

FROM THE MINISTER

For three long Tuesday sessions, eight members of our professional staff joined by Carol Smith met around the tables in the library. We wrestled with the “big questions,” struggled to put into words what we are about, reflected, deeply, on the challenge and opportunities of our work here.

What might help people here feel more deeply connected to one another?

What exactly are we trying to do in Sunday services?

How might we empower members to feel more confident talking about our liberal religion outside these walls?

How do we foster greater spiritual depth in all of the meetings and gatherings that take place here?

Is it really the role of the UUCC to help shape the way the larger Charlotte community thinks?

If being heard is a key part of the experience we're trying to create together, how do we cultivate the art of listening here?

It was the most powerful, most profound conversation we've had in my more than eight years here.

Our reflection was guided by the direction our Board has set for the coming years. Drawing on extensive input and conversation with the congregation, the Board has offered us a “snapshot” of what they think a thriving UUCC should look like in a few years. They have now instructed us to figure out how we can make that ideal picture a reality here.

So, our big question was: if this is who we are supposed to be in a few years, what will we need to do in order to make that happen? The experience of wrestling with all of this was intense. It evoked strong feelings, far-reaching thinking, outbursts of laughter, moments of profound silence, and a deepened clarity both about who we are and about who we could be.

Now it is your turn. If you are a member of this congregation, there's an opportunity for you to participate as we continue creating this roadmap toward our future. Each of our program Teams will be led in an exercise that will invite reflection and input. We'll have focus groups engage in that same exercise. We'll offer a session for the whole congregation. And, we'll continue having our “Beacon Box” available in Freeman Hall for anyone with an idea to contribute.

Thanks in large measure to some very hard work that our Board has done in the past few months, we are clearer than ever about a future direction for the UUCC. The process of living up to the vision the Board has set before us will ask a

great deal from the professional staff and the members of the UUCC and will offer a great deal to each of us and to those who will join us along the way.

I'm excited about this stage of our “Envision 2015” work and look forward to the ways the profound staff experience can now expand throughout our congregation.

Peace, Jay

**All manifestations of art are but landmarks
in the progress of the human spirit
toward a thing but as yet sensed
and far from being possessed.**

Robert Henri in *The Art Spirit*

Memorial Sunday

Sunday, October 30

One of the essential roles of the spiritual community is to create a setting in which we can both celebrate those who've been important in our lives and grieve the loss of family members, friends, and colleagues together. So, each year in the fall, we offer a Memorial Service, an opportunity both to celebrate and to grieve.

Contrary to what some assume, this is not a morose or depressing gathering. Over against what some seem to think, this is not just for those who've had some significant loss this year. One of the gifts we offer one another is that of presence, being here to help create a community for those who may need it most at any given time.

The service will include a litany in which those we've lost will be named aloud. Perhaps you've lost someone important to you between last year's Memorial Service and this one. If you would like her or his name included in our Memorial Sunday litany, please email me (jay@uuccharlotte.org) with the name and how you are related to that person. You can also write that information on a note and stick it in my mailbox in our office area.

We'll also create an altar of remembrance at the front of the sanctuary on this day. You are invited to bring a photograph or other memento of someone you'd like to remember on that day and place it on the table as you enter the service.