

Interim Minister's Report to the Board

February 22, 2016

I have been at UUTC for about six months now, and wanted to reflect on our work together during this brief, yet very full, time period. It may be helpful to review a paragraph from my first written report in August.

From my August 19, 2015 Report to the Board

I have thoroughly enjoyed the unsurpassed warm welcome that my husband, Mark Cannon, and I received during our first few weeks at UUTC. My first impression is that the members and friends of the congregation are incredibly vibrant and engaged in the UUTC community and beyond. There are many strengths here, and the possibility for building on these strengths is very great.

*My first impression of the principle growth opportunity for UUTC is managing the HUGE transition from being a "pastoral size" congregation to a "program size" congregation. It is my understanding that your Minister Emeritus shared this insight with UUTC leadership before his retirement. At the time, I imagine it was a rather abstract concept, and in many ways still is. **I believe I can offer UUTC the most assistance if I can help you fully understand (from a visceral as well as operational level) exactly what that means, and the steps required to make this leap – if you choose to do so.***

Again, based on first impressions, the three main areas requiring TLC are:

- 1) Staffing*
- 2) Space*
- 3) Spending*

Since writing that, I have found that UUTC continues to be a very warm and welcoming community, especially for people who are very similar to the members and friends already present. In the future, we may want to discuss ways to attract a more diverse membership that is reflective of the demographics of Transylvania County. Of course ... this would be a long-term aspiration, if UUTC leadership wishes to include it on long-range planning.

I have been wondering if Trustees now more fully understand the significance of transitioning from being a "Pastoral" to a "Program" size congregation, and its concomitant "policy governance structure" designed by the Administration Committee in about 2014, and effectively first implemented upon my arrival.

Some of the “Big Rocks to Move” during the remainder of the Interim Ministry Period:

- It seems to me that **“refining” the existing PG model to meet the needs of UUTC will be among the highest Board/Staff/GMAC priorities** as we continue to prepare for arrival of a new Settled Minister. Specifically, the question I would ask is “What process(es) do we need to adopt in order to ensure that we are working at the “optimal” level of Staff-Volunteer Involvement (and/or any other issues that arise.)
- We should develop a process for the Board, Staff, GMAC, and Lay Leaders to develop a Long Range Plan for UUTC. This will include refining Values/Mission/and Vision. We may want to consider bringing in a UUA-based consultant to assist in this effort.
- Strengthening Lay and Staff Leadership through enhanced training is also recommended. We should **discuss the process and content of selecting and funding attendance at the upcoming SUULE Experience** to be held 7/24 – 29 in Williamsburg, VA. Nominations are due by 3/28/2016. (See www.seduua.org/events.html for more info.)
- It would be extremely helpful **to identify a President Elect and Secretary of the Board for consideration in the SUULE Experience** nomination process.
- Exploring ways to **become a truly “Intergenerational Congregation.”** This may include reviewing worship style(s) and possibly having a “Modern” and “Traditional” service, as well as less formal worship opportunities throughout the week. Of course, this would require concerted effort on the part of the Worship/Music Teams, and anything changes we attempt should be done slowly, and as an “experiment.”
- There are also “positive rumblings” among members of the Social Action Team to **keep “Green Sanctuary Guidelines” in mind when planning for current and future building use.**
- Finally, it would be helpful for me to **work with GMAC/Board of Trustees/Committee and Team Leads to develop CONCRETE, Measurable GOALS for myself and the rest of the Professional Staff.**

Below follows a partial list of activities and accomplishments since I began serving in August.

1) Staffing

For what I believe is the first time in UUTC history, we are holding weekly staff meetings that last about 1 hour in duration. These help us plan our work as well as maintain an esprit de corps which I believe is essential to the healthy and harmonious operations of a congregation – and every other organization as well.

During this time of transition, ***we have developed and continue to refine job descriptions*** for all staff members. ***Once the Board helps me establish overarching goals for the coming budget year, we can also refine concrete goals for each staff member.***

We should also discuss the possibility of increased wages and/or line budget line item(s) for employee expenses such as professional development, supplies, and mileage for some positions.

As required by our insurance underwriter, as well as UUTC Policy, we have ensured that everyone who works with children (both paid staff and volunteers) passes a background check. Although the \$15 fee for each background report added unexpected expenses, it was essential to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and staff. (For this reason, Jim Hardy also cut a hole in the Nursery door, to ensure that passersby can view the inside of the room.) In the future, we should also look into installing security cameras in strategic areas, including the nursery.

All Nursery personnel must have current CPR Certification, and RK is working with a contact to offer a training program at UUTC at a significantly discounted rate. The tentative date for this training is March 12.

We have experienced ***numerous shifts in professional staffing since my arrival.*** First, and most significantly, we upgraded the part-time position of Administrative Assistant to a full-time Administrator position. Although there may still be some dissention regarding this decision, I believe that hiring “R.K.” Becky Young fulltime was probably the single most important change implemented during my brief tenure.

RK Young runs the office and manages use of the physical plant, including scheduling use of space as well as maintenance. Under her leadership, she has worked with the Building Use Task Force to develop plans for both short-term and longer-term building use.

She also publishes a weekly newsletter and maintains UUTC Communications while also working with other staff members, volunteers and me to make significant, albeit often “invisible” improvements, in virtually every area of operations.

Heather Layton continues to do awesome work with our children and youth. ***Once we have dedicated space for our Youth, and a few more families in regular attendance, it will be time to begin discussion of added paid hours in the CRE program.***

Mark Allison retired and we hired Kevin Smith to work as our A/V tech on Sunday mornings. In addition, we are developing a small team of other “techies” who can follow the A/V Instruction sheets being developed as guides to newbies, and those who use the equipment

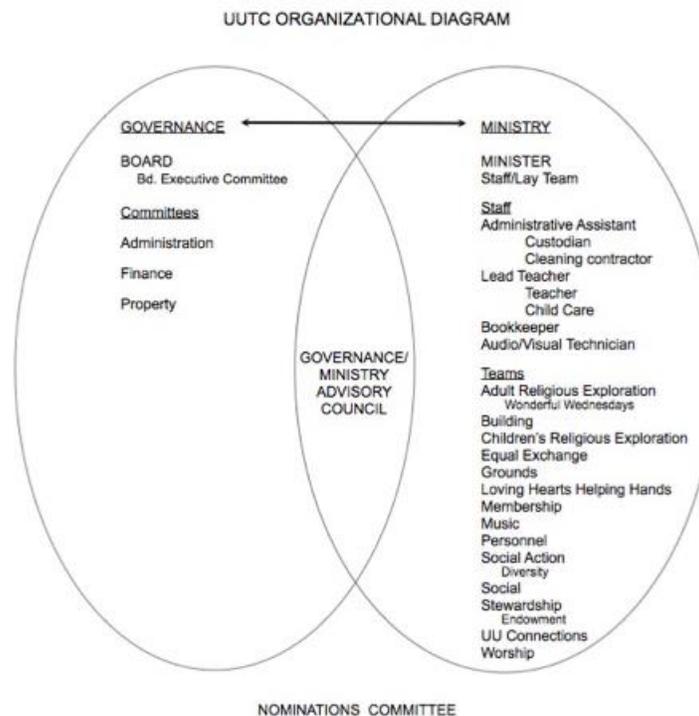
infrequently. Mark continues to print the Order of Service and to volunteer his time in troubleshooting and some of the other A/V things he used to do before “retirement.”

Emily Atkinson is now so busy with her “day job” as a Middle School Art Teacher that she **needs to take a break from being a paid Sunday School Teacher**. Heather Layton will work with the CRE Team and me to determine next steps in staffing.

Katie Messmer is a great addition to the Nursery, since she is a certified teacher and also enjoys doing administrative work, such as coordinating staff and parents. I believe we benefit greatly from Katie’s many talents.

Sue Gervais continues to serve as part time bookkeeper. As the number of activities at UUTC grows, so do Sue’s hours per week. At present, we are fortunate to have a very hardworking Treasurer who works closely with our bookkeeper, and I daresay pitches in to hold Sue’s hours to about 8 weekly. **If, in the future, the Treasurer cannot give time as generously as Dave Roberts, we will need to add hours to Sue’s schedule; recruit other volunteer(s); or shift work to another staff person.**

Hector Flores, are part time custodian, has been a big help in small maintenance jobs, and also in setting up tables for larger social events. Many people who have hosted these events have expressed their relief at not having to move furniture – on top of everything else.



Administration (Committee)

In the area of administration, **we have begun to study the nature of “Policy Governance”** of PG, by reading (and eventually discussing/working through) Dan Hotchkiss’s book *Governance and Ministry*. Determining the right “organizational structure” for UUTC (most likely through trial and error, as well as researching PG in other congregations of similar size) will be a work in progress for several years.

The Board of Trustees has developed a Covenant for Right Relationship, serving as good “role models” for all teams and committees to follow suit. (The Staff is putting finishing touches on our own Covenant as we speak.) ***It will be important for the Board and Staff to continue to support understanding and use of covenants by all UUTC groups.***

We have **revised policies to allow for rental of the building**, and I believe we will begin to harvest the fruits of our labor in the near future, once all the “infrastructure” is in place. Although we are still in the process of developing a recommended fee structure, and finalizing the sample rental agreement, we have taken significant steps toward generating increased revenue through rental fees and other creative uses of building space. (Possibilities include establishing a rotating art gallery with a percentage of proceeds of sales of items going to the “UUTC Gallery.”

We have also **developed a policy for “disruptive behavior,”** with a **“Document Retention Policy”** in the works.

I am also working with the GMAC and Worship/Music Teams and others to ***develop a policy regarding aesthetics*** in the Sanctuary and throughout the building and grounds.

I recommend that the Board review and consider modifications to the existing policies to promote healthy, open discussion regarding financial contributions to UUTC. J.C. Christopher and other authors cite numerous reasons to develop a more open approach to talking about money.

Finance (Committee)

The Board of Trustees, the Stewardship Team, and the Finance Committee are now working together to develop a Mission Based Budget, as envisioned by J. Clif Christopher in *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*. As Donald Trump would say, “This is HUGE.” I’m moving to another country if he wins.

We have also developed a policy to guide the Board in the amount of money to be kept in Reserves, and the amount to remain as “Cash on Hand.”

Thanks to Dave Roberts

2) Space (Property⁺ Committee, Grounds Team, Building Use Task Force)

Because RK is now a fulltime employee, she has been able to offer *significant*, valuable leadership in the Building Use Task Force to make strategic decisions about how to best utilize space at present, while planning for the future. RK is scheduled to present the findings at our February meeting.

Although it is largely “invisible,” we have made significant advances in squeezing every square foot of available space out of the existing building:

A. **Converted “alcove” at entrance to main door into a coat closet.** This reduces the visual clutter of a dry cleaner style coat rack, while also free the space it occupied for other uses.

B. **Cleaned out main closet in the Admin Office**, which I refer to as “The Vault.” This has freed up space to move the Music Team’s supplies to this same area, **so the Minister can use the hall closet for MUCH NEEDED storage.**

C. **Freeing up space in the Library to allow for a Youth Group/Multipurpose meeting room.** To accomplish this we moved the CRE Lead Teacher’s desk from “The Library” to the “A/V” room, only after moving books and supplies and removing shelves. We now have FOUR positions sharing this small workspace: Our Lead RE Teacher, the hourly bookkeeper, the Treasurer and the A/V Technician(s). This is a bit tight – by anyone’s standards.

We have also packed up and are in the process of storing most of the books that have been in the library until now.

D. **Exploring ways to “hide” the folding tables** in a location closer to the Social Hall, to cut down on wear and tear of equipment – as well as people, walls and floors. This should also yield additional square footage for storage in the Mechanical Room.

E. Although these fall more under the area of “Family Outreach and Support” than under Use of Space, I am very pleased to announce that RK, Jim Hardy and Browning worked together to **add a Diaper Changing Station** in one of the restrooms off the kitchen. This was in response to fathers expressing the need for access to a changing table – since there was only one in the Women’s room. This team also added a **“cry room monitor” in the Admin area**, so that children and staff in the nursery can see and hear the service – as well as parents who left the service to comfort a crying or fussy child.

F. Katie Messmer of the CRE/Nursery Staff is now exploring a no cost/low cost way to possibly **use the small, green space at the rear of the parking lot**, to serve as a play area for young children.

G. Upon final approval of the Document Retention Policy, **Admin will begin to scan and/or destroy documents we no longer need** – but are now taking up precious space.

H. Also, ***special thanks to RK and Kay*** for donating the time and supplies to create “***rock sculptures***” and ground covering on the exterior of the windows in the Social Hall.

3. Spending (and Stewardship)

The Board of Trustees, the Stewardship Team, and the Finance Committee are now working together to develop a Mission Based Budget, as envisioned by J. Clif Christopher in *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*. For a congregation that is very cautious about monetary matters, this is a very large step. Kudos!

The Stewardship Team is up and running, under the capable leadership of President Elect Gary Kendrick. We are also extremely fortunate to have new Friend Kristen Leesment offering expert consulting on the upcoming Stewardship Drive.

Thanks to Dave Roberts and associates, we now have a well-integrated “ACS/Church Life” computer software system that allows for links between the UUTC website; individual mobile phones and computers; individual member and friend “accounts”; monthly electronic payments; an automated “phone tree” system that allows for almost instantaneous “news blasts” for those who have signed up to receive them; and more. I believe it is hard to fully convey how useful this integrated software package is when trying to run the organization at an optimal level, with a relatively small staff.

We have also developed a policy to guide the Board regarding the amount of money to be kept in Reserves, and the amount to remain as “Cash on Hand.”

We have been developing a much-needed process for acknowledging significant contributions by members and friends. We also ensured that all donors received a personalized end-of-year thank you letter.

In addition, we produced an updated version of the Endowment Fund trifold brochure. Since then, several people have enquired about the program, and/or made a contribution. In the future, ***it will be helpful to develop a systematic method for identifying, communicating with, and honoring members and friends who wish to make a significant financial contribution to UUTC.***

Transition Management

In addition to everything recorded above, we have also been deeply involved in the UUA-required logistics to prepare for your upcoming Search for a Settled Minister.

- 1) Start-up Retreat in September with Southern Region Consultant Kathy McGowan
- 2) Values/Mission/Vision retreat lead by Marguerite Mills from Nashville UU.

- 3) First visit with Ministerial Settlement Representative Rev. Ann Marie Alderman.
- 4) Scheduled (and then postponed due to snow) the Conflict Resolution Workshop in Greenville, SC.
- 5) Hosted meals with major donors to receive feedback about their perceptions and desires for UUTC at present and in the future.
- 6) Established the GMAC and began to figure out how to make it “work.” I believe this body has already helped UUTC in significant ways, including helping to enhance communication between the Board, Finance Committee and Stewardship Team. Also, we were able to present a “Community Conversation with Coffee and Confections” to enhance existing processes for addressing concerns.
- 7) “Breathing life” into the significance and *use of Covenants* as sacred promises that bind us in community.
- 8) Developed a process to *select members of the Search Task Force* to identify a new Settled Minister.
- 9) Ongoing work to refine Values, Mission and Vision. It will be important for the Board to work closely with the Visioning/Long Range Planning Task Force, and perhaps bring in another outside consultant, in order to facilitate this process.

Although there is much more that I could include in this “Six Month Review,” I believe I have addressed most of the high points, while also offering suggestions for future consideration. I hope that this is helpful, and solicit feedback as to ways that I can most effectively support you in living out the Mission of UUTC.

Respectfully submitted,



Rev. Dr. Paula R. Gable