

The Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries

Monday; June 6, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

This is my final President's Report to the membership of the Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries. By presenting it I complete my second and final term as President and pass the gavel to my successor, the Rev. Cat Cox.

It has been a blast to have served you over the past six years. I've had the opportunity to work with some very fine people as Directors of our Society and feel pride in what we've been able to accomplish together.

I came into office unexpectedly when the President, the Rev. Deborah Holder, had to step down after accepting a position with the Unitarian Universalist Association. I did not have the benefit of the "apprenticeship year" as President-Elect, and had to hit the ground running. I didn't know the ropes of the organization and had limited involvement with the other leaders. Deborah handed me a well-running organization but there was a lot I had to learn.

Over the years I've thrown a multitude of things "against the wall to see what would stick." Some of these efforts, such as our electronic newsletter Beyond the Walls, creating our organizational management website, taking a stronger position with denominational groups and increasing the rigor of our membership process have worked very well. Other, such as encouraging colleagues to make better use of podcasts, videos and Twitter have not. But on the whole, we got a lot done.

Some of what we got done are the routine business of any organization. We cleaned our membership roles, improved dues collection, updated our bylaws, modernized our logo, created a standardized Identification Badge program, formalized membership nomenclature, and expanded the professionalism of our presence at the General Assembly. With an emphasis on using technology well, we have been able to expand programs and services with no need to increase membership dues during the six years I have served as President.

We also accomplished some exceptional things. We persuaded the Unitarian Universalist Association to better include community ministers in the UU World and the UUA Directory. We successfully lobbied to a greatly expanded mention in the denominational Strategic Plan for Professional Ministry.

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Additionally, we created and published two popular and important documents, the Best Practices Guide for Community Ministry and the Guide to Covenanted Relationships between Lay Community Ministers and Congregations, Organizations and Parish Ministers. Both of these documents have been frequent downloads from the Key Documents section of our website.

One important development was our Task Force on Excellence in Community Ministry, where representatives from the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, the Unitarian Universalist Association and our organization met to find ways to work together to improve the quality of community ministry in our denomination. The report of the Task Force will no doubt be an important document, although adoption of its recommendations has been slow by the other denominational groups.

To improve the “optics” of community ministry, your Board began the process of inviting key denominational leaders to meet with the Board to learn about what community ministry means and how it works. I believe these contacts have been, and will continue to be, influential in the years ahead. We also were invited to help the Ministerial Fellowship Committee create equivalencies for community ministers and successfully lobbied for books on community ministry to become part of the Recommended Reading List.

We have participated in both of the Unitarian Universalist Association Financial Sustainability Summits and have been of counsel to our denomination when asked.

At the request of two student members, we provided assistance and support when their degrees were withheld. We were of substantial influence to protect their civil rights, and both students have been cleared of wrongdoing and have received their degrees.

Finally, we published a substantial book, *Called to Community*, which is on the revised Ministerial Fellowship Committee Reading List. It was released in print in 2014 and as a Kindle edition this year.

We have committed to work on a project for endorsement of lay community ministers. In light of the recent announcement by Unitarian Universalist Association that there will be denominational movement toward this goal, our strategy will shift to influencing that process instead.

We have also begun a comprehensive upgrade to the interface of our website and that will show results in the upcoming year. It will make our website more attractive and easier to use.

One project remains unfinished. We had hoped to create a Discernment Project to help young people make career decisions to enter community ministry but time ran out

amidst the press of other demands. Perhaps this project will see development in the future.

As I pass the gavel to Rev. Cox, I want to say how delighted I am that she will be the next President. I think Cat's style is exactly what our organization needs going forward. She has my full confidence and I think our best years are ahead.

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The people I have worked with on the Board of our organization over the past six years have been some of the best people I have encountered in my 38 years as a minister in our Association. They are devoted, hard-working, reliable, intelligent and kind. They have staffed our General Assembly table, represented us on denominational committees and Task Forces, attended important meetings and much more. Our membership has been well served by every Director, past and present, and I am grateful.

There are two past Directors I want to single out for special thanks in this, my final report.

The first is Mr. Bob Miess. Bob was my Vice-President for five of my six years on the Board and I could not ask for a better. Bob is wise in the ways of the world, calm under stress and always someone who could be counted on. I deeply appreciate his support. I could not have gotten as much done without him at my side.

The second is the Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh who served us in the crucial role as Membership Director as we increased rigor in our membership process and categories. She also served us in an expanded leadership role in relating to other denominational groups in a way that was vitally important. There was a tremendous amount of work that went on behind the scenes to make all we have accomplished happen, and Michelle did a superb job.

I want to extend praise for our hard-working Administrator, the Rev. Amanda Aikman. A lot of the basic work of running our organization gets done by Amanda, and she has always been reliable, smart and has shown herself to have excellent interpersonal skills. We have been well served by her and I am delighted she will continue in her role as our organization goes forward.

Finally, I would like to thank the leadership and membership of the Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries for having put up with me over the past six years. I pass the gavel with a sense of accomplishment and optimism. It's been a privilege.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. C. Scot Giles, D.Min. President.

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