

## A Fascinating Short History of the UCC Ministry, 1941 to February, 2025:

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 classmate from Unity School in Kansas City, who had also attended classes 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 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 served a long career as a well-known and much-revered teacher and scholar in New Thought. Levi Hammock was born in 1990. In 2002, Leddy earned her Masters Degree in Theological Letters from the Emma Curtis Hopkins Theological Seminary housed at UCC. Leddy earned her Doctor of Ministry degree 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, and about a hundred others. Leddy, Gwen, Dieter, Rob, 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, fulfilled the seminary

requirements to become Advanced Certified U-PC Instructors. (Both Dieter and Rob had earned their Associates Degrees from St. Petersburg College. Dell, 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 Cohenour 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. Four of the ordinands were appointed as Associate Ministers for UCC by our Sr. Minister (as was The Rev. Magie Cook, Life Coach, ordained at Renaissance Unity, Michigan. 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. In Dec. of 2025, the remaining four Faith Bonds, totaling just over \$45,000, are due to be paid in full.

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 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 proposed would cover the cost of constructing our new Church Home. Our Peace Cottage and out building were razed on the Church parcel.

12. A new contractor, Bill Botelho, owner of Custom Building Solutions, was drawn to us and signed a negotiated contract with UCC in the summer of 2023. Our building contents had been sorted and stored; the site readied for development. 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 focused on going forward. The Reverends Mary MacKenzie (our UCC Minister of Pastoral Services), made peaceful transition in December of 2024. The Reverends Rob Hammock, Cynthia Mackey, and Sue Riley serve on our Ministry Team. The Reverend Carol Record joined the team, installed as our Minister of Unity Studies, and Lydia Muar joined the team as Prayer Chaplain. As of February of '25, while our Sunday worship services continue to meet on the school campus. Since the first Unity of Clearwater folks began to meet in Clearwater in 1941, we have stayed together through 84 years. Since UCC was incorporated as a Church (1958) to the present, this congregation has come through more than 67 years by faith. We are happy to announce that UCC's construction permit is approved by the City of Clearwater and we are ready to build our new Church home this year! Through it all, *we are still UCC Strong!*