

CONSULTING MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT (2009-2010)

You've all heard of M+M candies, as well as the 3M company, but I'd like to offer, as the core of my annual report 6 M's, in no particular order: morale, membership, mission, money, movement, and ministry as a barometer reading on this consulting year we've enjoyed together.

MORALE

I have found the morale at Tapestry, despite your batch of setbacks in the last few years, to be keen and high. Your pride in being a part of such a warm and welcoming place is palpable. Your caring network is truly exemplary. Social action projects are plentiful, something for everyone. Religious education life is on the grow, even as we will hopefully double the program in the years ahead. Your fun-and-fund raising events are as delightful and delicious as any I've experienced in my 43 years of ministry.

The Board and I have had to navigate a difficult, oft-painful, transition with our Office Administrator, Suzi Spangenberg. There were mistakes made on all fronts, but it has come to an amicable close, and we're all moving on and moving forward! Currently, with Michael Boys, as the office consultant, Tapestry's administration is being handled effectively and economically. I plan to work alongside Michael during my final year as your consulting minister.

MEMBERSHIP

The books said 168 members when I arrived, but thanks to prudent pruning by Bev Huff, Rosy Pacilli and the Board, we stand closer to 150 now. The key is to know our committed membership rather than "imagined" or "bloated" numbers.

I will be pleased, if we can move toward 175 in the next year, on the road someday toward a 250-300 member congregation here in South Orange County.

MISSION

Tapestry exists not for itself alone but primarily for the world. We worship every Sunday to nourish our souls, in order to better restore the brokenness of our precious earth. You phrase it well in your own literature: “to be a transformational home for liberal spirituality and a dynamic community leader in South Orange County and beyond.”

At our fresh site, my personal hope (shared by many of you) is eventually to display up front on the stage/dais a sizable and compelling chalice, perhaps 3-4 feet tall...a chalice that vividly represents the governing symbol and artifact of our Unitarian Universalist history and message. When folks enter our sanctuary, they will experience the unmistakable presence/power of a chalice that signifies enlightenment, passion, and service.

MONEY

I'm pleased to report that Tapestry has grown this year in its capacity to talk about, then deliver, dollars and cents, but, my friends, we've a ways to go. Stewardship of our earth, our households, and our chosen congregation marks one of religion's highest values. May you continue to learn to become a truly “generous” congregation, one that realizes that's stinginess, in every guise, is life's ultimate “sin”.

Toward that end, all of us as your staff leaders have taken a cut in salary, not because we're martyrs but to show all Tapestrians what is reasonable and fiscally sound. If you grow in your generosity during 2010-2011, we can possibly restore those cuts.

Tapestry gives each of us a golden chance to give fully of our best selves: our joy, our resources, and our caring. I challenge you to join the ranks of the generous ones, if you don't already belong there.

MOVEMENT

This year, we've accomplished an amazing feat: we've moved from a long-time site to an utterly fresh location. Wasn't our farewell bash on May 23rd a most memorable passage? Your moving out and moving in teams have been exemplary. The current challenge will be not only to move *from* a particular site or history or set of problems, but also to move *toward* fresh possibilities, fortified with renewed vision and courage. The governing theme for these two years of my consulting ministry, if I had to pinpoint one, would be: *MOVING AHEAD*: Spiritually, Financially, Physically and Prophetically...Moving Ahead in every conceivable sense of the phrase!

MINISTRY

Any ministry of enduring value will be equally shared by both pulpit and pew. That's how I've tried to do this consulting ministry, every step of the way, from working intimately with the chairs of pivotal committees at Tapestry to having one-on-ones with most every stakeholder in your beloved community.

I could thank several specific people but no one has meant more to me than Connie Pursell. I don't know that I have ever been in such regular and meaningful contact with a President during my whole career. She has always been available for personal conferencing (via phone, e-mail or face to face), day-in and day-out. We have truly been teammates in trying to serve the welfare of Tapestry and its 150 members and countless

friends. Every decision we've made has aspired to answer a single question: "What's truly best for the overall worth and dignity of Tapestry?"

Connie has been unfailingly constructive and creative, humorous and playful as well. Please thank her, in your own way, for being our superior Board President during this year and on into the next.

I do not make unilateral decisions, whether on hiring issues or liturgical choices. I am a *consulting* minister; we govern Tapestry's destiny together. Even when I choose sermon topics, I'm thinking of what words might best serve the health Tapestry. That's my aspiration even when I fall short.

I possess a modicum of religious presence and authority, earned after some 43 years, I know that...but I will always consider myself primarily to be a *servant leader*. I lead by serving our shared mission of healing the spirit, repairing the world.

Before we all know it, your fine Ministerial Search team of five will be negotiating the next critical move in Tapestry's history: the selection of your settled minister, to be situated by the summer of 2011.

Thank you for all you have meant to me thus far; and *yes* to all the challenges we might enjoy in the months ahead.

Tom Owen-Towle
June 13, 2010