

Special Commission on Financial Sustainability

for the

**Connecticut Conference
of the United Church of Christ**

Final Report

September 2010

I. Executive Summary

The Special Commission on Conference Sustainability presents this report to the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. The charge to the commission was extremely challenging in that there are no easy, immediate answers to ensuring Conference financial viability. However, the Commission has identified a series of recommendations that it believes can favorably impact the long term financial position of the Conference.

The proposed actions will take time and require leadership and resolve by the Board of Directors, the Conference Minister and the staff. These initiatives will also challenge those in leadership positions to think in new ways. And they will require all those in the Connecticut Conference, pastors and church members alike, to embrace the covenant that not only defines our identity but also holds us together as a church.

Each recommendation should be examined in more detail to consider its feasibility, its impact and its implementation. The commission envisions smaller teams that would tackle one or more of the recommendations and, as appropriate, develop specific actions to make them happen. The commission also understands that the scope of the recommendations may require the Board to rank order them. Here in summary form are the commission's primary recommendations. The list, divided into near term and longer recommendation, is in no priority order and each recommendation is discussed in more detail in the body of the report.

Near Term (Impact in 12 -24 months)

- a. Assign and clarify individual responsibilities for Our Church's Wider Mission among the Conference senior staff.***
- b. Develop a plan whereby each church in Connecticut is visited by at least one Conference senior staff member every year to strengthen relationships with the churches in the Conference and to deliver the message of OCWM.***
- c. Raise the visibility and recognition of current OCWM giving levels by local churches.***
- d. Prepare and distribute an annual "open letter" to each local church that reviews the services received by that church, the commitment that church has made to OCWM and the more significant initiatives undertaken by the Conference and national church in support of the UCC mission and ministry.***
- e. Expand the "Friends of the Conference" appeal.***
- f. Include in the search criteria for a new Conference Minister such skills as development, financial management, strategic partnering and team building.***
- g. Consider adjusting the sharing ratio.***

Long Term (Impact in 2 to 5 years)

- h. Re-name and re-brand OCWM.*
- i. Strengthen the case for OCWM by re-enforcing the breadth and value of the services provided by the Conference and the national church, including the need for a progressive, distinctive Christian voice.*
- j. Develop and implement a program that focuses on stewardship and financial management for clergy.*
- k. Encourage all clergy in the Connecticut Conference to affirm their support for OCWM and to act as visible, vocal and articulate advocates for OCWM in their local churches.*
- l. Develop a new Strategic Plan for the Conference.*
- m. Improve the collection, integration and use of data related to OCWM.*
- n. Identify and develop strategic partnerships with both religious and secular organizations sharing similar values that would increase the joint vitality and visibility of both parties.*

II. The Commission Creation and Charge

At the October 2009 Meeting Annual Meeting, the Connecticut Conference Board of Directors recommended the following:

In light of the challenges inherent in the 2010 budget, the Conference requests the Board of Directors to appoint a Special Commission on Conference Sustainability. The responsibility of the Commission will be to study the sustainability of the Conference under current models of support, to develop alternative models of financial sustainability, to place its work in the context of the importance of the mission of national and global ministries of the church, and to make recommendations to the Board of Directors for preventing, and if necessary, responding to future revenue deficits, The Commission is to be composed of laity and clergy from within the Conference, plus representation from the national setting of the United Church of Christ. (Exhibit 1) Further, the Conference requests a preliminary report from the Commission through the Board of Directors at the Spring Meeting on May 8, 2010 at the First Congregational Church in Madison. (Exhibit 2)

The Commission met monthly beginning January 14, 2010. Major activities during the process included:

- Examination of relevant and available data with particular attention to 1) recent conference budgets, 2) the eleven-year Connecticut Conference profile from the UCC yearbook, 3) five-year trends on giving to OCWM from churches within the Connecticut Conference, and 4) 2002-2009 retention or sharing ratios from the other conferences.

- Presentations by Davida Crabtree, Connecticut Conference Minister, and Jane Heckels, National Minister for Our Church's Wider Ministries, that provided national and conference contextual frameworks including trends and changes that are occurring with respect to giving.
- Reports by 1) Charlie Kuchenbrod, Associate Conference Minister for Endowment Ministries, on OCWM Basic Support from 1979-2009; and 2) Patsy Bjorling, Associate Conference Minister for Generosity Ministries, on the issues and challenges of funding the Connecticut Conference.
- Examination of OCWM promotional materials (CD, brochure and electronic) that interpret the wider ministry of the Church locally, nationally and globally.
- Input from each of the Conference senior staff and program directors on current responsibilities, critical issues and possible actions with respect to financial sustainability.
- Interviews with 27 selected pastors whose churches represent a range of support for OCWM.
- Research and reports by individual team member on possible revenue enhancement opportunities.
- Report by Carole Carlson, Interim Conference Minister, on the management of OCWM within the current Conference structure.
- Hours of discussion, analysis and evaluations of critical issues and potential initiatives, both short and long term, that would address the future sustainability of the Connecticut Conference.

III. The Challenge

The United Church of Christ is an institution in transition. In truth, we are re-thinking what it means to be a Church. The model perfected in the 1950's and 1960's is no longer as relevant or as compelling. While change has long been a part of the Church, in recent years both the increasing scope and accelerating pace of change have profoundly impacted the Church. This is apparent all levels: national, state and local. As Steve Sterner, the national minister for local church ministries points out in a recent opinion piece on the future of the UCC, *"The flow of mission dollars is changing, the organizational structure is in flux, indeed, the very mission and essence of the denomination is changing."*

As a Church, we are moving away from old ways of thinking and traditional ways of doing things. The national setting is no longer viewed as the primary hub of all information. With the emergence of new approaches and altered relationships, the challenge becomes one of developing recommendations that effectively respond to current and future scenarios. Courses of action that find traction today may be less effective tomorrow in light of an emerging church with different values, priorities and structures. The challenge for this committee has been to think both near and long term in crafting an approach that will respond to present issues and evolving trends that will impact the financial sustainability of the Conference. We need to build bridges to the future and we have attempted to do that.

As our SCCS commission co-chair, Rev. Micki Nunn-Miller, pointed out in her project update at the 2010 Spring Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting, we cannot continue to fish on the same side of the boat and expect to enjoy the services and benefits we have all come to expect from the Connecticut Conference. Further, simply doing better what we

have always done is unlikely to solve the financial challenge facing the Conference. Rather, it will likely only prolong an increasingly difficult situation. The Church in general and Conference in particular may be at an important crossroads as it attempts to find ways to provide value and maintain relevancy such that members embrace and support a broad definition of stewardship, interdependence and mutual responsibility.

V. The Current Landscape

Recent trends raise serious concerns about the future financial sustainability of the Conference.

- From 1999 to 2009, membership in the Connecticut United Church of Christ fell 20%, a loss of over 20,000 members. (Exhibit 3)
- Basic support as a percentage of local church budgets, as high as 16% in 1967, is now on average less than 3%.
- In terms of dollars, basic support is down \$637,000 when comparing 1999 to 2009. In fact, dollars for basic support have declined at a faster rate than the decline in membership.
- Participation at the Conference Annual Meetings is averaging 60% of the churches in a state where such meetings can be reached in no more than 90 minutes.
- Cuts in staff at both the national and state levels have been significant in the past few years making it that much more difficult to respond to the growing needs of local churches.

Such numbers do not fully portray the changes and challenges that influence giving now occurring within our conference and throughout the country. Much of what is happening reflects cultural shifts that are both pervasive and systemic. Economic uncertainty, eroding local church revenues and a general sense of scarcity have forced many churches to re-direct their mission dollars to meet internal obligations.

Further, the diversity and local autonomy enjoyed by UCC member churches and viewed as a strength within the denomination can at the same time undermine and weaken any deep attachment to the Conference and the national setting. Such weak affiliations, coupled with a diminished sense of wider affiliation and responsibility, can undermine giving beyond local borders. And finally, the increasingly prevalent view that local mission efforts are more effective, more personally rewarding, and in general more accountable than giving managed by larger entities, poses another very real impediment to local churches expanding their OCWM giving. These are formidable environmental challenges that will be difficult to overcome.

While it is clear to the commission that the current structure and implementation of OCWM is not working, the commission also believes that abandoning it would not be a faithful response to our connectedness to others within Connecticut or across geographic boundaries, nationally and internationally. The unique witness of the UCC to a broken world must be maintained and nurtured. Therefore, much of what is contained in this report is an attempt to revitalize OCWM so that it will remain an important pillar in our giving. However, sufficiently improved giving via OCWM to overcome the current financial

challenge is unlikely. Therefore, additional revenue enhancement initiatives, deeper, more meaningful relationships and partnerships on a variety of fronts, and new ways of meeting the needs of local churches and their members will all play a part in maintaining a viable and vital Conference.

V. Key Issues

The commission spent a considerable amount of time understanding and defining the problem. The issues surrounding the current approach and recent disappointing results of OCWM are pervasive. Some of these forces are environmental or cultural and will be difficult, if not impossible, to address; some of the issues lend themselves to near term responses while others are more systemic and will take years to produce tangible results.

To develop a full understanding of the magnitude of the challenge, the commission brought a variety of perspectives and experiences to the table which were shared and examined. In addition, the commission collectively interviewed the Conference senior staff and program directors as well as 27 selected pastors that represented a cross section of OCWM giving responses and commitment levels. (Exhibit 4) From this information the commission created two documents:

1. **The Critical Issues Grid** which identifies the wide range of perceptions around OCWM held by the commission, the Conference staff and the interviewed pastors. The issues have been grouped around similar topics or constellations. (Exhibit 5)
2. **Pastoral Concerns/Observations Regarding OCWM** which captures the sentiments of pastors who play such a critical role in terms of local advocacy for OCWM. (Exhibit 6)

Together, these two documents indicate that the issues surrounding OCWM are broad and deep. Significant challenges span such diverse areas as a general lack of understanding as to what OCWM is and where the contributions go, unclear accountabilities at the Conference level as to who directs OCWM and what are staff roles and responsibilities and the differing levels of support shown for OCWM by local pastors who should be first line champions for the program. The recommendations outlined later in this report attempt to address these diverse issues on as many fronts as practical.

One of the major concerns of the commission is an apparent erosion of sense of interdependence and interconnection, particularly as it relates to more affluent churches recognizing a responsibility to provide support for churches where finances are more problematic. Larger more financially secure churches tend to need fewer services and less help from the Conference. One of the key elements of OCWM is the assistance these dollars provide newer or smaller churches that may be struggling. In the view of the commission, this ebbing of a collective responsibility among all UCC churches within Connecticut ultimately jeopardizes the future of every church regardless of size or financial strength. With the closing of any one church, the entire community is diminished.

The commission spent considerable time discussing this weakened sense of covenant. The concept of “Covenant” as a promise between people and with God is rooted in scripture. These faithful promises have been central to congregational churches throughout history. A

UCC document for new church starts states that “The word ‘covenant’ is at the heart and foundation of the polity, practice, history, and theology of the United Church of Christ. Covenant holds us together as a church; it exemplifies our understanding of ourselves as a people in relationship with one another and with God. We are bound together by our common faith.” Simply put, our covenants are the glue that holds us together as well as the guarantor of our spiritual freedom that is so often celebrated and lifted up in local churches. This sense of connection and commitment to one another used to be the primary motivating factor for giving through Our Church’s Wider Mission and other forms of support.

Unfortunately, the understanding of covenant is getting lost in our local churches as is our sense of interconnectedness. Fewer people understand the meaning of the term or the importance of these relationships for the wellbeing of the Church. More and more people are joining local churches with little sense of denominational affiliation or loyalty. The Commission feels the concept of “covenant” has become an empty one for many church members and believes that a re-vitalization of the concept would go a long way toward addressing many of the issues around financial sustainability.

VI. Current Strengths

It is important to note that in spite of the very difficult financial sustainability challenges facing the Conference, the commission identified a number of Conference strengths regarding giving and OCWM. Perhaps most important is that the commitment to mission among UCC members and individual churches remains very strong. The decline in membership does not parallel the decline in giving. Funding to local mission efforts, which appear to strike a more responsive chord among givers, continues to flourish. Further, while giving to OCWM is down 24% from 1999 to 2009, giving to the various special support initiatives sponsored by the Conference is actually up by almost 19% over that same period. It seems UCC members in Connecticut have both the financial wherewithal and the willingness to give when they feel an affinity or attachment to the cause. In short, the issue is not capacity but rather connection and commitment.

The Conference staff is seen as experienced, committed and responsive. Engagements between the Conference and local churches as a rule are very positive. Further, the staff understands the challenges facing the Conference and there exists a genuine willingness to explore new approaches and alternative strategies. The Conference provides an array of useful resources to local churches. Of particular note is the very effective “search and call” process from which every church, at one time or another, benefits.

Unquestionably, Silver Lake remains one of the real assets available to Connecticut UCC churches and their members. The facility has profoundly influenced the lives of people of all ages. While the Conference continues to subsidize the facility, in the view of the commission, the value of Silver Lake far outweighs the costs incurred in keeping the facility solvent. While it should be a goal for Silver Lake to become revenue neutral from the Conference standpoint, balancing the budget through further budget cuts in this area would not appear to be a prudent course of action.

VII. Recommendations

Near Term: The following recommendations can be more readily implemented and likely produce benefits within 12 to 24 months.

a. Assign and clarify individual responsibilities for OCWM among the Conference senior staff.

At present, there is no clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for OCWM. The commission believes that every staff member should play a part in advocating for OCWM. Currently, the administration of OCWM is diffused, confusing and lacking in clear lines of responsibility and authority. The commission recommends that specific accountabilities be incorporated into staff job descriptions and performance appraisals.

b. Develop a plan whereby each church in Connecticut is visited by at least one Conference senior staff member every year to strengthen relationships with the churches in the Conference and to deliver the message of OCWM.

Developing and strengthening relationships between local churches and the Conference is imperative to revitalizing OCWM. The Conference must put a face on the work of OCWM while sharing the story with those who sit in the pews. The commission believes that every church should be visited at least once a year by a Conference staff member to talk about OCWM. Local churches should also take advantage of opportunities to engage those at the national setting as well. If relationships are strengthened, the commission believes that the understanding of and commitment to OCWM will follow.

c. Raise the visibility and recognition of current OCWM giving levels by local churches.

The commission sees no reason why OCWM giving, either basic or special support, should be proprietary. A more open sharing of information on giving may prompt some churches to reassess, and subsequently increase, levels of support. Churches could also share success stories. Information regarding OCWM giving should also be used by regional ministers and senior staff members when communicating with or visiting local churches.

d. Prepare and distribute an annual “open letter” to each local church that reviews the services received by that church, the commitment that church has made to OCWM and the more significant initiatives undertaken by the Conference and national church in support of the UCC mission and ministry.

Such an initiative reinforces the value of what the Conference and the national setting do with the support provided by each individual church. The hope is that this letter would be shared with local church members in some manner and even serve as a vehicle to spur discussion of OCWM. Part of the focus should be to encourage local churches to no longer position OCWM as one among many mission giving options, but to reprioritize OCWM to a higher level of consideration during the annual budget process.

e. Expand the “Friends of the Conference” appeal.

The “Friends of the Conference” annual appeal shows great promise and the commission believes that there is an opportunity to further expand its success. However, it is important to note that this fund raising initiative is not a substitute for a strong OCWM program. To generate more revenue through the Friends of the Conference appeal, the Conference will need greater involvement and support of local churches and their ministers. To do this right will require relationship building which will take time, effort and effective leadership on the part of the professional staff and particularly the Conference Minister. It will be important to help local pastors understand that Conference fund raising, when directly soliciting UCC church members in Connecticut, and local fund raising are not in competition, In fact, giving at one level of an organization typically increases rather than reduces, giving at other levels. While there may be sensitivity among some ministers to direct donor contact by the Conference, the commission believes that steps should be taken now to further “ramp up” this program and that this can be done in a manner which creates a win-win situation for both the Conference and the local churches. This is also an initiative which, properly done, can generate more near term dollars.

f. Include in the search criteria for a new Conference Minister such skills as development, financial management, strategic partnering and team building.

The next Conference Minister will face significant financial challenges and will need an expanded set of skills to navigate an uncertain future. Not only will the Conference Minister have to be a very strong advocate for giving, but he or she will also need skills that promote collegial work, build bridges to diverse interest groups and effectively direct and inspire multiple development and advancement activities.

g. Consider adjusting the sharing ratio.

The commission fully understands that this is a difficult recommendation and is very cognizant of the historic leadership of the Connecticut Conference in the denomination. It is also aware that any change to the sharing ratio generates an impact that is immediate, both to the Conference and to the national setting. Currently, the Connecticut Conference provides 15% of the OCWM funds that support the national setting. This is higher than any other conference. As a result, changes to the ratio by the Connecticut Conference significantly impact the national setting’s ability to carry out its mission and ministry. A one percent change in the 2009 payment schedule would have reduced the funds to the national organization by over \$19,000.

The commission also understands that the national setting is re-thinking what it does and how it does it so that each contributed dollar is used as effectively as possible. Changes at the national level have been pervasive in recent years and more changes are likely. That said, the fact that

Connecticut sends 63% of its OCWM dollars to Cleveland and retains 37% creates a strain on the finances of the Conference. In 2009, UCC Conferences throughout the country retained, on average, 69% of their OCWM dollars, so Connecticut's current commitment is indeed substantial. At the same time, the commission understands that the Connecticut Conference is fortunate in that it has an endowment which helps provide the capacity for it to make this level of contribution. Further, reducing payments to the national setting as the expedient way to balance the Conference budget demonstrates the very behavior that this commission finds of concern in many local churches.

The commission believes that the Board of Directors should look closely at whether some reduction in the sharing ratio is necessary and if so, the message that such an action sends within the state and to other conferences. While the commission is proposing a series of recommendations to enhance revenue, it recognizes that these will take time to implement and to make a difference. Such is not the case with changing the sharing ratio; any change to the formula will be quickly felt by both parties. The commission feels it is in no position to recommend a specific number as to what the ratio should be, only that this is an area that should be thoughtfully and prayerfully considered.

Long Term: The recommendations below will likely require more intensive analysis to develop and take longer to implement. While these can be commenced in the near term, anticipated benefits will most likely be felt in two to five years.

h. Rename and re-brand OCWM.

Perhaps the most persistent theme heard by the commission is the general confusion around what OCWM is and where the dollars go. In fact, the perception by many is that OCWM is in competition with local mission efforts. In an era when branding is so important, the label must convey a clear, meaningful message that truly resonates with all constituencies as to what these contributions fund. The commission acknowledges that any re-branding of OCWM has implications beyond the Connecticut Conference and therefore must involve the national setting. Part of this effort to more effectively "sell" OCWM may necessitate better distinguishing its diverse components and placing more emphasis on the work of the Conference on behalf of local churches.

i. Strengthen the case for OCWM reinforcing the breadth and value of the services provided by the Conference and the national church including the need for a progressive, distinctive Christian voice.

Certain programs are critical to the vitality of the denomination and yet most lay people have little idea as to all the Conference actually does. The current focus of OCWM materials is on mission work which often competes with local efforts, generally more accessible and immediate. In addition to mission work, OCWM funds an array of important programs and initiatives

outside of mission work that enhance and sustain the life of the individual churches themselves. There needs to be greater awareness of the role and value of these efforts in maintaining healthy local churches. It is also at the national level that the UCC's mission and ministry can be most effectively disseminated in a marketplace of very different faith based messages. In a culture where the voice of the Christian right often predominates, it is important to keep the progressive voice of the UCC vibrant in the public discourse, both in Connecticut and in the nation.

j. Develop and implement a program that focuses on stewardship and financial management for clergy.

The ability of local churches to continue as “going concerns” in the face of declining membership, increasing costs and economic uncertainty poses a real threat to a number of churches. The extent to which clergy can expand their knowledge of stewardship, current fundraising techniques and financial management will enhance the capability of each church to remain viable and in the process maintain support for OCWM. When faced with a choice between covering expenses in the local church budget and making a contribution to OCWM, the Conference generally takes second place. More needs to be done to help local churches stay in business. Properly done, such a program could be offered to other conferences for a fee as a revenue enhancement opportunity.

k. Encourage all clergy in the Connecticut Conference to affirm their support for OCWM and to act as visible, vocal and articulate advocates for OCWM in their local churches.

It was very apparent during the commission's interviews of pastors that the local minister plays a crucial role in influencing attitudes about and support for OCWM. Local clergy have greater access to information on OCWM as well as the opportunity to share such information with their congregants. While churches have vastly differing available resources, each minister should actively demonstrate his or her commitment to the UCC and the various programs it funds. In the spirit of our covenantal connection, the commission encourages ministers from churches with greater resources to help their congregations understand that the closing of any one church in the Conference invariably impacts those that remain.

l. Develop a new Strategic Plan for the Conference.

The Church is changing and while views may vary on what is meant by the emerging church, it is clear that the institution will be different. Covenantal connections have weakened, denominational loyalty has ebbed, church and culture are no longer inextricably linked and increasingly local churches are pursuing their own mission agendas. How to thrive or even remain relevant in such a dynamic environment is a challenging proposition. The commission feels that a strategic plan and the creation of a new operating model would clarify and enliven the vision and mission of the Conference as it charts its future. The effort would allow the Board and the Conference

staff to build on the commission recommendations and to identify goals, objectives and critical success factors that will help drive priorities, activities and resource allocation. This effort should also include a well-developed, integrated, long-term, development strategy that brings together in a coordinated manner all fund raising initiatives. The commission suggests that this be undertaken once a permanent Conference Minister has been called.

m. Improve the collection, integration and use of data related to OCWM.

The commission understands that more streamlined data management is a potentially expensive endeavor. Currently, multiple systems make it difficult to integrate, access, track and manipulate data related to giving. However, accurate information that focuses on the right issues and presents a meaningful story line strengthens both the appeal and the anticipated response. Without question, the Conference staff and church leaders need more user friendly tools to analyze, share and manage information.

n. Identify and develop strategic partnerships with both religious and secular organizations sharing similar values to increase the joint vitality and visibility of both parties.

The commission believes that strategic partnerships present a significant opportunity for increasing denominational visibility and vitality. The challenge is that such collaborative efforts are not necessarily revenue generators per se but carry important “soft” benefits that could ultimately impact the Conference’s financial well-being. Increased denominational visibility, membership growth and outreach to organizations with similar values and goals should have a positive impact on the vitality and long term financial health of the Church. There may also be opportunities for synergy in that the Conference can do more with less and conversely, the Conference may be able to derive benefits from the experience and expertise available to it through these partnerships.

The Commission also feels that the Conference possesses unique talents and resources that could be shared more pro-actively with other faith-based groups and community service organizations and possibly other Conferences. For example, partnerships could be built around the issues of aging. While members of the UCC are the oldest of any denomination at an average of 65 years, there may be an opportunity to leverage this age demographic. Issues of aging will be paramount in a majority of congregations over the next 25 years. Strategic partnerships could be created to share delivery of services to the elderly, including the theological and spiritual dimensions of aging, with the Conference on the leading edge. Grants from family foundations might be possible, as well as the "marketing" of such services to other conferences. Other types of partnerships, for instance, could be built around multi-cultural issues, youth and adult-based ministries, long distance care, and clergy and care-giver support. The commission believes that an inventory or assessment of specific skills and expertise residing in the Conference matched against

community needs and the organizations that respond to these needs could surface meaningful partnerships that strengthen both parties and enhance the quality and delivery of services provided.

VIII. Other Areas Considered

The commission identified close to 20 potential revenue enhancement opportunities and commission members researched in more detail six that appeared to have the most promise: Friends of the Conference, strategic partnerships, fee for services, a capital campaign, Silver Lake and a common mission project,. The first two appear in the recommendations section; the latter four, along with some observations on the per capita assessment, grants and endowment, are discussed below.

Capital Campaign

The purpose of a capital campaign would be to generate sufficient funds or to enhance existing endowments to support specifically identified needs or activities of the Conference. Over the years, the Conference has had a checkered history with respect to the success of capital campaigns. Most recently, the Conference completed its Now and For the Future campaign for capital improvements and new construction at Silver Lake. While the initial goal was \$8-\$12 million, the campaign concluded with a disappointing \$3 million raised.

The commission believes that this is not the right time to embark upon any effort to raise significant amounts of money as part of a concerted capital campaign. Any such campaign would require the active leadership of the Conference Minister who would also need a period of time in office to fully understand the workings of the Conference and to establish organizational priorities. The next several years will be a period of transition in which a settled Conference Minister builds relationships, engages local churches in a very positive manner and directs a comprehensive and thoughtfully prepared feasibility study for a campaign that could be launched in five to ten years.

Fee for Service

The commission believes that this is an area that affords limited opportunity. First, the conference already charges fees for many of its workshops to offset the expense associated with conducting the program. Another possibility is to charge fees for conference services to those churches that do not contribute to OCWM. This has, in fact, been tried in other conferences. However, this approach does present some thorny theological questions as well as some practical ones in terms of implementation.

The third possibility is for the Conference to broaden its offerings of workshops and seminars and to develop and provide additional technical expertise that other conferences may need and to offer and charge accordingly. This is currently done on a limited basis but there may be more ways the Conference can share its experience and expertise outside the state for a fee. However, the commission believes that an aggressive and expansive fee for service program would not be a particularly effective way to increase revenues.

Silver Lake

As indicated earlier, Silver Lake is a tremendous resource for the Conference. The facility provides one of the most visible ministries of the Conference and experiences there can be life changing for young and old. While many church camps are facing declining enrollment, Silver Lake continues to be reasonably successful by offering attractive and robust programs while controlling costs. Silver Lake developed a Strategic Plan in 2003 which has served it well although it is probably time to re-visit the plan in light of the many changes occurring in the Conference.

The subsidy provided by the conference was \$117,000 in 2009 and has been around that level for a number of years. Financial support has been much higher in the past but those who manage Silver Lake have done a good job at managing expenses and increasing fees while ensuring that the facility remains an option for as many campers as possible. Silver Lake has explored ways to attract more groups like adult conference business but the facilities are not really geared for these situations. There are also a host of issues (staffing, insurance, requisite renovations, etc) in trying to accommodate such groups.

This is not to say that there may not be additional ways for Silver Lake to increase revenue or reduce expenses. The commission feels that a long term goal for Silver Lake should be to move toward a revenue neutral position with the Conference. Possible ideas include:

- 1) Designation of a portion of per capita revenues to go to Silver Lake,
- 2) Adoption by individuals or local churches of a specific component or aspect of the facility,
- 3) Expansion of the winter program offerings,
- 4) Greater collaboration with the Conference Youth and Young Adult Minister,
- 5) More time for the Directors to visit local churches,
- 6) Greater emphasis on the facility as a retreat center for spiritual growth,
- 7) Periodic scheduling of the Annual Meeting at the facility, and
- 8) Multi-cultural worship across denominational lines.

While these are just a few possibilities identified by the commission, one course of action that does need a closer review is whether Silver Lake should be able to directly approach individuals, local churches and associations for financial support and to what extent, if any, such a strategy would compete with other Conference fund raising efforts. Again, the commission believes that such actions do not necessarily create zero sum scenarios since in many cases aggregate giving will actually increase. In short, the commission continues to endorse subsidizing Silver Lake as it searches for new ways to broaden its value and to strengthen its bottom line.

Common Mission Project

Other denominations have successfully employed “common mission” efforts to build unity among diverse entities. Churches could join together to rally behind a designated mission project or effort undertaken outside of the normal mission giving efforts. Silver Lake may be an ideal location to facilitate or host such a project. The project may change over time, but it can provide a central focus around which all churches can collectively pool resources and in the aggregate, make a substantial contribution toward an important project. It also

affords the opportunity for churches to work together and to strengthen intra-church relationships.

Per Capita Assessment

The commission decided not to make a specific recommendation regarding the per capita assessment. On the one hand, as a method for raising additional funds in the near term, this approach does have the potential to generate more dollars in a relatively short time span and is relatively easy to implement. Further, Connecticut's assessment at six dollars a member is less than those levied by other New England Conferences. And finally, there is the argument that all of the per capita dollars remain within the state while this is not the case for OCWM contributions.

However, it is difficult to gauge the impact that an increased assessment rate would have on OCWM giving. There is some evidence to suggest that overall dollars generated by increasing the assessment may be greater in the first couple of years but then slip back in later years. Churches may view a higher per capita assessment as an increase in Conference "dues" and decide to reduce what they contribute to OCWM so that the aggregate dollars received by the Conference remains constant. Given the continued confusion among many church members as to how OCWM differs from the per capita assessment, the commission believes that more analysis needs to be done on how individual churches would respond to a per capita increase in light of their current contribution to OCWM. Bottom line, there is an opportunity through improved communication and education to better clarify and position both OCWM and the per capita assessment so that local churches develop a greater comfort level as to why each is important and what each does.

Grants

The commission did not explore in any depth the idea that a far more aggressive pursuit of grants would yield significantly more dollars to the conference. As a rule, grants are awarded for specific initiatives and not for general overhead and staffing. Further, there are relatively few foundations or grant agencies that will entertain requests from religious organizations. However, the commission does believe that the Conference should remain alert to and respond to grant opportunities and strategic partnerships that do present themselves. The recent award of \$50,000 from a foundation is a good example of a specific Conference initiative that was funded by grant money.

Endowment

The Connecticut Conference is fortunate that it has an endowment sufficient to generate significant dollars annually for the budget. Market fluctuations have reduced this income by \$100,000 over the past three years and the commission encourages those managing the various funds to consider ways for more stabilization in the annual investment contribution to the budget perhaps by adopting a three or four year moving average. Since the Church has very strong fiduciary relationships to the expressed desires of those individuals who have established or contributed to the funds, the commission makes no recommendation as to any change in asset allocation and assumes that such funds are invested in markets and instruments that carry an acceptable risk, generate sufficient returns and maintain low expense loads. If the Conference does engage in another capital campaign down the road,

growing its investment portfolio to create an enhanced stream of future income for the Conference should be a priority.

The commission also suggests that the Board examine whether the management of the Connecticut Conference endowment should be folded into those funds at the national level. Any expense savings and economies of scale associated with this move would benefit both the Connecticut Conference and the national setting. The commission recognizes the experience and expertise that the current Associate Conference Minister for Endowment Ministries brings to the table and would want to retain that talent in some manner. It may be possible for instance to have some of this position's salary covered by the national setting or for the position to become a center of excellence (see recommendation "n") with expanded opportunities to partner with and support other organizations.

IX. Conclusion

The commission fervently hopes that at least several of the recommendations outlined above will prove useful in providing greater financial stability to the Connecticut Conference in the years ahead. As indicated above, the commission envisions smaller teams, consisting perhaps of Conference staff, clergy and laity, to pursue those recommendations identified by the Board as most feasible and promising. Understandably, the Conference staff's ability to find the time to participate in the further refinement and implementation of these recommendations in the face of current workloads may be very difficult. However, the commission believes that business as usual will only exacerbate an already very challenging situation.

In sum, the commission has done its best to understand the problem presented to it and to provide a range of possible courses of action. Improved communication and stronger relationship building are consistent themes and points of emphasis in this report and in what the commission is proposing. The commission also believes that the problem is less one of capacity than one of connection and commitment. The overall willingness to consign dollars to mission remains strong in Connecticut. Whenever and wherever people become engaged in Christ's mission and ministry, the money will invariably follow. If people, however, perceive that they are supporting an institution that is unfamiliar and out of touch, the financial return will be disappointing.

X. Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Special Commission on Financial Sustainability Team Members

Exhibit 2: 2010 Spring Conference Preliminary Report

Exhibit 3: Eleven Year Connecticut Conference Profile

Exhibit 4: Critical Issues Grid

Exhibit 5: Pastoral Interview Guide

Exhibit 6: Pastoral Concerns and Observations around OCWM

Exhibit 7: Potential Revenue Enhancement Opportunities

XI. Acknowledgements

The commission wishes to publicly recognize and thank the Conference staff for their accessibility, support and valuable insights during the entire project. In particular, Sue Wilber and Cecile Gibson provided significant administrative help. Lastly, the commission expresses its deep gratitude to the Spring Glen Church in Hamden whose flexibility and graciousness in the use of their facilities provided an environment conducive to thoughtful, prayerful work.

Special Commission on Financial Sustainability

Commission Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Church</u>
Douglas Morrill (Co-Chair)	First Congregational Church Bloomfield
Rev. Micki Nunn Miller (Co-Chair)	United Church of Christ in Cornwall, Congregational
Linda Beher	Asylum Hill Congregational Church
Rev. Paige Besse-Rankin	Church of Christ Goshen
Rev. Dr. Denise Esslinger	Gilead Congregational Church
Douglas Hawthorne	Spring Glen Church, Hamden
Carlton Highsmith	Dixwell Avenue United Church of Christ, New Haven
Rev. Dr. Jane Heckles	National Minister for OCWM
Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson	First Congregational Church, Stamford
Diana Napier	First Congregational Church, Norwalk
Luis Pagan	Church of the Redeemer, New Haven
Dr. Michael Rion	Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford
Rev. Dr. Jay Terbush	North Madison Congregational Church

Ex Officio Members

Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree	Connecticut Conference Minister
Rev. Dr. Ronald Brown	Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Concerns
Rev. Carole Carlson	Interim Conference Minister
Rev. Dr. Charles Wildman	Interim Conference Minister

Spring Meeting Preliminary Report

May 2010

Someone whose name I can't remember has famously said that if we always do things the way we've always done them, we will always get the same results. Most of us know from personal experience that this saying is true.

When Jesus met the disciples on the beach after the resurrection, they were just coming in from a night of fishing, according to John's Gospel. There was nothing in their nets. They had gone back to fishing after everything that had happened with Jesus in Jerusalem. They had gone back to fishing after some of them had experienced Jesus' presence after the empty tomb. They went back to fishing because that is what they knew best. And they fished on the side of the boat they always fished on.

And this early dawn, there was nothing in their nets. The man on the shore, whom they did not yet recognize, said to them, "Go back out and fish on the other side." And there is this amazing moment of grace – they did it! They tried something new and we are told that they came back with nets overflowing! So many fish that the nets almost broke! It was work and they were hungry and Jesus was there grilling fish and breaking bread. And then they recognized him.

My friends – pastors and delegates and visitors of the CT Conference – our nets are empty. We cannot continue to fish on the same side of the boat and still be what you all have known as the CT Conference. It is not possible. We cannot continue to do things the way we have always done them; and hence the formation of the Special Commission on the Sustainability of the CT Conference. We have been charged with reviewing where we are and finding new revenue streams that can help sustain the Conference and its mission to the local churches here in CT and its mission to the national setting of the UCC.

Meeting since January, we have been familiarizing ourselves with all things Conference mission and with all things Conference funding. We've looked at graphs and tables; we've met with Conference staff; we have been resourced with staff from the national church; we are in the process of speaking to local church pastors. We are at the point now where we are analyzing information and organizing it in a way that helps us to understand where we have been fishing and how we might look in the future to fish on the other side of the boat.

A number of critical issues have come to the fore. We are very clear that some of these issues can be addressed by us and some are beyond our control. Cultural shifts effecting all religious institutions – things like membership decline and lack of strong denominational identification - certainly play a role in the decline in giving to Our Church's Wider Mission. In our culture now we have a strong leaning toward "local" mission and giving and toward "hands on" mission, with less of an appreciation for the mission to other local churches and beyond to the work of the national church both at home and abroad. We are clearly at a crossroads of change in the Church as a whole, as the traditional church is

fading and a new church is emerging. These types of issues affect us here in CT, and we can note them, but we cannot change them.

But there are some critical issues we can address. As a Conference our communication to local churches about mission and, more broadly, mission interpretation has failed to reach the people in our local church pews. We have assumed that pastors would educate about our covenantal system and that that knowledge would lead to continued commitment to our covenantal way of life. And we have assumed that such a commitment would lead to continued dollars. The local church is the main building block of the UCC, but each church is connected by covenant to the Association, the Conference, and the wider church – and thereby to all of God’s people. And a vital part of the mission of each local church is caring for other local churches through our mission dollars to the Conference.

The Commission has identified issues around education of our pastors in areas of stewardship and mission understanding. We are aware that best practices in fund-raising for non-profit organizations have not been applied in most churches. How many of our churches emphasize our amazing abundance given to us by God? And how many of our churches live with a culture of “lack” instead, a culture which says we have little to go around so we’d better keep close to home what we’ve got. Generosity is not a buzz word in 2010 – but shouldn’t it be?

Some of the ministry of the Conference is confidential. Countless sessions with pastors or churches in crisis have taken place, but cannot be talked about. And yet the story of the ministry and mission of the Conference can still be told in ways that can excite all of our churches and that can remind us that our ministries are not complete unless churches are caring for one another. Of course, one of the main ways to do that is to give generously to OCWM.

Certainly OCWM is the foundation on which our Conference is built. And it will remain so. But the Commission is also interested in other potential revenue streams that still need thought and research. Are there ways to build our endowment so that it offers more operating money for us? Would there be times when there should be fees for services offered by the Conference? What about per capita dues? We know that we have by far the lowest such dues in the New England Region of the UCC. Should we consider changing the formula between the amount of OCWM that stays in CT and the amount that goes to National? Certainly many conferences have done so, and their actions have impacted negatively the ability of the national church to carry out mission on behalf of all of us. The CT Conference has resisted this easy solution for many years, so this Commission would not recommend such an action lightly.

The “Friends of the Conference” Offering produced about \$65,000 for the Conference this year. Since the Conference has only about 10% of the mailing addresses of members of our churches, we see that we could make a greater effort there. What about a special fund-raising opportunity every year, something that would increase the identity and sense of community and mission among our churches and that would also raise money for the Conference to use in a special way? There is the possibility of making some of our staff available to other Conferences who do not have the specialists we have and this, of course, would be for a fee. These are all potential revenue streams, and we may propose that a Development Committee be formed to navigate some of these waterways. They all need further reflection.

After looking at pages of data covering a period of years, we are amazed that the Conference has been able to do so much with shrinking financial resources. This quality of ministry and mission is a testament to Davida's leadership and to the commitment of our staff over a period of many years. It also reflects their belief that God's abundant grace and presence is never measured by a lack of financial resources, but is always measured by the abundance of lives transformed, good news told, and justice done.

So as the SCCS continues its work in preparation for a final report at the Fall Annual Meeting, we will be in discernment for where God is leading us. But members and friends of this Conference make no mistake. If we are to sustain this Conference financially, we are going to have to consider new ways of doing and being. Local churches can no longer assume that some other church will send in enough OCWM dollars to keep the Conference afloat. That kind of thinking has led us to where we are today.

In that same breakfast together, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. Peter assured him that he did. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "Then, tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Follow me." This work of tending and feeding we do in our local churches, but we also do it church to church, church to Conference, Conference to national Church, and national Church to the world – and we will do it with the abundance that God shares with all of us.

[2010]

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ELEVEN YEAR CONFERENCE PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC YEARBOOKS**

8 Connecticut

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
1999	101499	32061	26729	1367	866	2833	1996	2985	85
2000	99996	31680	26765	1357	844	2577	1953	4277	-1452
2001	99860	32838	27378	1502	739	2541	1889	2764	129
2002	99664	30087	27163	1479	543	3052	1734	3535	-195
2003	97762	31313	25481	1497	714	2306	1919	4278	-1680
2004	92573	28421	22344	1547	617	2409	1768	4475	-1670
2005	89996	26101	22111	1378	634	2078	1640	4081	-1631
2006	89373	28179	20760	1184	572	1767	1473	3591	-1541
2007	84613	29080	20353	1358	540	1425	1540	4852	-3069
2008	82394	27207	19918	1106	542	1452	1391	3934	-2225
2009	81177	26618	19000	1223	502	1314	1399	2918	-1278

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPPORT	SPECIAL SUPPORT	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP % CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
1999	\$51,083,146	\$3,781,962	\$2,579,690	\$975,681	\$3,555,371	\$3,505,236	\$7,060,607	5.05	\$61,925,715	\$36,926,345
2000	\$53,839,690	\$7,519,073	\$2,699,524	\$833,308	\$3,532,832	\$3,808,497	\$7,341,329	5.01	\$68,700,092	\$38,372,428
2001	\$57,087,533	\$5,975,136	\$2,695,266	\$1,069,779	\$3,765,045	\$3,725,317	\$7,490,362	4.72	\$70,553,031	\$38,800,100
2002	\$57,631,766	\$5,107,923	\$2,641,724	\$890,734	\$3,532,458	\$3,970,601	\$7,503,059	4.58	\$70,242,748	\$39,376,290
2003	\$62,015,618	\$3,915,864	\$2,812,550	\$1,011,921	\$3,824,471	\$4,484,072	\$8,308,543	4.54	\$74,240,025	\$44,693,885
2004	\$62,476,171	\$8,484,611	\$2,379,477	\$878,415	\$3,257,892	\$4,050,391	\$7,308,283	3.81	\$78,269,065	\$41,622,738
2005	\$62,093,217	\$6,605,593	\$2,164,656	\$1,348,566	\$3,513,222	\$4,175,958	\$7,689,180	3.49	\$76,387,990	\$41,151,617
2006	\$63,158,783	\$2,815,298	\$2,166,625	\$1,044,411	\$3,211,036	\$4,339,152	\$7,550,188	3.43	\$73,524,269	\$43,613,816
2007	\$64,794,233	\$3,845,344	\$2,176,273	\$1,305,683	\$3,481,956	\$4,518,875	\$8,000,831	3.36	\$76,640,408	\$42,946,320
2008	\$66,668,457	\$5,410,774	\$2,056,271	\$1,266,991	\$3,323,262	\$4,601,841	\$7,925,103	3.08	\$80,004,334	\$41,850,566
2009	\$71,744,803	\$4,118,828	\$1,942,483	\$1,159,997	\$3,102,480	\$4,100,846	\$7,203,326	2.71	\$83,066,957	\$42,894,068

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CUR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURES
2004-2009	-12.31	-6.34	-14.97	-33.54	-30.85	14.84	-4.77	6.13
1999-2009	-20.02	-16.98	-28.92	-40.01	-13.33	40.45	-12.74	34.14

Please note: Data may not be identical to UCC Yearbook totals for every year. Schedule 1 and 2 churches are not included in these totals. In 2007, Church School Enrollment data was replaced by Christian Education participants.

EXHIBIT 3

Critical Issues Grid: The Challenge of Conference Financial Sustainability

	SCCS List	Staff Interviews Additions	Pastor Interviews Additions
ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS: Forces to which we can only adapt and are not likely change	<p><i>Philosophy on & knowledge of Giving</i> View that “unrestricted” means less accountability Perception that local/targeted mission is more effective and meaningful</p> <p><i>Cultural/Demographic</i> Discontinuity inherent in UCC organization Ethos of weak national affiliations</p>	<p><i>Philosophy on and knowledge of Giving</i> Sense of scarcity, economic concerns in local churches means the priority is home</p> <p><i>Cultural/Demographic</i> Declining membership trends especially among the young Natural resistance to change Dissipation of a central spiritual home and lack of communal discernment</p>	
NEAR TERM: Issues we can address now that would have a direct impact on sustainability in a one to two year period	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> Lack of clarity on meaning of mission Confusion around what OCWM is and is not Local churches not giving or only giving modestly to OCWM Constant flow of info to pastors hampering further dissemination Weak communication (both ways) Confidentiality constraints that limits heralding successes and showing value</p> <p><i>Philosophy on & knowledge of Giving</i> Slow pace of adopting best practices in fund raising Limited clergy training in stewardship and finance</p>	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> Weak links of Conference staff to churches Lack of volunteer opportunities at Conference level Relative invisibility of Conference staff to churches</p> <p><i>Philosophy on & knowledge of Giving</i> Poor understanding of stewardship and weak approaches in congregations</p> <p><i>OCWM Management & Administration</i> Lack of understanding among staff as to specific roles and responsibilities Multiple issues around data collection, integration, access and use</p>	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> Lack of interest among laity in OCWM; many do not embrace it Poor attendance at Conference Meetings Retention rate beyond what Conference can afford Absence of meaningful connections between local churches and Conference</p> <p><i>Philosophy on and knowledge of Giving</i> Confusion around and misapplication of per capita and OCWM giving</p>
LONGER TERM: Issues that we can start addressing but the real impact on financial sustainability will not be felt for a number of years	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> Churches treating Conference as one among many mission options UCC “message” is not fully understood or embraced Absence of mission and global immersion opportunities</p> <p><i>Sense of Covenant and interdependence</i> Lack of strong sense of community among local churches The importance of giving not deeply held as a fundamental Christian obligation</p>	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> UCC message not widely or effectively celebrated in local churches Disconnect between perceptions of ministry and wider church among leaders Lack of a clear strategy to relate to and nurture the emerging Church</p> <p><i>Sense of Covenant and interdependence</i> Erosion of covenantal mindset and connection encourages looking inward first My church generally defined as the local church Absence of a shared energy and vision between the Conferences and local churches</p>	<p><i>Manifestation of Conference to Churches</i> Lack of a compelling Conference story line Cleveland activism and liberal policies</p> <p><i>Sense of Covenant and interdependence</i> Absence of a strong advocate for OCWM in most local churches</p>

Outline for Discussion with Selected Pastors on OCWM

The Concept:

The intent is to better understand how local churches make decisions about giving to Our Church's Wider Ministries. Rather than "ask" a series of questions, the approach is to engage the pastor in an open and honest sharing of information as to how decisions are made about OCWM, what factors tend to support or encourage such giving and factors detract from it.

While we would like those being interviewed to feel comfortable in sharing their comments openly, we also understand that in certain instances some individuals may prefer that their observations be kept confidential and we should acknowledge and respect that request. While knowing sentiments of individual pastors on some of these issues may be very useful, the primary intent is to aggregate the information to determine what patterns or trends the interviews reveal. Regardless, we do need people to be as candid as possible in their responses.

Key Discussion Points:

- Who makes the decision each year as to whether the local church gives to OCWM and how much is given?
- To what extent is the pastor involved in the gift determination decision?
- What information, if any, from the national, or conference is used in the decision making process?
- How is OCWM giving viewed by the local church and what is the level of understanding as to where those dollars go?
- What factors promote giving to OCWM and what factors detract or discourage OCWM giving?
- Does the Church's local or "pet" mission efforts play any role in the decision to give to OCWM and why or why not?

Analysis:

The expectation is that the person conducting the interview will take good notes and then put together some written summary that addresses the key discussions points outlined above. We will then combine all the interview results and explore collectively for an important findings or conclusions.

Exhibit 5

Pastoral Concerns and Observations Regarding OCWM

1. There is a widespread lack of understanding within the CT UCC membership as to what OCWM is and why it should be supported.
2. The mission efforts of local churches are more visible and personally satisfying.
3. Economic uncertainty will continue to impact the Conference disproportionately. Churches will opt to maintain local programs and services at the expense of state and national ones.
4. There is general confusion among the UCC membership between OCWM and per capita giving as to what each is and why each is important.
5. The activism in Cleveland and its liberal policies to some extent appears to impact membership support for OCWM giving.
6. Most churches do not have a strong, vocal lay advocate for OCWM and the role of pastor as champion can vary considerably.
7. The OCWM materials (brochure and handout) available for use by local churches generate mixed reviews as to their use and effectiveness.
8. There is tremendous variation around how mission budgets are determined and approved among the various conference churches.
9. Many pastors see themselves as the guardian of what money now comes to the Conference from the churches and indicate they are working hard to protect current levels of giving.
10. There appear to be few substantive and continuous links between the conference and most of the individual churches.
11. There remains a strong commitment to mission in virtually all local Conference Churches.
12. Personalizing examples and experiences of OCWM giving in terms of how it can make a difference or transform a life tends to promote greater local support.
13. Conference staff are generally held in high regard with respect to their competency and commitment.

SCCS BRAINSTORMING REVENUE GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Fee for services:
 - Within the Conference: training programs, auditing and bookkeeping, placement services, speaking engagements, strategic planning facilitation, consulting for capital campaigns and workshops (conflict mgt., transitioning ,etc.)
 - Outside of the conference: fees for services similar to above
 - Conference Churches below a threshold for Basic support or per capita contribution
2. Increase retention rate
3. Strengthen the “Friends” of the Conference Giving Initiative:
 - Expand direct annual appeal including improved database collection of information
 - Gain approval (if needed) for conference to approach UCC congregants directly
 - Employ a major donor conference team approach cooperating with local churches
4. Create a senior development team at the Conference
5. Explore and develop new grant opportunities
6. Raise per capita amount
7. Examine and expand Silver Lake revenue sources:
 - Aggressively explore outside sources of revenue.
 - Determine if Silver Lake can be self sustaining and if so, develop and implement a plan to make it happen
8. Explore options to increase endowment
 - Investigate more attractive rate of return options
 - Determine the various funds distribution flexibility
9. Promote donations to Conference staff who come to preach
10. Conduct Conference Special/Signature Events: runs/ walks, bike-a-thons, golf outings, blessing of the animals, galas, etc
11. Set up and Sponsor Affinity programs: UCC credit card, “good search”, Amazon donor program, welcome event for the new conference minister
12. Conduct a Conference capital campaign: target specific projects/causes (endowing pastoral excellence program or designated conference positions)
13. Create and market branded products: water bottles, tee shirts, mugs, etc
14. Copy Heifer model of buying an animal by supporting one piece or part of a project or cause
15. Conduct locally run bake sales or similar communal fund raising events

Exhibit 7