

Dear CSEOA friends,

Many of you know the vision lifted up in our Association's Future Story, recently created in consultation with Rev. Dick Hamm, our Association leadership, and you - individuals and congregations of CSEOA. In a nutshell, to me, what we're striving for goes something like this:

- an association that is less a hierarchy and more a covenantal body,
- an association in which the work is dispersed through a network rather than done from a hub;
- an association in which people (both clergy and laity) are equipped, empowered, enabled, appreciated and held accountable;
- an association that will provide information and spiritual and emotional support for congregations that are willing to address the change needed to make them more effective in the current context.

Actually, those words are lifted directly from the Future Story document itself, so they may be somewhat familiar. Pretty cool, huh? Covenanting, networking, equipping, empowering, transforming. A great vision to capture!

Your Association Council, too, has been inspired by those words and that vision. At our recent retreat together, we reviewed the 12 Key Strategies that were identified in order to begin implementing the Future Story. Some we could check off: done! (Such as "calling part time Association Ministers, training our first class of Association Elders, forming a communications team, launching a finance personnel affinity group, and beginning to streamline governance structures and committees) Some strategies we are continuing to work on, including some of those I just mentioned, taking each further and deeper. Some strategies we've still to target.

What excites me (in case you're interested): affinity groups, Association Elders, and intentional "experiments" towards transformation. More on each of these in the weeks to come. For now, I simply lift up the Council's true hope to engage as many of us as possible in our movement forward, toward the vision we have articulated in our Future Story and toward the yet-to-be-fully-discerned (but thrilling to contemplate!) church of Jesus Christ that's calling us into the future.

Amazing times for the UCC! Thank you for being part of the journey, Central Southeast Ohio Association!

Many blessings,
Susan Towner-Larsen
Moderator, Central Southeast Ohio Association