

## Congregational Session: January 13, 2008

Nancy Loughrey began the meeting at 12:30. She explained that this meeting would have a different format from the previous informational meetings, and that it was a time for everyone to express themselves about OCUUC conversations with Tapestry. She introduced our outside resource person, Phyllis Daniels, who would lead the meeting and take notes on the easel.

Twenty-six people spoke. The speakers will be identified only by number in these notes, and the number repeated and asterisked if the speaker was speaking for more than one time.

1. Although I'm not either for or against a potential merger, I am skeptical. Growth of UUism should involve more churches, not less; closer, not further.

2. The way that the San Diego congregation has been able to develop satellites is not a model for Orange County, as we are not the size and influence of that model. Merging would provide an immediate "step-up" of UU impact.

3. I think merger has become a foregone conclusion, and I've been told by a member of the new property search committee that they are only looking for property for a merged congregation.

4. I've heard that the building next door is empty, and if it is sold, we could lose our parking, which has been our recurring problem. Our growth is now stagnant, and we could become stronger UU's if we joined forces.

5. We are not a healthy, growing church as we are now. We have a dearth of leadership; for example, the nominating committee was very hard to staff. We have been calling on the same people to take jobs. The decision for breaking out of this pattern will be ours.

6. I support the merger and/or moving. But we need some type of transportation arrangement in place members who can't drive far to church.

7. As a ministerial student, I've learned that a church that is habitually 80% or more full will not grow. We have that situation right now.

8. What about taking the cliff down and doing a parking lot there? We could get Tapestry to bring their money to us to finance it.

9. I think we are in a rush to decision; it feels hurried and coerced. The first timeline I saw doesn't seem feasible.

10. We need transportation buses.

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11. I love our space, too, but we definitely have a hard time staffing committees. I don't feel this has been at all rushed, but instead that we've been dragging our feet! I feel very positive that if we need to do this, we should.

\*2. I was VP of finance in 2000, and I am now. We are having exactly the same problems that we had then, and we need to change something.

12. Recently we have lost, through moves, members who were very strong leaders. We need to develop a plan to increase commitment, include and welcome visitors.

13. Some of us young, new people are getting involved, for example on the Ways and Means Committee. However, we need people on the committee who have past experience and information for projects--such as the Casino Night--so that we can take them on.

14. I've been a member since 94/95, and I've had a lot of experience with other UU churches. New people and new relationships generate enthusiasm and energy. A larger church would be more cost effective and plan toward continuity. I, personally, will bus people who need it. I'm an advocate for joining forces.

15. I think we should put this in the right frame of reference. This is a decision for long term benefit for UUism ... not "What about me?"

16. What will be the problems if our policies differ, for example about requiring pledge for membership. Wouldn't issues such as this cause a schism?

17. Doing this will generate many questions and problems. We need a careful process.

7. Should we get professional outside help for this?

Nancy: Phyllis is an example of this. We also have other people in line as we go along, such as experts from the denomination and a potential realtor specializing in church property. However, several outside UUA people have been following our process closely, and they believe we have been doing things right.

11\* It's really helpful for people to actually read the 27-page report the task

force has created, as so much information is there that would answer many of these questions. I was amazed at how little difference there is between the two congregations. Could we consider a Power Point on these comparisons that would simplify this lengthy report?

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18. I would welcome the new energy of the combined churches. Also, Orange County has a dominance of mega-churches. While we'd not exactly be a megachurch, this would give us the possibility of programs that address the needs of potential members who do want a larger congregation.

1.\* Aren't we a healthy church? We grew by 25% when Karen came, and young leaders are emerging.

19. My perspective is economic and the law of diminishing returns. We will deteriorate if we don't expand in some way to be a vibrant congregation.

20. I'm a member of the ETF and have experienced working together. Different "cultures" can be worked out.

Mickey asked for a show of hands of how many people had visited Tapestry. About twenty people responded, and there was general laughter and a joke from Karen.

Karen said that those who had visited from either congregation expressed enthusiasm, such as the visitor from Tapestry this morning.

21. I'm also on the Task Force and have had experience trying to plan activities for Orange County pagans at our church. We inevitably have space problems if we have to meet in the Gillan building and are sometimes a victim of our own success.

8.\* I have a lot of fear. I'm not a fan of all UU's, but I adore these UU's. I like things small and fear what we have would get diluted.

14. \* I was on the board before, and there seems to be a policy of not asking for money. I think everyone should give according to ability, and service commitment should be an option.

22. Hey, we're all UU's! If we can't get along with other UU's, then we really have a problem!

21.\* Actually, I've been invited to speak at Tapestry next week, and they have been most welcoming.

23. I think it's ironic that we're having some of these discussions after we just heard about Martin Luther King this morning. We should do what's best for the church.

24. Change is inevitable, and change means things are different. We just have to accept that.

25. We need more room! Are we afraid of change?! Change is inevitable!

26. I'm not a member of your church. My church is 2 miles from my house, but my son comes here, 40 miles from where he lives. I don't think you should worry about distance. Just do what's in your heart, and it will be right.

Karen A little commercial. If you want to see what it would be like to join two congregations, come to the service on February 3. It will be great!

### Wrap-up

Phyllis suggested that we indicate for now, since this will be the essence of the January 27 motion, how we feel about "continuing and deepening conversations with Tapestry."

Keeping things the same: No votes other than one joke proxy vote for a person who was not present.

Continuing conversations: Unanimous