

The Labyrinth

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
ECUMENICAL CAMPUS Coalition

September 2009

The Mission Envisioning Team

Broadening the Ecumenical Campus conversation

By Judy Lightfoot

Pastors Mary Boyd of University Temple United Methodist Church (UTUMC) and Ron Moe-Lobeda of University Lutheran Church (ULC) are chairing a new task force whose job is to explore ways in which missions and ministries might be defined and structured at the Ecumenical Campus.

"If we were really going to have our congregations invested in UDECC's project," said Moe-Lobeda, "we needed to broaden the conversation."

Meeting biweekly since July, the task force is discussing how members of collocating congregations might relate to one another and how they could engage together in mission. Initial meetings kicked off with wide-ranging discussions.

Said Boyd, "We dove in immediately. There was no sitting around wondering if it was safe to say what we thought. We found a commonality of both concerns and hopes. And it's not a group where individuals need to draw others out. Everybody jumps right in. I'm impressed with the enthusiasm and depth of engagement of this group in the whole idea."

MET members are excited about a vision that will take the wisdom from 60 years of ecumenical dialogues, and instead of continuing just to talk in abstractions or about recommendations, will put them into practice. Boyd: "It's an opportunity not just to achieve a



deep understanding of what church is, but to act on that basis."

Moe-Lobeda explained that the job of MET is to lay the groundwork "so that when congregations say 'Yes, we want to collocate,' they can

come together and make decisions about mission smoothly. We'll be a resource as people make decisions and we'll be able to answer people's questions: 'What might that look like?'" Boyd agreed, adding that MET is "a think tank, a place to explore ideas, investigate possibilities, and turn the focus from being narrowly on buildings to what will happen in them. We've mainly worked in a free flowing, brainstorming, exploratory way. Now we're settling into choosing a focus."

A foundational question is "What does it mean to be church for the 21st century?" Said Moe-Lobeda. "That question is a place we keep coming back to in order to check on the relevance of our discussion."

"But there's no single answer to that question," said Boyd. "Church will be a lot of things." Moe-Lobeda: "And

church can't do everything. Congregations will need to leave some things behind." For example, a current outline of administrative wishes for an Ecumenical Campus includes a separate secretary for each pastor. That may not be the best way. "We need discussion about what makes for pastoral effectiveness as well as economy," he said. "How can we be more effective?"

"Campus ministry said they need their own space. But there will be space on the campus available for ministry that all can use. We're reframing the question: How can the entire facility be conducive to campus ministry instead of just setting one place apart for it?"

Boyd added that the point is not just to move a few blocks away to a different site where we create the same configuration, the same world that we had before.

Other members of the MET task force include Michael and Molly Shaw (UTUMC), Jon Berkedal (ULC), Rev. Catherine Foote, Kathryn Robinson and Valerie Thiel (University Congregational United Church of Christ), Rev. Steve Garrett and Don Ostrow (Christ Episcopal Church), and Rev. Janetta Cravens-Boyd and Chuck Simrell (University Christian Church).

A Week in the Life of the Ecumenical Campus

One vision of what the future might look like for faith communities and service agencies at the proposed Ecumenical Campus can be glimpsed

in a new narrative recently posted to the UDECC website. Visit www.ecumenicalcampus.org and go to the "Documents" section to download

"A Week in the Life of the Ecumenical Campus," a vision of the life within the proposed facility during a typical week several years from now.

Are We There Yet?

The following is excerpted from an open letter from the UDECC Board of Trustees regarding the progress of UDECC's predevelopment study. The full text of the letter dated August 1, 2009 is available on the "Documents" page at the UDECC website, at www.ecumenicalcampus.org.

UDECC's mission to study the feasibility of the Ecumenical Campus proposal continues without interruption. That said, recent events have significantly impacted the pace and duration of our efforts to complete the feasibility study. A review of these developments is timely.

1. Our Growing Ranks. The UDECC coalition has grown from an initial group of 5 congregations and 1 campus ministry, to a current total of 6 congregations and 4 campus ministries. The most recent additions to the ranks of UDECC member organizations are Episcopal Campus Ministry UW (a program of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia) and University Congregational United Church of Christ, a congregation with nearly 900 members that became a full participant in UDECC in February 2009. Other faith communities continue to consider participation, as well.

2. Site Options. UDECC has reduced an earlier list of 12 candidate sites down to 3, and is nearing the conclusion of the process of selecting a single finalist.

3. More Time to Resolve Site Selection. Due to ongoing real estate negotiations, the 3 finalist sites have not yet been made public. Of necessity, one of these sites is widely known to be under consideration. Located at the intersection of 15th Avenue NE and NE 45th Street, "Site C" includes a parking lot and other adjacent property belonging to University Congregational United Church of Christ (UCUCC), the newest member of the UDECC coalition. In March, the UDECC board asked the leadership at UCUCC to approve its consideration of their property as the project site, for purposes of concluding the feasibility study. Further deliberations by both UDECC and UCUCC culminated in mid-June in a request from UCUCC for an extension of UDECC's schedule so that the UCUCC congregation and leadership can more fully consider UDECC's request. The UDECC board agreed to this extension, lengthening the schedule for its feasibility study by an additional 4-5 months.

4. Mission Envisioning. (See article on Page 1 of this newsletter.)

5. The Economy. UDECC has generated a report that discusses the various ways the recession has impacted the prospects for development of the Ecumenical Campus.

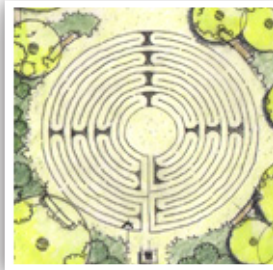
This report is available at the UDECC website.

6. Funding Challenge. One of the consequences of the current economic turmoil has been a significant downturn in the stock market, resulting in greatly reduced fund balances at charitable foundations. No one has been immune, meaning that private grants to nonprofit organizations everywhere are sharply lower across the board. Many foundations, already over-extended with multi-year grant commitments, have simply suspended all granting operations until they see their fund balances recover. Others have

restricted their granting activities to a much narrower focus. For UDECC, this means that the job of fully funding the Ecumenical Campus feasibility study has become more challenging. Our current budget calls for \$115,000 in new grant income in 2009, in addition to new charitable contributions from individuals. UDECC's board and its Capital Development Committee are focused on achieving this goal, but meeting it is a daunting task in the current economy.

The Right Time. Never has the concept of the Ecumenical Campus seemed more opportune than it does now in the face of some of society's greatest challenges. The project's potential for nurturing deeper community, its revolutionary modeling of a more sustainable way to be church, and its promise of a more effective strategy to support essential human services stand in stark contrast to our old ways. This transformation, requiring new thinking and new ways of working, calls for more time than initially anticipated.

The ancient Greek word "kairos" means "the right or opportune moment." In theology, kairos refers to "the appointed time in the purpose of God." These definitions approximate our sense that the work UDECC began 2 years ago is timely and urgent, and must not be forced to a truncated conclusion. As we work to complete the Ecumenical Campus feasibility study, we find ourselves in the midst of a kairos moment, and we persist undeterred.



New Documents Available

Several important documents are now available at the UDECC website, most of them entirely new or significantly revised from earlier postings. Find them in the "Documents" section of the UDECC website, www.ecumenicalcampus.org.

- * Letter Regarding Project Status
- * Statement on the Impact of the Economic Downturn
- * Project Description
- * Progress Report
- * Building Program Outline for the Ecumenical Campus

- * Draft Ownership & Governance Plan
- * A Week in the Life of the Ecumenical Campus
- * Our Ecumenical Journey (an historic overview of our shared ecumenical history)

Happy Birthday to Nickelsville!

By Judy Lightfoot

It was one year ago this month that the tent city called Nickelsville moved to the University District. All are invited to celebrate this anniversary at an Open House, 3PM on Saturday, September 26. However, you'll have to travel a few miles farther now to reach the encampment.

Late last winter Nickelsville moved from the University Congregational Church parking lot to a field beside a Methodist church in Renton. In late March my visit via Metro Transit required catching three different buses. The familiar pink and blue tents had diminished in number, as the remoteness of the site and the infrequency of buses made it difficult for working residents to travel to their places of employment.

Recently Nickelsville moved to Port Authority park T10, on West Marginal Way. Metro stops are a mile away in either direction, but employed Nickelodeons manage. Unfortunately, the residents face an abrupt eviction on September 30. Last month, Speaker of the House Frank Chopp, Duwamish Tribe Chairperson Cecile Hansen, Execu-

tive Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle Michael Ramos, and Executive Director of the Washington State Lutheran Public Policy Institute Paul Benz worked with Port Commissioner Gail Tarleton to draft an agreement by which Nickelsville could stay a full 90 days at the T10 park. This would have allowed residents time to find their next temporary home.



Nickelsville at University Congregational Church's Parking Lot, February 28, 2009

Photograph by Joe Mabel

But the Commissioners have told tent city leaders that the encampment and its people will be swept on September 30. "Sweeping" means using force, if necessary, to remove tents, equipment, belongings, and people. One of them asked me, "Are we supposed to jump in the Duwamish?"

Faith communities can help Nickelsville remain a viable place for home-

less people to live in safety until affordable housing becomes available. On its website you'll find details of its negotiations with the Port Commission and suggestions about whom to contact. Public officials are very responsive to citizens who bother

to make a phone call or to send an email! It only takes a dozen or so people to make a difference.

If the Port Commission doesn't

change its position, faith community members can come stand with the residents of Nickelsville on September 30.

The address is 4700 West Marginal Way. The website is www.nickelsvilleseattle.org – scroll down to find names, phone numbers, and email addresses for the Port Commissioners, as well as driving and transit directions to the encampment.

Join the Conversation on Homelessness

By Judy Lightfoot

It's been a year since the presence of Nickelsville in the U District prompted groups of interested people to meet monthly at neighborhood churches to find ways of solving homelessness in Seattle.

Led by stalwarts Nathalie Gehrke of University Congregational Church and Tom Quigley of University Christian, and ably seconded by others including Nancy Amidei, retired Professor of the U.W.'s School of Social Work, a variety of U District neighbors, activists, church members, advocates from social services and U.W. representatives have gathered each month since February to share and learn.

Group numbers remained impressively high throughout the summer, sometimes rising to 40 while temperatures rose to twice that and more. It's because the conversation as well as the speakers are informative and in-

spiring. Speakers (including executives from United Way, the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, the Seattle Human Services Coalition, the King County Committee to End Homelessness, and the VA Puget Sound Health Care System) have all spoken to the group and sparked members to start making a difference.

Conversations about King County's financial crisis led to a campaign of phone calls and emails to K.C. Council members responsible for the Human Services budget. Whereas the committee had been planning to cut the line item for services entirely, just 200

calls and emails changed their minds. Councilmember Larry Gossett said that if the committee had met a week earlier, they would not have agreed to reserve the 1% for human services that they somehow dug up as a result of hearing from citizens. Gossett's advice: "You all better keep it up!"

Upcoming Homelessness Conversations: September 14 and October 12 (Mondays), 9-11:30 a.m., at Christ Episcopal Church, 1305 NE 47th Street in Seattle's U District. Contact Tom Quigley (tomquigley1@comcast.net) or Nathalie Gehrke (Gehrke@u.washington.edu) for more information. Come play on a winning team!

A Citizen of the University District

Interview by Joan Burton

Patty Whisler is a long-time University District advocate. As a member of University Congregational United Church of Christ (UCUCC), she has participated for years in church decisions affecting the community. She is also a member of the University Heights Association board, the Greater University Chamber of Commerce, the University District Community Council, and the Museum Without Walls, and she serves as Coordinator of the Ave Group. Her passion is for the well-being of the University District.

One of the most difficult yet most satisfying decisions Patty had a hand in was the recent settlement of the status of University Heights with the Seattle School District. She says the negotiations took 20 years. She is pleased that the building can be brought up to code and that the Farmers Market has a secure future.

About UDECC, Patty said “I first learned about it when I was a part of the church committee that met with Clint Pehrson and David Anderson to go over the survey of our church plant and activities. I became a member of the Ecumenical Stewardship Task Force and an enthusiastic participant in the ‘Summer Salons.’ Meeting for dinners on summer nights was a perfect way for us to ‘bond’ with new friends from other churches and talk about our congregations’ views of church life. We sponsored a screening of ‘Babette’s Feast,’ a film that showed how barriers between people can melt away when they gather around wonderful

food and learn to trust each other.” At the time, Patty said, “UCUCC was in the middle of an enormous renovation project and facing clergy vacancies. Members didn’t have time to ‘get the picture’ of a University District ecumenical campus until the much more recent presentation by UDECC.”

Patty finds that communication with members of other University District churches can be inspiring. She praises the ROOTS program at U Temple, the Sanctuary Art Center at U Lutheran, and the SHARE Program at Christ Episcopal. She says the greater the community need, the more the churches are contributing. Cooperation between the various churches is building bonds. She is



especially pleased to know about the many service agencies housed in U District churches and how their members are reacting to increased need. About collocating agencies in a new facility, Patty cautions against the loss of individual agencies’ loyal

followings and base of support that might result. Some, such as ROOTS and the Emergency Fund, define themselves as charities in terms of their locations. Host churches may not want to give up their ownership of the outreach missions they host.

Patty Whisler supports UCUCC’s participation in UDECC wholeheartedly and wishes she’d had more time to help in planning it. She is confident her church will arrive at the right decision when the time comes for the vote.

Snapshot: University Temple Thrift Store

Started in May 2000, The Thrift Store is a program of University Temple United Methodist Church. It operates in space occupied by the ROOTS young adult shelter, which provides space to the store for free. The store is open for business on Fridays from 2-5 PM. It is staffed and operated entirely by volunteers.

120-150 people come to shop each time the Thrift Store is open. Volunteers include members of U Temple,

other churches, and the larger community. Several volunteers are homeless persons. Income is used by UTUMC for other outreach programs.

The store’s broad range of customers includes homeless persons of all ages, UW students, the working poor, and others. In addition to providing very low-cost clothing and goods for those in need, the Thrift Store has expanded its Friday offerings to include a free lunch, showers from noon-3:00 PM,

free haircuts, and foot care. New underwear and socks are purchased and given out to anyone using the showers. Food for the lunch program comes from Northwest Harvest and others, and merchandise is donated by businesses from overages. Importantly, donations from individuals make up the lion’s share of the store’s offerings.

Dignity and compassion are in evidence in everything the folks at the thrift store do.

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