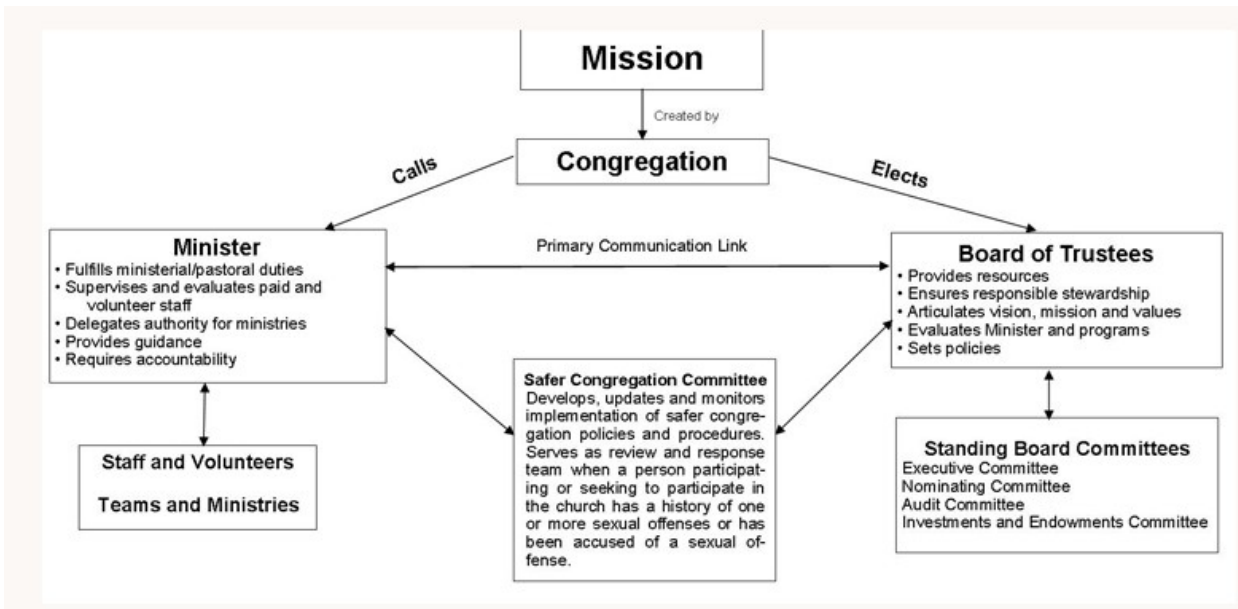
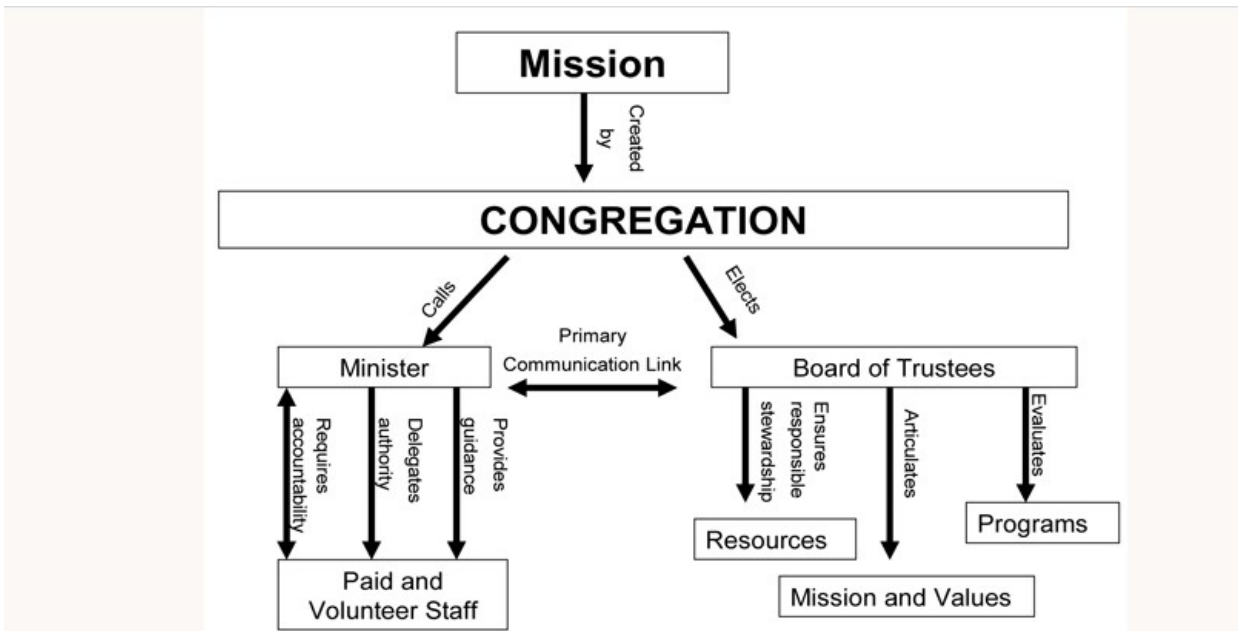
MISSION – We kindle the light within and inspire courage to nurture the web of life and to create a just and compassionate world.



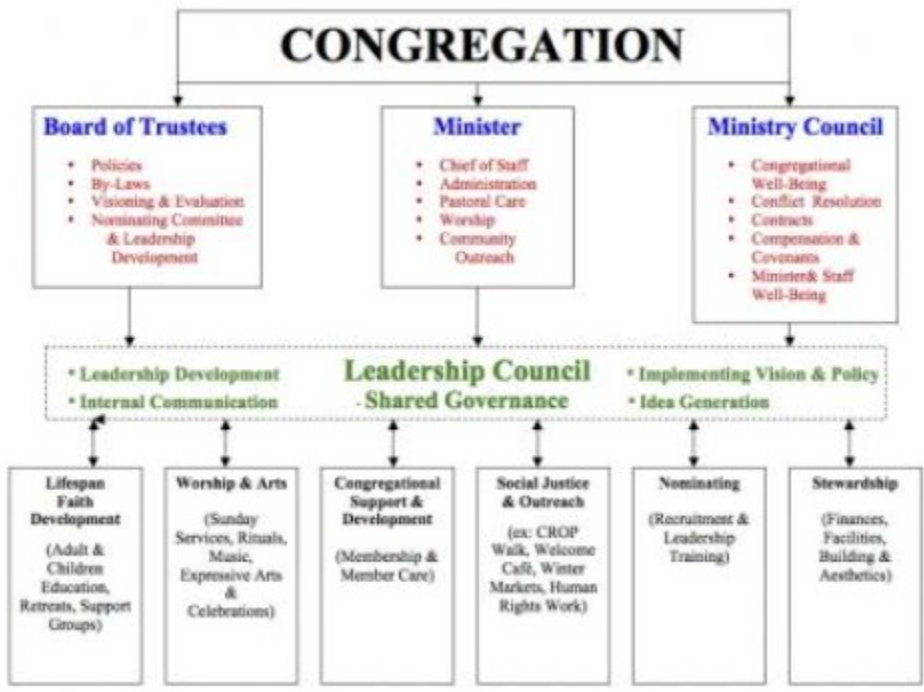
MISSION – We kindle the light within and inspire courage to nurture the web of life and to create a just and compassionate



Unitarian Universalist Church, Columbia Missouri



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of DeKalb, Illinois



The Fourth Universalist Society, New York, New York

Resources For Further Development

Effective Congregational Governance: Organizing for Mission and Ministry:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/handbook/effective-congregational-governance>

Congregational Governance:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/learning-center/governance/polity/47009.shtml>

Accountability, Agility, and Good Governance:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/coic-governance>

Policy Based Governance: A Resource for UU Congregations:
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/learning-center/governance/policybased>