

A Last Word

— by John Weston

This workbook is a guide to hands-on practice, a manual. But from its tools, exercises, and admonitions emerge, as well, the characteristics of effective interim ministry, and the beginnings of an interim pastoral theology.

Interim ministry requires a consultant attitude. The congregation is a *you*, not a *we*. And always there is the implied *if*: *If* you want to become, in fact, the congregation you say you dream of being, these are the issues you need to attend to.

A consultant attitude alone is not enough. I once witnessed a crop of new interim ministers take Lyle Schaller's *The Interventionist* too much to heart and have, individually and collectively, a tough year. They had taken from that fine volume the misimpression that they were to be analytic, shrewd, and aloof, and therefore led with their expertise in organizational development rather than their common humanity. As a result, their reserve forestalled the growth of trust—in both directions.

If emotional remoteness will not do, neither will emotional neediness. An interim minister who requires a daily dose of appreciation, affirmation, and admiration, and who wants these people to be her or his people, will find interim ministry dry work. If your ministry needs validation, stay away from interim ministry! Edwin Friedman was massively right: differentiation is required, and differentiation is bipolar. On the one hand, avoid getting tangled in the emotional processes of others. On the other hand, be emotionally available. Interim ministers must cultivate what called ministers, too, must cultivate, only more so.

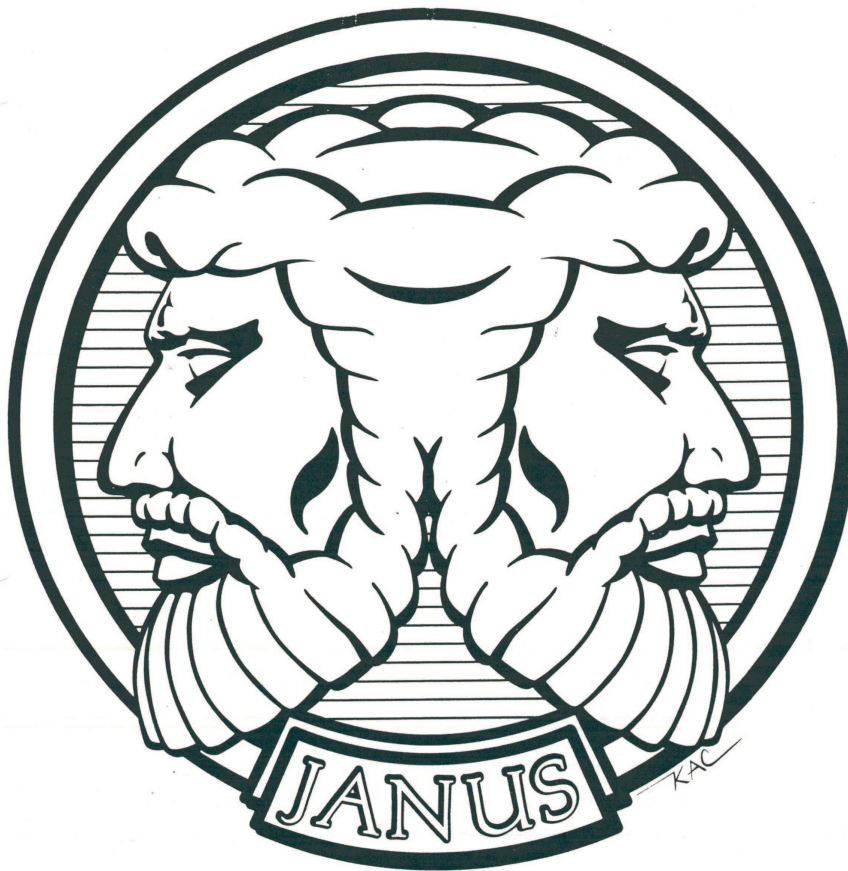
This brings us, finally, to preaching and worship. Excellent and profound worship, weighty worship, is essential. Without it, a congregation in transition, full of centrifugal forces, threatens to fly apart. Worship at its best is centripetal, the center of gravity, and the preparation of excellent and profound worship is equally essential to the preacher. Where better than in the preparation of worship can interim ministers, so often strangers in a strange land, come to terms with themselves in the context of their current community? Where else can they approach the sources of their robustness, resilience, commitment, and courage as those sources reveal themselves in this time and in this place?

Worship prepared in the spirit of life's abundance conveys that spirit, constituting a living, breathing witness to the promise of life fully lived right here, right now, in the context of our age-old religious tradition.

Interim ministry affirms so little—and so much! In this moment, under these conditions, with these people, with their history both noble and ignoble, the old verities prevail: truth is better than deception; secrecy avails not; compassion and forgiveness are sweet; generosity enlarges, while stinginess contracts; and life is worth living to the full. Say it is so!

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

— T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding” V



Janus Workbook

Bibliography

An annotated list of resources proven useful in working with interim congregations.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Our own INTERIM-L list online: where Unitarian Universalist interim ministers share ideas and consult each other on issues relative to our work in the field. Sign on via the UUA website:

www.uua.org/lists, click on the Alphabetical Listing of all UUA lists, and you will find Interim-L.

THE ALBAN INSTITUTE: www.alban.org — access to membership, training opportunities, a congregational resource guide, a rich annotated resource list, and all Alban publications on-line, including the *Alban Weekly* and many of the other books listed below.

INTERIM MINISTRY NETWORK: www.interimministry.org — the only ecumenical organization training clergy for intentional interim ministry.

NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED: Check out the ever growing body of resources on the UUA website beyond those mentioned herein, and in addition to those specifically related to Settlement and to Interim Ministry [such as this very JANUS WORKBOOK you are reading].

BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

AUUA Guidebook, published by the Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators, www.auua.org — The congregation's administrator should have one; even so, you will likely find this binder, which is full of current wisdom about the nuts-and-bolts of everyday church management, useful to you also.

Boers, Arthur Paul, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*, Alban Institute, 1999 — The subtitle says it succinctly. Boers challenges the prevailing habit of targeting persons as problems and teaches, instead, how to understand and address situations systemically.

Branson, Mark Lau, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, Alban Institute, 2004 — Demonstrates the use, value, and transformative potential of Appreciative Inquiry in a church setting, adds substantial scriptural reflection to fit the context of a Christian congregation (a California Presbyterian church).

Bridges, William, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, Addison-Wesley, 1980 — The classic resource for coping with difficult, painful, and confusing times, it is framed in terms of personal life, and applies to interim times in congregations equally well.

Durall, Michael, *Creating Congregations of Generous People*, Alban Institute,

1999 — Compelling presentation, practical suggestions, and real-life congregational examples, many of which are from UU congregations, packed in a slim gem of a book on stewardship. Durall also consults with congregations and is available for district workshops.

Friedman, Edwin H., *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, Guilford Press, 1985 — A classic on family systems theory at work in congregations, alive and well (or not) in congregations. Chapter 10, on “Leaving and Entering a Congregational Family” is useful rereading as farewell time approaches.

Gaede, Beth Ann, editor, *Size Transitions in Congregation*, Alban Institute, 2001 — One of Alban’s “Harvesting the Learnings” series, this volume collects the wisdom of fourteen pioneer thinkers on the sociology of numerical size and its impact on congregations.

Heller, Anne Odin, *Churchworks: A Well-Body Book for Congregations*, Skinner House, Boston, 1999 — The handbook for sustaining a healthy church; it is comprehensive and practical.

King, Jerald L., *Budgets With A Mission*, second edition 1998, King and Associates, Toledo, Ohio; available via UUA Bookstore — This is ‘the bible’ on program-based budgeting, which enables folks to see what their contributions accomplish.

Lott, David B, editor, *Conflict Management In Congregations*, Alban Institute, 2001 — A collection of twenty classic essays on congregational conflict, with an introduction by Speed Leas, which reflects on how this vital field has evolved. Especially cogent for interim work is Gil Rendle’s chapter on “The Illusion of Congregational ‘Happiness.’” [This book is also in Alban’s new “Harvesting the Learnings” series.]

Mann, Alice, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations*, Alban Institute, 1998 — Interim ministries often encounter size transition stresses; Alice Mann is the leading consultant in this realm, insightful and practical. (Note: current church-size theory primarily describes Anglo-Saxon Protestant congregations; this is also true of Appendix D.)

Mann, Alice, *What Size Should We Be? Visioning the In-Between Church*, Alban Institute, 2000 — This VIDEO incorporates and expands on *The In-Between Church* and is a very useful tool in educating people about size and the stresses that accompany growth or decline in church population. Approximately 90 minutes, in four segments.

Mann, Alice, *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition*, Alban Institute, 2001 — The transition between pastoral and program size challenges many a congregation and is familiar to many an interim minister. This cutting-edge book maps this ground and provides a guide for navigating it.

Mead, Loren B., *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors*, Alban Institute, 1986 — Loren Mead pioneered recognition of transitions between clergy as times of unique opportunity and of ministering to them as a specialized calling. This book outlined the developmental tasks involved, generated a movement, and led to the establishment of the Interim Ministry Network. A precursor to *Temporary Shepherds*.

Nicholson, Roger S., *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*, Alban Institute, 1998 — Addressed to congregations, it describes well the developmental opportunities of interim time. Ministers may find it beneficial to provide this book to the lay leadership before your arrival .

Oshry, Barry, *Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Mysteries of Organizational Life*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 1995 — Shows deep understanding of power systems at work in social organizations and is engagingly written.

Parsons, George & Leas, Speed B., *Understanding Your Congregation As A System*, Alban Institute, 1993 — Contains both a Manual and a Congregational Systems Inventory that apply systems theory to evaluating a congregation's life and readiness for change. It is an excellent tool for aiding non-conflicted congregations in self-assessment and future direction-setting.

Phillips, Roy E., *Letting Go: Transforming Congregations for Ministry*, Alban Institute, 1999 — This is an update for an ecumenical audience of Roy's earlier *Transforming Liberal Congregations for the New Millennium*, [published by Unity Unitarian in St. Paul, 1996]. Both volumes present a compelling case for redesigning congregational life for shared, gift-centered ministry, rather than need-centered task accomplishment.

Rendle, Gilbert R., *Behavioral Covenants In Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences*, Alban Institute, 1999 — Rendle uplifts the relational essence of faith communities and structures how to embody it with covenantal commitments for healthy and safe engagement that respects difference and honors diversity.

Rendle, Gilbert R., *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, Alban Institute, 1998 — Keen insight, savvy analysis, and useful tools for serving congregations encountering change, by a senior Alban consultant in the field. Addresses the spiritual, emotional, and behavioral responses to change and the ways to meet them.

Schaller, Lyle E., *The Interventionist*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1997 — Invaluable! This compact volume packs all of Lyle Schaller's lifetime of consulting experience in a volume which penetrates to the essence of every facet of church life—all posed in questions that yield insight and discovery. A book for your kit bag.

Trumbauer, Jean Morris, *Sharing the Ministry: A Practical Guide for Transforming Volunteers into Ministers*, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1995 — Hefty binder packed with shared ministry philosophy, processes, and forms. Exhaustively detailed.

Wheatley, Margaret J., *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World, second edition*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 1999 — An accessible and comprehensive introduction to the paradigm shift in understanding how systems transform in the midst of change and emerge creatively. Wheatley applies 20th century breakthroughs in science to human organizations and our role as leaders.

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Assess the STATE OF THE CONGREGATION at this point in time relative to these interim goals:

● **Claiming and honoring the congregation's past and healing its griefs and conflicts**

Congregation is mired in grief and/or conflict past with					Congregation recounts and assesses its ease, insight, appreciation

● **Illuminating the congregation's unique identity, its strengths, its needs and its challenges**

Congregation is claiming floundering, confused, with lacks direction					Congregation is its unique personality clarity, honesty, pride

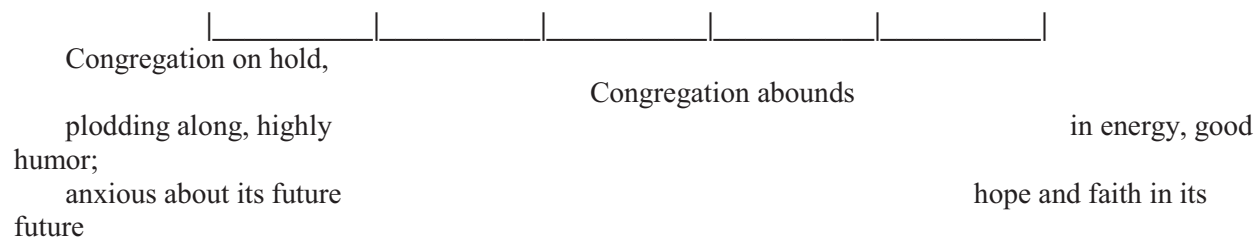
● **Clarifying the multiple dimensions of leadership, both ordained and lay, and navigating the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition**

Staff and leadership strong, are in stasis, burning out; access is limited managed					Leadership is capable, readily shared; turnover is well

● **Renewing connections with available resources, within and beyond the UUA**

Congregation is isolated and going its own way					Congregation well connected, readily using available resources

● **Reviving the congregation's vision, strengthening stewardship, preparing for new professional leadership, and engaging the future with anticipation and zest**



DATE: _____ BY: _____

Arriving with a suitcase

One popular technique for introducing ourselves and our role the first Sunday in the pulpit is to arrive with a suitcase that we unpack, as we describe interim life. One of us found a canvas tool bag at a resale shop, and dubbed it her interim satchel. On the outside she painted “travel stickers” depicting each of the locales where she’s served (and on the Sunday she leaves, there’s a new sticker there).

Inside are photos of family (connecting with home) and a street map (connecting here), and a stash of “satchel pages” that invite people to tell her “where to go”, i.e. —

BEST BREAKFAST MENU

FAVORITE ETHNIC RESTAURANT

GREAT EXCURSION WITH GUESTS

USED BOOK STORE

HIKING / BIKING TRAILS

DROP-IN MEDICAL CLINIC

Plus, there’s a linen wall hanging for her office with a quotation from Saint Benedict, to remind herself that she is a guest here.

“If any pilgrim monk come from distant parts, if with wish as a guest to dwell in the monastery, and will be content with the customs which he finds in the place, & do not perchance by his lavishness disturb the monastery, but is simply content with what he finds, he shall be received, for as long a time as he desires. If, indeed, he find fault with anything, or expose it, reasonably, and with the humility of charity, the Abbott shall discuss it prudently, lest perchance god had sent him for this very thing. But, if he have been found gossipy and contumacious in the time of his sojourn as guest, not only ought he not to be joined to the body of the monastery, but also it shall be said to him, honestly, that he must depart. If he does not go, let two stout monks, in the name of God, explain the matter to him.”

Beyond items personal to yourself, there will be objects that symbolize the interim year developmental goals:

- **Claiming and honoring the past, and healing griefs and conflicts:** a heart pendant; a box of Kleenex, or an all-purpose cowboy bandanna
- **Illuminating the congregation’s unique identity, strengths and challenges:** a mirror; a JENGA game (*the object of which is to open up spaces in the structure*)
- **Navigating the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition:** a compass; a nametag; a copy of *Churchworks*; a kaleidoscope
- **Renewing connections with resources within and beyond the district and UUA:** *Temporary Shepherds*, District and UUA directories; a copy of “InterConnections”
- **Engaging the future with vision, strength, anticipation and zest:** a star chart; beads to string together into a rainbow
- **Fulfilling the normal responsibilities of parish ministry:** As this will be of greatest concern to most of the congregation meeting you the first time, perhaps a liturgical stole, or a Jefferson Bible?

Let your imagination play!

Streams. . . a "how to" applications program by C.E.N.T.E.R. — Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association
(update, Spring 2001)

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR APPLYING FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

©The Reverend Kenneth Gordon Hurto

From the fall of 1986 until his death October 30th, 1996, I had the good fortune to study with Rabbi Dr. Edwin H. Friedman, author of *Generation to Generation* and *Friedman's Fables*, and a video, *Re-Inventing Leadership*, (both published by Guilford Press) and *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (published by his estate). Over the years, I discovered many colleagues had studied the theory, found it energizing, and then were at a loss to know how to apply it. Ed repeatedly declared *Bowen Family Systems* is a **way of thinking** about life. "*It's not about technique!*" Still, he had several tricks up his clever sleeve. With that caveat in mind, I offer this collection of aphorisms and tips that I have found useful in my ministry. Perhaps they may be helpful to you.

Know the theory! Thinking the theory is the practice. In addition to Friedman, read *Family Evaluation* by Michael Kerr & Murray Bowen (Norton, 1988), *How Your Church Family Works* (1993) and *Healthy Churches: A Systems Approach* (1996) both by Peter Steinke (The Alban Institute), and *Extraordinary Families* by Roberta Gilbert.

Know Thyself! Be Somebody! This is what Self-Differentiation is all about. Remember: Who you are is more important than what you do. Define your boundaries — often. Be clear about your values and commitments. Be clear about what you will and won't do. Tell people. Tell them again.

Know your Vision! Witnessing for your Vision of the Ideal toward which you are drawn and to which you give your loyalty is what enables you to Be a Self. Can you say: What has God/Goddess called you to do? To be? Go to the Promised Land: Tell your people where you're going, invite them along, and then go.

Using Family Systems in General:

- HISTORY DEFINES AND LIMITS THE PRESENT. Study your personal family of origin. Study the history of your church, especially how it has handled crises over time.
- PRETEND YOU ARE A UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER. Your job is to watch and to report observations, to keep violence from escalating, to minimize alliance formation, and to forestall outside interventions.
- LEADERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE STRONG STANDS on issues; they do not have the right to expect conformity. Cultivate a tolerance for disagreement, diversity, and ambiguity. Lower your need to have your way.

- **MAGNETS ARE BETTER THAN BULLDOZERS.** The more you rely on the attractive appeal of your vision, the less need you will feel to push people. Respect others' boundaries.
- **REFUSE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.** Be a coach, not a savior — they tend to get crucified.
- **MAKE THE IRRESPONSIBLE RESPONSIBLE.** Watch out for the over-functioner's trap of solving everyone's problems. You are responsible only for your problems. Refuse to take on the responsibilities of others. Of course, expect to be criticized for that restraint.
- **QUESTIONS ARE THE ANSWER !** In counseling, in conflicted situations, if you never do anything more than ask (good) questions that help people define themselves, you'll have done enough.
- **CHALLENGE NEGATIVITY.** Many Unitarian Universalists are cut off from their existential origins. Thus, they are more anxious about and reactive to what they're against. Challenge people to define what they're for. For instance: *"Well, if you don't believe in God, what do you believe in?"*
- **WHEN THINGS GO WELL, WATCH OUT FOR SABOTAGE.** The poorly defined person fears progress and change.
- **EXPOSE SECRETS, STAY OUT OF TRIANGLES** (not that you can, but be aware when you're in one!). Don't be caught by confidentiality traps. Say: *"I'm sorry, but I'm just terrible about keeping secrets, don't tell me this if you don't want others to know."* They'll still tell you and you won't be colluding. Feedback and check out what you hear from others. *"Say, Bill, Jane just said to me... Is that so?"*
- **KEEP YOUR BAGS PACKED.** Remain emotionally able to "quit." Do not place your survival in the hands of others or your job. You can't be free to be your Self (take stands that others may not like) if you emotionally need the job or role.
- **THE CHURCH IS NOT A PRISON.** Learn to tolerate others "quitting" you. Really believe in freedom.

Using Family Systems in the Pulpit:

- **BE A SELF.** Preach from a *"This I believe"* or *"Here is where I stand"* perspective.
- **AVOID FUSION.** Be wary of the preacher's falsely inclusive *"we."* Your experiences are not everyone's.
- **TRUST THE UNIVERSAL IN THE PARTICULAR.** Use the pulpit to work out what's going on in your head and heart. Your working out issues important to you allows others to do the same.
- ***"NOT TO THINK ALIKE, BUT TO ALIKE THINK."*** Create space for your people to define themselves. Say: *"Afterwards, I'd like to hear what you have to say..."* Or: *"Here's a few ideas I've been wrestling with..."* When dealing with controversial topics, include phrases that increase the listener's ability to hear; viz.: *"I can see how some think this, others that...; here's what I think."* Or: *"You may disagree with me on this..."* Or: *"Of course, I'm often wrong about things."* Or: *"But then again, this is a non-creedal congregation, we don't expect everyone to conform to the same teachings."*

- **PASS THE BATON.** When challenged in a way that indicates you were misunderstood, do not defend or explain your point (it's hard!), but ask, *"How did the rest of you hear what I said on this?"*
- **WHEN ANXIETY STRIKES HARD:** If you are or your congregation is anxious about the minister-congregational relationship, give a strong, clear *"I Have a Dream"* sermon wherein you define your ministry. Then provide opportunities for them to do likewise.

Using Family Systems to Cope With Criticism:

- **YOUR CRITICS LOVE YOU.** All criticism (valid or not) is a desire to be closer to you, either to be more intimate with you or to have control over you. Can you love and pray for your enemy (it's hard!)?
- **CRITICISM IS CONFESSION.** Statements about you tell you more about the speaker than they do about you. One colleague declares: *"It's not about you! It's not about you!"* — although it sure feels that way. Listen for and feedback your critic's values to help them define themselves.
- **THE NOTEPAD PROTECTOR:** You can modulate your own anxiety by asking questions and writing down anything that is said, noting: *"Say that again slowly, I just want to be sure I get it down right."* Do not defend or explain, just write it down. The act of writing slows everyone down and lowers anxiety.
- **THE RULE OF TWO:** If two rational attempts to solve the problem fail, the problem is NOT the problem. Pay attention to the emotional process and relationship issues. Stay out of the content.
- **PRAISE YOUR CRITICS.** With good humor, even affection, you can say publicly, *"As you know my loyal opposition believes I..."*
- **DON'T FEED SHARKS.** Be wary of willfulness and/or defensiveness on your part. These feed the demons that would eat you. Try affirming criticisms: *"Yes, I'm not as good at that as I'd like to be."* Or be playful: *"You know, my mother always complained about that in me, too!"*
- **ENLIST YOUR CRITICS ON YOUR BEHALF.** After you've listened non-defensively (use the pad!), you can help your critic define her/himself by asking: *"If there were a button you could push to change me, what would that button be labeled?"* After it's clear what s/he wants/needs, turn the responsibility back where it belongs by asking: *"I'd like to do what you ask, can you help me do so by...?"*
- **TRUST HELPLESSNESS.** Know-it-alls disempower people. You can stay non-anxious by saying, *"I share your concern. I want to be responsive, but I just don't know what to do."* Make yourself small, avoid the arrogance of the expert.
- **ON CONSEQUENCES:** How you respond (react?) to an event, not its content, determines its outcome. Put differently, it's what you do after you've decided that determines how good a decision you've made.

Using Family Systems to Cope With Anxiety:

- **A NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE IS NOT WITHOUT ANXIETY.** If you're human, you'll be anxious! The issue is to not let your anxiety control your behavior. Exercise,

meditate regularly. Have a safe place to go when you're scared. Remember the refrigerator magnet: *"Leadership is the art of hiding your panic from others."*

- *"DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING, STAND THERE!"* One of Murray Bowen's favorite sayings. Over-functioning reactivity usually makes anxious systems more so. Stopping long enough to step back and quietly assess will calm things down so that you and others can begin thinking again.
- **PROBLEMS ARE NEVER SOLVED BY AVOIDANCE.** When in doubt, go closer to the sources of your anxiety. Learn to prefer acute to chronic pain. As Ed often said, *"Can you actually look forward to meeting with that troublesome parishioner?"*

This exercise offers a broad-brush introduction to the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**. It can be fleshed out with hand-outs describing each type-set from resource books on the subject. There will be trained facilitators in your area who can lead retreat sessions or workshops for Boards, staff, and lay leadership, if interest arises. It is an enabling tool for groups that interact regularly.

Share the reading of each of the pairs of opposites with a partner positioned on the opposite side of an open floor. Ask people to listen, in each case, to both options, and then move to whichever side better describes him or her. You and your partner might have stickers with corresponding letters on them

(E or I, S or N, T or F, J or P) to give to each person on your side. Sometimes people will be near the middle, but ask them to choose the side they incline to first. The pairs of choices are the following:

1)

You are **Extraverted** if you:

- Gravitate toward the outer world of actions and objects and people, and enjoy meeting strangers.
- Tend to think your way through something aloud, and may not know what you will say ahead of time.
- Count many people as close friends, and like to include all those you can in your activities.
- Feel depleted if you spend too much time in reflective thinking alone; you recharge by being with people

You are **Introverted** if you:

- Relish the inner world of concepts and ideas, and seek quiet places and solitary activities when you need to recharge your energy.
- Tend to feel most alone, not when by yourself, but in a crowd of strangers.
- Prefer to spend special occasions with one other person or perhaps a few close friends.
- Are a good listener and devote thought to what you're going to say before deciding to say it (wishing others would do so too!).

[Introverts constitute only 25% of the U.S. population but more than 50% of UU's]

2)

Your primary source of information about the world is your **Senses** if you:

- Focus on what is immediate, actual, and practical.
- observe details, trust and remember facts, prefer specific answers to specific questions, and value what is useful.
- believe instructions should be clear and be followed.
- like to concentrate on what you're doing at the moment --
and would rather *do* something than *think* about it.
- seek examples; you see the *trees* when you encounter a forest

(75% of general population)

You rely more on your **INTUITION** if you:

- Are more innovative than practical, focusing on possibilities and on connections between things; you tend to ask, “what does this *mean?*”
- You enjoy solving new problems, trust your hunches, value imagination, and take leaps in logic; you skip from one activity to the next (perhaps completing none).
- You pay more attention to what *may* happen than to what has happened before.
- Value metaphor and analogy; perceive the *forest* when you see trees.

(only 25% of general population, but among UU's the ratio between these two appears exactlt opposite.)

This polarity engenders the most misunderstanding and conflict between people.

3

You rely on **THINKING** if you....

- settle issues based on what is fair and truthful
(this is more important than whether or not people like you)
- you don't shrink from difficult decisions, remain objective,
and keep your cool when all around are losing theirs
- you emphasize logic, respond to *ideas*
- and are more likely to remember numbers and figures than faces and names
= 60% of men; 40% of women

You rely on **FEELING** if you....

- make decisions subjectively, weighing the values involved, and how choices impact others
- consider a "good decision" one that takes people's feelings into account
- prefer harmony to clarity, and will alter something you've said if it has offended someone
- respond to others' needs, sometimes at risk of caring for your own.

(vice versa)

4

You act with **JUDGMENT** if you...

- plan your activities and like reliable schedules
- establish deadlines and keep them
- tend to be restless until a decision is made
- like to settle issues, achieve closure on things, provide an atmosphere of safety, and stay on top of what's going on

You operate from **PERCEPTION** if you....

- prefer spontaneity to structure, enjoy surprises
- don't pre-plan a task but wait and see what it demands, adapt to what happens, stay flexible
- tend to postpone decisions, so as to keep all the options open
- love to explore the unknown

NOTE: "JUDGING" here means to bring to a conclusion; "PERCEIVING" means to be gathering data.

P's are still out there shopping while J's are already wrapping the package.

CONGREGATIONAL SIZE DYNAMICS

There are several ways that vital differences in congregational size have been described. The most used and useful describes four different congregational constellations relevant to the numerical size of the congregation that gathers on an average Sunday morning: family, pastoral, program and corporate.

Up to 50 worshippers thrive as a **FAMILY**-size church, not large enough to sustain full-time clergy, but self-supportive as an extended family. It is group-centered and close-knit (and not always easy for new members to break in to).

Growing larger, the congregation becomes a **PASTORAL** size church, relying on its now-full-time minister to sustain that sense of unity, to know and relate with everyone personally, and to integrate all that goes on in congregational life. As Sunday numbers reach 150, the demands on clergy become oppressive, burn-out threatens, and clergy turnover is the typical consequence, be it voluntary or under fire. The majority of churches of all denominations in the United States are pastoral size.

If numerical growth continues, a profound transition awaits. The church must move from being pastor-centered back to being group-centered again, and at the same time it must shift operationally from being a single-celled organism to a multi-celled organization. If it succeeds in this, it becomes a **PROGRAM** church that can effectively serve anywhere from 150 to 350 people in average attendance. The role of clergy (and a growing staff) now becomes one of planning, inspiring, coordinating and supporting the laity who lead and sustain a variety of programs and activities. These program groups provide lots of entry points for newcomers and many fertile fields for friendship to grow and bloom.

When Sunday attendance pushes on to 400 and more, there is typically a shift back to being pastor-centered again, as this large congregation expects its senior minister to devote primary time to quality worship and community leadership, becoming a visible symbol of its public identity. It is now a “**CORPORATE**” size church. Not a very appealing term, perhaps, but once a congregation gets to be this size, members know what they like and pride in their church runs high, no matter what be the descriptive word.

We have very few corporate-size churches in the UUA. Most UU congregations are pastoral-size; many of them are on the threshold of becoming program-size. Very many congregations plateau on that threshold for years. Rarely does one move from pastoral to program size without crisis. And the occurrence of crisis may pull the congregation smack dab back to pastoral size again.

Nor is it easy residing on that plateau, for it's fraught with peril and promise; and there is no best size to be. Thus ambivalence about which way to go may run deep. There will be unease, a confusion of views about the congregation's identity, and an array of outgrown perceptions — such as: “we all know everybody,” a feeling all are loathe to lose, never mind that it is no longer true. Members have conflicting expectations of clergy. Lay leaders over-function to meet the many needs and risk burn-out. If any of this sounds familiar, if folks are feeling any of these feelings, it's no one's fault. It's largely because they are in a crunch between sizes. It helps immensely to recognize and understand and honor that; to let it soak in; to let it become bright window of awareness. That is the vital first step to deciding what to do about the fact.

GRIEF WORK ACTIVITY

I designed this activity based on the annotated 11-stage diagram of the stages of grief work for congregations who have lost their minister (Interim Ministry Network, Basic Education Workbook, 1999, page 4.24). I have used it with the Search Committee the first time I meet with them and with the Board at an early fall retreat. It has facilitated my ministry with both groups.— Barbara Child*

- 1: Hand out a copy of the diagram to each person. Mention that it adapts Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's theory of the stages of grief to the context of a congregation's loss of its minister. Also hand out small slips of paper or post-it notes.
- 2: Ask each person to review the graph, and identify where they would place themselves presently. Ask them then to jot down on the slips of paper the numbers of each point on the graph where they feel themselves now—a separate slip for each number (with no name or initials), and put their slips into a basket or bowl in the center of the table. Emphasize that it's possible to be at multiple points at the same time.
- 3: When everyone is done, take a blank copy of the graph and make a mark by each numbered point for each note bearing that number. Then hold up the graph for all to see.

It is typical for a fairly large number of marks to appear high on the right side, representing Hope, Reaffirmation and Reality. But it is also typical for least a few marks to appear high on the left side, representing Denial, Grieving and Depression. There are often many more marks than the number of people in the room.

Barbara Child adds:

Each time I have done this activity, members of the group very quickly volunteer which marks represent them. Freed from responsibility to share this information, they find they are eager to share it. The experience is cathartic. In some respects, the conversations are confessional. People grow closer as a group in doing this exercise together. It contributes to their going forward and working well together during the interim year.

* NOTE: The diagram depicts an encounter with a “valley of death” on an inverse bell curve, running downhill from denial, through grieving, depression, physical symptoms, panic/anxiety, to anger/acting out, and then swinging upward from guilt, to resistance, hope, reaffirmation, and reality, with each of these points briefly described.

Rev. Howard Dana created this event for his interim congregation suffering in the wake of a painful separation from its previous minister, and offers it to colleagues to use and freely modify.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Our Town presents

A HEALING RITUAL for its members and friends

Saturday, November 30, 9 am to Noon

The advance publicity [a trifold brochure] announced that childcare and light refreshments would be provided, committed to ending at noon, and urged attendees to plan to stay for the whole service. The order of the service and its key elements [*ritual covenant, candles of remembrance, truth mandala, and prayers of hope*] were described, and the service leaders [minister, worship associate and musician] were named.

In addition, the following questions were asked and answered:

Why this ritual?

Our congregation has a unique opportunity to spend a year looking at its present and past ministry, so that it can look to the future. We need a way to recognize and acknowledge our history and the people who have contributed to it. We need to remember. We need to speak and listen. And we need to grow beyond our past.

Should I come?

“Why do we have to talk about this?” ... “I think we are beyond our past trouble.” ... “Rituals make me nervous.” ... “I don’t know what all the fuss is about.” ... “I’ll come, but I don’t want to have to say anything.” If you can say any of these things, this ritual is for you. The Healing Ritual is for the whole church. It needs people to speak and people to observe. It needs people with a long history here and people who have only come a short time. The ritual needs you.

Here is the ORDER OF SERVICE that was followed that Saturday morning:

The Sound of the Bell Calls Us to Begin... *We ring our gong three times. The first is in memory of all those souls who have gone before us, who have struggled to light the way. The second is for those of us here today who search for deeper meaning in our journey together. The third is for all those who will carry on the torch of our faith we now nurture with love and care.*

Call to Worship

Unison Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice

to remind ourselves to treat all people kindly, because they are our brothers and sisters;

to take good care of the Earth, because it is our home;

to live lives full of goodness and love, because that is how we will become the best people we can be.

Opening Hymn — # 323: “Break Not the Circle”

Ritual Covenant *to set ground rules for the ritual and create a safe and worshipful space:*

LEADER: As a community of faith, we gather to hear one another. Let us begin in love.

CONGREGATION: We gather to speak and to witness to the speaking.

L: Recognizing each of us comes from a different place this morning, we respect the differences in our midst.

C: Some of us have been with our congregation from the beginning. And some of us have come to this community only recently. Some of us are in key leadership positions. And some of us have little

knowledge of the inner workings of the church. Some of us remember Rev.XYZ's ministry. Some of us don't. But we are all one congregation.

- L: As a congregation of people who care for one another, we covenant this morning to speak our truth in love.
- C: We covenant to hold what is spoken here this morning in our hearts. We will not share what others say here beyond this sacred time and space, that this may be a safe place to speak.
- L: Our task is to advance the cause of healing, not to cause hurt. We will speak from our own experience. We will speak our own feelings. We will listen with compassion and open hearts.
- C: We covenant to be with the group through the ritual. The group can hold fear, anger and sadness. To witness is as powerful as speaking. All here this morning are full participants in this healing ritual.
- L: We come together this morning to worship. As worship, this time and space is sacred. This room is truly a sanctuary. May we know the love and peace of this caring community. May we each find our own voice. May we remember the power of love. Let us begin in love.
- C: Let us begin.

Time of Silence

Reading — (of your choice; Howard used a selection by Rabbi Shapiro in *Life Prayers*, p.268)

Candles of Remembrance *People are invited to light a candle for anyone who was part of the life of the congregation and is no longer with us. They are invited to speak of that person's gifts to the congregation and their shortcomings. [This serves to bring the congregation's history into the space and allows names to be said aloud.]*

Hymn — # 318: "We Would Be One"

Time of Silence

Reading — (of your choice; Howard used A Prayer by C.P.Estes, *The Faithful Gardener*)

A Truth Mandala *A circle has been created on the floor with four stations. At each station there is a ritual object represent an emotion: anger, sadness, disillusionment and fear. As people feel moved, they come into the circle and take up one of the ritual objects. They speak from their own experience of the emotion the object represents and its tie to the church. [They may move from object to object if needed]. The group witnesses their words. [When the person returns to his or her seat, all take hands, say "We hear your truth," and release hands. The ritual goes until all have had ample opportunity to speak. It is good to have one person ready to go first if needed.]*
— NB: the TRUTH MANDALA is described in detail in Joanna Macy's *Coming Back to Life: the Work that Reconnects*.

Musical Interlude

Time of Silence

Reading — (of your choice; Howard used "The Beads of Life" by Nancy Wood, from a book of poetry entitled *Dancing Moons*)

Hymn — # 123: "Spirit of Life"

Responsive Reading: # 637: Litany of Atonement

Recovenanting with Each Other — *segué into the following closure...*

Candles of Hope *Each person is invited to come to the center of the circle to light a candle, silently, or speaking aloud their hopes and their prayers for the congregation.*

Pastoral Prayer

Closing Hymn — # 6: "Just as Long as I Have Breath"

(Refreshments and conversation followed the service.)

HEALING FOCUS GROUPS

—*a design for a congregation in recovery following a conflicted clergy termination—*

by Devon Greyerbiehl & Mary Rupert, Spokane, WA

OVERVIEW: A team of facilitators (two or more), with skill and experience and training in counseling and mediation, created a schedule of group meeting times (each to be facilitated by a pair of them). They then phoned everyone listed in the church directory, to invite their participation and to schedule them for a meeting. They sought, insofar as workable, to gather people in working teams (i.e. the Board, the COM, the former Search committee, the staff, the choir, the Membership committee, etc.); and they also aimed for a balance of viewpoints where they knew of them. They aimed for 8 in each group (the results ranged from 5 to 10). They scheduled each meeting for 90 minutes (but allowed for an extra half hour). Approximately half of the more than 200 people contacted participated in a group. Several who were dubious or reluctant beforehand became enthusiastic promoters of the experience. The phone conversations themselves were a valuable healing experience for some.

INTRODUCING THE EXPERIENCE:

If the conflict is distant in time, invite participants to bring that time to mind, place themselves within that scene again. Acknowledge what happened ...

In this time together you will hear yourself ..sometimes for the first time.

You will hear others and feel affirmed or enlightened.

Sometimes when you write you'll be surprised by what you become aware of.

You will feel broadened and connected to others.

Anonymity is an absolute—you may tell **your** parts to anyone you choose, but do not reveal the source of anything else you share. Most often the wisest course is simply not to repeat anything anyone else said. Others may guess its source; or (just as unfair) guess it wrongly.

GROUND RULES:

Time limited*...no interruptions ...no critique or argument ...write down your thoughts, and then speak, so as to not to lose focus ...speak from your own experience.

* The facilitators occasionally varied the limits [shown below], according to the size of the group, the time available, and the degree of pain represented. Participants typically concluded on their own when they heard the timer signal the end of their 2 or 3 minutes. Concerned questions and erroneous information were acknowledged briefly if necessary, and held for wrap-up time.

THE PROCESS:

STEP # 1 — *3 minutes writing time, 3 minutes speaking time for each person*

Write about your feelings or thoughts about what has transpired....anxieties, concerns, hurts, about XYZ leaving ...the way s/he left... or what will we do in this time without a minister...or wherever your heart and mind lead you....follow your own energy....

STEP # 2 [acknowledging grief & relief]

Write about what you will miss

2 minutes writing time, then 2 minutes speaking time for each person

Write about what you will not miss

2 minutes writing time, then 2 minutes speaking time

STEP # 3 [honoring regrets & new opportunities]

Ask participants to write this one on a separate sheet of paper and leave it with us, so we may use it with the next Search Committee and not lose this vital learning

What would you do differently? ... what do you wish you'd have done differently? ...

What would you like the Board to do differently? Make it into an action statement.

What will *you* do? Who will you talk to about your questions and concerns.

3 minutes writing time...3 minutes speaking time

WRAP-UP:

Respond to any outstanding questions, hot issues. Clarify misunderstandings and erroneous facts. If time allows, and the group feels right, you might ask, "Is there anything that anyone wants to say now?" Responses are frequently gracious, sweet spirited, healing and powerful.

EQUIPMENT LIST: pens and paper...clip boards if not sitting at tables...minute timer...white board or newsprint pad, easel, marker pens [for posting the questions]

“Who Am I ?”

— *an activity to de-escalate conflict by helping people identify shared feelings and discover the emotional complexity experienced by all*

Put on a table in the center of the room, turned all different ways but none covering any others, slips of paper or stick-on labels with various emotions and identities (below) — each one duplicated many times. Ask participants to walk around the table and peruse the labels.

Then, after three minutes of "emotional shopping," invite people to pin those labels on their clothes which they care to own publicly, and put in their pocket ones that fit how they feel but are not comfortable revealing. You could, as well, suggest that people rate the intensity of each feeling they own from 1 to 10 and write that number on the label.

Invite everyone, then, to walk about the room silently reading the labels on everyone else.

Finally, offer an opportunity for each person to speak of one discovery they made about themselves in the process.

— *Andy Backus*

Here is an not-so-exhaustive list of possibilities:

winner	silent	fearful	anxious
loser	frustrated	hopeful	worn out
observer	grieving	regretful	curious
conspirator	tired	happy	worried
gloating	abandoned	sad	wary
disaffected	guilty	joyous	weary
bemused	cynical	sorry	peaceful
disheartened	onlooker	glad	forgiving
disillusioned	angry	injured	forgetting
disgusted	pleased	scared	denying

LEADERSHIP SURVEY

One of the tasks of an interim year in the life of a congregation is to clarify the multiple dimensions of leadership and navigate the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition. Thank you for participating in this survey of leadership in this congregation.

If you are involved with more than one committee or group, please complete a separate survey for each.

Please turn in your completed surveys to: _____

by _____. Thanks very much for your help!

1. Your Name
2. Are you a member of the congregation? – If yes, for how long?–
3. Committee / Group Name
4. Your Position (chair, member, etc.)
5. How long have you held this position?
6. How long have you been a part of this committee or group?
7. How often does your group meet?
8. When will you meet next?

9. Who serves with you? Please list (below) all the people who actually participate, including yourself, and put an asterisk (*) next to the name of the chair, facilitator, or group leader.

Does your committee/group have any of the following in writing? (Please circle your answer.)

10. Mission or goals	Yes	No	Don't know	Wish we did
11. Processes or procedures	Yes	No	Don't know	Wish we did
12. Plan for recruitment of new members	Yes	No	Don't know	Wish we did
13. Plan for succession of leadership	Yes	No	Don't know	Wish we did

Additional thoughts:

An interim ministry startup workshop

— for boards and program staff

9:30-10:00am GATHERING & REFRESHMENTS

10:00am WORSHIP/CENTERING

Theme: What does our Unitarian Universalism require of us as religious leaders?

10:15am INTRODUCTIONS

Include something about yourself that the others should, but probably don't, know. And include something you feel deeply about the church, either a passionate joy or challenge.

10:30am LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Tell in story form, a piece of history that relates to the congregation's identity and demonstrates why/how the congregation sees itself in certain ways. Tell stories of what you consider the most important incidents in the recent life of this church.

11:00am WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

What do these stories tell us? Is it helpful or problematic to our healthy future? What do we know are the hot-spots, landmines, as well as opportunities? What do we want to hold up high and keep as our guiding lights? What do we want to see lived out differently?

11:30am WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO FROM HERE?

What are your yearnings about new directions for this church's ministry to itself and to the wider community?

11:45am WHAT WILL THAT REQUIRE OF YOU?

What change in behavior and program will these new directions require? What strategies will be required?

12:00 noon LUNCH BREAK

12:45pm WHAT SHOULD THE FOCUS OF THIS INTERIM YEAR INCLUDE? WHAT ARE THE GOALS FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND STAFF?

1:45pm WHAT PART DOES THE BOARD LEADERSHIP ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR? PRIORITIES? WHAT WOULD A WORK PLAN LOOK LIKE?

2:45pm WHAT PART DOES THE INTERIM MINISTER ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR? PRIORITIES? PARTNERS?

3:30pm HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

WHAT WILL BE THE MARKERS OF SUCCESS BE? WHAT WILL
YOU BE CELEBRATING? WHEN COULD THAT BE?

3:45pm

CLOSURE

LITANY OF DAY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

— Beverly S.

Smrha

The Diagnostic Leap

Invite board members and committee chairs to a “Diagnostic Leap Day.”

- This should be an all day (Saturday) 9 to 3 workshop. You will need plenty of butcher paper, marking pens (a set of three colors for each small group of six), masking tape, and blank paper for individual’s use, coffee, tea, water, and box lunches that the congregation should pay for. Remember to have the board provide childcare so everyone can be there!
- The goal of the workshop is to look at what you have learned, and together, to set priorities for the balance of the year.
- Mid-November (early January second choice) is the best time to do this workshop. That way you can relax for the holiday season and jump right in to Janus’ month, January!
- At the workshop, when people have gathered, describe the goals and the process. With the President, conduct a brief (10 minutes max) worship service.
- Divide people into small groups of six to eight. You can do this in advance with name tag designations, or as an activity by asking each person to team up with one person they don’t know especially well, and then have each pair join another pair to make a quartet, and then each quartet to make an octet. If you want groups of six, have each pair join with two other pairs...
- Instruct each small group to come up with two separate lists: 1) *Things this congregation does well and should celebrate*; 2) *Things we can improve on or don’t do at all*. Provide a half-hour (more if they need it) to complete the task.
- Reconvene the small groups into one large group. Ask each group, one by one, to present its #1 list. After every group has made a presentation, invite everyone to look over the lists, which you have posted on the wall. Ask if everything up there has the consensus of the group that it *should* be up there. Note (with a marking pen) the “well and should celebrate” items that appear often. Mark the number of times each appears on a new list.
- You should end up with one list, of all that the congregation does best. Pass out dots, three per person, for each participant to place next to that which they think the congregation *really* does best.
- You now have a list, prioritized by congregational leadership of what they are proud of and feel they do well. If this list does not match your observations, you may wish to discuss your observations with the president of the congregation.
- Repeat this process with the #2 list. At the last step, with the dots, instruct participants to place dots by the three things they believe require the most immediate attention.

This becomes the work priority list for both congregational leadership and the interim.

Workshop for a **Congregational covenant of right relations**

YOU WILL NEED: Butcher paper pads (around thirty sheets, minimum)
Marking pens (water base, six colors)
Masking tape

TIME: 5-6 hours, including lunch

AHEAD OF TIME: Ask congregation leadership to:

- Appoint a committee of five-seven people to plan the event.
- Set the event 2-3 months ahead.
- Request that the event be publicized in the newsletter.
- Request that an invitation be sent to every member inviting him or her.
- Request every member be phoned, inviting them to attend and stressing the value and importance of their presence.
- Have coffee and tea ready for when people arrive, and the room warm and inviting. Music and flowers are wonderful!
- Ask the committee to arrange for childcare and for a mid-day meal, free of cost.
- Ask that the workshop be announced from the pulpit.

You will need a critical mass of half the congregation or more.

Neither minister nor staff should be present at this workshop: it is a covenant of the congregation with one another, and clergy or staff presence and participation are differently weighted.

SET UP: You will need breakout space for six small groups, plus a room space adequate to accommodate the entire group, and for serving lunch.
And you will need space for child care space.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE:

(NAME OF CONGREGATION) will be hosting a very special event on (DATE and TIME) at (PLACE). This is an opportunity for us to determine how we, as a congregation, wish to be in right relationship with one another.

Working together in large and small groups, we will develop guidelines for ourselves around how we interact as members of this congregation, with ourselves, with one another, with our minister, our staff, our board and the larger community. The workshop will be facilitated by (NAME).

This covenant process was first developed by the Pacific Northwest District and has been widely acclaimed. The result will be a good and as powerful as the people who are part of it. It is vital that as many members as possible attend. Mark the date in your book, your palm pilot, and your calendar! We look forward to seeing every one of you there!

WORKSHOP OUTLINE:

- On arrival, tear off 4-5 sheets of paper for each of six groups.
- Post agenda for the day in a visible place.
- Make sure coffee set up is ready.
- Be available to greet people and introduce yourself as they arrive.
- Tear off small pieces of masking tape (around 60) so you won't have to do it later.
- Have someone prepared to introduce you to the group.

9-9:30 **Arrival, greetings**

9:30 *Introductory remarks:* Who you are, how the workshop originated in Victoria, BC (see *Churchworks*, p. 144). Explain how long the process will be and a description of it. Ask for questions.

9:45 *Describe UUMA Code of Conduct*
Ask for suggestions in categories and/or explain the following categories:
Member to Self

Member to Member

Member to Minister

Member to Staff

Member to Board

Member to Larger Community

Ask group to self-select into groups. If they are not relatively evenly divided, ask for volunteers to move from one group to another. Explain the process to be used, stressing the use of "I statements" and that this is about how each person (subject) will covenant to be accountable rather than how the target (object) *should* act.

Ask for questions about the process. Let them know that you will give them a 15" warning; that they have until noon when lunch will be served.

Ask that each group post its proceedings contiguously on the wall before getting lunch. Suggest they take time to read the other group's proceedings before and during lunchtime.

10:45 **Small Groups Breakout**

Circulate during the small group meetings, making sure that folks understand what they are doing. Get them on track if they are unclear, or drift off. (They probably will be just fine!)

Give them 15 minutes warning before lunch, to finish up.

Remind them to post their proceedings and to read the other proceedings.

NOON – 1 LUNCH and read proceedings (Arrange for grace, or lead it yourself.)

1 Large Group Process

Ask each group, one at a time, to present its work. Invite feedback from the whole group, asking each time if there are important omissions or concerns. In conclusion, ask if everyone can live with the covenant section. Allow a bit of silence. (You can, the first time, tell them that now is the time for criticism; that what comes from this meeting will be the consensus document of this group.)

Repeat with each small group proceeding.

2 Follow-up

Ask each group to meet by its proceedings and to choose one person to represent the group on a *Covenant Task Force*. Stress that this is a short-term task. The Task Force will:

*Prepare the Covenant for Publication,
See that one copy is mailed to each member,
Develop a plan to educate members not present,
Publish the Covenant in the Newsletter,
Receive concerns and suggestions,
Integrate them into the Covenant if appropriate,
Present the Covenant to the Congregation at their meeting.*

Emphasize that only suggestions that have significant backing need be integrated.

The Congregation needs a 75% vote to be adopted.

Convene the Task Force to make sure that they understand their responsibilities and the follow-up process.

When you have finished: Compliment and thank the participants for their active and creative participation. Let them know that this is hard, real work, and that this document, once adopted, will be a foundation for right relationship in their community.

Send a one page report to the District Executive, describing the tone and feeling of the day, and if there were any notable difficulties.

This model was initially created by the Pacific Northwest District CONTACT Team and the Unitarian Church of Victoria, British Columbia. Its structure was inspired by Code of Professional Practice in the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association Guidelines.

Member GIFTS & INTERESTS bank NAME: _____

PHONE: _____ DATE: _____

What is—or has been—your primetime vocation?

Skills you enjoy using:

Activities and interests that brighten your life:

What would you like to gain and learn from your participation here in our congregation?

PLEASE NOTE WHERE YOUR **GIFTS** AND **INTERESTS** BECKON — (check all that apply) —

- 1: ☐ SPIRITUAL and PERSONAL GROWTH and LEARNING — *worship, adult education*
- 2: ☐ TEACHING and NURTURING CHILDREN and YOUTH
- 3: ☐ SOCIAL JUSTICE, DIVERSITY and COMMUNITY OUTREACH activities
- 4: ☐ CREATIVE ENDEAVORS — *music, drama, arts, crafts, photography ...*
- 5: ☐ CONGREGATIONAL SUSTENANCE — *planning, funding, organizational skills ...*
- 6: ☐ CONNECTING and CARING for members — *corresponding, visiting, pastoral care*
- 7: ☐ HOSPITALITY — *greeting, ushering, welcoming newcomers, fun times, special events...*
- 8: ☐ HANDS-ON — FACILITY: *cooking/serving, building, landscape, audio / video systems*
- 9: ☐ HANDS-ON — ACTIVITIES: *newsletter, publicity, website, office support, telephone*
- 10: ☐ UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM — *in our district and continentally*

Which areas of involvement in that list **least** fit your gifts and interests?

Can you tell us how you most enjoy working? — (check all that apply) —

- ☐ with ideas ☐ with facts and figures ☐ with things and materials
- with: ☐ preschoolers ☐ children ☐ teens ☐ adults ☐ seniors ☐ intergenerational
- ☐ envisioning ☐ designing and detailing a program ☐ doing hands-on tasks
- ☐ by myself ☐ one-on-one ☐ with a group — ☐ behind the scenes ☐ leading

ANY ADDITIONAL IDEAS or COMMENTS?

COMMITTEE:

date of meeting:

attending were:

*[underline name
of notetaker]*

decisions reached:

tasks undertaken:

issues **pending**:

next meeting:

Please hand this page (or minutes) in to the church office — & make sure your next meeting is calendared: _____

JOB DESCRIPTION

Title:

Reports to:

Hours: — *by week or by month? ... or is it an exempt position?*

Responsibilities:

- *{What goals are the person in this position expected to fulfill? What are the*
- *general responsibilities of this position? Why does the position exist?}*
-
-
-

Duties:

1. *[What objectives are to be accomplished to fulfill the goals stated above?*
2. *This is not intended to be a specific task list. Rather, assume that the staff*
3. *member is able to determine tasks based on the objectives identified.]*
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Qualifications:

- *[What experience and skills are necessary to accomplish the goals*
- *and objectives of this position]?*
-
-

Position requirements:

What abilities are necessary to accomplish the anticipated tasks (i.e. bending, lifting, writing, driving, hearing, seeing, etc.)

If the church has a non-discrimination policy, you may want to state it here, e.g:
 The UU Church of Holy Hill does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, medical condition, disability, marital status or sexual orientation. UUCHH will provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities when requested.

*NOTE: Upon hiring, this description attaches to a **LETTER OF CONTRACT** in which terms of employment are specified.*

WHEN PEOPLE CONFIDE COMPLAINTS – *wise guidance learned from Speed B. Leas*

Conflict tends to fester within and between people when problems arise and they feel unable to talk directly to each other. Criticism then wends its way to key players through “third parties” who hear the complaints, but don’t feel at liberty to reveal their source lest they be “breaking a confidence.”

This kind of confidentiality is hurtful, both to the whole group and to individuals within it. It applies a rule safeguarding privileged communications (between attorney/client, doctor/patient; priest/parishioner) to *every* relationship.

Where complaints are made about individuals to others, in hope that sharing these perceptions indirectly will another’s their behavior (or tenure), then one cannot and should not invoke the rule of privileged information. It undercuts the ability of people to work and live together in love and trust. Organizational candor is called for. Indeed, secrecy is already broken once information is passed on.

Other ethical and relational principles also apply. Someone who is perceived to have transgressed should have a right to know about such a charge and to explain the circumstances under which it occurred. And persons who express a concern about others are likely to exaggerate the problem when they believe they may not be held accountable for what they say.

Furthermore, where a problem exists rarely is one party is the sole cause. Usually both sides have a role in the difficulty. Indirect communication prevents shared involvement or extenuating circumstances from being recognized and resolved.

So, when someone wants to share a private complaint with you about someone who is not present, here are three clarifying interventions you can offer in response:

1 — **“Have you shared your concerns and feelings about this with ____?”**

If the complainer has not, encourage them to do so. (Perhaps role-playing with you would help.)

If they are reluctant or unwilling to do so, offer your presence:

2 — **“____ should know of your concerns. Would it help if I go with you?”**

If so, plan when and where and how with them.

If they remain unwilling to express their concern directly....

3 — **“May I tell ____ that you have these concerns?”**

If the complainer rejects this option, too....then: *cease to consider it a problem*. Sometimes, people simply need to vent distress to calm and wise ears, and your listening helps them let go of the issue. Their feelings may be strong, but won’t endure, and the matter isn’t going to weigh on them further. You are simply serving as a safe and healing friend.

Sometimes someone may be linking you into a chain of “harmless” gossip. Be aware that when such gossip leads you to distrust or think unkindly of someone else, relationships are damaged, all too often unfairly, and it isn’t harmless at all.

Sometimes someone wants to recruit you to fight their war. Don’t enlist. The issue may continue to distress the person complaining, but he or she is not ready or willing to resolve it. Refuse to take on this burden.

If possible, don’t be a runner with others’ grievances. When you are, carry no anonymous messages. People will learn that you handle problems honorably, and may gain courage from you to manage their own conflicts capably and well.

And — **WISE RESPONSES WHEN SOMEONE BRINGS ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT YOU:**

- May I ask how *you* feel about this? Is it a concern for you, too?
- I would welcome a chance to talk with them. Would you be willing to help get us together?

Transition Team start-up letter
Sample Mid-summer Message to Congregation's President

Dear _____:

I want to describe now the first job for the Transition Team so that you can turn this over to them and let me know who the contact person is for the Team so I can deal with any questions about this with that person.

I would like the Transition Team to take charge of my calendar for the first two or three weeks of September. Before the Board retreat, I would like to have meetings set up with:

- each Board member individually (half hour with each member other than you, an hour with you or more if you like)
- each Committee chair individually (half hour with each)
- each other leader however titled – such as the coordinator of the covenant group facilitators, newsletter editor, pledge drive chair, and anybody else the Transition Team views as a leader whom I should meet early on (half hour with each)
- each paid staff member (one hour with each individually – plus a weekly two-hour staff meeting needs to be plugged into the schedule)
- the Transition Team as a group (two hours)
- the Ministerial Search Committee as a group (two hours)

Also, I would like to have scheduled sometime during September a get-together (possibly a meal somewhere where conversation would be easy) with all past Presidents who are still present and members of the congregation.

When the schedulers work out my schedule, they need to cross out _____ for the UUMA cluster meeting, the evening of _____ for the Board meeting, the evening of _____ and all of _____ for the Board retreat, and whatever time will be devoted to the pledge campaign planning meeting. Insofar as possible, I hope they will divide each day into morning, afternoon, and evening, and on each day leave one of those three periods free. Also, I prefer a 15 minute break between any two meetings.

If you or the Transition Team have questions about any of this, please don't hesitate to ask. Do know that I will be away on vacation without email _____, and I hope to start my drive to [your town] on or about _____.

Best wishes to you all,
[signed]

The Days of Awe

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

(A liturgy inspired by traditional Jewish ceremonies adapted by the Unitarian Universalists for Jewish Awareness)

MINISTER: Time's cycle invites us to give pause—to celebrate the seasons turning round again, to ask how we might live better lives. These are the Days of Awe. In the Jewish tradition we are asked during this season to live and plan our lives a little more deliberately and seriously than usual. That is what our service is about this evening. We will ask forgiveness. We will remember the dead. And we will rededicate ourselves to our vision of the good and of the true.

(the Shofar sounds)*
*[*a bell or a gong may substitute]*

MINISTER: Let this sound pierce the armor with which we shield our hearts.

CONGREGATION: ***May my heart and mind be open to all this time may ask of me.
May I respond from open mind and heart.***

(the Shofar sounds)

MINISTER: Let this sound echo in your soul. Let it call you to a quiet moment out from your busy day. Let it call you to pay attention. Let it be the call of your spirit to return, to slow down and turn inward, to become one with yourself.

The Spirit of the time is woven about two books: the Torah and the legendary Book of Life. According to legend, on Rosh Hashanah—when one year ends with the harvest and a new year begins, each of our destinies for the year to come is inscribed by the Angel of Life. During the ten days that follow—the Days of Awe—the Book of Life remains open. If we then try to understand how to take the Torah's insights with us into the everyday world, the Angel of Life must reconsider what has been written. By taking thought we can make changes that will alter the future. At the last sound of the Shofar on the day of Yom Kippur, says the legend, the Book of Life for the year to come is closed and all that is written is sealed.

CONGREGATION: ***We are called to review how we have lived our lives in the year past.***

MINISTER: Now we reexamine all of our motivations and desires, and all the roads we have chosen to walk without judgment, for all opinions and stances we have made towards or about others can be nullified, altered, and forgiven.

CONGREGATION: ***We are called to view how we may live our lives in the year to come.***

MINISTER: We are given freedom to choose to be humane beings. The Spirit of this time calls us to see ourselves without the trappings that may clutter our days and ways; to see ourselves as we truly are. It is awesome to clearly perceive the real moment. Thus these days are called the Days of Awe.

And how easy it is, to feel deep in our souls the true meaning of those words, the Days of Awe, when the Awe-filled-ness of the universe has been present in our lives in such profound ways—in violence, terror and hatred, each feeding the other, and in simple human goodness, bravery and love.

CONGREGATION: ***I stand in awe of the universe within me as I do of the universe around me.***

MINISTER: We bless this moment by asking the questions asked by Rabbi Hillel:

CONGREGATION: ***If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I?***

MINISTER: We create the outer images—of gods, of history—to understand ourselves and what may lie ahead. What we know as holy we know as an urgency within ourselves.

CONGREGATION: ***I stand in awe before my own destiny as I do before the vastness of time.***

MINISTER: The starting place is within. In this time, sages tell us, we may yet change our destinies. Yom Kippur is a time for return, and for repentance; a time for self-reflection, returning within: to examine the reality of who we are, spiritually and cognitively. To make the changes we must make to become our best selves, we need to begin with insight. That is the starting place, the only one there is.

CONGREGATION: ***I can say "I am to be" if I can say "I am."***

MINISTER: The starting place is within. This is a time for reflection, for prayer, for holding up a mirror to ourselves. To pray is to mirror within, to see ourselves as we are. We know there is a world and a universe outside our knowing. There are powers beyond our beseeching, power beyond our reach. But we can know surely what is within: what our own loyalties and conscience urge, what good sense and affection bid us to do. That is the starting place, the only one there is.

CONGREGATION: ***I can say "I am to be" if I can say "I am."***

MINISTER: Yom Kippur is also a time to turn, to heed our deepest intuitions of what is right and necessary. We know that time moves beyond our control. Things change beyond our control. Yet we can decide how we will respond to the changes around us. This is the starting place, the only one there is.

CONGREGATION: ***Those who change without evaluating are like leaves blown away by the wind. Those who change without choosing are servants to the whim of time. Truth and power abide in us. Thence will come the light to illumine our paths.***

KOL NIDRE

MINISTER: The sages taught that Yom Kippur cannot mend our relationships with life unless we seek reconciliation with those we may have harmed, wittingly or unwittingly; and shed from our hearts all sentiments of rancor and enmity.

Let us prepare for the year to come by becoming at one, in the silence, and in the silence, asking ourselves these questions:

Who or what have I not yet forgiven?

What is it for which I have not yet forgiven myself?

We ask these questions that we may begin to be at one with ourselves, at one with each other, at one with nature, and at one with the Eternal Unknown.

(The Congregation will remain in silence)

MINISTER: All bad actions, habits, harmful opinions, attitudes, and bindings with others, we now acknowledge we are free to change. We are free to set our feet on a truer path.

CONGREGATION: ***And all the congregation shall be forgiven, and any stranger that resides among us: for all have transgressed.***

MINISTER: Kol Nidre is an honest confession of our fallible humanity. Here lies the fount of our compassion for each other. In humility before our humanness lives the source of our connection with all people. That connection is our strength.

(The Congregation will please stand)

MINISTER: Following ancient tradition, let us proclaim together:

CONGREGATION: ***I hereby forgive whoever has hurt me, whoever has done me harm. — Whether deliberately or by accident, whether by word or by deed. I shall seek out those whom I have harmed and ask them to forgive and pardon me, whether I acted deliberately or by accident, whether by word or by deed. May I not willfully repeat the wrongs I have committed.***

(The Congregation will be seated)

Bread may be passed in baskets from one to another, as a symbol of repentance and forgiveness and the renewal of life.

MUSICAL RESPONSE: *[solo or duet, instrumental or vocal]*

KADDISH

MINISTER: Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of a new year. It is also a day of Remembrance — when God remembers the deeds of God's creatures and when humanity remembers what has gone before us to make the world what it is now.

Such remembrance is not merely an excursion into the past. The message of Rosh Hashanah is the power of memory itself. Memory defies oblivion, breaks the coils of the present, establishes the continuity of generations, and rescues human life and effort from futility.

CONGREGATION: ***It is good that we have the gift of remembrance. It is good that we wish to transmit our traditions from generation to generation.***

MINISTER: Though their tongues be silent, our ancestors speak through ours. We eat the fruit of trees planted by men and women long gone from our midst. The works of men and women of old are recorded in our histories and reflected in our society.

CONGREGATION: ***The past lives in our minds, in our spirits, and in our hearts.***

MINISTER: We stand with those who have wept, those who now weep, and those who have yet to weep. Let us stand and commemorate those of our loved ones who have died to our world.

(The Congregation will please stand)

Recall before you the face and the spirit of the dearest of them, as you best knew and best loved them. Think on the meaning of their presence in your life. All over the world, people on Yom Kippur stand in honor of the dead.

I invite you now — as we stand together — to speak the names of those dear to us who are gone. If you mourn a friend or loved one, call their names.

(...Names are spoken...)

MINISTER: Here, in remembering these, we reaffirm our common humanity.

CONGREGATION: ***Each time we remember loved ones, or mourn the victims of the holocausts past and present, we affirm our intention to uphold life, to cherish and nourish and protect it.***

MINISTER: The world is sustained by just and merciful men and women. The light of justice and mercy has been passed on to us; let us pass that light to our children, to each other, and to the peoples of the world. Be this our understanding of our covenant: to be a beacon of justice, mercy and love. May peace be with those we love. May peace abound on the earth. May this peace bloom within ourselves.

MUSICAL RESPONSE:

"This is My Song" [Singing the Living Tradition #159]

MINISTER: Pay heed to the day before the sun sets.

CONGREGATION: ***Each day turns like the pages of a book.***

MINISTER: We are in the turning of each day. By coming together, by seeing our presence in the year, and our place on the lines of time, we take part in destiny. May your name be written in the Book of Life!

(the Shofar sounds)

“CONVERSATIONS IN COMMUNITY”
A Three-Sunday Program on Vision, Mission, and Covenant

by Rev. Barbara Child
designed with an ad hoc group of leaders at the
Morristown (NJ) Unitarian Fellowship
Winter and Spring 2004

Background

At a leadership (Board, committee chairs, and other congregational leaders) retreat in the fall, one of three priorities selected by the group for the year was clarifying the Fellowship's vision – both its understanding of its present identity and its collective hopes for the future. Six leaders volunteered to serve on an ad hoc task force to carry forward this priority.

At about the same time, nearly all of the members of the Committee on Ministry attended a District Workshop at which Rev. Robert Latham described his COM model. At their next meeting, the COM determined to use this year to reinvent the Fellowship's COM accordingly. They understood that this would mean devoting some new attention to the Fellowship's Mission and Covenant even though it has a Mission and Covenant Statement, adopted in 1993, in which it takes pride. (The statement appears in every Sunday bulletin.)

At about the same time, the Ministerial Search Committee was recognizing that it did not have the shared clarity it needed to put out a congregational record or a search packet to give ministers an accurate impression of the congregation and its wishes regarding a new called minister.

At about the same time I was in conversation with my Transition Team about what would be the focus of our work together over the year.

It fell into place quite naturally that the Visioning Task Force created at the leadership retreat, the COM, the Search Committee, and the Transition Team would work together to create a program that would engage the congregation in the important matters of vision, mission, and covenant. Although different individuals took active roles at different points along the way, about six people representing these groups joined me at every step as a brainstorming, planning, and later debriefing group. Working with them was positively exhilarating!

“Conversations in Community” Come to Life

At the first planning meeting, it became clear that no one was going to have any energy for a program with the desired outcome of revising the Mission and Covenant Statement. But if we freed ourselves from a wordsmithing job and

also from language like “vision,” “mission,” and “covenant,” we might be able to get somewhere.

Early on, we decided to make this a three-Sunday project, using the two Sunday services and the hour following each service, rather than trying to get a large number of people to come for three Saturday events or stay on long into three Sunday afternoons. The three Sundays were scheduled roughly a month apart.

We decided to honor the introverts by having a process of reflecting silently and writing answers to questions and then reading the answers aloud in small groups before having any discussion about them. We decided the small groups needed to have facilitators, who needed to be trained. We decided it was worth it to stream-line the process as much as possible so that it would go smoothly and therefore people would be more likely to take it seriously. We had a major brainstorming session to come up with a title for the whole series. After we had a long list of possibilities, people were invited to vote for as many as they would be comfortable with. The one title that everyone in the room voted for was “Conversations in Community.” And so we went to work to plan for them.

Marketing and Logistics – a Combination for Success

I did the official marketing – my newsletter column and then a letter from me sent by regular mail (not e-mail) to every member and friend inviting them to participate. Meanwhile, the members of all the participating planning groups waged a major informal campaign of talking up the first “Conversations in Community.”

I did a training session for everyone who would facilitate a small group and produced a facilitator’s guide. (We had eight groups of ten after each of the two Sunday services.) I drafted potential questions to ask the congregation for reflection, writing, and discussion; my planning team vetted the questions, improving them immensely. When the “Conversations” days came, the facilitators received an envelope with their materials inside. The custodian had arranged the chairs in the Meeting Room in eight open half circles (I called them scallops), and the facilitators took their stations in their circles before the service so they could move to close the circles as soon as the service ended for the following hour of writing, reading aloud, and conversation.

Each of our three “Conversations” days took up four questions – the first two that I posed during the sermon for writing right then but no discussion, and two more during the following hour for writing and discussion. For ease of processing the answers, we used color-coded index cards with a different color for each question. The cards for the answers to questions posed during the sermon were stuffed ahead of time in the order of service. The cards for the

answers to questions posed during the following hour in small groups were in the facilitator's supply envelope.

The Questions – the Heart of the Matter

First Sunday Sermon Title – “Who Are You This Time?” (on vision)

- Imagine yourself as a newcomer here on Sunday morning. Maybe you ARE a newcomer. What does Sunday morning here tell you about who MUF is? What about what this place looks like? What about who is here? What about what happens and who does what?
- What does the name “Morristown Unitarian Fellowship” tell you about this group of people? Reflect on all three words. If you were to pick a name for this group, what would you pick? Why?
- One of the things this interim year is for is to illuminate the unique identity and strengths of MUF. What is unique about MUF? What are its strengths that you especially appreciate?
- One of the things this interim year is for is to renew MUF's vision so that we are ready to engage our future with anticipation and zest. Imagine MUF in five years. What do you hope will still be the same as today? What changes do you hope will happen by then?

a Second Sunday Sermon Title – “Safe Harbor or Challenging Cliff: What's Congregation For?” (on mission)

- What do you care passionately enough about that you would take a risk for it? Is risk-taking allowed, encouraged, or required at MUF?
- What does MUF do to support growth and change among members and in Fellowship life? Is spiritual growth nurtured at MUF? Is it provoked?
- What is MUF for? What difference does it make in the world that MUF exists? Is there something here to ignite passionate commitment?
- Does MUF comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable? Should it? Does MUF appeal more to doers, activists, and people willing to try something new even though it's scary? Or more to those who want a safe place for healing from the hurts of life? Or more to those who want a warm, sociable community for nurturing friendships?

Third Sunday Sermon Title: -- “Living Together in the Wilderness” (on covenant)

- Is MUF a religious organization, a club, or something else altogether? How can you tell?
- What does it mean to you that MUF is part of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations?
- Among Unitarian Universalist principles is one that affirms and promotes acceptance and support of one another in our congregations. What do people here at MUF do to live up to this principle? What might we do better?
- Since there is no Unitarian Universalist creed, we don't put restrictions on what people believe if they want to be part of a UU congregation. Is it understood at MUF that "anything goes" in behavior here too, or are there some behaviors that are not or should not be acceptable at MUF – or by MUFers no matter where they are?

Follow-up – the Other Essential Element of Success

The planning group warned me that a lot of conversation with no follow-up would only frustrate people. "We talk and talk and then nothing ever comes of it" can be a common congregational complaint. So we stressed that these conversations and the turned-in answer cards did not amount to votes on anything. In one sense, the conversations themselves were the "product" – the opportunity to reflect and share with others on important questions about congregational life. But also, I committed to reflect back to the congregation what I made of the responses. On the second "Conversations" Sunday, I reflected about the first one, and on the third about the second. I also used my newsletter column for reflections. It was made very clear to people that all of the responses would be given to the Search Committee to aid them in preparing a congregational record and packet and ultimately in choosing a ministerial candidate. Individual members of the Search Committee read through the answers on individual questions and wrote a summary, and one Search Committee member volunteered at the end of the whole project to edit the summaries into one summary with copies to be made available to all.

Action – the Best Kind of Follow-up

The four questions for each "Conversations" Sunday were given to the DRE and Youth Advisors in advance of each "Conversations" Sunday, so that the children and youth could address them in some fashion as well. The children made a mural as part of their answer to some of the questions – so that it could grace the front wall of the Meeting Room on the third "Conversations" Sunday. The youth, having taken up whether "anything goes" in a UU congregation, composed a covenant for themselves according to which they promised to speak respectfully towards all religions. At last report, they were deciding whether to ask to have their covenant displayed in the Great Hall next to the Welcoming Congregation certification.

The adult leadership, having learned the results of the answers given to the question about the congregation's name, began exploring possibilities for good process to address a possible name change. The Search Committee is ready to go to work on its congregational record and packet. The congregation may or may not get around to revising the wording of their Mission and Covenant Statement, but the Committee on Ministry has a much better understanding than it did a year ago of what it is that COM is charged with upholding. It was a COM member who said to me that he wished I would figure out some way to let the UUA know about this program so that other congregations might try out some variation on it too. So here it is.

“Conversations in Community” Notes for Small Group Facilitators

Themes for the Three Sundays

February 29 – Who are we this time?

March 21 – What's the Fellowship for?

May 16 – How shall we be together on the way?

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world;*

indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

--Margaret Mead

Here is what you need to know to make these conversations go smoothly:

- 1) It will be helpful if you can sit in your circle of chairs during the service preceding your Conversation. Please look at the circle diagram on top of the cabinet on your left as you come into the Meeting Room. Your name will appear on the diagram in a circle. Please sit there.
- 2) **Before the service**, pick up from the top of the cabinet a brown manila envelope. It will have inside ten name tags and two white envelopes. Inside one white envelope will be ten copies of Question #3 and ten lavender cards. Inside the other white envelope will be ten copies of Question #4 and ten blue cards. (People will reflect on Questions #1 and 2 during the service. You will not receive blank cards for those questions.) A copy of these Notes will also be in the manila envelope.

- 3) **Before the service**, pick up from the top of the cabinet a blue marking pen for people to use on the name tags.
- 4) Please don't wait until after the service to pick up your supplies. It is important for you to be able to move into the small group process immediately after the service. People in the circles should not be left at loose ends without a facilitator. Barbara will serve as a floater with extra supplies if needed. Raise your hand to flag her down.
- 5) Right away after the service ends, bring your circle together. If somehow you have more than ten including yourself, get some to move to another circle. Please don't let more than nine besides yourself stay. You don't have materials for more than ten, and it's important that the conversations involve no more than ten. (If by chance, we have more than 80 people at one of the sessions, we'll deal with it then.)
- 6) Make sure everybody in your group has a name tag on. Provide name tags for anyone who needs one. Please don't rely on an assumption that everyone knows everyone else. Even if they say they do, you will be doing a favor to those with uncertain memory if you insist on nametags, and you will be especially helping any newcomers.
- 7) Make sure people are seated so that everyone can see everyone else's face in the circle.
- 8) Even if you are 100% sure everyone in the circle knows you, introduce yourself: name; how long a member; any Board, committee, or other role you have at MUF now. Please do this very quickly. Time is at a premium in these sessions.
- 9) Invite everyone in the circle to say their name and how long they have been at MUF. Make clear this is to be short answer, no speeches. Don't bother with distinction between member and friend. Again, time is at a premium.
- 10) Briefly describe the purpose of this conversation – to give you a chance to reflect together on important questions about how you want people at MUF to be with one another. Mention that Barbara has introduced the theme during the service.
- 11) Briefly summarize the process for this hour. You are going to ask them some questions and invite them to write their answers on the cards you will provide. Then after people write, you will invite them to read their answers. Make a point of the fact that you will ask them just to read exactly what they have written (not to use the cards as notes for speaking extemporaneously). Let them know that you will invite discussion at the end of the process, not during the reading time.

12) Tell them you hope that at the end of the hour, they will give you the cards – and also the green and yellow cards with the answers they wrote during the service to Questions #1 and 2. (Tell them it's up to them whether they want to sign the cards or not.) Explain that the cards will go to the Ministerial Search Committee to help them have a clear idea of how to present MUF accurately to ministers in search. Also, a member of the Search Committee has volunteered to write a summary of the answers to all of the questions from all three "Conversations in Community," which will be made available for all to read.

13) Explain that these conversations do not involve votes on anything. Also, there will be no attempt to have people come to a consensus on anything. The most important product of these conversations will be the experience itself – including both the opportunity to reflect on important questions and to hear some other people's reflections.

14) If someone has a question, answer it as briefly as you can. Don't invite questions. It's important to be able to use as much of the allotted time as possible for the reflections on the questions you present to the group. If group members begin to ask a bunch of questions, invite them to hold them for after the session when either you or Barbara will address them. Let the people know that you want to make the best use possible of the limited time you have.

15) Divide the remaining time equally between the two questions for reflection.

Please use this format:

- Hand out Question #3 and lavender cards, and read the question out loud.
- If somebody asks what the question or some word in it means, tell them to interpret for themselves and proceed. Decline to answer such a question yourself.
- Ask people to write "#3" prominently on the card.
- Give people time to write their answers on the card. Keep them quiet during this time.
- Invite reading (not talking about) the written answers around the circle. If someone wants to pass, that's okay, but encourage them not to. Don't offer the option of passing unless someone asks.
- Let them know that you are going to defer discussion until after the writing and reading of answers to Questions #3 and #4.
- Curb any attempts at discussion during the reading, including questions posed to a reader. The only exception is if someone hasn't heard clearly and needs the reader to repeat.
- When all have read who are going to, repeat the process for Question #4.

- When your group has finished reading their answers to Question #4, invite open conversation for the remaining time.

16) It's important to end on time. Before closing, have all who are willing give you their cards answering Questions #1 and #2 from the service and Questions #3 and #4 from the conversation hour.

17) Please close intentionally with words of thanks to everyone for participating and sharing their thoughts openly and candidly (assuming that seems to have happened). If it feels appropriate, and if there is time, you might have people say one word (no speeches!) about what they will take from this circle, or something about your small group for which they are thankful.

18) Before you leave, turn in your group's cards. It will help the follow-up process if **you** put your group members' cards in the four manila envelopes on the cabinet at the back of the room that are color-coded and labeled by Question #.

A Couple of Special Notes:

I invite you to figure out the best way for you to be a participant in this process as well as a facilitator. If you are facilitating at only one session, perhaps you could be a participant at the other. If that isn't feasible, at the very least, you could write answers to the questions while the others in your group are writing. It may be possible for you also to read your answers to the questions (probably last) without interfering with your role as facilitator, but you probably can't both facilitate discussion and participate in it. Sorry about that – but reality is reality!

Thanks very much for your time and effort in making this "Conversation in Community" a success. You are contributing in a major way to the important work of this interim year!

Barbara,
along with the Visioning Task Force and The Committee on Ministry

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE CONGREGATION'S HISTORY: HEALING GRIEFS AND CONFLICTS

by Barbara Child

I make much of dealing with the congregation's history – its emotional history. In fact, I often make it the major work of the first few months of an interim year. I do it in a very intentional way, as follows.

Moving from Denial to Reality: Adapting Kubler-Ross's Grief Graph

Soon after I arrive, I use the Interim Ministry Network's adaptation of Kubler-Ross's grief graph as the basis of an exercise which I do separately with the Ministerial Search Committee and with the Board. It goes this way:

I give each person a copy of the graph, ask them to read it over, and invite them silently to identify where they would place themselves right now on the graph. I make a point of suggesting that it is possible to be at multiple points at the same time.

I put a basket in the center of the table. I hand out lots of the smallest size of post-it notes and invite everyone to write on a separate note each number of a point on the graph where they see themselves now. I assure them that I will not ask them to share this information out loud but ask them to put all the post-it notes in the basket.

When everyone is finished, I take a blank copy of the graph and make a mark by each numbered point on it for each note bearing that number. When I have all the notes recorded, I hold up the graph for all to see. It is typical for there to be a fairly large number of marks high on the right side, representing Hope, Reaffirmation, and Reality. But it is also typical for there to be at least a few marks high on the left side, representing Denial, Grieving, and Depression. Since I have instructed people that it is quite possible to be in more than one place on the graph at once, there are often many more marks on the collective graph than there are people in the room.

I keep my word and never ask who is where on the graph. Instead, I ask two questions:

- How did it feel to do this exercise, locating yourself on the graph?
- What do you make of this resulting picture of your group (Board or Search Committee)?

Every time I have done this exercise, a number of people have quickly and quite voluntarily said which marks on the graph represent them. Freed from the responsibility to share this information, they find they are eager to share it. I

have listened then to very moving conversations among the leaders of the congregation as they sort out their feelings, notice how their feelings have begun to shift, and find to their relief that they are not alone in their feelings. They become closer as a group having done this exercise together. They always tell me afterwards that they are grateful for having this opportunity.

The “History Wall” – First Pass with the Board

I like to do the grief exercise described above with the Board at the Friday evening session of an early fall Board retreat. After a break, I then turn to my first work with the History Wall. Incidentally, even though the Saturday session of the fall Board retreat may turn out to be a start-up workshop facilitated by the District Executive or some other outside person, I make clear ahead of time that no one except the Board members and me is to be present on Friday evening. This is very important for the intimate quality of what happens on Friday evening. I like to have this session at someone’s home or in some other private space where other congregants will not wander in.

Before the retreat, I do my homework and have noted on a wide swatch of butcher paper or newsprint the major milestone dates in the congregation’s history: founding, building purchases or moves, comings and goings of ministers, etc. (I do not find it a productive use of anyone’s time to use the workshop to haggle over whether we built the building in 1985 or 1986!)

The first part of this exercise is for all of the Board members to stand in front of the year when they came to the congregation (not necessarily when they joined). The point is for them all to see how much or little of the history they carry in their living memory. I give them time to talk about what this means to them.

I give them a quick chance to correct any errors they know I’ve made in recording the history, and I ask them to say out loud quickly any other major milestones I’ve missed so they can be added now.

This time I have a fat stack of larger post-it notes – 3 x 5 notes are just right. I ask them while seated to write notes on how they feel (or felt) about any of the events that affected them strongly. They are also free to add other event notes that may not have been milestones for the whole congregation but were for them. I caution them to try to stay clear of opinion statements and stick with feeling statements. I encourage them to take as long as they need to do this writing and then to post their notes on the wall in the appropriate places chronologically. It is entirely up to them whether they sign their notes or keep them anonymous. I assure them that that I will not ask them to identify their postings by name.

When they have finished writing and posting, I invite them silently to walk around the room and read what people have written. I make much of the importance of doing this silently. I give them plenty of time for this.

When everybody has finished reading and returned to their chairs, I ask them two questions, waiting for full conversation about the first before asking the second:

- How did it feel to write what you wrote? (This is not the same as asking what they wrote, and I make a point of saying so.)
- How did it feel to read what others wrote?

The conversation about these questions is a natural sequel to the conversation about the grief graph. As it winds down, I tell them of my wish to post this “history wall” at church and leave it up for some time with the invitation to people to come and write and read. I explain at some length the rationale for this, and I address their fears of trouble coming from having unhappy or angry or factually erroneous notes posted. My theme song is that whatever gets written, it won’t be worse to have it said than to have it festering unsaid. And if there are factual errors, no doubt, somebody else will come along and write corrections (which is, of course, what does happen). We talk all this through, because I believe it is critical for the Board to be on deck and endorse this project wholeheartedly.

After our long conversation, I tell them that if they have written anything that they absolutely don’t want to go on the public wall, they should remove the post-it before they leave. Then what I will do is remove all post-its (which if left up would only curl and fall in time) and transcribe the content on the butcher paper. Then I will be in a position to tell the congregation that all the notes written at an angle in the distinctive blue ink are Board members’ notes in my handwriting. I find that if I do patient work with the Board at this session, they by and large end up willing to share their feelings and vulnerabilities with the congregation – a major element in the success of the project.

The History Wall’s Life in the Congregation

I introduce the history wall to the congregation both in a newsletter column and from the pulpit. I also write a short introduction to it which goes up as a small poster at the left (beginning) end of the butcher paper. I let them know how many weeks the wall will remain up and invite them to come back and write and read often. And I promise them that after the butcher paper comes down, I will reflect back to them in a sermon what I make of what they have written.

It’s helpful if there is space in the congregation’s social hall where the history wall can remain up for a number of weeks. I have found people at coffee hour or after a pot luck wandering over to read the wall. If it is in the sanctuary or

in some out of the way place, it doesn't get as much traffic. I want it to get as much traffic as possible. I have seen reading the wall become a meditative experience, reminiscent of walking the Vietnam Memorial wall. I have also seen it serve as a kind of graffiti wall on which people communicate with each other in ways they haven't been able to before. A note gets circled with an arrow to another note responding to it. I have heard people say that they had no idea some event mattered so much to some others when it meant almost nothing to them. I have stood some distance from the wall after a period of weeks and been able to pick out in a second what events still carry congregational angst. Those are the ones where the paper is solid with writing.

I always take seriously the promise I have made to reflect back in a sermon what I've read on the wall. And by the time that Sunday comes around, there is high interest to know what I will say. I make much of the glories in the congregation's history. And I lift up all instances of courage or admirable congregational risk-taking. And then I settle down to talk about the griefs and conflicts. I end up reminding them that a congregation is not a court, and I talk about the difference between justice and reconciliation. The goal is not to figure out who was right or wrong in the congregation's flash points in history, or who was sufficiently punished or rewarded. The goal is to recognize the limitations of one's own and others' perceptions and memories and to look toward covenanting for the future.

The Fate of the History Wall

Inevitably someone gets the idea that the history wall should remain in safe-keeping as a congregational archive. Inevitably I decline. It is not a history. It is itself an event in the congregation's history. When it's over, it's over. Then someone decides we should have a ceremony and burn it so that it cannot be misused by someone later on. But I am not much for ceremonial burnings, no more of documents than of people. The history wall ends up in my trash at home, having completed its work and its life.

GROUP CENTERED
• ORGANISM •

FAMILY

under 50 average attendance
[under 100 members]

PATRIARCH / MATRIARCH OR
GATEKEEPER IS "HEAD OF CLAN"

NEW MEMBERS ARE ASSIMILATED
BY 'ADOPTION' INTO THIS
EXTENDED FAMILY

MEMBERS ALL KNOW EACH OTHER;
LITTLE ANONYMITY

MEMBERS' SENSE OF OWNERSHIP,
BELONGING, IS HIGH

LITTLE PLANNING; THINGS HAPPEN
BY KNOWING WHO TO TALK TO

WANT PASTOR FOR RITES OF
PASSAGE, CHAPLAIN-STYLE CARE

ENDURE BY NOT TAKING CLERGY
TOO SERIOUSLY, SINCE...

LOW PAY, PART-TIME, YIELDS HIGH
CLERGY TURNOVER

MAY GROW IF ONE PASTOR
STAYS A LONG TIME

CONGREGATIONAL SIZE relative to DYNAMICS

CLERGY CENTERED
● ORGANISM ●

PASTORAL

50 to 150 attending
[100 to 300 members]
MOST U.S. CHURCHES THIS SIZE

PASTOR IS CENTRAL, RELATES TO
EVERYONE, INVOLVED IN ALMOST
EVERYTHING; MAY BE ONLY ONE
WHO KNOWS ALL MEMBERS' NAMES

EXPECTATIONS HIGH, PERSONAL

ORGANIZATION LOW-KEY, FLEXIBLE

MAJOR ATTENTION PAID TO TRUST-
BUILDING, RELATIONAL NEEDS

PASTOR IS KEY CHANNEL OF
CONNECTION FOR NEW MEMBERS

CONGREGATION BELIEVES ITSELF
FRIENDLY, BUT MAY BE SO MAINLY
WITH EACH OTHER

GROWTH OFTEN DEPENDS ON
POPULARITY OF CLERGY

TIME DEMANDS ON CLERGY GROW
OPPRESSIVE WITH GROWING SIZE;
HARD ON SPOUSE & FAMILY; MUST
DELEGATE OR RISK BURN-OUT

based on work by Arlin Rothauge

For insight on size transitions
see Alice Mann,
The In-Between Church

GROUP CENTERED
... ORGANIZATION ...

PROGRAM

150 to 350 attending
[300 to 700 members]

DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY
IS ASSUMED

CLERGY ROLE SHIFTS TO TEAM
LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION:
RECRUITING, PLANNING, TRAINING,
EVALUATING, COORDINATING

PASTOR IS MOTIVATOR, TRUST-
BUILDER, AGENT FOR CONSENSUS

MULTIPLE STAFF, LAY AND
PROFESSIONAL, PROVIDE
PROGRAM SUPPORT

LAY LEADERSHIP VITAL

ACTIVITY & PROGRAM GROUPS
CONNECT AND ASSIMILATE NEW
MEMBERS, NURTURE FRIENDSHIPS

CLEAR MISSION STATEMENT
UNIFIES DIVERSE PROGRAMS

COMMUNICATION NEEDS HIGH

NEED RELIABLE SYSTEMS TO KEEP
TRACK OF MEMBERS, PROGRAMS

**DIFFICULT TO MOVE FROM
PASTORAL TO PROGRAM SIZE
WITHOUT CRISIS**

CLERGY CENTERED
... ORGANIZATION ...

CORPORATE

350 or more attending
[700+ members]

QUALITY WORSHIP IS HIGH
PRIORITY

TOP-NOTCH MUSIC PROGRAM

SENIOR CLERGY DEVOTES QUALITY
TIME TO SERMON PREPARATION &
WORSHIP PLANNING

MEMBER PRIDE IN CHURCH IS HIGH

MULTIPLE STAFF, COLLEGIAL YET
DIVERSE; CONVEY SPIRIT; MUST
ENJOY WORKING TOGETHER

SENIOR CLERGY BECOMES SYMBOL
OF UNITY, STABILITY; PROVIDES
VISIBLE PUBLIC IDENTITY; KNOWS
FEWER MEMBERS

COMPLEX ORGANIZATION WITH
MULTIPLE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

SERVICES, PROGRAMS ARE
DIVERSE, VENTURESOME

LEADERS GENERATE ENERGY,
MOMENTUM

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT HAPPENS IN
INTENTIONAL GROUPS; PRIMARY
RELATIONSHIPS ARE WITH OTHER
MEMBERS RATHER THAN STAFF

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

[adapted by Margaret Keip, with permission, from *MOVING YOUR CHURCH THROUGH CONFLICT*, by Speed B. Leas; Alban, 1985]

Levels are not discrete: Overlaps of characteristics often occur. Intensity levels will vary from individual to individual and group to group, requiring careful examination of a broad data base before deciding the conflict level.

Characteristics are broadly indicative: Diagnosis of a particular level of conflict ought to be derived from looking at all characteristics, rather than one or two that seem to dominate. Conflict may emerge at all levels of intensity and may move through the levels at varying rates of speed.

Caring approach is essential: A caring, sensitive concern for the people affected by the conflict is assumed to be uppermost. The personal support of clergy, spouses, church leaders and church members, as well as those persons involved in the conflict intervention, should receive primary consideration at all conflict levels.

Consider a team approach: No one person may have all the skills needed to manage a higher level of conflict. Other team members are needed to share insight and (*especially at higher levels of intensity*) to share emotional stress of conflict intervention.

Training is required: It is recommended that anyone wanting to provide effective intervention at even a level 1 conflict situation receive some basic conflict management training. Some will want to go on to receive additional training so they are equipped to handle levels 2 and 3. Levels 4 & 5 usually require the objectivity and skill of outside, professional consultants in conflict management. — *Speed Leas*

NOTE: These pages are designed so they may be assembled into a chart. Visual impact may be added by photocopying the next 5 pages on colors of increasing 'heat' (e.g.: buff, solar yellow, goldenrod, orange and red) and tape them together in sequence — either in "descending into hell" order or escalating thermometer order.

1:

PROBLEM TO SOLVE

AIM:

***to determine
what is awry
and how to fix it***

LANGUAGE:

***clear, specific,
here-and-now***

ATTITUDE:

optimistic

Actual differences exist; people understand one another, but have conflicting goals, values, needs, action plans or information.

Players confront the problem, not the persons involved. They focus on facts, and listen to understand. They are quick to move into rational problem-solving and optimistic about working through difficulties.

Key players may feel some anxiety in one another's presence, but anger, if it arises, will be short-lived and quickly controlled.

Usually people at level #1 believe collaborative methods are available and choose to engage the conflict openly,

fully sharing information, and allowing participation by everyone involved who is equally open. Problem solving is a source of satisfaction.

At this level players will invite others to describe the difficulty or what they want, and to contribute, as fully as necessary, descriptive and specific information about what is or is not happening that is creating the problem. At level #1 the focus is on solving it.

2:

DISAGREEMENT

AIM:

self-protection

LANGUAGE

***shifts from specific
to general;
interpretations
conceal facts***

ATTITUDE:

cautious

A new concern enters the picture: oneself. Players would like to solve the problem, but don't want to get hurt or maligned in the process; they are aiming to come out okay. Hence, they are cautious about sharing all that they know about the difficulties; they tend to withhold information that might enhance the other or hurt themselves, preparing for compromise. An element of shrewdness and calculation thus enters the picture.

At this level, players will call on friends to discuss the problem and ask for advice, planning strategies to deal with the conflict now or when next it arises.

The barbed, distancing gibe that diminishes the other rather than relieving tension, begins to appear at level #2, but for the most part players are not hostile, just cautious. Hence, the shift in language from the specific to the general, for personal protection. Behind each generalization is a specific, factual happening, but the player is interposing a safety zone. This caution may distance people from reality and keep them from getting close enough to each other to work out their differences.

People are confused about what is going on. They suspect someone may be at fault.

3: CONTEST

AIM: *to win*

LANGUAGE:
distorted
(*emotions
are rising*)

ATTITUDE:
combative

Win/lose dynamics are at work. There is often more than one problem to “fix,” as players compile hurts and wrong doings, and multiple problems cluster into issues or causes.

People take sides, pursue victories, and jockey for power and control. Players are torn between using rational argument and appealing to emotions. Motives are suspect.

Opponents avoid conversing beyond what social norms require. Problems are identified with persons, who are now subject to attack. Players focus on building their case at the cost of objectivity.

Irrational thinking arises, and language grows distorted in any of numerous ways — e.g.:

- *magnified* (I am more benevolent, the other more evil, than we actually are)

- *dichotomized* (issues are either/or)
- *over-generalized* (“you always...” “he never...” “everybody...”)
- *presumptive* (in knowing opponents’ minds better than they do themselves)

Blaming abounds.

There may be resistance to peace overtures at this level. The hope of ***winning*** dampens willingness to admit partnership in the problem or invite others to try to work out a resolution.

Contests, like sporting events, generate adrenaline. Many players at level #3 are stimulated and exhilarated by a worthy opponent and disappointed when the opposition folds without offering an interesting challenge.

4: CRUSADE

AIM: *to hurt and/or
get rid of the other
side*

LANGUAGE
*gels into ideology
—“principles”
eclipse issues*

ATTITUDE:
righteous, punitive

Changing the other person or the situation is no longer enough. Players do not believe the others can or will change, and hence view their only option as removing the other from their environment (or escaping from it themselves). Threat pervades the air. Players feel under siege.

Primitive survival responses are triggered. There seems to be no middle ground between fighting or fleeing, and the attacker does not differentiate the persons attacked from the ideas proposed or defended. Opponents are perceived as lacking integrity. Vital perspective is lost.

Factions solidify. One's own subgroup grows more important than the health of the whole.

Players will not speak to opponents. Instead, parties attempt to enlist outsiders in their cause, while remaining detached from one another — growing cold, unforgiving, righteous, and unaware of others' pain. People yell, walk out, and slam doors.

Punishing and proving oneself right are major themes at level #4. Outsiders are enlisted, not to help manage the conflict but to support one's own side.

5: WORLD WAR

AIM:
to destroy the other

LANGUAGE:
ballistic

Conflict!!!! is out of control.
Players now feel part of a global cause and no longer free to stop fighting. It is not enough to get rid of one's opponent; the wider world must be warned as well. The end justifies any means. There is no resolution in sight. The combatants must separate.