

Long Range Planning Committee Report and Recommendations

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Whidbey Island

15 April 2018

Preamble:

This proposal for modifications to the operation of the UUCWI is meant to be evolutionary, not revolutionary. It is a "long range plan" only in the sense that it looks out across the next three to five years and identifies aspects of the UUCWI that could be improved that would better support the goals of the congregation. It attempts to set the stage for the congregation to adapt to the foreseeable challenges (operational, fiscal, human resource) and to maintain the ability to change as unexpected needs emerge.

The UUCWI is a remarkable institution that deserves to be acknowledged for its service to members and to the community. Much of what goes on at the UUCWI is remarkable in its own right and all the more remarkable when one considers the size of the congregation and its resources. Still, there are aspects of the church's current operations and efforts that could be made more efficient and effective and there is always more that could be done. This proposal is intended to offer recommendations that might foster those sorts of improvements. This report describes mostly "what" changes are recommended. The "how" of any specific recommendation will mostly fall to the committees and people involved in that aspect of the congregation's life.

A. Charge to the Committee

The UUCWI created the Long Range Planning Committee in October 2016 and tasked the committee to develop a proposed long range plan for the congregation and to then monitor implementation and update the plan on an on-going basis. The plan (this report) must be approved by the Board of Trustees and by the congregation as a whole.

B. Our Covenants

Love is the spirit of this congregation and service its practice.

This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek truth in love, and to help one another.

Our promises:

- We warmly welcome all.
- We speak with honesty, respect and kindness.
- We listen compassionately.
- We express gratitude for the service of others.
- We honor and support one another in our life journeys, in times of joy, need, and struggle.
- We embrace our diversity and the opportunity to share our different perspectives.
- We address our disagreements directly and openly and see conflict through to an authentic resolution.
- We serve our spiritual community with generosity and joy, honoring our commitments.
- We strive to keep these promises, but when we fall short, we forgive ourselves and others, and begin again in love.

C. Goals for the UUCWI

We believe that a vibrant community of people who share the values and practices of Unitarian Universalism adds important value to individual member's lives and to the world at large. Thus, we believe that the fundamental goals of our congregation are:

- To sustain and enhance the community of the congregation in service to its existing membership in accordance with our seven principles.
- To grow the membership of our congregation and the participation of its members in the church's efforts.
 - *To that end, as a congregation, individually and collectively, we will strive to grow our membership by a net of 10 new pledging members/families per year for at least the next few years*
 - *This is no small ambition for the congregation. As we succeed in growing the membership, there will be new challenges to face such as resource needs, facility constraints, the possibility of needing to move to two services or using technology to transmit worship services to other locations.*

- To carry our values and efforts into the wider community to serve the needs for social justice, improved human welfare, and to protect the natural world.
- The UUCWI should begin a longer conversation, exploration, and consideration of how more people in the north of Whidbey might be better served by the UUCWI. This report does not address the question of how to deal with the geographic reality of Whidbey Island in depth. It certainly seems plausible that there could be a larger community of people on the north of the island who would be well served if a Unitarian Universalist community were more logistically accessible for them. Encouraging membership and attendance in our current location is the appropriate near-term effort, but other possibilities like real-time video transmission of services, renting space for Sunday services in the north (with video transmission of services or evolving into locally managed services), and perhaps in the longer term the development of a sustainable second UUA congregation in the north (perhaps sharing a full-time minister) might be the best path. Considering these options should also be an evolutionary process for the UUCWI.

D. Leadership within the UUCWI

Role of the Minister in the organization:

Our goal for UUCWI is to have a shared ministry, where everyone can contribute their skills, wisdom and experience. We are neither an exclusively “lay-led” congregation nor an exclusively “minister-led” congregation. Rather, we partner and share responsibilities appropriately. As part of the evolution of our organization’s leadership style, the new minister, board, other lay leaders, and congregation must make thoughtful decisions about the role of the new minister. There are undoubtedly aspects of the church that might be better served if the minister were to play a more active or directive role. In other areas, the minister could play a more advisory or collaborative role. Finally, there are areas where the minister might be only minimally involved. The UUCWI will look forward to a collaborative partnership with the minister to craft the best model for leadership and responsibility for our minister and for our lay

leadership in each aspect of the UUCWI'S efforts. The strengths, weaknesses, and preferences of the minister will undoubtedly play a role in these decisions. A strength of this congregation has been its ability and willingness to adapt to such factors.

Completing the evolution to a leader-centered organization

The UUCWI has been transitioning for some time from a "group-centered" style of governance and operation toward a "leader-centered" style. The following is taken from the UUA national web site:

"Congregations generally come in two kinds—group-centered and leader-centered. The group-centered congregation tends to do everything as a unit. They worship together, eat together, make decisions together, complain together, and laugh together. Being part of a tight-knit group can feel great—loving, supportive, and part of something important. But some tight-knit groups are reluctant to let new people in—the risk being that the tight-knit group might loosen up and change. Many newcomers will just drift away if the circle doesn't open to include them. Eventually the group-centered congregation becomes large enough that the group cannot work as a whole—there are simply too many people. At that point, one of two things will happen.

The group can decide—unconsciously—to shrink back into the comfort zone or the group can recognize that it's too big to function as a whole and finds another way to function. It becomes a leader-centered congregation. The group accepts that the leaders—lay or staff—need to coordinate the activities of the congregation. The leadership, in turn, recognizes that the congregation would like to retain the intimacy of the smaller group, and institutes ways to break the larger group into smaller, more manageable pieces. And because there are now several pieces instead of one whole, the leadership must become true leaders—checking in with each group, making sure they are carrying out the vision of the congregation and that they have the support needed to thrive. The leadership is expected to know about everything that is going on."

Presently, the UUCWI is completing the evolution to a leader-centered congregation. Much of that leadership comes from active and committed lay

members of the congregation. This is an on-going cultural change. For some, it may seem like a mistake or at least be confusing or uncomfortable. Like all cultural changes this transition takes time. For now, the member leaders of the congregation take essentially all responsibility for the major missions and tasks of the church. As we begin the process of searching for a new minister, it is very important for the members and friends of the UUCWI individually and collectively to come to terms with completing the transition from a "group-centered" to a "leader-centered" model of governance. As that transition matures, the parallel challenge will be to be open to opportunities for re-shaping the leadership role of the minister within the day-to-day operations of the UUCWI.

E. Four Missions of the UUCWI: purpose, constituent committees, and planning observations and recommendations

There are four basic missions that we serve as a congregation: spiritual development, member service, community outreach, and infrastructure service. The following sections lay out the roles, relevant committees, and recommendations within each of the missions and then for aspects of the UUCWI that do not fall principally within one mission. The results of last fall's survey of priorities are reported here as well.

1. Mission: Spiritual Development:

- congregation priority of 5.5 out of 10
- priority for the minister of 6.9 out of 10

In addition to the Minister, the following committees are principally designated to serve the mission of Spiritual Development:

- **Worship Committee:** Our Worship Committee, which includes our minister, shoulders the enormous responsibility for putting together all the various aspects of each Sunday's Worship Service (which includes invited speakers, music, in-house services and arrangement of the Sanctuary). Although a format used during most services has evolved over the years, no two services are entirely alike. We often hear the suggestion "If today's service doesn't fit your desires, remember it might be just what the person sitting next to you needs." In collaboration with our minister, we expect the Worship Committee to continue to craft quality services and to recruit and train new worship leaders.

- **Music Committee:** Music is a highly valued aspect of worship. This committee will collaborate with the choir director and worship committee to include our talented member musicians and guests to enrich our worship experiences.
- **Committee on Shared Ministry:** With the minister, this committee shares the responsibility of educating the congregation about shared ministry and the partnership of trust necessary to encourage this ministry to deepen and grow. The committee also provides input and counsel to the minister. The committee shares the responsibility to promote understanding and practice of our Covenant and to support, as needed, the de-escalation of conflicts. Small group discussions as well as educational presentations will continue to be developed by this committee.
- **Earth-based Religious Exploration Committee:** Relationship with the natural world is an important part of spirituality. Through participation in services and other guided activities this group helps expand our awareness of our environment and of our place in the natural order. They will continue to lead seasonal celebrations and offer nature walks to explore our grounds and nearby trails and parks.
- **Children's Religious Exploration Committee:** provides a values-based Religious Exploration (RE) program to the limited number of enrolled children. The objective of the program is to help raise the children of the community to become responsible, thinking adults.
- **Visual Arts Committee:** The UUCWI Gallery of Art and the aesthetics of our building are important aspects which relate to our spiritual development. The VAC will continue recruiting artists for our gallery and to work with the worship committee and others to coordinate and reinforce themes as much as possible.

The following recommendations are made that relate to the mission of Spiritual Development.

Children's Religious Exploration Committee

The Children's Religious Exploration Committee faces the obvious challenge that there are almost no children in our congregation. Were that to change or in order to attract families with children, then the committee would need to be effectively engaged and support for Sunday child care would need to be more available.

2. Mission: Member Service

- congregation priority of 5.1 out of 10
- priority for the minister of 5.9 out of 10
- This mission serves by caring for the congregational community, including pastoral care, providing member support services, and helping members of the congregation meet challenges in their personal lives. It also serves by promoting communication amongst and participation by members of the congregation in the life of the church.

The following committees and services are principally designated to serve the mission of Member Service:

- **Membership Committee:** To ensure that visitors and other potential new members are made welcome and to facilitate their becoming members.
- **Adult Programs Committee:** Adult programs are a vital part of UUCWI and play an important role in the spiritual, as well as the social, intellectual, educational, and political life of our community.
- **Caring Connections Committee of UUCWI** coordinates with the minister and chaplain to meet needs within the congregation such as transportation to medical appointments and emergency needs of individuals within the congregation. An important responsibility of the CCC is to help the minister with arrangements for memorial services.
- **Pastoral Care:** UUCWI has an active program for providing comfort and support to members of the community. Pastoral care is delivered through three principal pathways: our Minister, our Chaplain, and our Pastoral Associates and serves in support of the needs of members and friends in the congregation.

Recommendations relating to the mission of Member Services

Membership Committee

If our goal is to grow the membership of the congregation by a net of 10 member pledging units each year, the role of the Membership Committee is key to that effort. The Membership Committee has been working hard to make visitors welcome to the church. There are established protocols for contact, follow-up, and introduction of people into the church.

1. While those procedures might be tweaked or expanded in the future, the most pressing issue for the Membership Committee is the need for more volunteers to share the existing work load. It would be useful if the committee were able to conduct interviews of people who leave the congregation to better assess the reasons for their departure.
2. The Membership Committee should work to develop a more robust carpooling system for the church to encourage membership for people who live on the north end of the island or who need help with transportation.
3. While not the primary responsibility of the Membership Committee, this is perhaps also the place to note that the congregation must attend to the need to retain new and existing members. Membership growth will require intentional efforts to make and sustain connections within the community that will motivate retention and increased engagement. This is a multi-faceted challenge and deserves attention from many parts of the church's activities.

Adult Programs Committee

1. This committee should be the facilitating and coordinating source for adult programs of the UUCWI, including small group programs. The Adult Programs Committee may be the source of programs but should also encourage program creativity from across the UUCWI.
2. In collaboration with other committees, this committee should work to promote the use of the church for programs of interest to the greater community: music, speakers, dance, art, education, etc.
3. This committee should develop efficient processes for hosting meetings and programs at the church and become the facilitating touch-point for all non-service educational, spiritual development, and public programs that happen at the church.
4. This committee needs to involve more members and be supported as well by our minister and administrator.

Care and Connections Committee

The Care and Connections Committee currently has no Chair and is thus largely non-functional. This committee needs to be re-energized and should work closely with the new minister to respond to needs of members brought forward to the minister.

3. Mission: Community Outreach

- congregation priority of 4.8 out of 10
- priority for the minister of 4.7 out of 10

The mission serves by caring for the community beyond the congregation. It provides service to the local community and charities, organizing and providing a venue for public events and programs, and through direct and collaborative social justice work, environmental advocacy, etc. Community Outreach is a key motivation for many in the congregation and brings people to our church.

The following committees are currently principally engaged in serving the mission of Community Outreach:

- Social and Environmental Justice Council: The Social and Environmental Justice Council within UUCWI strives to promote social justice in our community and wider society and to promote environmental protection and sustainability.

Recommendations regarding Community Outreach

A broader Outreach Committee should be created to serve the mission of community outreach. The Outreach Committee could serve as the focal point to help manage a range of activities that reach out beyond the congregation. The Outreach Committee should develop an explicit process whereby potential activities might be identified, prioritized, and supported by the church.

1. UUCWI Major Social Initiatives: These would constitute major congregation selected themes for social action. The UUCWI would serve as a visible driving force in these efforts, likely over a longer time horizon. The Outreach Committee would be tasked with managing the effort. The "Side of Love" effort comes to mind in this context. The congregation should have deliberate input into what projects might rise to this level by a process developed by the Outreach Committee. There would likely be only a few (2 or 3) of these initiatives approved and active at any given time. The current efforts by the Social and Environmental Justice Council might also be a good example of such an initiative.
2. UUCWI Facilitated Projects: The UUCWI could provide a venue for activities, help with publicity, and, in some cases, provide an official endorsement of the effort, subject to Board approval. These efforts would

be led by one or more engaged members, but not by a standing committee. If individual members' enthusiasm for the project were to fade, so would the project. The church's efforts supporting Habitat for Humanity or Civility First might be examples of a facilitated project.

3. **Networked Collaborations:** for these, the UUCWI would agree to serve as a conduit for information, communications, and promotion of activities that are being managed by an organization outside the church. Members could then participate in those efforts as they, as individuals, choose. The "Greening Congregations" effort might serve as an example of such a networked collaboration.

4. Mission: Infrastructure Service

- congregation priority of 4.5 out of 10
- priority for the minister of 2.3 out of 10

This mission serves by caring for the congregation's operating infrastructure: personnel, banking and money management, fund-raising, endowments, building and property operation and maintenance, AV systems, insurance, and other business activities. While the survey showed that the congregation prioritizes this mission somewhat less than the other three, there is general consensus that this remains a necessary and critical function. The survey also showed that the minister should not focus much of her / his efforts here. Lay leadership should manage this aspect of the UUCWI.

The following committees are principally designated to serve the mission of infrastructure service:

- **Finance Committee:** To monitor the financial health of the Congregation and make recommendations for preserving it.
- **Stewardship Committee:** To conduct an annual canvass of every member and friend of the congregation to secure funding to support the UUCWI operating budget, collect feedback to the congregation's leadership, and provide personal contact with each member and friend.
- **Auction Committee:** This committee conducts the annual auction to raise operating funds, host an important social event for the congregation, and showcase the congregation's many skills and talents.

- **Building and Grounds Committee:** To maintain the UUCWI congregational building in a state of beauty and repair, so it is available for regular use by congregants and rental groups.
- **Library Committee:** The role of the UUCWI Library Committee is to oversee and manage the UUCWI book collection, referred to as the UUCWI Library. The scope of the UUCWI Library collection is limited to books and media particularly useful to a Unitarian Universalist community, especially those not easily available in nearby public library collections.

Recommendations regarding Infrastructure Service: observations about long range activities, needs, and resulting recommendations.

Building and Grounds and their operation

Looking forward, there are three major areas of function:

1. **Current operations:** The committee does a commendable job of taking care of our physical space and grounds. There are ongoing needs that must be budgeted for and implemented.
 - a. We will set the process in motion to repaint the building inside and out in the next 5 years. Buildings and Grounds Committee should prepare a plan and budget for the painting. The plan should be in place by September 2018. The annual budget should reflect these projected costs.
 - b. We will expand the parking capacity. Buildings and Grounds Committee should prepare a plan and budget for the additional parking. The plan should be in place by September 2018. The annual budget should reflect these projected costs.
 - c. The Committee should also consider and provide plans for other long-term capital maintenance and facilities improvement needs
2. **Long term facilities planning:** If the congregation is to be able to grow to an important extent in the next 5 years, the church needs to plan for additional capacity to adapt to the increased memberships. This would potentially include sanctuary space, small group space, office space, bathroom space, and expanded parking.
3. The Board will create a task force of people to consider how we might better make use of the space in the front of the building: lobby, office, storage closet, and classrooms. This task force should include the key stakeholders (e.g. Visual

Arts Committee, Worship Committee, Membership Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee, Church Administrator, and Minister) to re-consider the way the foyer and sanctuary can best meet its many, sometimes competing, functions: visually attractive, informative, promoting the UUCWI presence, communicating with members and visitors, and allowing ease of people flow. Consideration should be given to the uses and needs for the classrooms and for storage in the building.

Library: We have remarkable collection of books and resources available to the congregation, but there is an urgent need to better house the collection, safeguard the materials while encouraging their use by the congregation. To that end, we will renovate the middle classroom to allow the library to move into that space for its permanent collection. The Library Committee should prepare a plan and budget for this conversion. The plan should be in completed by July 2018. The estimated costs should be included in the 2018 - 2019 fiscal plan.

Finance:

- The Finance Committee and the Treasurer will work to develop the annual budget for fiscal year 2018 - 2019. That budget will include best estimates for the cost of new initiative specified in this long term plan and thus inform the need for resources from this year's pledge drive.
- The Finance Committee will develop a formal structure and plan to create a planned giving / endowment process for the UUCWI.
- The Finance Committee and Treasurer will develop an effective process of education and information for the congregation so that all members have an opportunity to better understand the finances of the UUCWI.

Stewardship Committee:

- For this year, the Stewardship Campaign will be led from the Board. In future years a properly constituted Stewardship Committee will take on this task.

Auction Committee: The Auction Committee did an outstanding job in 2017 and are to be commended and gratefully acknowledged.

- Going forward, there is a need to recruit more people to participate and assure that established systems (like the credit card process) are documented and available to future versions of the committee.

F. Coordinating efforts and committees not specifically tasked with serving a specific mission

Mission Liaisons: We propose that each of the four missions of the UUCWI be assigned a member of the Board to serve as the liaison and communication link between the Board and the committees that serve that mission. Those committees that span all functions (e.g. Communications and Participation) should also have a Board member liaison This would replace the current sometimes ineffective system where each committee nominally has a Board member liaison. This Board member would be referred to the Mission Liaison for the mission. The Mission Liaison could be any member of the Board except the President and Vice President. In most cases, the Treasurer might be the natural fit for Mission Liaison for the Infrastructure Service mission.

This approach would mean that one member of the Board would be responsible for monitoring, helping coordinate, and serving as a communication link and advocate for each of the four major missions.

Note: The Communications Committee and the Nominations Committee have up to now been included in the Member Service mission. These two committees serve key roles that span all four missions and thus are included in this section.

Communications Committee:

The Communications Committee is currently functioning as the Internet management group for the UUCWI. They have done an excellent job of developing our web site, a task that is admittedly never complete. Requests for changes and enhancements will remain an on-going challenge, but the basics are there and much appreciated.

We propose that the Communications Committee serve a broader mandate, with the current web management role subsumed into the new structure as the Internet Subcommittee.

The larger Communications Committee would be tasked to:

- Working closely with the minister, address the need of the UUCWI for a more visible public relations presence on the Island: newspaper articles, buttons, posters for activities, etc.
- To provide support and systems for other committees that want to publicize or promote activities or programs to the congregation and the wider community.
- Internet Subcommittee: maintain and enhance the UUCWI web site and other digital communications as they do now.
- Select, develop, and train the congregation in the use of digital / Internet platforms we can use for real-time service broadcasts, committee meetings, and other communications and interactions via the Internet.
 - Look into and develop at least a draft plan to be able to live-stream services that would make it possible to better serve people who cannot attend services in person such as shut-ins, the sick, bad weather, and people living on the north end of the island for whom the commute is an issue. This might also make it easier to expand our membership from the north.
- To accomplish this end, this committee would need an expanded budget allocation for the 2018 - 2019 fiscal year.

Nominating Committee: This committee is currently elected directly by the congregation and is not accountable to the Board. It serves currently as the body that recruits members to serve on the Board of Directors.

To establish the context for the recommendation that follows, some pertinent numbers may be useful.

- The UUCWI currently has 100 Members, plus a number of active Friends (maybe another 20 people or so). So there are currently about 120 people who might be called upon to serve in whatever capacity in the church.
- There are 21 committees in the church, thus 21 committee Chairs.
- There are 7 members of the Board of Trustees
- If each leadership position were filled by a unique person, nearly 25% of our available work force would be needed just to supply leadership roles.
- The reality is that our church depends a great deal on a much smaller cadre of people for leadership and under these circumstances one can reasonably expect attrition, burnout, and slippage in efforts and outcomes.

- **Thus the UUCWI needs to do two things**
 - Grow our membership so that the pool of available volunteers is expanded
 - Enlist a broader array of existing members to take on tasks that need to be done.
 - One of the consistently identified needs for our church is to do a better job of developing leaders and supporting member activities so that they need less time and effort.

To address the second of these, we propose that the Nominating Committee be restructured as follows.

- The committee should be re-named to be the **Participation Committee**
- That it become a standing committee reporting to the Board, with its Chair and members established as is done for other standing committees. This committee will likely need some staff support.
- The committee would be responsible for the following functions. Think of this committee as the Human Resources Department for the UUCWI.
 - Continue to identify people to serve on the Board of Trustees.
 - In collaboration with each committee, help to identify and recruit congregation members and friends to fill the Chair position of committees (including the Participation Committee itself). The committees themselves would still choose their own Chair.
 - Seek out additional members and friends to serve on the committees, working (with staff support) to identify and catalogue peoples' skills and interests and promote participation. For new members, this would include coordinating with the Membership Committee to learn about new members' skills and interests.
 - Work to develop leadership skills in the congregation and to address needs for succession planning for committee leadership. Where possible, help to develop Vice Chairs at least in key committees to help train new leaders.
 - Look for ways to address the need to acknowledge and express gratitude for member participation in the work of the UUCWI.

Long Range Planning Committee: at least initially, this committee would remain a standing committee which, after this proposal is approved, monitors the progress of the recommendations and updates the plan with Board and Congregation approval as appropriate. The committee should prepare a report of progress to the Board at least annually.

- This will need to be an on-going effort to encourage the implementation of this plan (if approved) and to do some of the detail work needed, such as updating the Bylaws to reflect the proposed changes. Further down the road, the LRP Committee should refresh the plan in light of what is learned in implementation and to adapt to changing conditions in the UUCWI.

Leadership Council: literally a council of all UUCWI congregational leaders, the Leadership Council exists in order to:

- Foster sharing and consultation among committees •
- Promote appropriate collaboration between committees
- Identify and possibly resolve issues of responsibility between the affected parties, or define the issues for board consideration •
- Provide visibility into the operations and governance activities of the congregation for enhanced coordination of activities, more effective functioning of the church, and to minimize lapses in meeting the congregation's needs.
- Promote a strong sense of ownership of and connection with the UUCWI mission and community.
- Meet periodically with the Long Range Planning Committee to monitor progress on the plans and to identify new needs.

Paid Staff: This proposal does not anticipate that the paid staff of the church will grow in at least the next few years beyond our $\frac{1}{2}$ time minister, $\frac{1}{2}$ time administrator, support person for Sunday children's RE, our accounting service, and our cleaning person. For now, the UUCWI will still depend on the in-kind contributions of choir director, accompanists, special music coordinator, and bookkeeper. These donated services save the UUCWI more than \$12,000 per year.¹

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