

### A Fascinating Short History of the UCC Ministry, 1941 to 2020:

1. The Reverend Louise Beatty of First Unity in St. Pete began to drive weekly to downtown Clearwater to begin a Unity study group 1941 in homes, offices, and a funeral parlor.
2. Louise called The Reverend Mary Powell, her fellow student with Charles Fillmore, cofounder of Unity School in K.C. to lead the group; Unity-Clearwater moved to a small church building on Turner Street and incorporated as a Church in 1958.
3. After The Reverend Howard Bradford was called to minister here, the present building on Nursery Road was completed in 1971. (That year, Leddy and Randy Schmelig graduated from the University of Missouri in St. Louis; at 22, he was the youngest student minister accepted at Unity School; she served on the Editorial Staff of **Unity** magazine and both worked at Silent Unity; he was ordained in 1974 and invited to minister at Unity of Mt. Carmel in Bettendorf; the couple was called to the ministry of Unity Christ Church of St. Petersburg in 1979 when their son, Dieter, was about months old. (Randy had also been chosen by Unity of Syracuse, where Dell deChant was in the congregation. Dell moved to St. Petersburg soon after the Schmeligs arrived. Later, he and Marilynn deChant settled in Port Richey.
4. After Howard Bradford's retirement from Unity in Clearwater, Mary Powell assisted his successor, The Reverend Nicholas Griffin, until Nick was called into leadership at Unity of Delray Beach in 1981. Leddy and Randy were elected in February, 1981, by the Clearwater congregation. (Leddy had become a Licensed Unity Teacher in 1980; she was licensed as a Unity Minister by exception in 1981 and ordained by the Association of Unity Churches at Unity Village in 1982). Gwen Cohenour (our longtime Minister Emeritus) was a member of UCC and a Licensed Unity Teacher at that time.
5. Leddy and Randy Schmelig were elected as Co-Ministers by our membership in February, 1981. (Dell deChant had joined Unity Christ in St. Pete as Youth Ministry teacher; seven year old Dieter was usually his only student. Dell had studied **Lessons in Truth** with The Reverend Mary Powell). Dell served as Assistant, then Associate Minister here. Leddy conducted the wedding ceremony for Randy and Faye Schmelig in May of 1985; they were inspired to found Unity of Palm Harbor in 1986. Dell, along with Leddy's parents, The Reverends Lowell and Irene Turner, conducted the wedding ceremony for Leddy and Russ Hammock here in December, 1985.
6. Dell was ordained by exception by the Association of Unity Churches in 1989 and served here for nearly 20 years; during that time he became the Chair of the Dept. of Religious Studies at USF in Tampa (where he continues to serve), a well-known and much-revered teacher and scholar in New Thought. Judy Tafelski and her daughters began to attend here about 1987; she had earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at USF. Dell had earned his Bachelor's degree at Tampa College and his Master's degree in religious studies with highest honors from USF. Levi Hammock was born in 1990. Judy and Leddy earned their Masters Degrees in Theological Letters from the Emma Curtis Hopkins Theological Seminary. Leddy earned her Doctor of Ministry at Meadville-Lombard Theological School in Chicago in 2013.
7. Dell deChant and a few other dedicated Truth students from UCC formed the Unity-Progressive Council, a reaffirmation of traditional Unity faith, in 1989--the Centennial Year of the Unity Movement. Early members included Leddy and Russ Hammock, Rob Hammock, Gwen Cohenour, Dieter Randolph, Judy Tafelski, Jane Spicer (who made

peaceful transition in 2020), and about a hundred others. Leddy, Gwen, Dieter, Rob, Judy, and a few others were trained as U-PC Certified Instructors. The Council called for the founding of the Unity-Progressive Theological Seminary in 1992. The first graduating class (1995) included both Rob Hammock and Dieter Randolph, who were ordained along with Dell and Leddy by the U-PC that year. Dell, Leddy, Dieter, Rob, Judy (and later, Ann Luce and Robin Hankins) fulfilled the seminary requirements to become Advanced Certified U-PC Instructors. (Both Dieter and Rob had earned their Associates Degrees from the SPC.) Both Dell, and later Gwen, were among those who served as Dean of U-PTS (later renamed the Emma Curtis Hopkins Theological School; Leddy served as Chair of Pastoral Studies for two decades; most faculty positions were filled by USF instructors. The seminary program closed due to the renovation process of our building after an electrical fire in 2003 (and the hope that Unity School would someday follow through on developing an accredited school). (Gwen and Jane Spicer had organized our Church lending library and the theological library of U-PC / U-PTS.)

8. Both Dieter Randolph and Robert Hammock were appointed as Associate Ministers here at UCC in 1995. In 2009, Leddy requested approval for the formal ordination by U-PC of all remaining active Advanced Certified Instructors of U-PC who had not yet been ordained by the Unity-Progressive Council: Judy Tafelski, Gwen Cohenour, Robin Hankins, and Ann Luce and all four were appointed as Associate Ministers for UCC by our Sr. Minister (as was The Rev. Magie Cook, Life Coach, ordained at Renaissance Unity, Michigan). (Robin, Ann, and Gwen—who in her retirement was installed as “Minister Emeritus” for UCC—have since made transition). UCC acquired the Peace Cottage at 2419 Nursery Road in the fall of 2010 with the help of faith bonds.

9. At the Annual Meeting in February of 2019, our membership gave unanimous consent for our Board of Directors to consider proposals to develop the property according to the Board’s guidance. (The first charter school to bring a proposal to the local school board based on developing the UCC grounds withdrew its proposal to the school board that summer.) At the Annual Meeting of Feb. 23, 2020, The Reverend Randy Schmelig accepted the invitation of our Ministry Team, Board, and membership, to accept the title of Minister Emeritus; he served for over a year.

10. Due to the Corona Virus, UCC ceased in-person gatherings and began to present the ministry online as of March, 2020. Our small but staunch team maintained the building and Tech Team and office staff continued to present the ministry online. Our Annual Meeting of 2022 marked the 41st year since the installation of our Sr. Minister. In the summer of 2021, UCC received a proposal from Southcrest Development on behalf of The Discovery Science Academy, to share the UCC property and build a lovely new building of UCC’s design.

11. In the autumn of 2021, our Board empowered Leddy Hammock to proceed with the Purchase Sale Agreement, which she signed in January of 2022. Construction documents for remodeling the existing UCC Church buildings, building a new classroom building to the north of the present Sanctuary, and constructing a lovely new Church home of UCC’s design were negotiated before our Annual Meeting of 2022. During 2022, UCC cleared its building except for the Sanctuary and lobby, in preparation for Discovery Academy’s planned remodeling of the building. The City of Clearwater finally issued the permits for Southcrest Developers to begin construction on the project.

12. However, by the time we were ready to celebrate another Christmas in our fifty-year-old building, we learned that Southcrest was reneging on its agreement to construct our facility. Attorneys representing UCC are confident that we have a binding agreement in place. Meantime, we are exploring other contractors and with the help of volunteers, will soon going be ready to vacate our worship space (which will be Discovery's new cafeteria, where we can return for services in three months or so). UCC has been welcomed by both Congregation Beth Shalom and Temple B'nai Israel on Belcher to host our Sunday services in the interim. Our UU neighbors across the street will welcome the AA group that has met at UCC for more than a decade. We see a new UCC in 2023! We have come through forty-two years by faith and, through it all, *we are still UCC Strong!*