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Annual Report Notes May 2010

This is the conclusion of my tenth year in our ministry together. Rather than focus on just this last year, I thought I'd try to give a decade report.

Problems in 2000

When I began my ministry with you there were some problems:

- Congregational confidence was shaky:
 - Negotiated resignation with the previous settled minister
 - Another minister cut due to poor congregational financial planning
 - A recent history of difficulties with a few members
 - Reputation for prickliness
- Budget was mysterious:
 - Budget software so complex that no one understood the budget
 - Annual budget that included 100% of income and 70% of expenses
 - A large bequest being used up for annual expenses so no need for a balanced budget
 - No stewardship (annual canvas) chairs until canvas about to start
 - Bank statements not reconciled
- Governance difficulties:
 - Governance structure was appropriate for a congregation half our size

- Board expected to manage program details – therefore 3+ hour meetings and still unable to address some important concerns

- Board the focus of frustration from many members

- Hard to get people to run. Several people joined the Board to confront the bums – one resigned when he found no bums to confront.

• Staffing issues:

- Staffed for decline – two program people for 425 members
- 4 admin staff

There were lots of strengths

- Smart, goodhearted, dedicated members who have stuck together through difficult times – not fair-weather friends
- Core instincts were wonderful – leaders could be verbally attacked but if they showed any sign of stress, the rancor stopped and people were there to support them personally.
- Hardworking staff dedicated to the congregation
- Previous interim ministers had begun some much needed healing
- Just completed a covenant that people loved
- History of long successful ministries – difficulties with my predecessor were an exception, not the rule

Delivered to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, on Sunday,

Changes over ten years

During my first decade with you, some things have changed. A few of the more tangible shifts include the following. (The underlined ones require time and energy from me now though they didn't when I started in 2000.)

- New Programs:
 - Second service added
 - Worship Leader Training
 - Ministry Circles
 - Lay Ministry
 - Spiritually Grounded Leadership Program
 - Spiritual Journey Groups
 - Second Saturday Meditation
 - Sharing the Path
 - Adult Enrichment programs begun
 - Family Friendly dinners
 - Family Camp made more inclusive
 - New member dinners with the minister
 - Spirit Play
 - Social Responsibilities Committee greatly expanded in scope
 - Family Promise
 - Green Sanctuary
 - Community Garden
 - Interweave
 - Peace Vigils
 - Aesthetics Committee
 - Art Displays
 - Memorials Committee
 - Serious, sustained long range planning – Financial Workshop, World Cafes, Searching for the Future, UUMPFs
- New Entryway built!
- Changes in governance and staffing:
 - Senior staff meeting
 - All staff meetings
 - Annual Board retreats resumed
 - Executive Committee – ensures that Board deals with policy and committees are empowered
 - Program Council
 - Program Council Steering Committee
 - Annual Program Council Retreats
 - Membership Connections Facilitator added
 - Several student interns
- New Ways of operating:
 - Children and Youth programs overseen by a minister to the congregation
 - Shift focus to Family Ministry
 - Policy Governance – empowering more people in congregation
 - The general mood more optimistic and less prickly. We fight less and enjoy each other more.
 - Reputation for being warm and friendly
 - Covenant, mission and values repeated every Sunday
 - Community Partner Program that shares the Sunday offering
 - Easier to find people to serve in leadership
 - Weekly email from Roger
 - RE Assistance added

- Shorter more satisfying Board meetings
- Office staff reorganized
- Financial reorganization – “Living within our Means” program
- Budget more transparent
- Budget is now balanced
- Budget includes all our income and expenses
- We have a policy of not using bequests for the annual budget
- Checking accounts are reconciled with the bank
- We’ve had several stewardship chairs last more than one year
- Email is a more dominate means of communication
- Other:
 - Public UU voice at rallies, press conferences, etc.
 - Good Offices for PDC Ministers
 - Exec Comm for PCD Ministers
 - Lead Chaplain for General Assembly

Directions for the Future

Looking at where we are now, the context of our lives in the larger world and where the energy in the congregation is focused, these are some of the things I see in the next five to ten years that will be important to emphasize:

- Connections – It is no accident that our mission statement begins with the words, “We come together ...” Our world is increasingly fragmented, fast-paced, stressed and dependent on technologies (like email) that give people a false sense of connections. There is a great need for communities that allow people to

come together face to face in a meaningful way. We are a covenanted religious community which means much of our strength comes from the quality of our relationships with one another. The more ways we provide for us to come together, the stronger we’ll be.

- Families – the need for connections amongst families who are actively parenting is a special focus. In an age-segregated society, meaningful multi-generational environments are deeply needed.
- Depth – the second phrase in our missions statement is “... to deepen our lives ...” Not everyone who comes in our doors is looking to deepen their lives. Some are just struggling to stay afloat or to manage a difficult transition. But many are looking for spiritual, philosophical or emotional depth. Providing depth on Sunday morning and providing additional opportunities for people to explore in meaningful ways gives strength and stability to the entire congregation. This is particularly important for those who are in leadership roles.
- The Larger World – our mission statements closes with “... to be a force for healing in the world. Unitarian Universalists are keenly aware that do not exist in isolation. The problems and possibilities of our world community moves us to help those in difficult circumstances and speak to issues that touch our commonwealth.
- We are a regional church – that must adapt to people who come relatively long distances.
- Our buildings and grounds provide a place for us to come together, deepen and reach out to the larger

world. Our buildings are a resource. And they are worn. We have good energy and dedicated talent focused on developing a truly congregation-wide master plan. This will be important in our congregational life during the coming years.

Directions for My Ministry

As I look forward to what I hope will be another ten years of ministry with you, I see some shifting patterns in our relationship. Some of these shifts are already well underway.

If I look at my calendar a year from now – say next May – I have 45 to 48 hours of each week already committed. And I know that each week there are 5 to 20 hours asked of me that comes from new circumstances or events. In the ten years I've been here we have added so many programs that require time of me that my schedule is an increasing challenge.

This, ironically, may make me seem more remote and less involved – I'm simply not able to get around to as great a percentage of our activities as I once did.

This is accentuated by having a second minister. It allows us to do more. But to be effective, he needs time in the pulpit to connect with all of you. In my

early years I was in the pulpit more often than our Letter of Agreement required. But now we need to give some of that time to developing our family ministry.

I frankly struggle with this time management. I still want to be everywhere. But I can't sustain the long hours and stay in balance. And I think it is healthier for the congregation to have some of the things I did during those early healing years turned over to lay leaders who are looking for ways to deepen their lives.

I'm trying to shift my attention more toward lay leadership development.

Stefan Jonasson, the UUAs large church consultant, listened to me talk about my struggles with my shifting role. He smiled and said of all the ministers he knows, the only ones who do not struggle with time management are the ones in churches that are in decline.

So this is good news – it is in the nature of churches our size who are doing well to have these issues.

With your help and feedback, I'll continue to adjust to do as much as I reasonably can to keep us healthy.

We are doing well, indeed.