

THE FUTURE WHAT
Conference Minister's Annual Report for 2008
Following up on the Forums for the Future

“Each Forum will be designed by a specific Conference-based planning team, and the “results” of the conversations which ensue will be taken back to the Board of Directors so that they can shape the future ‘what’ of the mission of the Conference.” With that description, we launched our five Forums for the Future in 2006.

Our Forums began with “Strengthening Our UCC Identity,” wove through “Ministry With and To Youth and Young Adults,” “Church Formation & Transformation,” “Faithful Witness for Justice & Peace,” and wound up with “Becoming Evangelists of Generosity.” Along the way we delighted in the “hymns, hoopla, and inspiration” that were present at every Forum, along with upwards of 100 members of the Northern California Nevada Conference, testimonies, questions, conversations, “wise persons from the East,” *i.e.*, Cleveland, and the presentation of ridiculous gifts and the not-so-ridiculous “5 For 5” awards. “But the greatest reward,” we promised participants, “will be the enlivening of your church’s ministry and mission and a strengthening of the support that the Conference can offer you.”

Support. Unite. Nurture. Those are, of course, the three key words of our NCNC mission statement. The Forums definitely supported and united our local churches, and then graciously held open the door for nurture. “Through nurture we become more than we now are, we grow into what God hopes we might become.” And, in April 2007, after we completed the last of the Forums, the Board of Directors and Conference Staff began shaping the “future what” of our mission as a Conference.

Here’s what:

From our Forum on Church Formation & Transformation, our Ready, Set, Grow! training events were launched. Emerging from those events is a new partnership with Local Church Ministries and Paul Nickerson, church consultant, to train a team of church vitality consultants in NCNC; to begin work this year with an initial group of churches ready to grow; and to embark on a Conference plan for new church initiatives.

From our Forum on Ministry To & With Youth and Young Adults came the Board’s actions to form a Visioning Team for our churches’ Youth Ministries and to convene a Young Adult Program Team while maintaining our commitment to and expanding the reach of the life-changing programs of Outdoor Ministries.

From our Forum on Faithful Witness for Justice & Peace two Ministry Networks emerged: Partnership with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and Justice & Peace for Iraq.

Our Forum on Becoming Evangelists of Generosity resulted in the search for a Financial Development Director, who turned out to be Ron Buford. With a beguilingly Biblical drift, the last has become first in that Ron had been our focus presenter for the Forum on UCC Identity, which is where we began. In all likelihood we will find it necessary to expand Ron's title to encompass not only financial development but the kind of nurture that "...inspires us, strengthens us as individual Christians, and as a church.....makes real the intangibles of our seeking, questing, Biblically-based, soaring-into-unexplored-mysteries faith."

For this year, that's what.