

A Church Rooted in the Neighborhood: Outreach Sustainability Recommendations Report



**2013 Outreach Sustainability Task Force
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Our thanks also to UUMC and the “Committee of Five” for their wisdom and stewardship in convening the Sustainability Task Force. All of those on the task force have been convicted, challenged, and inspired by our conversations together, and are deeply honored by the charge to serve UUMC and the Near East Side. We thank you, the reader, for your patience and grace as we all look for and work towards Christ’s kingdom coming together.

SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT: FOREWORD

When I was growing up, the rule was that you had to finish your entire meal, including vegetables, before you could have dessert. As an adult, I have friends who believe life is short and so you should eat dessert first. If you are a "dessert first" type, you have my permission to skip this introduction and go straight to the next section, where you will find the report conclusions and recommendations. On the other hand, if you are a "dessert last" type who appreciates the entire meal, this introduction puts the report in its broader, historical context. So read on . . . or head straight for the "dessert" table and the fun stuff. It's your choice.

The Outreach Sustainability task force grew out of a year-long conversation among church leaders, regarding the proper staffing needed for the church's community outreach ministries. When no clear consensus could be found, a small group of leaders--representing several key groups in the church (the Governing Board, the Outreach/Missions Committee, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Finance Committee and the pastor)--was charged with the task of finding a solution that met the concerns and priorities of all parties.

When that group of five persons met, they quickly agreed that no single answer was adequate. There needed to be both a short-term and a long-term component, something that fit the current needs and budget of Outreach, as well as future needs and budget. The discussion around the outreach coordinator's position came to be seen as just the tip of the iceberg. The group identified a much broader concern: key outreach volunteers and key outreach donors who are growing older and whose contributions cannot be counted on forever.

With that realization came a shift in focus. No longer was it about the kind of staffing we need and want for Outreach. Now it was about what needs to be done in order to to continue--and even expand--our overall outreach ministries. A special study team was formed to develop a long-term viability plan for Outreach. This is its report.

On their behalf, let me point out two key elements of the report. First, it focuses on only one aspect of UUMC's outreach activity--namely, local outreach--even though the church also has a long history of global missions concern and involvement. Second, the report addresses the workings of the church and the changes that will strengthen who we are and what we do. It does not try to spell out changes that will benefit the neighborhood; those need to be shaped by persons who live and work in the neighborhood. Nor does it mean to suggest that we can do it all on our own, without the help of other community organizations and partners; clearly we can't. However, we ourselves need to be transformed before we can hope to be instrumental in transforming the world around us.

The special study team (the Outreach Sustainability Task Force) quickly determined that the continued vitality and viability of the church's overall outreach efforts was not just a matter of

finding new sources of income and volunteers. That kind of "fix" would merely postpone the inevitable crisis point. No, a more thorough and far-reaching review of our outreach ministries to the community is needed:

- What are the current and changing demographics of the church's neighborhood? How do we assess the needs and concerns of our neighbors? (They may or may not be the same as those of the past.)
- What are we called to do, in order to "live the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... be God's love with our neighbors ... transform the world around us"? How do we honestly assess our capacity ... and work to expand it?
- What do we do well and want to continue? What can be improved? What do we want to add? What do we need to stop doing?
- What resources (spiritual, human, financial, spatial) are needed? What kinds of staffing and leadership will best serve this ministry and this neighborhood?
- Who "owns" the church's outreach ministry? Who are all the stakeholders . . . and how do we empower them to be fully involved?

These questions led the task force in a very different and exciting direction. In fact, the work and vision of the task force expanded into an almost church-wide strategic planning process (though we never called it that or tried to tackle every facet of such a process). Indeed, to review the work of outreach apart from its place in the overall life and ministry of the congregation would be foolhardy and impossible.

If you read this report expecting to find a quick and easy fix to the projected loss of current donors and volunteers, you will not find it. What you will find, instead, is:

1. A recommitment to the centrality of outreach to our very existence and to everything we do as a congregation;
2. A recognition that the starting point and the heart of all outreach is the creation of vital, authentic and mutually loving relationships; and
3. A refocusing of our life and work to make the building of relationships—especially cross-cultural, cross-racial, cross-class relationships—a priority in everything we do.

The absence of specifics (for implementing the recommendations) is not an oversight, but rather a recognition that (1) adoption of a clear, compelling and energizing vision must come first, and (2) the participation of many others is essential to the successful development of the recommendations. Without these, nothing will ever happen.

The observations and recommendations that follow will stretch us in lots of ways. But I believe they reflect God's desire for us, as individuals and as a congregation. I also believe they hold the key to renewing and sustaining this congregation and its ministry. What really excites me, however, is that, though the conclusions and recommendations are cast as new and different, the truth is that God is already at work and that we are already living our way into a new way of life, consistent with these recommendations.

Craig French
Pastor

SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT: BACKGROUND

Current Status

“Everything goes well, looks good, and you are all so nice here. It just would have been nice to have someone to talk to. Things are hard, you know? For a few months there, I was in a really bad place. I was just... Look at me, I’m about to cry just thinking about it.”

I was trying to gather some information for the task force from our current Friday Community members, and as I sat down next to one of our sweetest “regulars” this came pouring out of her heart.

Definitions

“Outreach” forms a major piece of UUMC’s identity; we are all proud to be part of a church that keeps its responsibility to the surrounding neighborhood at the forefront of its efforts. A small group of dedicated volunteers has grown and sustained our programs for decades, doing the hard work of ministering to “Christ in his most distressing [homeless, naked, and hungry] disguise”. The largest of these programs – our Friday Community (food pantry and clothing closet) and Sunday breakfasts - are incredibly efficient at providing food to our neighbors in a welcoming environment. Our current neighborhood outreach programs also include our community garden, shared with Welch Terrace, and sponsoring incoming refugee families, the Thanksgiving bag program, and a free Christmas dinner.

The “Outreach Committee” consists of some leaders of these ministries, as well as the Friday Chaplain and pastor. It meets monthly to report on outreach work and make decisions regarding future activities.

The “Sustainability Task Force” is a group which met from January-June 2013 to consider the future of outreach at UUMC and make recommendations for a “sustainable” outreach program.

“Sustainability” was determined by the task force to have a broad definition. We took it as our charge to determine *what* outreach ministries should be sustained and *how* they would be sustained.

¹ *all first person, italicized “stories” in this document are by Lyndsey Graves*

Through our discussions, we discovered a common theme that UUMC's human resources are its most precious resources, and that they, in turn, are ultimately sustained by relationships. Our focus then shifted to considering how the church could best cultivate relationships that would bring life and transformation to folks inside and "outside" the walls of UUMC. Our current model of ministry involves UUMC members giving to "The Others", with resources flowing almost entirely in one direction. For the task force, however, sustainability begins with acknowledging the resources the entire community already brings with them into our life together, and then tapping into those resources for a multidirectional flow of sharing life and love. We hope to see our current outreach ministries incrementally transformed into spaces for the cultivation of deep, life-giving relationships – extending our habit of caring for those we already know or who already "belong" - which would transform these activities from programs that only *consume* resources into programs that, with enough flexibility and creativity, also *produce* resources of all kinds.



Winter coats line the altar.

Reasons for Change



When Laurie mentioned that a listening ear could have helped her through some hard times, I decided to be honest with her: "You know, we've been talking about that very thing – how we don't always get to sit down and get to know people. But things get so busy around here, we barely have enough people to handle the demand for food. Do you ever have a free Friday to give us a hand?"

It was clear that she had never considered the possibility that she might be included in making our Friday Community happen. Amidst her schedule of doctor's appointments and grandchild-care, she is getting started volunteering with us on Fridays.



These programs – and the people who have led and supported them, past, and present - are worth being proud of. To honor and sustain these people, these programs, and those they serve, it is necessary to reduce dependence on a small group of people. As people's life circumstances change, so do their locations, availability, and physical ability to invest time, money, and energy in a position or program. Even if this were *not* the case – if we could count on the same people to do the same things indefinitely – that would not be fair or desirable, for those volunteers or for anyone else.

It is for exactly this reason that the future of the outreach program will determine the future of the church. We feel UUMC is called to become a church rooted in the neighborhood – a beacon and a resource to those immediately surrounding us, while also continuing to draw people from across the city and county who want to call such a church home.

This means that outreach – UUMC’s service with our neighborhood – is no longer just one of the things that we do. It must become *who we are*.

Becoming a church *with* and *of* this neighborhood means re-evaluating everything we do . This is not because there is anything wrong with our church, ministries, or people. On the contrary, our desire to share the wonderful gifts entrusted to UUMC should drive our efforts to make them more accessible. At the same time, we look forward to their enrichment from the gifts, efforts, ideas, and cultures of “newcomers”, so that over time what we do matches whom we serve, which may come to look very different.

SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT: PROPOSAL

Minister *With* the Poor

The Church is not a social service agency. UUMC does not simply keep “The Resources” and hand them out to “The Needy”. Instead, it is a hub for all to share whatever they bring – to give and receive freely.

Too often there is a *perceived* divide between volunteers and visitors/guests/clients/friends. However benevolent and friendly the relationship may be on both sides, it still appears lopsided. “Those who Work” do things *for* “Those who Wait”, with few people crossing between groups.

All may share whatever they bring – giving and receiving freely.

Many volunteers are overworked and rarely recognized; meanwhile, certain aspects of current programs, as well as any new programs that arise, are in need of even more volunteers than the current workforce can provide.

Friends help each other out; friends even *ask* for each other’s help. All must have the humility, the flexibility, and the tolerance for chaos to allow others – The Waiters - the chance to help maintain and improve something that is dear to everyone. And we must not take ourselves so seriously that we refuse to take a break and sit among Those who Wait while someone else works. We all agree that our church has a great capacity for giving, but for some, becoming more like Jesus will mean learning when and how to receive!

This shift is already occurring, but there is a long way to go before UUMC’s ministries *belong* to and *minister* to all involved.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

* People do not often take the initiative to enter a space where they have not been invited. Everyone involved in church activities can and should be proactive about inviting others to volunteer when it is natural to do so, while making it clear that this is not a requirement to receive help or be treated

with love and respect.

* Invite breakfast attendees to church, and consider some of the very practical (space and time) barriers to “crossing the bridge” from breakfast to the service.

* Both Friday Community and Sunday Breakfast could benefit from the addition of a Greeter and/or Hospitality Specialist volunteer position. These people would have the job of distributing nametags to everyone, spending time with others and perhaps looking for small ways to serve individuals – refilling coffee, for instance. There would always be room for more people like this, or even for more shy or uncertain people to “shadow” the established Greeters.

* A new volunteer should always be valued and welcomed, and space made to allow him or her to help. If possible, leaders should find a place for the new person that fits his or her comfort levels and skill set. A very shy person should not feel required to be a Greeter, nor a very energetic, outgoing one to stand facing the wall, rolling silverware. This might involve shifting more experienced volunteers into different roles to allow a new person the chance to contribute.

* All volunteers should be considered, and feel that they are, part of the church. They should also feel respected as the servant leaders they are. Though UUMC’s volunteers do their jobs for reasons other than recognition, for some people a job title and a uniform (even just an apron) carry the message that their contributions are valuable and their responsibilities real.

* Periodic volunteer training workshops would allow volunteers to be trained in multiple positions, to grow relationships with one another, and to understand certain skills and standards that apply to all volunteer positions at UUMC.

All have the opportunity to show Christ’s love to everyone who comes through the doors.

Make “Outreach” a Goal of Every Ministry

Make “Outreach” a Goal of Every Ministry

Every UUMC group, event, and ministry participates in making the church hospitable and inclusive. From worship to Christian education to Friday Community, we all have the opportunity and the responsibility to show Christ’s love to everyone who comes through the doors. In planning for the future, we recommend all of UUMC’s ministries re-evaluate their efforts through the eyes of an “outsider” coming in. Some questions each ministry might consider:

- * Is our space, our setup, and our time together comfortable or confusing?
- * Would a new person be able to navigate here? Where would he or she go with questions?
- * What does our way of doing things communicate – or what message is *received* – about our beliefs, about the people involved, about different groups of people?
- * How can we send a better message and ensure that it is received?
- * How would a new person feel here if he or she were dressed down, illiterate, dirty, disabled, or in some other way “out of the norm” compared with the majority of our current congregation?
- * What does this event/ministry/group assume its attendees will enjoy? Own? Believe? Expect? Be able to do?

Open the Doors

The official slogan for the United Methodist Church is “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.” Our doors are, however, locked, about 164 out of 168 hours every week. What message does this send to the neighbors? How does this affect the church’s ability to build relationships?

The task force recommends transforming this building into a resource for the community, even if only to provide a warm space, a bathroom, a cup of coffee, and a friendly face.

Of course, this involves risk, possibly great risk. UUMC has responsibilities to its tenants and to the stewardship of the property for everyone’s use and enjoyment. But with the proper precautions, opening the doors is a necessary first step in becoming a welcoming home for our entire community.

“When we opened the [front] doors during the study hall, several people came in off the street or standing on the corner just to look at the sanctuary and the building. One church member noticed how inviting the open doors looked on a cool summer night.”

- Matt Gress

Employ Great Leaders

One step in providing a welcoming space for neighbors to drop in is employing a steady, visible, present person at a minimum of half-time. In addition, we expect that successful leadership of outreach ministry will require several sets of skills and responsibilities, all of which can probably not be supplied by just one employee. These include:

Chaplaincy skills

- * Providing spiritual care to the community;
- * Being available for one-on-one conversations and helping with specific individual needs, and
- * Modeling and promoting hospitality – the ongoing, growing work of “homemaking” at UUMC

Administrative skills

- * Ordering from Food Bank, arranging for pick-up or delivery, completing various paperwork and reporting, and volunteer coordination

Leadership skills

- * Providing training, on-the-job guidance, and leadership for an increasingly wide and diverse volunteer pool;
- * Innovating, strategizing, and implementing new ways of facilitating existing programs and establishing new ones;
- * Mentoring and supporting volunteers while holding them accountable to satisfactory job performance and respectful treatment of others;
- * Possessing experience and understanding of the necessity of how to earn respect and trust from church members, volunteers, and the community, and
- * Helping to create and maintain community-defined norms and expectations.

Time commitments

- * Being available for any new programs or drop-in hours that are instated;
- * Attending occasional evening meetings for emergency food programs, and
- * Acting as a Sunday morning “bridge” between weekday and Sunday activities and people

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

* A United Methodist Church and Community Worker could act as an Outreach Coordinator. We recommend pursuing this possibility. Church and Community Workers are commissioned missionaries of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, who, in response to God's call, are devoted to uplifting the poor and disenfranchised in rural and urban

areas throughout the United States. As their name implies, they take the church into the community and bring the community into the church. Workers normally serve in a project 6 to 10 years.

* The responsibilities listed above may be best attended to by a combination of the Outreach Coordinator, the pastor, and other



a Friday Community member chooses protein items.

persons they supervise.

* The pastor's role, focus, and priorities will change along with the needs, directions and priorities of UUMC. The pastor's job description should be reviewed and changed accordingly—especially inasmuch as the current pastor is sensing a call to be more directly and immediately involved in the church's outreach ministries (not simply as an administrator, supervisor or occasional drop-in “visitor”).

* There is great value in consulting with someone who is knowledgeable about leading a congregation through the kind of transitions highlighted in this report.

We recommend that serious consideration be given to employing a coach to work with the church's pastor, staff and leaders, especially through the initial phase(s) of these transitions.

Enjoy Friday Community

It has been observed that UUMC's pantry does not operate as a Friday Community; it would be more accurate to say there is a First Friday Community, a Second Friday Community, and so on. Since clients can only receive food once a month, a different set of faces cycles through every week of the month, except for three or four people who come by more often to see their favorite volunteers.

We recommend making a concentrated effort and investment in seeing the Friday Community become a place people want to return to week after week, even though they cannot receive their monthly allotment of food again. Various ways of doing this have been suggested, and several in combination may allow pantry time to become Community time.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

* Recruit more volunteers. Even though we provide a warm and friendly atmosphere overall, workers are often too overextended to chat with anyone.

* Share conversation over a meal, snack, or “nice” beverage.

* Intentionally configure space to invite conversation. This has already

The hallway can get crowded on Fridays with people packing up bags and boxes and socializing after they shop. I raise my voice a little over the hubbub.

“Sonny, could you pass that cart behind you over this way?”

Five or six heads turn to look at me and Sonny breaks into a grin.

“Did you hear that? She remembers my name!”

Much as I love seeing everyone smiling, inside my heart drops. I haven't performed a spectacular feat of memory; Sonny and I introduced ourselves to each other 10 minutes ago before we walked through the pantry together. In his happy exclamation, what I really hear is an indictment of the systems that shuffle Sonny and other community members through a rotating door of forms and numbers. I hear a longing to be recognized as an individual human being, not a member of the mass called “the poor”.

begun with Jeff Foley’s “hospitality center”.

- * Make board games and table games (ping pong or pool) available.
- * Establish new groups, activities, or classes.
- * There is a possibility – with a little more help and space – of separating the regular inventory from the items available from the Food Bank for free. Clients could return as often as they wanted to pick up the free items. *(detailed proposal available from Lyndsey Graves)*

Make Space Especially for Student Involvement

Many students would be happy to volunteer, but feel uncomfortable stepping into a church or ministry situation without a more structured role. Creating a student-friendly volunteering situation could be key for attracting and *keeping* students involved in the life of the congregation.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

- * Define a clear role, responsibilities, and “resource person” for any questions. These could make a student feel more secure among people who are vastly different from him or her (not just people who are poor, but also older or religious people). Invite LeMoyne College or Hendricks Chapel to send students to UUMC and give each school a detailed description of where these students will go

and what they will do.

- * Consider a partnership with the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, perhaps offering a stipend or fellowship to a student in nonprofit organization and management.
- * Invite graduate students in Maxwell’s Public Administration program, who complete a workshop project in the month of May at the culmination of their program, to conduct a workshop at UUMC.
- * Engage students at other departments at SU and colleges in Onondaga County with service learning opportunities.



Matt Gress, Lyndsey Graves, and Liz Pruchnicki serve brunch to passersby.

- * Partner with The ROAD to make service opportunities available to young adults who are in relationship with the café.
- * Maintain a relationship with the new 2013-2014 United Methodist chaplain at SU and support her ecumenical ministry with UUMC’s own resources and with ministry opportunities.

Eat Together

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Four months after the Stone Soup discussion group ended, people at breakfast continue to ask when “the next one” is going to be. There was something special about sharing a simple meal in The Gathering Room that made it easy to share opinions and stories, as well, and provided a home-like atmosphere that some of our friends are sorely missing.

Sunday breakfast is, for many church members and friends, one of the things that makes UUMC special; if one has a favorite “outreach memory” it is likely to have something to do with breakfast. It is also the outreach ministry that has brought the most people into the congregation in recent months.

Several aspects of UUMC’s breakfast program make it a particularly well-run and inviting “meal program” among the others in the city, but the joy it brings to those who eat and work there is most of all due to the simple fact of *eating together*. Though we may not be able to explain it, everyone has experienced the almost mystical power of food to draw people closer together. As Ted Finlayson-Schueler, UUMC’s breakfast coordinator, recently said, “Food is the best way to start relationships... I actually believe that the food I serve

ministers to the people who eat it without our even meeting – that’s how powerful it is.”

The task force’s recommendation is simply that UUMC *invest* in sharing food. Preparing and serving food at times other than Sunday breakfast is generally a confusing and expensive chore; it would be well worth the time, money, and space necessary to make breaking bread a more consistent and important part of the church’s life together.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

* Provide food to eat during Friday Community. The Outreach Committee is considering this direction. Despite potential logistical complications, this proposal is a promising avenue for establishing a real *feeling* of community at the pantry. Even if only expanded beverage service is available, it will be an important step towards *sharing* rather than just *giving* food and time.

* Familiarize more people with the kitchens, how to procure paper and plasticware, etc., as these are often barriers to the deceptively simple idea of “having a meal”. The Outreach Committee has also mentioned that certain kitchen implements *must* stay behind locked



Breakfast is served on Christmas morning.

doors to ensure they are available for Sunday breakfast cooks. It might be worth buying or even asking the congregation to donate additional implements for use at other times.

* Revamp the church potluck to account for the growing economic diversity of church members and friends. Perhaps UUMC could provide a main dish and invite attendees to either bring a dish to pass or help to prepare the main dish. This became the setup at Stone Soup as some homeless friends started bringing *their* friends.

Listen

Sometimes there is a dissonance between perceived and actual needs. The needs which some people perceive others to have may not be the needs that are most urgently felt. Those of us who do not *live* in UUMC's neighborhood must be careful to listen to those who do before starting new ministries or changing existing ones.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

- * Form a group to walk around the neighborhood *regularly* in order to have a greater presence and to open the possibility of forming relationships with some of the neighbors who do not come to UUMC.
- * Seek out further opportunities to listen to our neighbors and seek the Spirit's guidance in finding ways to facilitate solutions to problems. All, volunteers especially, should remember that listening is one of the most important jobs that can be done.
- * Cultivate other practices of listening at UUMC. Make space for individuals to share their stories publicly or train members in active listening skills.

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One of our regulars at breakfast asked me two Sundays in a row if our clothes closet could spare any men's shorts. Although we had none available, I pointed him to the Ten Tons of Love clothing drive, where the volunteers who help sort donations from SU students can take some items home for themselves. When I saw him there the next day, he told me more as we worked: "I went to the Rescue Mission thrift store, and they didn't have any; there's a lot of nice clothes donated for job interviews and stuff, but I've got a construction job now. I don't need pants and a jacket. I needed these shorts!"

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Look for the Leaders

The task force has focused on relationships in the last few months after a few initial weeks of data-gathering and "idea fests". "Legal advice!", someone would say, and everyone around the table nodded enthusiastically. Then someone else would chime in, "weekly youth nights!" and then, "cooking classes!", "support for those leaving jail!", "visiting the elderly!".

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Jeff Foley has already elected to become the Hospitality Coordinator for Friday Community. He makes and drinks coffee with clients waiting for Friday Community, allowing the opportunity for conversations and relationships to form. He is open to helping with any new food service we decide to implement on Fridays. For now, he's experimenting with offering a few snacks as extras make their way to us from the Food Bank, and directing set-up and clean-up of our coffee area.

Undoubtedly, all of the things listed above are needed by various people in our vicinity. The church is also surrounded with opportunities to partner with others working for the betterment of our neighborhood – Welch Terrace, McCarthy Manor, The Newland Center for Literacy, the Community Folk Art Center, the Ronald McDonald House, Visions for Change, and Copper Beech Commons, to name just a few. It is vital that we make these connections as well.

But as energizing as all of these ideas were, the task force realized the difficulty in dictating or discovering what gifts and skills in the congregation match up with the *actual*, and not the perceived, needs of the neighborhood around us. Discernment what new programs or directions are necessary must be done with the Holy Spirit and those who are affected by them. New ideas and events, with their attendant risks, are certainly expected, but they should grow naturally out of relationships as people seek to minister to one another.

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Such a grassroots approach to new programming will require flexibility and a hospitable environment for new ideas and leaders. This is a necessary step in becoming a “teaching church” as envisioned in Goal 4 of the UUMC 2009 Plan of Action. All have something to teach; all have much to learn. May all have the courage to look for, support, and believe in, the leader in everyone.

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

- * Look for ways to encourage new ideas and projects, especially from new leaders.
- * Develop a Service Corps of volunteers (who may receive a small stipend) whom we have gotten to know from the neighborhood, shelters, or halfway houses. Train them in contributing to events around UUMC and to other community needs, such as disaster relief efforts.

Continue Asking Questions

This report represents the task force’s best attempt to evaluate UUMC’s ministries thoroughly but not exhaustively. As our group disperses to allow the conversation to continue throughout the congregation, we trust in the creativity, passion, and prayers of all to enrich this vision and bring it to

life. New questions, directions, and puzzles are sure to present themselves to all of UUMC's leaders; here are just a few of the pieces that have not yet been addressed.

- * How can UUMC deepen connections among the current congregation, especially in seeking to care for the caretakers among us?
- * How will church rites, such as membership, meet all people where they are while retaining their richness and meaning?
- * What does diversity in worship look like?
- * How will UUMC care for and educate children creatively in Christian love – using multiple cultural methods or perspectives?
- * Does UUMC's church governance – its committee structure – facilitate growth? Participation by all?
- * How can UUMC connect with other urban and suburban United Methodist churches to share resources, people, and ideas?

Seek Transformation for All

A model of “ministry with the poor” is not just an idea for the benefit of our neighbors or a recruitment tactic to get more volunteers. It is a vision for a diverse community that will transform all of us. As we share more and more of our resources, space, responsibility, and power, we will all find ourselves learning and receiving in unexpected ways. This will require us to take risks, to exercise patience, to tolerate mistakes and misunderstandings, and to expect the unexpected as we all learn to live together with people of widely different backgrounds and experiences. May we all approach our work (and play) together with humility and trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, and with openness to the sometimes uncomfortable nature of any process of growth and transformation.