

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONGREGATIONAL STANDING AND DEVELOPMENT
to the
Metropolitan Association of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ
April 18, 2026

In times past, the work of this committee was primarily that of guiding local churches through the process of seeking United Church of Christ membership, and welcoming them into the fold. We gave standing to churches much as the Committee on Ministry gives standing to ministers. But the opportunities to expand the Association's membership are rare these days, and the needs of our member churches deepen as congregational attendance and resources decline.

In recent years, this committee has struggled to stay active, and most recently had become dormant.

Yvette Wynn changed all that. She convened the elected committee members and eventually persuaded me to serve as our chair for the third time in my 60year ministry in the Association. She had already begun to reach out to our member churches one by one to find out what was going on. In a few cases, that was like turning over a stone and staring at chaos.

Our committee has provided support and advice as Yvette, the Association Board of Directors, the Conference, and often the Cornerstone Fund of the UCC, have sought solutions to local churches discovered to be in crisis. These crises have ranged from an inactive church whose valuable but unrepairable squatter-filled property had been condemned by the City and was about to be given away by the court; to a church facing legal action on its property because of an unpaid water bill; to a church who couldn't find financing to replace its defunct boiler. Solutions are being negotiated in each of these situations.

It was by Yvette's making contact and following up that these crises came to the Association's attention. Her goal, which the Committee has adopted and is participating in, is to make direct contact with every church in the Association. In some cases, this has resulted in churches which have not paid fellowship dues in recent years agreeing to catch up and stay current. In two cases it has resulted in congregations which we understood wished to leave the Association and drop out of the UCC reaffirming their desire to remain in our fellowship. In many other cases, contact has highlighted some level of anxiety about the future of the church.

Thus the Committee's intention: to **identify and promote resources** to which local churches can turn, and to **provide workshops** and other learning experiences which better prepare churches for coping with the future. Three such workshops are being planned, the first to be offered this fall.

One ongoing concern the Committee has identified is the lack of preparation local churches who are probably facing closure have made. The end comes and there is shock, or worse, confusion. There may not even be the leadership left to make proper decisions and arrangements. Our goal is to help such churches prepare, even years in advance, for what the Lutherans call "**Holy Closure**."

Our committee is small with six active members. If the work in which we are engaged appeals to you and is something in which you would like to share, please step forward. There is a place for you at our Zoom table.

Respectfully submitted,

William R. Nye
Chairman Pro-Tem

Committee: Shirley Thomas, Fred Weidman, Anesta Vannoy, Eli Wilson, Forrest Todd Parkinson, Jacob Thomas, Marsha Williams (NY Conference Staff), Yvette Wynn (Metro Assoc-President)