

**Draft**  
**Report of the Pastoral Care Task Force**  
**to the Board of the First Unitarian Church Hamilton**  
**(December 2008)**

**Mandate:** To develop a pastoral care program for our church.

**Members of task force:** Michelle Corbeil, Glen Doe, Bill Fulton, Nancy Gaylor, Pat Keefe, Don McFadyen (chair).

**Process:** The process used to develop the program included the following steps:

- Initial planning meeting in June
- Information gathering June - July
  - Michelle and Don reviewed pastoral care in our church, past and present, including notes from Pat Oertel, Pat Keefe & Bill Fulton (Appendix 1) and definitions (Appendix 2)
  - Pat and Glen explored and reported on pastoral care programs in other churches (Appendix 3)
  - Nancy did a literature review (Appendix 4)
- Telephone survey was carried out through August and September. Results were tabulated (Appendix 5) and a summary of results was reported in the October newsletter (Appendix 6)
- Workshop entitled “Creating a Caring Community” was held Oct. 31 – Nov. 2. It was co-sponsored with the CUC and facilitated by Ellen Bell and was open to Hamilton and other congregations. See brochure (Appendix 7) and summary notes (Appendix 8).
- Task force met on two days (Nov. 18 and Dec. 3). Relevant documents were reviewed (Appendix 9): data was analyzed and synthesized (Appendix 10). Recommendations for a Pastoral Care Program for our church were agreed upon.
- Draft report was circulated to Task Force Members, revised and submitted to the Board for consideration at the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Preliminary approval was given.

Future:

- There will be a Circle meeting on January 11, 2009 to present the draft plan to the congregation and gather input and responses.
- Final report will be prepared incorporating comments from the Circle Meeting and will be submitted to the Board.

**Our Discussions:**

Many issues were identified and vetted during the course of this work. Some of them were: boundaries, resources, do-ability and appropriateness regarding implementation and continuance of program, diversity of needs, ages and stages, inclusivity.

Out of this vetting came our priorities, which were to develop a program that is intentional about being inclusive, doable and meeting identified needs within clearly established boundaries. The program will create a caring community, with close involvement of the minister especially with respect to complex needs and important life events. The program will establish clear role descriptions, adequate training and mentoring.

## **Recommendations to Implement the Mission:**

That there be:

1. A program called **Caring Community**.
2. A **Caring Community Committee** to coordinate all elements of the program and link with the management committee.
3. A **Point Person** to be known as the person to call if you need help and to coordinate all aspects of the program.
4. A continuance of existing programs of **Cards and Flowers** currently delivered by Pat Oertel and **Benevolence Fund** currently delivered by Bill Fulton.
5. A **Casserole Ministry** with a coordinator and a team of volunteers and the whole community participating.
6. A **Contact Network**, whereby all members of the congregation are known and where absences from church of more than three weeks are noted and a friendly contact with the person(s) is made. There will be two people acting together to keep in touch with 20 congregants or pledging units. In other words, people look after one another.
7. A **Spiritual Care Ministry** that will respond to needs identified through the contact network or by request. This will have a coordinator and team, and will require training, support and involvement with the minister.
8. Regular meeting times scheduled with the minister and the central committee in order that appropriate referrals be made as necessary.
9. Other programs addressed as resources allow, such as transportation, hospital visits, and home support.
10. Implementation of training and resolution of liability issues in a straightforward manner.

**Conclusion:** This model is an innovative approach to create connections within a mid-sized church. It is an attempt to incorporate a value of intimacy into the larger organization and to be a visible demonstration of living out our Unitarian Universalist principles.

Additional thoughts that will be addressed at the January meeting of the Pastoral Care Task Force:

- Bill wondered about Vision and Mission Statements and we played with ideas that seemed to emerge from our work preparing the report:

**Vision and Mission Statement:** We visualize a church where everyone is part of a supportive network. We will create a community where each person will be cared for and called upon to care for others.

- Bill also suggested including statements about sociological axioms re. size and community. These relate to established sizes of groups that are effective working together. He felt that this information supports our recommendation that there be a contact network that breaks us down into smaller groups. There is a lot of literature on this topic. Some references are:

<http://www.bbsonline.org/Preprints/OldArchive/bbs.dunbar.html>

<http://www.fldp.org/2008/11/07/group-size/>

<http://www.nazarene.org/files/docs/Understandingchurchsizesullivan2007.pdf>

The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations by [Alice Mann](#)