

### A Fascinating Short History of the UCC Ministry, 1941 to February, 2024:

1. Responding to many requests from Unity students in Clearwater in 1941, The Reverend Louise Beatty of First Unity in St. Pete began to make a weekly drive to begin a study group that began to thrive in a funeral parlor on Osceola Street.
2. Rev. Louise called upon her fellow student, Mary Powell, who had taken classes with her at Unity School in Kansas City taught by Cofounder, Charles Fillmore. Under the leadership of Rev. Mary, the new Unity group incorporated into a Church as "Unity-Clearwater, Inc." in 1958 and purchased a small Seventh Day Adventist Church on Turner Street (that would later be owned by the Serenity Club).
3. Ready for retirement, Rev. Mary welcomed The Reverend Howard Bradford, who was elected by the Unity Church as its new minister. Rev. Howard led the services when Unity began to build its present building in 1971 on Nursery Road. (That year, Leddy and Randy Schmelig graduated from the University of Missouri in St. Louis; at twenty-two, he was the youngest student minister in the Unity program. Leddy served on the Editorial Staff of **Unity** magazine and they both worked at Silent Unity (where Leddy had worked as a teenager in the late 1960's while her parents, The Rev. Lowell and Irene Turner, were in the ministerial program). Upon ordination in 1974, Rev. Randy was invited to lead the ministry at Unity of Davenport (which became Unity of Mt. Carmel in Bettendorf); their son, Dieter, was about seven months old. In 1979, Rev. Randy accepted offers to speak at both Unity of Syracuse, New York (where Dell deChant was in the congregation) and Unity Christ Church of St. Petersburg (an offshoot of First Unity, where Dell's mother, Ruby, had attended). The family chose St. Petersburg. (Dell deChant, feeling called to Unity ministry, moved to St. Pete, where he volunteered in the Youth Ministry; he was the only teacher and seven year old Dieter was his only student. Dell, who had been taught **Lessons in Truth** by Rev. Mary, was soon after called to assist the ministry at UCC.)
4. After Howard Bradford's retirement, Mary Powell returned to assist his successor, The Reverend Nicholas Griffin until Nick was called into leadership at Unity of Delray Beach in December, 1980. Rev. Nick invited Leddy and Randy to guest speak at UCC on two Sundays in a row in January of 1981; two other ministers had applied for succession of leadership. At the Annual Meeting in February of 1981, Leddy and Randy were elected by a vote of 82% of the membership. (Leddy had become a Licensed Unity Teacher in 1980, 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. In May of 1985, Rev. Leddy conducted the wedding ceremony for Randy and Faye Schmelig; 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 had earned his Bachelor's degree at Tampa College summa cum laude and his Master's degree in religious studies with highest honors from USF. He was ordained by exception by the Association of Unity Churches in 1989 and served here for nearly twenty years; during that time he taught at USF in Tampa and became the Chair of the Dept. of Religious Studies (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. Levi Hammock was born in 1990. Judy and Leddy earned their Masters Degrees in Theological Letters from the Emma Curtis Hopkins Theological Seminary housed at UCC. Leddy earned her Doctor of Ministry at Meadville-Lombard Theological School in Chicago in 2013.

7. Dell deChant and a number of 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 underwent lengthy and intensive training to earn recognition 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, and also Dr. Gail Harley (USF professor and author of ***Emma Curtis Hopkins, Forgotten Founder of New Thought***) 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 accidental electrical fire in 2003 (with the hope that Unity School would someday follow through on developing an accredited school). (Gwen and Jane Spicer, trained Library Scientists, 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 (as the final action of the organization) of all remaining active Advanced Certified Instructors of U-PC to be ordained: Judy Tafelski, Gwen Cohenour, Robin Hankins, and Ann Luce; 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 issued Faith Bonds for \$250,000 to dissolve all exterior debt, construct the media loft, and acquire the Peace Cottage property at 2419 Nursery Road in the fall of 2010. By 2022, less than \$50,000 is owed to a few remaining Faith Bond holders.

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 Church 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 classes and services online. Our Annual Meeting of 2021 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> year since the installation of our Sr. Minister.

11. That next summer, 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. In the autumn of 2021, our Board empowered Leddy Hammock to negotiate the Purchase Sale Agreement, which she signed on Feb. 22 of 2022, indicating UCC's acceptance of the purchase price, which was the amount that Southcrest proposed would cover the cost of constructing our new Church Home. Yet, in late October, 2023, though Southcrest's owner had clearly expressed readiness to sign the negotiated contract with UCC, he informed us by phone that his company would not be able to build our building for the purchase price for our five acres; Southcrest abandoned our agreement.

12. A new contractor, Bill Botelho, owner of Custom Building Solutions, was drawn to us and signed a new negotiated contract with UCC in the summer of 2023. Our building contents had been sorted and stored, the Peace Cottage cleared and razed. While still meeting from Sunday to Sunday at the UU Church a few times and, alternately, at Congregation Beth Shalom or Temple B'nai Israel (both on Belcher Rd), our spiritual community is determined to go forward. As of February of '24, our construction permit is still under review by the City of Clearwater, and Principal Emre Akbaba of The Discovery Academy is ready to welcome us back to our former Sanctuary space without charge as soon as the School has its initial certificate of occupancy, while our new building is under construction this Spring. Since the first Unity of Clearwater folks began to meet in Clearwater in 1941, we have stayed together through 83 years. Since UCC was incorporated as a Church (1958) to the present, this congregation has come through more than 66 years by faith and, through it all, *we are still UCC Strong!*