

Calls to Action for the United Church of Chapel Hill

1. HOSPITALITY

The mission of our United Church of Christ calls and commits us to embody God's Love for all people. Furthermore, United Church of Chapel Hill proudly claims "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." To reach the diversity of the population around us, the best ministry we can advocate is to increase access to our church on Sundays through an improved public transportation system and other forms of transportation. We call for an effort to improve such accessibility.

Other ideas for extending our hospitality and outreach include:

- Reaching the young *unchurched* adult
- Extending the coffee hour and fellowship time, making sure to nurture the members we already have welcomed
- Offering the library as social space for fellowship for those not looking to participate in a planned program
- Targeting specific neighborhoods as a way to grow our membership
- Offering the UCCH facility as daytime meeting space to social service agencies, which may in turn motivate a benefactor to visit us on a Sunday
- Working more closely with Iglesia Unida
- Becoming more ethnically diverse as a congregation
- Receiving and assimilating new members of all sorts
- Welcoming with greater inclusion the youth and young adults
- Creating an inviting path for those outside of the life of faith to find the church (or find the life of faith)

2. TECHNOLOGY

The 79% Solution or Boot up log on and drop in (a play on the Timothy Leary motto, "Tune In, Turn On, and Drop Out")

Who Should We Talk To?

- Young adults
 - Protestant churches losing this group
 - Noted brands like Cadillac, Buick, etc had suffered from losing younger segment by not keeping their brands updated.
- Diverse groups
 - Especially Hispanics, Asians given their growth in our area

- Also noted need to reach out to lower-income groups
- Ourselves
 - Most church members (79%) say they join a church because a member invited them to church. Want to activate members to make it easier to invite others to UCCH
 - Power of word-of-mouth in commerce marketing

Activating Members:

- Inform church members of the new media and methods we're using to reach out to others so they will know that they're available for use
- Provide informational sessions on how to use these new media and technologies: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- Give members "words to say" to invite/welcome others
- Use our events (e.g., concerts, dances, alternative X-Mas market) to invite others. Events are a low-threshold (i.e., non-threatening) way for others to experience our church
- Ideas:

Go Digital (Open the "digital doors" to our church)

- email a page from the church's website
- email an "e-postcard" from the church's website
- create a button to forward a UCCH email to a friend
- place events on Facebook pages - make better use of our Facebook presence (both UCCH page(s), youth and young adult pages)
- video both regular church events, sermons and other church activities (e.g., centennial video, create "fun/silly" videos to show our light-hearted side) and place on YouTube & our site
- continue to evolve our site to make it inviting, show both our serious & light-hearted personality ... that we are fun & inviting
- consider using Twitter, texting events, announcements and fun stuff mixing in the serious news with the fun and lighter side of things
- expand the wireless signal to all areas of the church

Non-Digital

- Bumper stickers - create our own?
- Bus ads - in other languages, too: Spanish, Karin?, other Orange county minority languages
- Continue to leverage the vinyl banners on MLK (can we also place on Homestead?).

Can we make these better, more fun, inviting to stand out?

Noted About Diverse Groups/Young Adults:

- Lower-income groups are not as active on web, need other ways to reach these groups
- Young Adults/Members will benefit from improving our digital efforts
- Continue with bus posters to help reach lower income groups (bus posters will also reach UNC students/grad students)

3. ECUMENICAL

Link up with other progressive churches across denominational lines

- a. Participate in and support ecumenical and interfaith partnerships
- b. Emphasize the marks of progressive Christianity
- c. Connect members with persons and groups outside with similar goals and commitments
- d. Find common goals and interact with Evangelical churches and with Muslims

To respond in faith to the call of Jesus Christ, we believe it is imperative that the impact of progressive Christianity remain and increase in our community. Since mainline Protestant churches will inexorably continue to lose members, resources and influence, we must become more movemental. We must form alliances among progressive people of faith and progressive organizations of faith to ensure that progressive values continue to be upheld and advanced, namely:

Faith and thought are inextricably bound.

Faith and responsibility in the social world are inextricably bound.

Faith sees "the other" not as a threat but a complement; the "other is not an object of conversion but someone with whom we can find common cause.

To that end we must do the following:

1. Build the ecumenical and interfaith relationships we already have, such as IFC, NC Council of Churches, Rick's clergy group
2. Establish trustful, helpful relationships with progressive communities of faith such as: The Unitarian/Universalist Churches, Hillsborough UCC, Pilgrim UCC, Binkley Baptist, Judeo Reform, the Quakers, Church of the Advocate (Episcopal), Church of Reconciliation, Chapel of the Pines, University United Methodist, and others
3. Research and discover how other progressive alliances have formed and moved forward, such as the alliance in Wilmington, Delaware.

4. Join together with other progressive people of faith and community organizations to effectively address environmental issues facing our community and area.
5. Join together with other progressive people of faith and community organizations to effectively address the lack of planning to care for and shelter the homeless.
6. Join together with other progressive people of faith to host a community-wide lecture or forum with a well known speaker who would address what the three Abrahamic faiths have in common and how we all might better work together. One by-product of such a community-wide event could be the development of inter-faith small group studies in which people actually get to know each other and build trusting relationships.

4. JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

It is at the heart of Jesus' message to care for the poor and oppressed, and it is at the heart of our calling as followers of Jesus to advocate for justice and equality. Therefore, United Church of Chapel Hill will advocate for justice and equality for all, especially the marginalized.

- Link with other churches and groups to provide service at the men's and women's shelters.
- Reach out to the financially disadvantaged; work for economic justice; examine the economic barriers to full participation in UCCH.
- Increase efforts to secure lower cost housing, with attention to those who fall below the income guidelines for Habitat for Humanity.
- Strong support for Justice United of Orange County.
- Continue and expand support for the Interfaith Council and other direct service organizations.
- Initiate a North Chapel Hill Community witness and service with other churches and organizations.
- Develop a jobs and employment support system in cooperation with other churches and organizations.
- Sponsor an onsite project for economic justice in a developing nation, one that engages members of all ages.
- Increase our energy and capacity for national and state-wide advocacy for environmental and health care issues.

5. EDUCATION

Friends in faith, based on what we know in our hearts and what we've heard and shared, we find that there is a need for us to prioritize how we welcome and engage our youth and young adults.

Further, we need to enfold them within our congregation, to make it clear that their participation is a critical part of preparing for and moving into our future.

Further, it is apparent that there is a need for leadership in our church home, in our denomination, and ecumenically to develop and continue the progressive movement for social justice and the care of the human mind, body, soul, and spirit.

Further, this progressive movement, in keeping with our faith, must be rooted in sound theology and connected to Christ.

Our educational efforts then should be to foster and support the ideas below.

Form a young adult steering committee to help us increase our appeal to this group. This committee could:

Begin exploring what the younger people are currently committed to and have an interest in.

Discover how to attract young people to our services and classes, e.g., look at a ministry for UNC Students and other young adults who are in our community.

Create structures that can be easily understood, communicated and implemented by people with no shared past; busy, mobile, diverse, dispersed and perhaps not permanently rooted to our area.

Reduce and eliminate barriers for youth and young adult participation in church activities, e.g., open up the pastor-led Bible study to Skype or consider blogged comments as part of sermon shaping.

Encourage and support with educational materials and classes, the development of progressive leaders among our youth and young adults.

Encourage young people to consider public service, education, government service and ministry as career paths.

Develop small groups that would allow intergenerational study.

Provide Christian education that supports all of the above and intersects with the life framework and commitment of the young and young at heart.