

UNITY CHURCH OF OVERLAND PARK

Report on Long-term Action Plan 2008-2012

September 21, 2008

Introduction

From early March through July 2008, a group of board and staff members and congregants met to refine the Unity Church of Overland Park (UCOP) mission statement and to create a new, inspiring vision statement. They also further developed the church's core values and created a new long-term action plan that will support the church's evolution toward enlightened leadership and significantly enhanced, thriving ministry throughout all aspects of the church.

The following paragraphs detail the development of this plan which really began with Futurescape 2002, a weekend-long visioning process. Out of this initial visioning came an appreciation of the need for visioning our future. One key initiative remains from Futurescape 2002, and that is our Green Team. Everyone in the church is, no doubt, aware of the contributions of that important team to our ministry.

In March 2006, we continued our visioning work through our Vision Quest process facilitated by Rev. Susan Burnett-Hampson. It was an eight-month process led by Danielle Keith involving a core team of congregants that met at least weekly and sometimes more often. The team was coached by Rev. Susan who first met with the staff and board to introduce guidelines for the process. She then coached the congregation during three retreats over the entire period to birth the new vision and the many ideas that arose from it. The process included appreciative inquiry interviews that yielded reams of responses from the congregation, all of which were taken into consideration as the team formed our mission, vision and values.

The team rolled out the results to the congregation at evening dinner presentations in Harmony Hall during which Rev. Patricia Bass and Danielle Keith presented the new mission, vision, and values. They invited comments and inputs from the congregation during these dinners. The response was very positive.

The following mission, vision, and values statements were created from this process:

- **Mission:** We are here to awaken and express the Christ Presence in individuals, families, our community, and the world through prayer and meditation, joyful worship, spiritual education and loving service.
- **Vision:** We acknowledge that our words and thoughts have power. In alignment with the Divine Presence in our lives, we co-create our own future built with five key pillars:
 - **Service** - Loving service to others is a hallmark of Unity Church of Overland Park. We deepen our spiritual practice through a commitment to serving our church family and the community at large. Our service ministry engages an abundance of people

from all ages and backgrounds, who are trained and supported both spiritually and practically to meet the needs of the specific initiative. We partner with other churches in interfaith projects to have an even greater impact on the hearts and minds of our community. We are recognized as spiritual leaders whose insights on key social issues are actively sought by the media. In times of local or global need, we are strong action-oriented contributors. A wall of thank-you notes and positive media coverage about Unity Church of Overland Park's innovative service programs further remind and inspire our community to carry forward in Christ's Love.

- **Relationships** - Through an expanded small-group ministry, Unity Church of Overland Park is a hub for developing safe relationships, grounded in trust and unconditional love that truly welcomes ALL. Our Celebration Worship Services, through the progressive and creative use of media, music and other art forms, deliver a transformative and relevant spiritual experience that deeply touches and actively engages our congregation. Many new visitors are drawn each week after hearing or reading about our dynamic Church and are delightfully surprised by the warmth and personal touch of their visit. New forms of intergenerational services, classes and social activities empower and foster healthy family and social relationships built on strong principles of Spirituality.
- **Education** - Our high quality and unique Spiritual Education Program teaches Unity Principles and practical Christianity for everyday lives. Unity Church of Overland Park is recognized as a regional center for spiritual growth and development. Our teachers and guest speakers are highly regarded, passionate and inspiring. The vibrant Youth and Family Ministry creates new and fresh ways to engage and inspire children and parents alike. The well-organized and focused Spiritual Education Program serves all members and all ages of our Church community, while drawing a high number of participants from the community at large. Our innovative bookstore and website are exciting go-to places for interfaith ideas, music and inspiration.
- **Prosperity** - Blessed by a strong prosperity consciousness, our community draws a large and diverse family of individuals, whose unique talents and passionate commitment contribute to our ever-improving programs. Unity Church of Overland Park is a powerful force of love, giving back to the community in big and small ways. This is possible through the vitality and leadership of our Church staff, and our abundant financial and volunteer resources. As good stewards of God's blessings, we efficiently maintain and appropriately update our beautiful building, equipment and grounds to meet our community's spiritual and practical needs. We value our earth's resources through environmentally appropriate practices.
- **Leadership** - Creatively blending our core values and zeal for our Community's Mission with new technologies, modern organizational design, and best-in-class management practices, Unity Church of Overland Park is at the forefront of the Unity Movement, demonstrating a model of Spiritual Success. Our Leadership Model is a well-organized system of planning and implementation, and brings new ideas and priorities to reality quickly and efficiently. Churches and other Service organizations study the Unity Church of Overland Park Leadership Model.

- **Values:**
 - **Love** - We are a home of unconditional acceptance and safety for everyone.
 - **Inclusiveness** - We seek to understand and celebrate all faiths, ethnic heritages, ages, sexual orientations and socio-economic backgrounds, making our own lives richer for the experience.
 - **Community** - We foster authentic relationships in individuals and groups, children and families, across all generations, building peace and trust in acknowledgment that we are each part of a larger whole.
 - **Wholeness** - We express our divine perfection as we grow and heal physically, emotionally and spiritually.
 - **Joy** - We live from a fundamentally positive view of life, celebrating our oneness with God through laughter, fun and music.
 - **Prayer** - We turn to Spirit within for guidance and active communication with the divine.
 - **Service** - We change the world and ourselves by being in service, to each other and to the community.
 - **Abundance** - We know that God is our Source. We celebrate the unlimited possibilities present in every moment and we live in a continuous flow of giving and receiving.

As a result of the Vision Quest, the board and staff developed 30 new initiatives and made significant progress on many of them. Rev. Bob Barth and Danielle Keith reported that progress to the congregation monthly during the Sunday services.

During 2007, it was becoming clear that the complexity of our vision and values, as well as the proliferation of initiatives, were keeping us from focusing our efforts and accomplishing the work that was needed to support key aspects of the ministry and ensure all were thriving. Church leaders were aware of the work of Susan Beck, a congregant, Unity lay leader and business coach, who had worked with numerous churches and centers across the country to clarify their vision, mission, and core values and develop and implement in-depth action plans. Susan first made a presentation to key leaders in July 2007. In March 2008, a large group of board and staff members, as well as several congregants who participated in Vision Quest 2006, began working with Susan to refine our vision, mission, and core values and to create a long-term action plan that would enable us to take Unity Church of Overland Park to the next level, spiritually and organizationally. The process unfolded swiftly on Spirit's wings, enabling this report to be presented to you after only a few months of concentrated effort. Those who participated in the work of creating this on your behalf are proud of this work. It provides the clearest focus to date on projects that will undoubtedly enable all of us to come together as a spiritual community, and to be all that we were created to be in this community and in the world.

For all those who were involved, this has been an amazing time of commitment and dedication. We thank the following members for their outstanding efforts on our behalf:

Fred Albers
Rev. Bob Barth
Rev. Patricia Bass
Susan Beck
Rima Bonario
Randy Gerard
Barbara Hadley
Tom Hadley
Paul Heath
John Hoefler
Rev. Jennifer Holder

Rev. Nancy Jerome
Danielle Keith
Debra King
Peter Jarosewycz
Ellis Megee
Tamie Mills
Dawn O'Malley
Jane Sauvé
Carla Wakefield
Shawn Wegner

The Refined Vision, Mission, Core Values and Action Plan

We began on March 2, 2008 with an initial small group exploratory meeting. The UCOP staff Strategic Planning Team met with Susan Beck (now Chief Operating Officer for the Association of Unity Churches International) and Danielle Keith to discuss how to move our mission and vision into an actionable long-term plan with clear priorities and action steps. At that meeting it was agreed that we needed to call together a larger group to consider the questions before us and also take a fresh look at our mission and vision. The staff Strategic Planning Team wanted to include more board members and also members of our original 2006 Vision Quest Design Team. It was also agreed that those who would participate in the work should attend the Association of Unity Churches International Integral Leadership Training being offered by Rev. Gary Simmons on March 28 – 29, 2008. Invitations were sent out to board members, Vision Quest Design Team members, and staff and lay leaders to attend this training.

So, on March 28 – 29, 2008, more than 20 UCOP board, staff, Vision Quest Design Team members and lay leaders attended the Integral Leadership Training (registration fees paid by UCOP) to learn about the new Thriving Ministries Model. The training really expanded their understanding of what constitutes a thriving ministry and enabled them to take a whole-system approach to the creation of the new long-term action plan.

On April 19, 2008, 18 board, staff, and Vision Quest Design Team members came together for an all-day Saturday session, facilitated by Susan Beck. (Note: The team also included board nominees, except one who was not available on that day.) At the end of that meeting, the attendees had reviewed the mission and vision work which had been done previously and created: a shortened and slightly reworded mission statement; a newly-created vision statement for our world; and four new strategic intentions for UCOP. They are as follows:

- **Mission:** We are here to awaken and express the Christ Nature within ourselves, our families, the community and the world.
- **Vision for the World:** Centered in God, we celebrate a world of peace, harmony and abundance for all.

- **Strategic Intentions:**

- We are a nationally recognized Center for spiritual growth and development.
- All our relationships are grounded in authenticity, trust and unconditional love.
- We are a powerful force of love, giving back to the church, our community and world.
- We are a flagship ministry demonstrating and inspiring spiritual leadership success, prosperity and stewardship.

After April 19th, a small planning team consisting of Rev. Patricia Bass, Danielle Keith, Rev. Bob Barth, and Susan Beck set about to draft specific objectives and goals to actualize these new strategic intentions. They strove to not only honor the congregational inputs contained in the 2006 vision pillars, but also to include their knowledge of the current needs of the church. Ellis Megee later joined this team.

On May 17th, 2008, the large group that originally met in late March came together again for an all-day Saturday session to review the draft objectives and goals. Having received the large group's feedback, the planning team set about to prioritize the goals. Also during this meeting, another small team was created to revisit the church's core values and create a values spreadsheet containing definitions of each core value and the rationale for each core value, along with church-wide implications of these core values and individual behaviors that stem from the values to enable us to "walk our talk." This core values team worked to refine and restructure the eight core values, while maintaining the integrity of the original values work that was done back in 2006. Throughout this period, both small teams, as well as the staff Strategic Planning Team, met numerous times to complete their work.

Once more, on June 23, 2008, the large group came together to review the recommended prioritization of goals and the initial work of the core values team. The goals were presented in three "waves" based upon their priorities, logical sequencing in time (timeframe in which they will be started), and available "champions" (those who will oversee and lead the work). The large group unanimously supported the goals and their prioritization. The core values team presented their initial draft and received feedback and inputs to enable them to complete the spreadsheet. They settled on five core values from our original eight values in an effort to make the values memorable for everyone.

On June 24, 2008, the Board of Directors met and approved the mission, vision, strategic intentions, objectives, and goals (the long-term action plan), as well as the core values. This approval indicated that the work of drafting was complete, and these elements were ready to be rolled out to the congregation for their feedback and implementation. Finally, on July 18 – 19, 2008, Susan Beck facilitated the board retreat. This retreat focused on how the board can model leadership and, in particular, walk the talk of our core values. The board also learned how to make greater use of appreciative inquiry in its interaction with congregants.

During the Sunday services on July 27, 2008, Rev. Patricia Bass introduced the new vision and mission statements to the congregation, and they were asked to score and give feedback on them. The response to the new vision and mission was extremely positive. All the inputs were gathered up and collated and were reviewed by the planning team. Only one trend was evident: congregants felt that the mission statement should be changed to indicate greater connection with the local community. The following is the revised mission statement with the change in bold type:

- **Mission:** We are here to awaken and express the Christ Nature in ourselves, our families, **our** community and the world.

From August 3 – 31, 2008, Rev. Patricia Bass presented a very well-received five-week series, entitled “Called to Be” about living the UCOP core values. In addition to receiving her lesson about each core value over this five week period, congregants received cards in their bulletins each Sunday that they could sign indicating alignment with each core value and their willingness to practice living the core values. (They also received a duplicate card to take home with them to reflect on during each week.) In the sanctuary, the cards were hung on streamers from colorful banners with the core values printed on them. These banners decorated the walls of the church during the series and are intended to be maintained even after the series is complete. The following are the UCOP core values:

- **Core Values:** Spirit-Led, Love, Inclusiveness, Joy, Abundance

The entire core values spreadsheet is attached at the end of this report.

On September 21, 2008, Rev. Patricia presented the strategic intentions, objectives, and goals of the long-term action plan during her lesson using a powerful slide show set to music. This presentation was designed to captivate the imaginations of the congregants and to elicit their desire to participate in making these goals a reality within the church. The strategic intentions, objectives, and goals are also attached at the end of this report.

Work will begin on the first of the goals in October 2008 when Susan Beck will coach team members on action planning. Action planning will continue through early 2009 when congregants will be invited to volunteer for action planning teams for the Wave 1 goals. (For a preview of Wave 1 goals, see the attachment at the end of this report.)

The staff, 2008 Vision Team and all those who participated in this new effort on behalf of our entire congregation hope you can feel the momentum building from our early work together in 2006 to our new action plan in 2008. The teams also hope that many of you will be willing to contribute your spiritual gifts and talents to make this plan a great success. The momentum is real, and it is Spirit at work! Thank you all in advance for your ever-increasing support, and we look forward to your participation.

Many blessings!

Core Values of Unity Church of Overland Park

Core Values	Rationale (Why is this attribute a UCOP core value?)	Implications for UCOP as an Organization (Consequences)	Behaviors to Walk the Talk (Individual Actions)
Spirit-Led			
<i>We turn within to Spirit for guidance and active communication.</i>	We create order, peace and harmony in ourselves and others when we align our daily actions with spiritual principles.	At all levels of the organization we are Spirit-Led in our decisions and actions.	I have a daily spiritual practice that keeps my conscious of spirit.
		We begin our gatherings with prayer.	I attend classes and workshops that support my spiritual growth.
		We teach spiritual principles and practices, such as meditation and prayer, to help adults and children cultivate communion with the Divine.	I take life's challenges and celebrations into my prayer practice.
		We continually deepen and expand our understanding of Unity principles and seek to consistently align with them.	
Love			
<i>We express unconditional love, an inner quality that sees good everywhere and in everyone.</i>	We are reflections of God, and God is Love.	We welcome and greet everyone in love.	I continually seek to expand loving relationships in my world.
		We are an intentional community of unconditional love.	I always look for the good in others and speak well of them.
		We are committed to supporting our children in experiencing themselves as the perfect creations of God that they are.	I am considerate of others and listen with empathy.
		We actively express love in the world through sacred service.	I love myself completely, as Spirit does, and I express my divine perfection and wholeness.
Inclusiveness			
<i>We embrace all people as expressions of God.</i>	Everyone is in God, the One Presence and One Power in the universe. As we recognize this, we grow in awareness of our oneness.	We foster authentic relationships in individuals and groups, children and families, and across all generations.	I reach out to others and acknowledge the Christ Nature within each person.
		We welcome ALL people as part of our congregation.	I am compassionate and considerate of all.
		We reach out to other organized faiths in the community.	I attend classes and events that expose me to different faiths and cultures.
		We embrace diversity by educating ourselves and our children through classes, workshops and other experiences.	I participate in activities that increase my understanding and embrace of all people.

Core Values	Rationale (Why is this attribute a UCOP core value?)	Implications for UCOP as an Organization (Consequences)	Behaviors to Walk the Talk (Individual Actions)
Joy			
<i>We live from a positive view of the world and celebrate life.</i>	Joy is our true nature.	We celebrate our oneness with God through laughter, fun and music.	I choose to be optimistic.
		We create a Youth and Family Ministry program that is fun, inspiring and grounded in Unity teachings.	I appreciate humor wherever I find it.
		We reach out to the community in joyful service.	I live complaint-free.
		We sponsor activities and groups that speak to many people's joys and passions.	I participate in activities that bring me joy.

Abundance			
<i>We know that God is our Source and celebrate the unlimited possibilities present in every moment.</i>	We live in a continuous flow of giving and receiving.	We make plans knowing that anything is possible. We think big!	I give to where I am spiritually fed.
		We bring people in to the conscious awareness of the value of service.	I speak of what is possible, not what is impossible.
		We provide adults and children the tools to develop and demonstrate the consciousness of prosperity.	I give generously of my time, talent and treasure.
		We tithe to the people and institutions from which we are spiritually fed.	I take action to realize my divine potential.
		We reach out to the community in sacred service.	

UNITY CHURCH OF OVERLAND PARK			
VISION: Centered in God, we celebrate a world of peace, harmony and abundance for all.			
MISSION: We are here to awaken and express the Christ Nature in ourselves, our families, our community and the world.			
STRATEGIC INTENTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND GOALS (Priority Legend: 1 = Wave 1; 2 = Wave 2; 3 = Wave 3)	1	2	3
SPIRITUAL GROWTH INTENTION: <i>We are a nationally recognized Center for spiritual growth and development.</i>			
TRANSFORMATIONAL CELEBRATION SERVICES			
GOAL: Our inspirational celebration services awaken the Christ Nature and transform lives by December 31, 2009.	1		
VIBRANT YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY			
GOAL: Our children live from a fundamental awareness of God's in-dwelling presence and unending love by December 31, 2010.	1		
GOAL: Our families raise their children from a fundamental awareness of God's in-dwelling presence and unending loved by December 31, 2010.		2	
ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT			
GOAL: Individual lives are transformed through innovative spiritual development programs by December 31, 2011.		2	
AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS INTENTION: <i>All relationships are grounded in authenticity, trust and unconditional love.</i>			
REWARDING AFFINITY GROUPS			
GOAL: Young adults (ages 18-35) lead thriving lives as they participate in our well-known and vibrant young adults program by December 31, 2009.	1		
SUPPORTIVE EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS			
GOAL: We experience accelerated spiritual growth and expanded consciousness through involvement in partner organizations such as our Association of Unity Churches International; Unity School; South Central Unity Churches Association; and the Association of Global New Thought by March 31, 2010.			3
TRANSFORMATIONAL SMALL GROUP MINISTRY			
GOAL: We experience greater bonding to each other and the church in our thriving small group ministry by December 31, 2010.		2	

SACRED SERVICE INTENTION: <i>We are a powerful force of love, giving back to the church, our community and the world.</i>			
COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVING			
GOAL: Congregants are actively supported through life challenges and celebrations by March 31, 2009.	1		
WELCOMING CHURCH			
GOAL: By June 30, 2010, 50% of newcomers are still congregants one year later and are active participants.			3
SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH SERVICE			
GOAL: By December 31, 2010, we are recognized as a powerful force of peace in our community.			3
GOAL: Sacred service is a way of life for our children by December 31, 2010.			3

ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP INTENTION: <i>We are a flagship ministry demonstrating and inspiring spiritual leadership success, prosperity and stewardship.</i>			
ENLIGHTENED LEADERS			
GOAL: Our Board and Staff are model leaders who “walk the talk” and teach our core values to others by June 30, 2009.	1		
COHERENT EVOLVING ORGANIZATION			
GOAL: We demonstrate organizational excellence through smooth and efficient operations of all the organization’s elements by June 30, 2009.	1		
GOAL: Our church name is widely recognized as we actively demonstrate the Christ Nature in our church and the local community by December 31, 2010.			3
BROAD-BASED OWNERSHIP			
GOAL: We demonstrate an increase in congregational “ownership” by at least 50% of our congregants lovingly contributing significant time, talent and treasure by December 31, 2011.		2	
OUTSTANDING BUILDING AND GROUNDS			
GOAL: Our beautiful building and grounds are structurally sound, well maintained and environmentally friendly by December 31, 2012.	1		