

An Affirmation of the Partnership between Local Church Ministries, a Covenanted Ministry of the UCC and The Center for Progressive Renewal

The Board of Directors of Local Church Ministries, a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ, hereby affirms receipt of the report “Assessment of the Center for Progressive Renewal” and wishes to express appreciation and gratitude to Rev. Dr. William McKinney for his work to conduct research and present this comprehensive document.

The Center for Progressive Renewal was founded in 2010 with a three-year grant from the LCM board. The stated purpose of the partnership was “training competent leaders, starting new progressive congregations, and renewing older ones.” Local Church Ministries and the Center for Progressive Renewal have worked closely together for the past three years, achieving significant gains in strengthening the UCC’s overall capacity to support church vitality. Having completed an extensive assessment of this relationship and the quality of the work offered by the Center for Progressive Renewal in September 2012, **this memo serves as a public testimony to Local Church Ministries’ ongoing support of the work of the Center for Progressive Renewal and LCM’s commitment to increase financial support in 2013. It also signifies the Center for Progressive Renewal’s interest in remaining in partnership with Local Church Ministries in the coming year.**

The assessment performed by William McKinney highlighted several helpful observations:

- CPR is viewed as an important new resource to the United Church of Christ and other ecumenical progressive Christian partners. It is seen as filling a void and supplementing the work of LCM in new church development and congregational renewal/transformation.
- To the extent CPR’s mission has evolved beyond recruiting, assessing, training and coaching new and renewing church pastors, this change is appreciated, as is the development of new resources and alternative delivery systems.
- CPR has raised the bar in communicating with clergy with directed, high quality materials.
- CPR has brought a broadened understanding and helped engage in a variety of conversations involving ministers in a full range of careers. It becomes a place for conversation. It’s huge for collaboration and networking....It has brought new dimensions of breadth and depth in developing ministries and leadership and provides insight into what is going on out there in the church and what needs might be.

As we move forward in partnership together, we will need further conversation about how this partnership might evolve based on the needs and goals of both organizations. These conversations will take place in the first quarter of 2013 at a retreat in Atlanta with the CPR Board of Directors and representatives from LCM.

In his assessment, Bill McKinney provided a helpful framework for exploring what this future relationship might look like moving forward. He presented three options for both organizations to consider:

1. **The Outside Model:** The Outside Model is to think of CPR as an outside organization from which LCM might purchase certain resources. This seems close to the founding vision: an Alban Institute for progressive church organizations with the UCC as an important “client.” This is not unlike the early relationship Alban had with the Episcopal Church. Made possible by financial support from various Episcopal agencies and by contracts with Episcopal congregations, Alban evolved into an independent resource center for research, consulting and training and publication.
2. **Inside Model:** The inside model involves further integration of CPR into LCM in which CPR undertakes certain functions on behalf of the UCC. This could take several forms but would recognize that while it might include an ecumenical dimension in its work, CPR would become in effect the church development arm of LCM.
3. **The Alongside Model:** such a relationship could take several forms but would preserve CPR’s independence in the context of a continuing partnership with the United Church of Christ. CPR letterhead and publications might say something like, “CPR is an independent ecumenical resource center for progressive Christian churches in partnership with UCC Local Church Ministries.” It could provide the flexibility to allow CPR and LCM to develop fairly specific annual or biennial agreements regarding work to be performed on behalf of the UCC’s church and leadership development programs. Such a relationship would lodge responsibility for church and leadership development policy-making more clearly within LCM while recognizing CPR as LCM’s agent in providing support to conferences and local churches.

Conversations about which of these models best serves our shared partnership are already underway. The possibilities of what our two organizations can do together are exciting and fairly limitless. What is clear today is that we all affirm the benefits of this relationship and wish to see it continued into the future.