

FIVE WINDOWS ON MINISTRY

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1. Congregational Life and Vitality

Three core beliefs:

- Congregational growth is not about numbers, but about vitality. When there is a compelling vision and a strong welcoming community, people come.
- Following and building on what is going well is an effective and life-giving way to engage in strategic planning, rather than focusing on what is going badly.
- To be effective, congregational leaders need to know what is expected of them, and to be provided with support and information. Congregational leadership offers a chance to practice behavior that is ethically consistent with our deepest beliefs, and to create a world we would like to inhabit.

Experience:

I have served on nine boards of directors, and experienced both the frustration of badly defined roles and the exhilaration of boards structured to succeed.

I designed and facilitated countless meetings of teams, engaged in tasks ranging from strategic planning to start-up ministries to project design to ongoing program administration. I have had training in non-violent communication, appreciative inquiry, and many other facilitative techniques.

The UUA Advocacy staff creates behavior covenants regularly, which gives us an opportunity to envision how we want to work and be together.

I have served on the senior management team of the UUA staff, Leadership Council, from 2002-present.

As Director of Advocacy and Witness Programs, I have been responsible for the budget (about \$2 million), supervising staff (six direct reports and seven other staff members), board reports, strategic planning, and for other administrative functions.

I have engaged in community outreach about Unitarian Universalism in environments ranging from senior citizen centers to campuses to town hall meetings, and through blogs, op eds, interviews, email alerts, and other media.

I have written grants and spoken with major donors, raising over \$1 million for the UUA and for boards of directors on which I have served.

2. Pastoral Ministry

Three core beliefs:

- A church is as strong as its members' commitment to it, and being safe to express vulnerability with others greatly enhances this commitment.
- Ongoing opportunities for intimacy with small groups is essential for people to deepen their relationship to a congregation, and to find meaning there.
- Critical moments, such as rites of passage, personal crisis, or societal upheaval, need the caring witness of others.

Experience:

I initiated, developed, and supported covenant groups at All Souls Congregation, Washington DC. I recruited leaders and participants, trained leaders, and co-facilitated a monthly leaders' group for three years. We went from zero covenant groups to over 20 in three years.

I have officiated at dozens of memorial services, marriages and union ceremonies, including interfaith services, cross-cultural services, and services co-led with other religious leaders.

I initiated the Befrienders program at First Universalist Church, bringing in experts to train lay-leaders in pastoral care for the congregation. This program enabled lay leaders to feel competent representing the church's ministry in hospitals, senior centers, homes of shut-ins, and to begin one to one relationships with community members who needed extra support.

I initiated and designed a theological reflection program for the staff in the Washington DC office, so that they might examine their work through the light of their faith and align the two. Weekly "TR" (or, theological reflection) is an important part of everyone's work, particularly the participants in the internship program.

On September 11, 2001, I was part of a service at All Souls' Congregation, Washington DC, presenting a hastily written piece entitled "What Shall We Tell Our Children?" This was cited or reprinted by dozens of crisis experts across the country.

As the UUA staff person in charge of the UUA Gulf Coast Relief Fund, I learned a tremendous amount about trauma and healing from trauma.

3. Prophetic Ministry

Three core beliefs:

- Prophetic ministry is about both cherishing what is and imagining what could be.
- Prophetic congregations are creative, caring, vibrant places. They seek to create healing where there is brokenness, and to engage the passion of the whole community in creative, life-giving action.
- In a faith based on deeds, not creeds, what we do together is far more important than what we say we care about. As the Buddhist monk Tich Nhat Hanh says, “My only possessions are my actions.”

Experience:

At First Universalist Church, I helped to engage the congregation in strategic planning about how the First Universalist Foundation could be more vibrant and effective. We then developed the “Pathways to Peace” project.

In the UUA’s Youth Office, I worked with youth to develop social justice programs for youth, including immersion projects.

In the UUA’s Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns, I worked with dozens of congregations, coaching them and visiting them (leading workshops and worship) about how to be more welcoming and inclusive. I worked on the team creating “Weaving the Fabric Of Diversity” curriculum about all kinds of inclusion.

I developed vision for a book and DVD entitled “A People So Bold,” which explore links between UU theology and social justice. I raised funds; solicited participants; designed a convocation and (with professional DVD makers) helped to create DVD content which is compelling. I am now introducing this to congregations for use.

I initiated, designed, and chair the UUA’s public advocacy campaign, “Standing On the Side of Love: Harnessing Love’s Power to Stop Oppression.” I hired and supervise staff, and oversee all aspects of the campaign.

I chaired the UUA’s Gulf Coast Relief Fund, dispersing 3.6 million dollars to the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I have led training for ministers and religious leaders in social justice, advocacy, media, grassroots organizing, and strategic planning. I’ve taught classes at Starr King School for the Ministry and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities about congregationally based justice work.

4. Lifespan Faith Development

Three core beliefs:

- A congregation's vitality depends on finding, nurturing, supporting, and appreciating good leadership for religious education for all ages.
- The congregation's real curriculum can never be written on paper. It is the lived experience each child, youth, young adult, middle-aged adult, or elder has day after day, week after week, in the community of Unitarian Universalists.
- The congregation must provide multiple, high-quality and meaningful experiences for all ages so that each person can select what is nurturing for his or her soul, heart, body, mind and spirit.

Experience:

I served as Director of Religious Education at First Universalist Church, Minneapolis, 1985-1989. There, I directed a program with 230 children and youth (to begin with, growing to 260). With a robust committee, I selected and trained teachers and advisors, chose curriculum, provided materials and created two 15 minute worship service weekly for K-8 kids. When the job moved from part time to full time, I also developed adult education programs and an enhanced youth program, developing a Coming of Age Program and serving as Junior High advisor.

I served for two years as Religious Educator at First Unitarian Society (1983-85; 700 adults; 110 kids) and quarter time for one year at Michael Servetus UU Fellowship in Fridley, MN (1986-87; 50 adults, 18 kids). At Michael Servetus, since I could never attend on Sunday Mornings, I led adult ed programs, planned curriculum with the RE Committee, led teacher trainings and coached teachers by phone.

As Youth Director at the UUA, I developed a Renaissance Module for advisors and religious educators working with youth, and trained trainers to lead the module. I also trained trainers to work with Our Whole Lives (junior and senior high).

I have led hundreds of adult education classes and workshops in congregations, at district and national UU gatherings such as General Assembly, and at UU camps and conferences. Classes have included Building Your Own Theology; Parents as Resident Theologians; Our Whole Lives for parents; Creating Whole-Hearted Lives; What If We Knew the Power of Our Lives; Weaving the Fabric of Diversity, Welcoming Congregation, Inspired Faith, Effective Action. I co-facilitated a 14 hour track at 2009 General Assembly for UU University, entitled A People So Bold.

5. Preaching and Worship

Three core beliefs:

- Worship is the heart and soul of the church. At best, it binds people together in common song, prayer and reflection, creating a sense of belonging and community from which the gathered people are emboldened to go forth and live faithful lives.
- What is powerful for one congregant will leave another cold. Variety in music, content, and presentation is critical for the whole congregation to feel at home. However, some consistency is also important, in order for people to feel as if there is a center. This balancing act between old and new, familiar and exotic, is the art of engaging and soul-satisfying worship.
- Worship is not, at heart, about good performance by participants. The word is derived from “worth-ship” and it is above all a time for congregants to remember their own worth, to simply be with themselves and others.

Experience:

Because of the roles I have played, both in congregations and at the UUA, leading regular weekly worship has not been possible. Most primarily, I have done ‘drive by’ worship services, often on topics particularly requested by the congregation.

I have probably preached in 200 UU congregations by now. I can honestly say I have never given the same sermon twice, even in congregations with multiple services. The words on the page may be the same but the sermon never is.

I did summer services two years in a row at All Souls Church, Washington DC, as they went through a budget crunch and were-understaffed. This experience of coming back six times to the same place immediately transformed worship into a much more relational, community-based experience than I had been able to enjoy before.

I have many parish minister friends and have spent many hours in formal and informal conversations about how to involve the congregation in the life of worship. I am intrigued to try many of these ideas and to evolve meaningful worship in a congregational setting.

I have a great deal of experience with New Media through the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, and am eager to make worship accessible to people who are unable to attend a bricks-and-mortar church.