

REPORT BY THE
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTERS ASSOCIATION
AND THE
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY FOR
COMMUNITY MINISTRIES
**TASK FORCE ON EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY
MINISTRY**

June 14, 2012

Introduction

The Task Force on Excellence in Community Ministry was created by the boards of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) and the Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries (UUSCM) to make suggestions and specific proposals concerning how the UUMA and UUSCM can work together to strengthen and promote excellence in Community Ministry.

Six areas of focus were identified for the Task Force to address:

1. Best practices of community ministries and congregational and associational relationships;
2. Models for strengthening collegiality between community ministers, parish ministers, and the association;
3. Models for strengthening the understanding and potential of community ministry within the broader association and movement;
4. Models for collaboration and continuing education;
5. Models for accountability and standards for endorsing or affirming lay persons engaged in community ministry;
6. Recommendations for the UUSCM and UUMA to collaborate and strengthen right relations between the two organizations.

The Rev. Michelle Walsh from the UUSCM board and the Rev. Alan Taylor from the UUMA board were appointed as co-conveners for the Task Force. Four others were also appointed to serve: the Rev. Wendy Fish and the Rev. Deborah Raible by the UUMA and the Rev. Cathleen Cox and Robert Miess by the UUSCM.

To begin, the Task Force identified an outside facilitator to assist us through our work together. We engaged Larry Peers, Senior Consultant with the Alban Institute. We agreed to meet over the weekend of April 14-15, 2012 in the Seattle area. Prior to this meeting, Larry facilitated a conference call meeting to initiate our work. We collectively put together materials for all participants to review. He also spoke to leadership in the UUSCM, the UUMA, and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The Rev. Sarah Lammert, the Director of Ministries and Faith Development at the UUA, accepted our invitation to join us so that the UUA leadership would have input into and familiarity with the Task Force work.

We met at the Palisades Retreat Center in Federal Way, a lovely site that overlooks Puget Sound amidst a wooded area. We began with worship and then Larry led us through affirming covenantal agreements on how to communicate with one another. What followed was honest sharing about hopes and dreams for community ministry. We acknowledged the frustrations of many community ministers with the scarcity of support from the UUMA and UUA; we addressed current “stuckness,” particularly between the UUSCM and the UUMA and UUA; and the differences of opinions among us were clearly laid out.

The following day, the work of the team transcended our different points of view. Worship and brilliant facilitation gathered us to focus on our common values and the significance of community ministry beyond congregations. From a place of hope and love, we identified that “the Spirit is upon us” to:

- support community ministry as the face of UU values in the larger world;
- celebrate the power and diversity of community ministries;
- enable community ministers to be present with those who feel outside, alone, and afraid;
- unlock our fullest pastoral and prophetic capacities for bringing healing and justice to our world, thus supporting a change of paradigm for understanding the broadest potential of community ministry within our UU movement;
- foster a welcome table theology that recognizes community ministry as a significant way for UUs to reach the most vulnerable in our communities;
- leap into integral consciousness whereby we are enabled to see what is missing and choose from a truly holistic place of creative, adaptive, surprising, and paradigm-changing depth movements.

We achieved a level of sharing that included honesty, vulnerability, risk-taking, depth of caring, and a willingness to deepen down together. We moved from a guarded set of viewpoints into a holy conversation. Our process to engage the specific areas of focus was to begin with “**Reviewing**” and asking “What is?”, then reflecting on “**Realizations**” from this review, and next turning to “**Revising**” by asking “What is possible?”. Finally we developed clear goals in “**Recomposing**” by asking “How shall we move forward?”

This report is outlined according to the six areas of focus identified above, with recommendations shared in each section. All the recommendations are also brought together as a final summation of our work. It is worthy to note that the topic of lay ministry was addressed on two different days, first focused on our divergent opinions and then later in the context of our most cherished values for community ministry. Section 5 will include both these conversations that were significantly different in tone, thanks to adept facilitation that brought out as a backdrop for the second conversation our deep commitment to community ministry.

Our meeting concluded with dividing the goals between short term (doable in the next 18 months) and longer term (requiring more time to implement). All Task Force members took writing assignments to develop this report. It is our hope that the leadership of UUSCM, UUMA, and UUA will consider these goals and find ways to make them real.

Topic 1: Best practices of community ministries and congregational and associational relationships.

Summary for Reviewing/What Is

In prioritizing the order for considering the 6 topics of our charge at our in person meeting, there seemed to be ready consensus that progress has been made on Topic 1 of Best Practices. And while there is certainly more that could and should be done regarding Best Practices, we should first focus on the topics with less progress. Also it was acknowledged that Best Practices would be attended to in many ways as we moved through the other topics.

Indeed as we moved through the other topics, all the items that had been brought up under Reviewing/What Is on Topic 1 Best Practices during our prior conference call were covered again, along with some new ones. Here is the summary:

There is a, newly published by UUSCM, **Guide to Best Practices in Community Ministry (2012)** and a **Guide to Affiliation for UU Congregations and Parish Ministers** jointly published in 2009 by the UUSCM, UUMA, and UUA. However, it is also the case that there has been no funding for educating congregations and parish ministers (or community ministers) about community minister affiliation, and there is still a wide range in what community ministers are asked to do as Affiliate Ministers. The MFC currently also requires community ministers to become Affiliate Ministers with congregations in order to move from preliminary to final fellowship. This requirement was put in place without any structure or funding for informing or educating congregations and ministers about their part in this requirement, and so there is no mutual expectation in place yet to support this requirement. While there are community ministers still struggling to become Affiliate Ministers, and swaths of congregants who have no idea what community ministry is, there are also congregations and parish ministers that are embracing community ministers in their affiliation process. Also noted was that there is no organized clear listing of community ministers anywhere, and that the majority of community ministers do not have congregational expense accounts unlike most parish ministers. Another accomplishment, however, is that Community Ministry Sunday has been established as an annual event, and the number of congregations in which it is being observed is growing. Community ministers are also leading worship and offering other services in congregations throughout the year. There are also those who feel support for community ministry from the vision expressed by President Morales' recent "Congregations and Beyond" statement.

Summary for Realizations

A realization from another topic bears repeating for this topic: Things aren't all bad. It is noteworthy that the first response to Topic 1 of Best Practices (as we prioritized our consideration of the 6 topics) was a **sense of progress**. There is also the known strain

on Best Practices, as on many topics, caused by limited resources, especially financial. However, this can also be seen as an opportunity to create more with less or the same resources.

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

There could be designated advocates in various major UU institutions and seminaries, who are knowledgeable in existing best practices, to help foster a greater awareness and understanding of community ministry and the development of best practices. Already existing structures within the UUA could be used to educate congregations about affiliation needs of community ministers. A centralized database could be developed for listing community ministers and information about community ministry. Planning could be done for continued study and action regarding the lack of expense accounts for community ministers. Existing forms of communication in our associational institutions could be used to help people learn what community ministry is and to promote Community Ministry Sunday, successful examples of affiliation, and other best practices. In talking about how community ministers seeking affiliation are (unfairly) often the ones who educate parish ministers and congregations about affiliation, there came the positive idea of community ministers being utilized for mentoring both community and parish ministers in skills that community ministers have to offer.

Summary for Recomposing/What's Next

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months):

1. Ask the UUA to educate congregations about affiliation needs of community ministers prior to their need to make a request, utilizing District Executives to disseminate this information to congregations and also utilizing the UU World.
2. Request that the UUMA, UUSCM, and UUA use all existing avenues of communication to hold up community ministry and stories about successful community ministries, for example through the use of the UU World, General Assembly, Community Ministry Sunday, blogs, newsletters, etc.
3. Request that the UUA and districts and the UUMA and UUSCM work together to develop an adequate database of community ministers and their ministries.
4. Promote the annual Community Ministry Sunday (1st Sunday in February) through the UUMA and UUSCM early enough to get onto the liturgical calendar of parish ministers.

Long-Term goals (more than 18 months):

1. Identify a responsible person/advocate for community ministry in various major UU institutions and seminaries, ones trained in best practices.
2. Promote mentorship by community ministers to community ministers or parish ministers in skill sets that community ministers have to offer.

Topic 2: Models for strengthening collegiality between community ministers, parish ministers, and the association.

Summary for Reviewing/What is

Time is a precious commodity for all professionals. When in-person collegial connecting times are during weekday hours, it is often difficult for community ministers (specifically meaning clergy colleagues in this topic) to attend as their employers do not consider these gatherings part of their work related responsibilities. Barriers for collegial in-person connecting include not just time, but also lack of professional expense funds for overnight professional events. Community clergy who have benefits often have to take vacation time to attend collegial meetings, and community clergy without benefits take unpaid leave in order to attend collegial meetings.

Not all collegial connecting is done in person. There are some electronic threads of connections: UUMA chat; UUMA relational groups: students, interims, and retired clergy to name a few. Some UUMA chapters reach out to clergy colleagues through letters generated during retreats, sending these letters to those mentioned during check-in who are unable to be present but who might benefit from hearing from their colleagues.

As clergy spend time together on committees at the continental and chapter level, trust is built and connections deepen. As both parish and community clergy lead programs or worship at collegial gatherings, individuals become better known to one another. Both parish clergy and community clergy might benefit if more clergy belonged to both UUSCM and UUMA.

There is a wide range within congregations of how community clergy and parish clergy work together and collaborate. Some parish and community clergy connect over the planning for Community Ministry Sunday.

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

UUMA chapters vary as to scheduling, and those that have expanded alternatives to include weekend and weekday gatherings, day and evening timing have more opportunities available for collegial connecting between and among parish and community clergy. Examples include: the Pacific Northwest chapter (PNW) which has one chapter professional days over a weekend in a two year period; and the Pacific Central District (PCD) which is considering alternating weekend/weekday and lunch/dinner gatherings. These chapters might be featured in UUMA and UUSCM newsletter articles.

Chapters that have subsidy funds available take into account the lack of professional expense or professional development money available to community clergy and limited

professional expense budgets of many parish clergy. Colleagues might benefit from reminders at the chapter level of the professional development funds available from the UUMA to attend chapter program related gatherings.

Cultivating a practice of including community clergy in leadership positions and on committees with parish clergy colleagues will foster collegial collaboration and connecting opportunities.

Community Ministry Sunday could be more collaborative, with parish clergy holding up the local or continental UU community ministries that abound rather than solely having community ministers speak about their respective ministries. Sharing liturgical responsibilities on such a Sunday is a powerful non-verbal statement of collegial relations.

Summary for Recomposing/What's Next

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months):

1. Encourage UUMA chapters to find ways to stay connected to community clergy. Re-orient collegial gatherings so they vary between weekend/weekdays and lunch/dinner times. This improves opportunities for in-person collegiality among parish and community clergy. Take opportunities during or after collegial gatherings to communicate with clergy colleagues who had to be absent as a way of building relationships between parish and community clergy.
2. Encourage the UUSCM Good Officer to speak with the UUMA continental Good Officer to pave the way for the UUMA Good Officers to reach out to community clergy who are disgruntled/hurt/angry.
3. Make wider use of existing communication avenues to enhance a sense of collegiality: send letters to colleagues not attending a gathering to say they are missed; utilize electronic means like blogs or the UUMA chat more creatively; foster small group ministries at collegial gatherings; encourage chapter leaders in their phone conference after UUMA Board meetings to feature new ideas of connecting.
4. Publicly encourage clergy to join both the UUMA and the UUSCM and to take advantage of existing avenues of collegiality.
5. Create opportunities for community and parish clergy to do some intentional work together, like composing a Community Ministry Sunday resource guide.

Long-Term Goals (more than 18 months):

1. Create ways for community clergy to caucus in the UUSCM and UUMA, for example through like-minded ministries, community of practice and focus, and virtual chapters.

Topic 3: Strengthening the understanding and potential of community ministry within the broader association and movement.

Summary for Reviewing/What Is

The themes that emerged in this conversation revolved around enlarging our capacity as a faith community to impact and heal the world in newly emerging ways that address the changing needs of our times - and in so doing fulfill our own ministries and lives more completely. We wove together a “both/and” perspective on how parish and community ministers could work together. Specific areas where we saw possibilities for strengthening the understanding and potential of community ministry included: greater collaboration between our organizations; working together to expand and co-create diverse ways of meeting spiritual needs beyond and within our walls in the face of changing demographics and expectations regarding religious affiliation; and becoming more actively known as a “good news faith” with greater pastoral and prophetic presence in the public face of our ministries and movement.

We affirmed a number of positive strands of development for UU community ministry since it was first affirmed as a path of ministry at General Assembly (GA) over 20 years ago, following a long and in many ways illustrious history of existing at the fringes. There are many flourishing community ministries today and increasing interest in community ministry among seminarians, among whom are many candidates of color. As many as half of all seminarians now express interest in community ministry. This is a positive trend at a time when there are not enough fully funded settled ministries to accommodate newly fellowshipped ministers - although that could shift to some extent in the coming decade with more anticipated parish ministers retiring.

There have been some important and growing institutional sources of support for community ministries in the UUA. These include the founding and development of the UUSCM itself; the establishment of Community Ministry Sunday; recently, especially, a greater and more visible focus on the interests and needs of community ministers by the UUMA and its leaders, some of whose professional leaders now identify themselves as community ministers, as do some of the professional leaders at the UUA; opening the UU Health Plan to community ministers; the achievement of a number of successful affiliations of community ministers with congregations; the development of key documents to add both rigor and support for community ministry; funding for UUSCM’s strategic planning by the UU Funding Panel; and the recognition by the 2011 GA of “congregations beyond walls,” such as the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF). Other such “virtual congregations” may be on the horizon.

The recognition of community ministry milestones, such as affiliations, in the *UU World* is another step towards full inclusion. There seems to be growing understanding and acceptance that many ministries will “flow” between parish and community settings over the years, as well as sometimes being initially set up as hybrid ministries that are part

parish and part community-based. Overall, community ministry has grown in recognition, respect and acceptance – albeit slowly – over the past twenty years.

It is also important to recognize that there are current realities that represent real disappointments and missed opportunities in fulfilling the potential of community ministry. There is still a widespread lack of understanding among laity concerning what community ministry is, as well as less understanding of and support for community ministry among parish ministers than is needed. Many are not yet willing to have an ordained community minister in preliminary fellowship affiliate with their congregation - which community ministry clergy need to be able to do in order to progress through the fellowshiping process.

There has been little continental or district institutional support for community ministers, in some cases for the same needs that are well served for parish ministers such as settlement. Pro-active initiatives aimed at educating and preparing parish ministers and lay congregational leaders for community ministry clergy seeking affiliation are particularly needed. Community ministry candidates seeking internships are in need of institutional support in finding placements. Fellowshiped community ministers also need such institutional support in seeking settled employment. UUMA and UUA educational events need actively to consider and include offerings that are likely to be meaningful for community ministers. A sabbatical program for community ministers is very much needed. Community Ministry Sunday needs to become more widely publicized continentally and observed locally in order to become a meaningful part of our UU liturgical calendar. Attention internationally also may be warranted.

The UUSCM has been dismayed that it no longer has an assigned workshop slot for GA which ensures that at least one program aimed at directly serving the needs of community ministries will be offered. UUSCM offerings in recent years have frequently been turned down for programming; greater consciousness of the importance for GA programming to address the needs of community ministries is called for.

Summary for Realizations

Overall, though community ministry has shown tenacity and resiliency in our movement, slowly gaining support and recognition, a scarcity mentality seems still to exist around institutional resources for supporting community ministries. A limited and short-sighted view of the potential for community ministries to contribute to our effectiveness and visibility is still widespread – at the very time studies show how the changing demographics of our culture cry out for new approaches to reaching the largest growing reported “religious preference” of our population: “spiritual but not religious.”

The huge potential of community ministry to be a rich, valuable, highly cost-effective resource for parish ministers and congregations (*not* a drain or complication!) needs to be strongly lifted up and embraced. At a time when we need to be doing more with less

in many areas, community ministries, both lay and ordained, are an underused, and often entirely untapped, resource.

At the same time, the sense of overwhelm and exhaustion among many parish ministers and institutional leaders is real, and resistance to responding to community ministry with interest and support needs to be understood in this light and constructively and compassionately engaged by all concerned. We need to encourage a mindset that looks for the “win/win” opportunities and shares that perspective and those opportunities with others.

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

There are many concrete opportunities for the potential of community ministry to become more visible, more productive, and more fruitful, and for a synergistic relationship between community ministries and congregations and their leaders to become a reality.

One of these is hybrid ministries; another is the use of community ministers as part-time consulting ministers, inclusive of the many forms of entrepreneurial community ministries that currently exist (ranging from spiritual direction to art and music ministries to academic ministries to pastoral therapy ministries, etc.). Congregation-based community service projects led by community ministers could multiply, and a variety of small group ministries of many types, both pastoral and prophetic, could be launched. Community ministers, many of whom work in the larger local community itself, can play a key role in opening doors to multicultural, anti-racist, anti-oppression understandings within congregations. The stories of community ministries are a rich source of inspiration that could be lifted up in many venues of communication throughout our institutions, inspiring congregations to move forward in new ways towards fulfilling our principles and promises as a faith.

Summary for Recomposing/What's Next

We look to work together to co-create change and fulfill the potential of community ministry.

The UUSCM, UUA and UUMA need to work together to create a well-researched, reliable community minister database. We need to know who community ministers are! No one reliable community minister database even exists. To create a more accurate list of community ministers and their ministries nationwide, the UUSCM, UUMA, and UUA should work together with districts on more effective ways of tracking and identifying community ministers. Such a database would open many new opportunities for dialogue with community ministers concerning both their institutional needs and the services they stand ready to offer. A national database to identify and track seminarians expressing interest in community ministry would be similarly valuable.

There are a number of key joint projects the UUMA and the UUSCM could undertake to promote and support excellence in community ministry. It would be valuable to create a joint document making recommendations regarding funding/compensation guidelines for congregations to fund community ministry activities in and beyond the parish. They could also create a joint recommendation to the UUA to propose a Community Ministry Settlement Representative for each district as the “go to” person for ordained community ministers seeking affiliation and job placement. There are a number of ways the UUSCM and the UUMA might work together on methods of promoting Community Ministry Sunday, such as providing a packet of worship resources for Community Ministry Sunday and collaborating to create a Community Ministry Sunday reminder 6 months in advance as a joint UUMA/UUSCM outreach. A joint Professional Development Fund reminder that community ministers are invited to apply for grants would also be desirable.

We could compile resources related to community ministry with a link between our websites to more easily share information. We might plan and submit a jointly sponsored workshop for GA 2013. Our hope is that both Boards will be intentional about using and promoting shared/wider use of existing lines of communication to hold up community ministry activities, including website links and publishing resources.

Clergy formation should be one focus of shared study between the UUSCM and the UUMA. How can we support the formation of clergy with strong bi-vocational skills? How can we contribute to understanding of how the changing religious landscape shifts how spiritual/religious services can be effectively delivered? We hope to create more opportunities for community ministers and parish ministers to connect with one another regardless of whether they are UUMA or UUSCM members – or both. One possibility would be to extend invitations to join one another’s chats or extend UUSCM’s virtual chapters to members of the UUMA. We could create more opportunities to lift up stories of those who have benefited from community ministry and community ministry interns through all communication avenues.

We on the Task Force look to the potential of creating a culture where how one lives out one’s faith and values is found not only in the parish, home or workplace but also out on the streets – a culture in which the praxis of service is also a spiritual practice, mutually reinforcing and deepening the collective spiritual life of a congregation.

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months):

1. Have the UUMA and the UUSCM jointly submit/plan a GA workshop for GA 2013 (e.g. on legislative UU ministries).
2. Capitalize on the “Standing on the Side of Love” campaign and the list of clergy on the website who have purchased clergy collar shirts demonstrating their

commitment to this campaign. These may be natural parish minister allies to community ministry.

3. Request that the UUMA, UUSCM, and UUA use all existing avenues of communication to hold up community ministry and stories about successful community ministries, avenues such as the UU World, General Assembly, Community Ministry Sunday, blogs, newsletters, etc.
4. Request that the UUA, districts, UUMA, and UUSCM work together to develop an adequate database of community ministers and their ministries.
5. Request that the UUSCM and the UUMA compile a list of resource documents on community ministry and make them available through links on their respective websites that can be hooked to each other's websites.
6. Promote the annual Community Ministry Sunday (1st Sunday in February) through the UUMA and UUSCM early enough to get onto the liturgical calendar of parish ministers.

Long-Term Goals (more than 18 months):

1. Identify a settlement representative for community ministers in each district/chapter who will serve as the "go to" person for community ministers looking for affiliation or job placement (an unpaid volunteer position).
2. Create a joint working document from the UUSCM and UUMA that provides recommendations for how congregations can financially support community ministry.
3. Look at the process of affiliation and the need for the equivalent of a ministerial settlement representative (MSR) for community ministers (e.g. Can the Good Offices person help with the affiliation of a community minister and a congregation?).

Topic 4: Models for collaboration and continuing education

Summary for Reviewing/What Is

Our conversation addressing Topic 4 was limited to continuing education, as Topic 6 focused on collaboration. We explored how community ministers typically have different priorities and different schedules for continuing education than their parish colleagues, how there is currently a lack of sensitivity for the needs of community ministers in many chapters, and how our current institutions can more effectively address the current need.

UUMA chapters typically meet when the vast majority of community ministers must either take vacation or give up income to attend. Many community ministers prefer educational opportunities that offer continuing education credits (CEUs), but currently no such UU-sponsored offerings are available.

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Chapter of the UUMA is an example of a chapter that has intentionally addressed needs of community ministers. Conversations have been had in the chapter about the needs of community ministers and led to understanding and changes. One clergy gathering every other year is held over a weekend, where both community ministers and parish ministers alike are encouraged to attend. The title for chapter gatherings is changing from “retreat” to “chapter professional days” so that community ministers can show employers this time is for legitimate professional development and thus increase their chances for being able to attend.

The two seminaries affiliated with Unitarian Universalism currently prioritize developing competence in community ministry. Starr King School began intentionally providing a strong educational framework for community ministry in 1995. Meadville Lombard’s new educational model includes a year long “Community Studies” educational component where all students must engage in ministry outside the parish setting as a learning opportunity.

Several community ministers have had difficulty finding a congregation and parish minister with whom to cultivate a relationship and formal “affiliation.” Without such affiliation, community ministers cannot earn final fellowship and are prone to leaving the ministry.

Summary for Realizations

Effective continuing education for community ministers has not yet been realized, especially when trying to simultaneously meet the needs of parish ministers and community ministers. There are inherent logistical challenges. Scheduling of chapter gatherings to accommodate community ministers is a perpetual challenge never addressed in most chapters, as parish ministers do not want to meet over weekends, and community ministers often must take vacation or lose income to attend during the week. Parish ministers often seek renewal and welcome “retreats,” while community ministers often seek programming that will better equip them for their ministries and provide them with CEUs. Seminaries and technology offer resources that likely can be tapped. There are some existing examples of chapter life that embody best practices that can be commended to other chapters.

Many different kinds of community ministry exist. Some focus inside the congregation, such as pastoral support for elders. However, a vast array of community ministries focus outside of the congregation. The myriad ways of practicing community ministry makes it challenging to address specific professional needs. We need further conversation about what competencies community ministers need to be successful and develop an assessment framework for this.

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

There are several ways to ensure that collaboration and continuing education for community ministers becomes more widespread:

- develop institutional portfolios to reflect on and recommend ways to support community ministers;
- offer continuing education units;
- provide ongoing, helpful channels of communication across institutions;
- provide opportunities where people can caucus among similar community ministries, such as those who serve in prisons, hospitals, or organizing;
- provide forums for community ministers to give input on their needs through the UUA and UUMA.

Summary for Recomposing/What's Next

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months):

1. Request of the UUA and the UUMA that their programming include content relevant and helpful to community ministers and that their publicity reflect this.
2. Profile chapters that are experimenting with different ways of scheduling and/or doing collegial gatherings through UUA and UUMA publications and trainings.
3. Encourage UUA field staff and publications to proactively educate congregations about the affiliation needs of community ministers.

Long-Term Goals (more than 18 months):

1. Advocate for more accessible and valuable continuing education for community ministers utilizing technology (e.g. podcasts, webinars, etc.) and apply for professional CEU credits useful to community ministers.
2. Offer continuing education for parish ministers and congregational leaders about opportunities for affiliating with community ministers. Lift up good examples of affiliations that community ministers currently have with congregations. Use chapter programming to inform parish ministers.

Topic 5. Models for accountability and standards for endorsing or affirming lay persons engaged in community ministry

Lay ministry was a significant topic of discussion during our time together. Our conversation revolved around understanding our very diverse points of view and questions that arose from them, and spiraled toward discovery of a common thread among us. We began on Saturday using the same format as we used regarding other topics. Then on Sunday we engaged more freely on the topic. The resulting exploration of the potential for lay ministries and revelation, much to our astonishment, of our

shared theology in this area were seminal. It led to a shared commitment to move forward, while acknowledging the differences we still held.

Summary for Reviewing/What Is

Ambiguity is a key characteristic of lay ministry in our movement. We explored this characteristic in some detail by considering an essential question: What/who is a lay community minister? This term clearly means something more than “all laity.” Yet, in the absence of official paths or designations that many other faith traditions provide, determining who is and who is not a lay community minister is daunting. Some lay community ministry roles seem easily identifiable as ministry, like prison chaplaincy and spiritual direction. Others seem more tenuous. Regardless of the deep ambiguity, however, we want to affirm that lay people can minister in a variety of roles, and we agree that it is important that there be accountability to the spiritual community out of which the ministry arises and with which the lay community minister should remain connected. Also, professionalism is to be expected of a lay community minister, just as it is for clergy. “Lay” does not mean “unprofessional.” This professionalism is not by reason of possessing professional credentials in other fields (which many lay community ministers have), but arises from the fact that the ministry is, in its essence, a profession: It is accountable to more than those whom it serves. It is a profession of UU values and a living out of a deep commitment to the UU movement; it requires initial and continuous development, support, and accountability to the religious community from which it arises.

Although the task force is charged with working explicitly on excellence in community ministry, exploring the similarities and differences between the situations of those who do lay ministry within the congregation and those who do lay ministry in the wider community was instructive in our discussion. We are also convinced that our movement needs to passionately and effectively address not just lay community ministry, but lay ministry in all its forms. So the material below differentiates between lay ministry in the congregation and lay ministry in the wider community, while recognizing common threads and the importance of both lay parish ministry and lay community ministry to the vitality of Unitarian Universalism and the fulfillment of our mission in the world.

There are longstanding positive trends in lay congregational ministry. For lay ministers who work within congregations with clergy, the clergy have a natural influence and can provide accountability. For example, pastoral care and worship leadership roles are frequently shared with lay members. These lay ministers are chosen within the congregation, with full participation and oversight by clergy. There are some wonderful programs in congregations in which people feel affirmed and are explicitly commissioned for a set period of time with titles and name badges. Some congregations have established chaplaincies and authorization for weddings. A few musicians have been ordained as music ministers by their congregations.

There are also positive trends in lay community ministry. Some congregational members are passionately and effectively witnessing in the wider community on behalf of Unitarian Universalism, whether there is explicit acknowledgement and support or not. A small minority of lay community ministers enjoys explicit endorsement by their congregations; of the 28 lay members of UUSCM, 3 members have indicated that they have received endorsement from their congregations for their lay ministry.

In both congregational and community ministries, there are some very positive developments for lay ministry. "UU of the Year" awards recognize diverse lay contributions. Some lay people are asking for accountability and structure, and some parish clergy are cultivating lay ministry in their congregations with accountability to the minister. Leadership schools have supported lay people in developing their sense of ministry. The Ohio-Meadville District has a long-standing "Commissioned Lay Leader" program, which could be a useful model; and there is a Canadian Chaplaincy program that commissions lay chaplains to serve congregations in the absence of clergy. There is a "Congregations and Beyond" Task Force in formation, which may address some issues around how we minister in our congregations and beyond, including lay ministry.

There are particular issues with accountability for lay community ministers because the connection is not as natural as it is for those serving within a congregation, so structures and processes need to be made intentional and explicit. This is significant because if people are designated as "lay minister" with no accountability, there are risks both to individuals as well as to institutions for liability. Also, because some lay community ministers make their ministry their career, some desire to make commissioning of lay community ministers permanent, unlike the time-limited commissioning of most lay ministers within the parish. Without appropriate structure and accountability, this can lead to the development of "loose cannons."

Some challenges are faced in virtually all lay ministries. There is no accountability at the Association level for lay ministry of any sort. Some lay ministers, in the congregation and beyond the congregation, have been operating without accountability, and would find accountability onerous. The UUMA is keenly interested in all forms of ministry, but lay ministry in general does not fall under the scope of the mission of UUMA. Some lay people who have sought recognition are inappropriate for the role, and some are inappropriately seeking special relationships with the congregation, exclusive of collegiality with and accountability to the clergy. Previous efforts and recommendations have not taken hold. For example, Harlan Limpert was hired in part to develop lay credentialing, but his valiant efforts did not reach that goal; Tamara Payne-Alex's credentialing report recommendations regarding lay ministry have not yet been taken up by the UUA board; and UUA President, Peter Morales, has publically supported the idea of developing lay credentialing while also saying there are no financial resources for it right now. (See Deborah Holder's interview of Rev. Morales printed in the Spring 2010 UUSCM Crossroads.)

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

We were inspired to dream of some new possibilities for lay ministry in our movement, and the role that we could play through joint action by UUMA and UUSCM.

The UUSCM and the UUMA could provide training for parish ministers, encouraging them to cultivate lay leaders and developing a culture of “cultivating discipleship,” as is done in other religious traditions.

Guidance and increased clarity about responsible acknowledgement of lay ministry could be developed by highlighting concrete models, documenting best practices, and recognizing excellence. For example, the Ohio-Meadville District model and the Canadian Lay Chaplain model could be explored for these. The UUSCM and the UUMA could develop a handbook for establishing best practices in lay ministry. The lay people engaged in legislative ministries could be recognized for their work.

Furthering the conversation and developing more common understanding around lay ministry would be valuable. The UUSCM and UUMA Boards could form a Joint Standing Committee on Excellence in Community Ministry with at least one lay community minister on it to help create standards of accountability.

There could be a periodic shared-ministry-focused UUMA chapter meeting, which would include lay ministers (parish and community). This could be similar to the shared meetings that have been established by UUMA/LREDA chapters.

Our movement is grappling with the place of lay ministry, and it would be valuable for those who are concerned about excellence in ministry to be involved in those discussions, regardless of our particular perspectives and scopes of mission. To that end, we could ensure that the UUMA and the UUSCM are involved with the Congregations and Beyond Task Force that is now in formation.

We noted that some of the pain of the relationships between parish and community ministry clergy in recent times was caused by the separation of parish ministry from community ministry. To avoid the same impact for lay ministry, we could expand the goal of this topic to **“Models for accountability and standards for endorsing or affirming lay ministry in congregational or community settings.”**

Summary for Recomposing/What’s Next

Recognizing the importance of this topic, and its complexity, we decided to ask the UUSCM and UUMA Boards to embrace and loudly advocate for their willingness to be involved in conversations around lay ministries (e.g. “Congregations and Beyond” Task Force).

We also saw that there are models already in place, and we urge that the UUSCM and UUMA Boards explore these models of lay ministry (e.g. Ohio-Meadville and Canadian models).

We decided to recommend that the UUSCM and UUMA Boards explore the value of covenanted lay ministry in congregational and community settings. An early step in this exploration should include soliciting feedback from UUSCM and UUMA members on the early draft “Guidelines for Covenanting Relationships,” published by the UUSCM.

Reaffirmation:

In our inspired conversation on Sunday, we joined together in affirming the immense value of lifting up and empowering lay leaders in embodying our faith and values in the world. We joined in affirming the value of a lay ministry program that would develop and offer recognition to lay leaders to work both in the wider community and in the parish. And we joined in affirming and recognizing that such a program would need to be carefully planned to promote excellence and require accountability while extending opportunities for service and recognition. We joined in affirming “the priesthood, prophethood and pastorhood of all believers.” We joined in our desire to affirm those who rise up for leadership and are then confirmed by their community for such service. A breakthrough in our systemic fear of all hierarchies/authority is only one of many potential benefits. Thus we ask not: Is there value in creating programs of lay ministry leadership development that offer distinct earned opportunities for service, as well as deepened commitment to congregations and Unitarian Universalism, and inspiration to others? We ask: How can such programs be created and be done well?

When we ask how this could happen, we see that there have to be processes in place which promote common understandings and trust in shared goals out of which broadly supported structures could develop.

There is a need to flesh out the theology of the linkage of lay and ordained ministries. We need to look at cultivating the idea of discipleship and of mentoring lay leaders. We, the UUMA and the UUSCM, need to provide leadership in a process of informing, upholding, and acknowledging the many lay ministries that now formally exist: pastoral care associates, social justice associates, small group ministry leaders, and worship associate structures. We need to examine how those could inform how other lay ministries are seen and understood.

We also need to hold openness to the possibility of a whole new lay-ministries association as a separate organization. Until now the UUSCM has held the portfolio of supporting lay community ministries. Is now the time, or is a time coming, when a separate organization becomes the way to move lay ministry forward with increasing clarity and structure?

We need to explore language. For example, does the title “lay community minister” invite an inadvertent and automatic resistance among many clergy to the very development of some program of lay leader endorsement/ credentialing/ commissioning? Might other terms, such as “Community Ministry Associates,” at least in the context of program development, lead to greater acceptance of a program that would authorize lay people in ministry that the UUMA and UUA could support?

We ask: What joint role could the UUSCM and the UUMA have in developing such a program for consideration?

There is so much to explore, so much to understand more deeply, so much to create, develop, and refine! For the good of our association and our religious movement, we urge the UUMA and the UUSCM to move toward and to encourage structures, including Associational, for doing lay ministry accountability, development, support, and recognition well, with greater common understandings in place. In this way we will increase the structured grounding for ordained and lay to work together and unleash the power of shared ministry to nurture spirits and help heal the world.

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months)

1. Create opportunities for dialogue with community ministry leaders and the UUMA (e.g. an opportunity specifically for a presentation to the UUMA board on the rationale for creating an endorsing/affirming path for lay community ministry as well as to help the UUMA understand the UUSCM in a deeper way and an opportunity for the UUSCM to understand the relationship between the UUMA, LREDA, and UUMN).
2. Encourage the UUSCM and UUMA to jointly embrace and loudly advocate for their willingness to be part of the conversation about standards and accountability for endorsing/affirming lay persons engaged in community or congregational ministry (e.g. doing this on their websites with a link to reports from this Task Force).

Long-Term Goals (more than 18 months):

1. Ask the UUSCM and UUMA boards to explore the value of covenanted lay ministry in congregational and community settings, including soliciting feedback on the lay community ministry covenanting manual, exploring covenanting with ordained mentors, and exploring covenanting with congregations.
2. Recommend the UUSCM and UUMA lift up models of accountability and standards for endorsing and affirming lay persons engaged in community or congregational-based ministry (e.g. Ohio-Meadville CLL, Canadian endorsement, cultivating discipleship, etc.).

Topic 6: Recommendations for the UUSCM and UUMA to collaborate and strengthen right relations between the two organizations

Summary for Reviewing/What Is

The topic of “right relations” between the UUSCM and the UUMA generated considerable concern and discussion during our weekend of meeting. It was clear that there was not a shared sense of what “right relationship” currently looks like between the two organizations, at both the board and constituency levels, though it was hoped that a shared sense might be cultivated for the future.

On the other hand, it was recognized that the UUSCM board and leaders also hold the tension and responsibility for recognizing the long history of a lack of acknowledgement of community ministers and subsequent hurt and disappointment by its membership. The perceived “negative” UUSCM tone is seen as an expression of anger that is often a more empowering experience than despair for many of the UUSCM membership (membership is steadily growing and the board often receives positive feedback for its work). Both the UUSCM and the UUMA agreed that the task in building right relationship and moving forward is to be able to allow a space for mutual venting and moving out of isolation and despair – to create a space for moving into a new shared story that can hold both the generativity (hope) and the pain. The question then becomes how to create structures that allow for this movement.

A starting place recognized that each organization has in place strong visionary leadership, leadership that arrives with good will and intends to move forward with good will. There is also a strong commitment by the boards of both organizations to support community ministry. What is needed is an examination of both the points of real difference as well as real common ground between the two organizations as they recognize and understand the needs and value of community ministry; this includes new developments in community ministry.

For example, the achievement of a critical mass of ordained community ministers is a new phenomenon, and the UUMA is on a steep learning curve in trying to figure out how best to meet their needs. A large number of incoming seminarians are now expressing an interest in community ministry, and this includes a large number of people of color. Organizationally, the UUSCM is now a strong collegial organization along with the UUMA, and this is also a new phenomenon. The UUSCM only incorporated in 2005 and some of the documents that the UUSCM has published, such as their guides to affiliation and/or best practices, are unfamiliar to many parish ministers.

There is also difference and tension around the UUSCM’s membership categories, which differ from the UUMA’s membership categories as well as from the UUA expectations for ministerial fellowship. Specific differences discussed were the inclusion of lay members as well as ordained clergy who are not in UUA fellowship (those

ordained in other religious traditions who have never applied to receive fellowship but who now consider themselves Unitarian Universalists as well as those who were ordained by their UU congregation after being turned down for fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee). Finally, the recent increase in dues to the UUMA caused some fellowshiped community ministers to resign or not renew their membership as the dues have become too expensive and/or they do not see sufficient value for community ministers in UUMA membership services. In response, the UUMA significantly reduced its dues to community ministers with the intent to restore the dues when strong continuing education opportunities are available through the UUMA.

It was recognized that the opportunity for more structured conversations between parish and community ministers, as some UUMA chapters have been able to do, helps to clear the air and to increase understanding of community ministry needs and developments, structures that have included some chapters shifting meeting and retreat times to better include community ministers. It was believed that the development of more such structured containers for mutual empathic understanding and compassionate listening might facilitate a reconciliation process between the UUMA and UUSCM at a deeper level for establishing right relationship. It was also recognized that despite the long history of tension and disappointment, there have also been different teams at different points that have come together in a persistent effort to make progress in supporting community ministry.

Summary for Realizations

A few realizations that emerged from the process of “reviewing what is” were that authentically naming the tension in a respectful and unhurried way helps, and that the public face of our respective organizations is important – that we can shape our language and dialogue around community ministry and parish ministry in how we engage our respective stories.

Summary for Revising/What Could Be

It was recognized that if more institutional measures that support community ministry are created, the overall angry or despairing tone will probably shift generationally for community ministers – the younger generation is at times better positioned to see progress being made than the initial generation that first broke through institutional barriers. It was also recognized that formally recognizing the historical pain of broken promises or lack of recognition may go a long way towards defusing the anger and defensiveness that is now channeled into the public face of UUSCM. Two major shifts have already happened and helped – the UUMA has formally expressed its intention to cultivate excellence in community ministry through collaboration, collegiality, and continuing education, and the Executive Director of the UUMA will gladly write letters for community ministers upon their request to help them get professional time off from their places of employment for meetings and/or retreats.

There were a number of other suggestions brainstormed to continue to build better institutional support for community ministry between the UUMA and UUSCM. One thought was to have the UUMA and UUSCM partner on creating a best practices guide for the leadership of both organizations to engage in re-storying. In doing so, it was recognized that there might be a value in engaging Good Offices to help facilitate relationship building when there is a perceived lack of goodwill. There was continued discussion of creating a “container” to offer compassionate and empathic understanding to community ministers, including providing a forum for a reconciliation process between community ministers and parish ministers to create deeper trust and collaboration. It was thought that some type of ongoing joint task force or working group between the UUMA and UUSCM might help to facilitate this building of greater institutional support and clearing of air to create room for new stories and new partnerships. In doing so, it was stressed that joint collaborative projects that might be “easy wins” would be best to start with, such as collaborating on supporting entrepreneurial ministries (for example: pastoral therapeutic or spiritual direction practices that are independent from employment by a congregation or an agency) and on the provision of professional continuing education credits.

Summary for Recomposing/What’s Next

At the end of our lengthy processing, several short and long-term goals were recommended to continue to foster right relationship between the UUMA and UUSCM. Ongoing structures for communication between the two organizations as well as structures for healing and reconciliation were particularly stressed:

Short-Term Goals (within 18 months)

1. Pick early wins in the service of right relations (create sparkling moments of cooperation among us and announce them broadly).
2. Collaborate on entrepreneurial ministry (ministry that is self-employed).
3. Create opportunities for community ministers and parish ministers to do some intentional work/dialogue about reconciliation for the future (e.g. establish a pilot group with a written up study guide in newsletters).
4. Address concerns with UUA staff and/or UUMA or UUSCM leadership/staff directly with the persons involved rather than using newsletters or other indirect communication for resolving conflicts.
5. Invite Good Offices persons in districts to create a worship experience at a chapter retreat for reconciliation of community ministers and parish ministers. (The Good Offices person of the UUSCM is encouraged to create a means to provide the UUMA Good Offices persons the info they need to help them prepare.)

6. In the same way that clergy are encouraged to join LREDA, we should encourage parish ministers and community ministers to join both the UUMA and the UUSCM and consider the benefits of linking themselves for support.

Short-Term and Long-Term Goal (for both within and beyond 18 months)

1. Charge the leadership of the UUSCM and UUMA to establish a joint working group (possibly time-limited, possibly ongoing) to create structures/processes for ongoing linkage on issues related to community ministry, while recognizing the large scope for creating these structures and processes (for example, monitoring or working on projects such as clergy formation and leverage with the RSCC and MFC credentialing process; gaining clarity about Good Offices role and community ministry; exploration of the creation of settlement representatives and institutional advocates for community ministry, affirmation/endorsement of lay ministry in community and congregational contexts, etc.). It will be the responsibility of this joint working group to work toward implementation of the below short-term and long-term goals and to prioritize these goals in coordination with the UUMA, UUSCM, and UUA.

Conclusion

All six of us that served on the Community Ministry Task Force are grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of ministry beyond the walls of the congregation and develop these recommendations. We enthusiastically offer these recommendations for the sake of strengthening, supporting, and empowering Unitarian Universalist community ministry.

As we stated in our introduction, from a place of hope and love, we identify that “the Spirit is upon us” to:

- support community ministry as the face of UU values in the larger world;
- celebrate the power and diversity of community ministries;
- enable community ministers to be present with those who feel outside, alone, and afraid;
- unlock our fullest pastoral and prophetic capacities for bringing healing and justice to our world, thus supporting a change of paradigm for understanding the broadest potential of community ministry within our UU movement;
- foster a welcome table theology that recognizes community ministry as a significant way for UUs to reach the most vulnerable in our communities;
- leap into integral consciousness whereby we are enabled to see what is missing and choose from a truly holistic place of creative, adaptive, surprising, and paradigm-changing depth movements.

Because collaboration drives the spirit of our task force, we identified one key overall goal toward fulfilling these aims that is both “short term” and “long term”: the establishment of a working group that draws from both UUMA and UUSCM membership.

To review, six areas of focus were identified for the Task Force to address:

1. Best practices of community ministries and congregational and associational relationships;
2. Models for strengthening collegiality between community ministers, parish ministers, and the association;
3. Models for strengthening the understanding and potential of community ministry within the broader association and movement;
4. Models for collaboration and continuing education;
5. Models for accountability and standards for endorsing or affirming lay persons engaged in community ministry;
6. Recommendations for the UUSCM and UUMA to collaborate and strengthen right relations between the two organizations.

Key Recommended Overall Goal (established within and working beyond 18 months)

Charge the leadership of the UUSCM and UUMA to establish a joint working group (possibly time-limited, possibly ongoing) to create structures/processes for ongoing linkage on issues related to community ministry, while recognizing the large scope for creating these structures and processes (for example, monitoring or working on projects such as clergy formation and leverage with the RSCC and MFC credentialing process; gaining clarity about Good Offices role and community ministry; exploration of the creation of settlement representatives and institutional advocates for community ministry, affirmation/endorsement of lay ministry in community and congregational contexts, etc.). It will be the responsibility of this joint working group to work toward implementation of the below short-term and long-term goals and to prioritize these goals in coordination with the UUMA, UUSCM, and UUA. [Topic 6]

Summary of All Short-Term Goals (within 18 months)

1. Ask the UUA to educate congregations about affiliation needs of community ministers prior to their need to make a request, utilizing District Executives to disseminate this information to congregations and also utilizing the UU World. [Topic 1]
2. Request that the UUMA, UUSCM, and UUA use all existing avenues of communication to hold up community ministry and stories about successful community ministries, for example through the use of the UU World, General

- Assembly, Community Ministry Sunday, blogs, newsletters, etc. [Topic 1 and Topic 3]
3. Request that the UUA and districts and the UUMA and UUSCM work together to develop an adequate database of community ministers and their ministries. [Topic 1 and Topic 3]
 4. Promote the annual Community Ministry Sunday (1st Sunday in February) through the UUMA and UUSCM early enough to get onto the liturgical calendar of parish ministers. [Topic 1 and Topic 3]
 5. Encourage UUMA chapters to find ways to stay connected to community clergy. Re-orient collegial gatherings so they vary between weekend/weekdays and lunch/dinner times. This improves opportunities for in-person collegiality among parish and community clergy. Take opportunities during or after collegial gatherings to communicate with clergy colleagues who had to be absent as a way of building relationships between parish and community clergy. [Topic 2]
 6. Encourage the UUSCM Good Officer to speak with the UUMA continental Good Officer to pave the way for the UUMA Good Officers to reach out to community clergy who are disgruntled/hurt/angry. [Topic 2]
 7. Make wider use of existing communication avenues to enhance a sense of collegiality: send letters to colleagues not attending a gathering to say they are missed; utilize electronic means like blogs or the UUMA chat more creatively; foster small group ministries at collegial gatherings; encourage chapter leaders in their phone conference after UUMA Board meetings to feature new ideas of connecting. [Topic 2]
 8. Publically encourage clergy to join both the UUMA and the UUSCM and to take advantage of existing avenues of collegiality. [Topic 2 and Topic 6]
 9. Create opportunities for community and parish clergy to do some intentional work together, like composing a Community Ministry Sunday resource guide. [Topic 2]
 10. Have the UUMA and the UUSCM jointly submit/plan a GA workshop for GA 2013 (e.g. on legislative UU ministries). [Topic 3]
 11. Capitalize on the “Standing on the Side of Love” campaign and the list of clergy on the website who have purchased clergy collar shirts demonstrating their commitment to this campaign. These may be natural parish minister allies to community ministry. [Topic 3]
 12. Request that the UUSCM and the UUMA compile a list of resource documents on community ministry and make them available through links on their respective websites that can be hooked to each other’s websites. [Topic 3]
 13. Request of the UUA and the UUMA that their programming include content relevant and helpful to community ministers and that their publicity reflect this. [Topic 4]
 14. Profile chapters that are experimenting with different ways of scheduling and/or doing collegial gatherings through UUA and UUMA publications and trainings. [Topic 4]
 15. Encourage UUA field staff and publications to proactively educate congregations about the affiliation needs of community ministers. [Topic 4]

16. Create opportunities for dialogue with community ministry leaders and the UUMA (e.g. an opportunity specifically for a presentation to the UUMA board on the rationale for creating an endorsing/affirming path for lay community ministry as well as to help the UUMA understand the UUSCM in a deeper way and an opportunity for the UUSCM to understand the relationship between the UUMA, LREDA, and UUMN). [Topic 5]
17. Encourage the UUSCM and UUMA to jointly embrace and loudly advocate for their willingness to be part of the conversation about standards and accountability for endorsing/affirming lay persons engaged in community or congregational ministry (e.g. doing this on their websites with a link to reports from this Task Force). [Topic 5]
18. Pick early wins in the service of right relations (create sparkling moments of cooperation among us and announce them broadly). [Topic 6]
19. Collaborate on entrepreneurial ministry (ministry that is self-employed). [Topic 6]
20. Create opportunities for community ministers and parish ministers to do some intentional work/dialogue about reconciliation for the future (e.g. establish a pilot group with a written up study guide in newsletters). [Topic 6]
21. Address concerns with UUA staff and/or UUMA or UUSCM leadership/staff directly with the persons involved rather than using newsletters or other indirect communication for resolving conflicts. [Topic 6]
22. Invite Good Offices persons in districts to create a worship experience at a chapter retreat for reconciliation of community ministers and parish ministers. (The Good Offices person of the UUSCM is encouraged to create a means to provide the UUMA Good Offices persons the info they need to help them prepare.) [Topic 6]
23. In the same way that clergy are encouraged to join LREDA, we should encourage parish ministers and community ministers to join both the UUMA and the UUSCM and consider the benefits of linking themselves for support. [Topic 6 and Topic 2]

Summary of All Long-Term Goals (beyond 18 months)

1. Identify a responsible person/advocate for community ministry in various major UU institutions and seminaries, ones trained in best practices. [Topic 1]
2. Promote mentorship by community ministers to community ministers or parish ministers in skill sets that community ministers have to offer. [Topic 1]
3. Create ways for community clergy to caucus in the UUSCM and UUMA, for example through like-minded ministries, community of practice and focus, and virtual chapters. [Topic 2]
4. Identify a settlement representative for community ministers in each district/chapter who will serve as the “go to” person for community ministers looking for affiliation or job placement (an unpaid volunteer position). [Topic 3]
5. Create a joint working document from the UUSCM and UUMA that provides recommendations for how congregations can financially support community ministry. [Topic 3]

6. Look at the process of affiliation and the need for the equivalent of a ministerial settlement representative (MSR) for community ministers (e.g. Can the Good Offices person help with the affiliation of a community minister and a congregation?). [Topic 3]
7. Advocate for more accessible and valuable continuing education for community ministers utilizing technology (e.g. podcasts, webinars, etc.) and apply for professional CEU credits useful to community ministers. [Topic 4]
8. Offer continuing education for parish ministers and congregational leaders about opportunities for affiliating with community ministers. Lift up good examples of affiliations that community ministers currently have with congregations. Use chapter programming to inform parish ministers. [Topic 4]
9. Ask the UUSCM and UUMA boards to explore the value of covenanted lay ministry in congregational and community settings, including soliciting feedback on the lay community ministry covenanting manual, exploring covenanting with ordained mentors, and exploring covenanting with congregations. [Topic 5]
10. Recommend the UUSCM and UUMA lift up models of accountability and standards for endorsing and affirming lay persons engaged in community or congregational-based ministry (e.g. Ohio-Meadville CLL, Canadian endorsement, cultivating discipleship, etc.) [Topic 5]

It is our hope and prayer that this report and these goals, both short and long term, will be taken to heart by the leadership of the UUMA, the UUSCM, and the UUA. “May the Spirit be upon” the leadership of our UU organizations in reading and implementing our report. Thank you.