

MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

MAPPING CONGREGATIONAL EMOTIONAL SYSTEMS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN  
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY LYNN M. ACQUAFONDATA

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## PREFACE

The original name of this mapping tool was Congogram which was intended to link the model to the family systems mapping tool the Genogram. After 2013, I changed the name of this model to Congremap because it is a tool that maps the emotional systems in congregations. “Congre” is for congregation. All references to Congogram have been changed in this version of the thesis to Congremap.

I now use this mapping tool as part of my business, Congremap Congregational Systems Consulting to guide congregations in managing conflict or transition, overcoming trauma, or strengthening healthy systems. This work moves congregations into a vibrant and healthy future by improving communication, developing skills to manage tension and conflict effectively, and enhancing relational strengths.

Lynn M. Acquafondata, November 2023

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work presents a tool for analyzing emotional systems in congregations and their effect on congregational development through a mapping system called a Congremap (c.2012). The tool includes the ability to diagram and analyze the interaction of particular family systems within the congregation in relation to the congregational system as a whole. The goal of creating the tool is to motivate members and leaders of congregations to strive to moderate their own actions and reactions in ways which foster the overall health of their own congregation.

## INTRODUCTION

We human beings lead our lives in relation to those around us. Even when we live apart from others, we are strongly influenced by human systems of all kinds including systems in our families, workplaces, congregations, social organizations, political organizations, neighborhoods, societal structures and more. Systems are created and perpetuated by communities of people. Often individuals act and react within a system with no conscious understanding or conscious choice. Even when individuals reject or move away from a particular system, it continues to influence the person. If we as individuals learn to see relational patterns and intentionally understand and change our own actions and responses, we can affect our own lives and the workings of the communities we are a part of.

One way to increase observation and understanding is through the use of visual tools. Visual tools gather complex information and simplify it so that it can be easily grasped by the eye, and quickly processed in the brain making it easy to comprehend and remember. Diagrams of all types have long been used in the physical and social sciences including graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, flow charts, blueprints, family trees, physical maps, political maps, concept maps, mind maps, organizational diagrams and many more.

Tools have already been developed to help people see human relational patterns and to understand the systems at work in their own families. A comprehensive tool for mapping the intergenerational systems in families is widely used in counseling and medicine. This tool, called a genogram was standardized and publicized in the mid-1980's by Monica McGolderick and

Randy Gerson in collaboration with family therapists and family physicians who already used the tool in their work in various formats.<sup>1</sup> The tool can be used to express the emotional systems of a family in a visual format, allowing for a systematic analysis of relationships. It is now used extensively in the human service and healthcare fields including counseling, social work and medicine. The process of gathering information from an individual or a family and recording it in this detailed visual format helps both the therapist and the client to recognize patterns, and consciously decide what patterns work well and what might benefit from change.<sup>2</sup>

I believe leaders and members of religious organizations could also benefit from a visual tool that would help them recognize patterns within their congregational systems and help them to observe the ways in which these patterns can overlap with the family systems of leaders and members of a congregation.

Though authors such as Peter Steinke, Edwin Friedman, Ronald Richardson and Gilbert Rendle have drawn on Bowen family systems theory to write extensively about the systemic nature of congregational life in which individuals do not act and respond in isolation, but as part of the larger system, their method has been for the most part word centered. They have used Bowen theory to analyze how the family systems of clergy interact with and affect the congregation as a whole and vice versa, and have encouraged clergy and laity to use systems thinking to examine and moderate their actions and reactions in ways which aim to benefit the congregation as a whole. Though some authors use small-scale diagrams to show particular aspects of the

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<sup>1</sup> Monica McGoldrick, Randy Gerson, and Sueli Petry, *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention* [New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008], 1.

<sup>2</sup> Monica McGoldrick, Randy Gerson, and Sueli Petry, *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention*, 3.

emotional life of a congregation, their focus is primarily on written descriptions of processes. Steinke writes extensively about congregational emotional systems and processes, but rarely attempts to visually map out specific congregational systems. When he does use a form of mapping it either relies heavily on words or is more theoretical and not specific to a particular congregation. His “congregational genogram” is in chart format rather than the diagram format used by McGolderick and Gerson in their family genograms. In Steinke’s “congregational genogram”, the rows show various time periods in a congregation’s history. The columns list additions (including new staff, additional membership, new buildings or additions to buildings), deletions (staff and members die, resign or leave; physical structures are destroyed) and stressors (factors which cause stress in the congregation). The chart format does simplify the information, but it relies completely on words and numbers rather than a pictorial or graphic presentation.<sup>3</sup> Steinke does use various diagrams such as one showing the interactions of anxiety and reactivity in a congregation,<sup>4</sup> and another showing a “leader’s being and functioning”.<sup>5</sup> These diagrams give a solid visual picture of actions and reactions that often happen in a congregation; however they are not specific to any particular congregation.

Edwin Friedman uses a few small-scale diagrams and charts to show congregational interactions. His drawing of the right and wrong ways for a clergy person to respond to efforts by congregants to pull him or her into a triangle is a solid visual diagram, but again it is not specific to any particular situation.<sup>6</sup> His chart of “Content issues when clergy is the focus” uses words put into

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<sup>3</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* [Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1996], 35-36.

<sup>4</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* [Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006], 43.

<sup>5</sup> Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* [New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1985], 215.

a category format.<sup>7</sup>

In *A Failure of Nerve*, Friedman focuses on society as a whole rather than congregations in isolation. His diagram of stable and anxious societies visually shows the interaction of fast paced societal changes on various societal systems and how families react with anxiety, causing anxiety to flow back and forth between families and systems within society. This gives a clear visual picture of how anxiety flows in a complex system.<sup>8</sup>

Richardson writes in detail about emotional processes in congregations, but rarely uses diagrams. When he uses diagrams they are sections of genograms applied to a congregational situation. For example, in a simple diagram he shows the triangulation between a father and his son and their pastor.<sup>9</sup> In a more complex diagram he shows the tension between Marie, the president of the women's association at Valley View Church and the worship committee. The diagram includes ways in which the pastor, Roy, allowed himself to take sides and be triangled in the interaction. It also shows how both Roy's and Marie's roles in their families of origin played a role in the interaction. There is nothing in the diagram to distinguish Roy as the pastor. It is necessary to read Richardson's story about the situation to understand Roy's position in the congregation.<sup>10</sup>

Rendle suggests charts that can be used to diagram emotional systems in congregations in his

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<sup>7</sup> Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 206.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* [Bethesda, Maryland: The Edwin Friedman Estate/Trust, 1999], 118-121.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life* [Minneapolis, MN; Fortress Press, 2006], 118.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 32-33.

exercises for leaders.<sup>11</sup> One chart, for example, asks leaders to think about a recent attempt at change in the congregation. Leaders then list resistance towards that change in one column, “information or learnings” related to this resistance in another column, and ideas regarding what to do about the change in another column. His charts provide a way to organize information, but focus completely on words rather than drawings. Even though there are detailed writings on emotional processes in congregations, the diagramming on these processes is thus far limited to relations between at most a handful of people at one moment in time.

Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser expand the use of diagrams to show the systems effects of specific situations at one point in time, and how these impact the congregation as a whole. In one diagram they use reinforcing feedback loop diagrams to show the response of a congregation to the quality of children’s programming at one church.<sup>12</sup> They use a balancing feedback loop diagram to show how one congregation resists change aimed at deepening the spirituality of the congregation.<sup>13</sup> These diagrams do not include the varied actions and reactions of specific individuals within the system.

A comprehensive tool to map emotional systems over the life of the congregation does not yet exist. Understanding patterns and one’s own role in a system allows an individual to make conscious choices about what actions and interactions are productive and what might benefit from change. The visual format of a genogram has aided individuals in understanding these

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<sup>11</sup> Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual Organizational Tools for Leaders* [The Alban Institute, 1998], 73-75, 157-158.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Managing the Congregation: Building Effective Systems to Serve People* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996] 323-325.

<sup>13</sup> Shawchuck and Heuser, *Managing the Congregation*, 330.

patterns in their family life. It should be possible to diagram interactions and processes in a congregation in a similar way, which would have equivalent value to members of congregations.

I therefore set out to develop a tool to map the emotional systems of congregations with as much detail as a genogram uses to show the emotional system of a family. A detailed genogram both shows emotional relationships between individuals and portrays multi-generational processes. I created a system of diagrams and symbols, which portrays a visual of congregational life over its entire history while also showing emotional patterns at specific points in the congregation's history. I have incorporated all of the symbols used in genograms, plus I added many symbols which are specific to congregational life.

The tool, which I have named a Congremap, is designed to be applicable to congregations from a wide variety of religious traditions, denominations and congregational structures. In order to study and test this tool, I worked with three existing congregations and their ministers. Each of the three congregations represents a different religious tradition. I mapped out a detailed Congremap of each congregation and presented it to the congregation. The original diagrams used real names and accurate historical information. In order to use this tool effectively, it is important for participants to share personal perspectives and sometimes personal thoughts and reactions; therefore I promised the congregations anonymity in published reports of this work. In this thesis I have changed the names, dates and major identifying events connected with these congregations and with the lives of their ministers. I have striven to retain the emotional patterns and emotional content of the case studies. This work presents the fictionalized Congremaps from the three congregations I studied. It will explain the process used to gather and analyze the

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information and it will talk about potential uses and applications of the Congremap.

Using a Congremap to study a congregation can provide some insights into patterns which have existed for many years. The tool itself doesn't change anything. It only describes what already exists from a different angle than participants usually use to look at the life and history of their congregation. The process of gathering the information in community can inspire individuals to look at situations differently than they had before, and therefore it can lead to change.

All family systems work is grounded in the concept that no individual acts in isolation, but rather one's emotional actions and reactions are part of larger systems. However each individual only has control over changing his or her role and his or her interactions within a system. No one can change another individual. Because individuals are part of a larger system, when one person changes, it always affects the larger system, but the individual who has made the personal change cannot control how the system will change as a result. The Congremap operates on the same principle. The recognition and naming of a particular pattern of interaction in a congregation can lead to the desire by a group of people for change. However, change will only happen when one individual participant in the system takes the initiative to analyze his or her own particular role in the system and to change his or her own pattern of interacting; then another person analyzes his or her role and makes changes, and then another and another. A leadership team or a particular committee within a congregation can make a group decision to emphasize certain patterns of interaction and let go of other patterns, and to support each other in the process, but in the end, individuals need to follow through or nothing will change. Like a genogram, the Congremap opens doors of recognition, but individuals need to walk through that



door and engage life in a different way if change is to occur. A Congremap operates on the principle of shared responsibility. As individual leaders and members understand more about themselves and their functioning in a congregational system, and as these participants become willing to make appropriate changes in their own functioning, the system as a whole will become healthier.

I hope the tool will motivate participants in congregations, especially clergy and lay leaders, to increase their understanding of relational patterns, and to strive to moderate their own actions and reactions in their congregational and family systems in ways which foster the overall health of their congregations and families.

## *What Does a Congregmap Look Like and Why?*

### **Spiral Shape**

In a genogram, several generations can be mapped out in detail on one page. Because congregations are much more complicated than individual families, multiple views are needed. The basic Congregmap diagram is in the shape of a spiral with the formation of the congregation placed at the center of the spiral and the most recent history on the outer ring. Future years can be portrayed by extending the spiral into more and more loops. Here is an example of a completed congregational spiral for West Coast UU Church from its formation in 1949 through the year 2012. At this point, only pay attention to the spiral shape. The details can be viewed later in Appendix B, figure B.1.

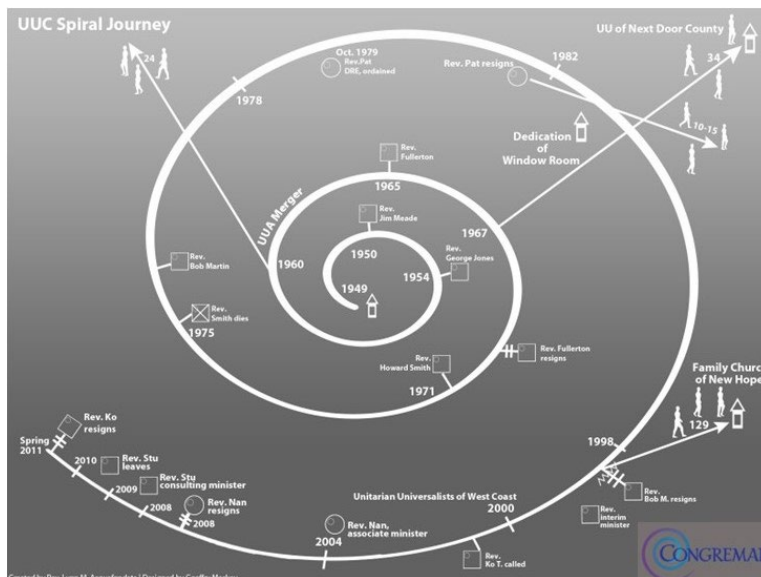


Figure 1. Spiral shape.

I chose the spiral format as opposed to a linear format to give a visual representation of systems thinking. The spiral format shows a congregation's history and emotional processes in a continuing journey, full of movement, cycles and interconnections over time. The format is

designed to show that we can't separate the beginnings of a congregation's history and all that has occurred over the years, from what is taking place in the congregation's present experience. It is also designed to show that congregations, like the rest of life, are not static but always evolving. Change and development continue to take place in one way or another throughout the life of a congregation.

### **Snapshots**

Multiple views of the spiral are needed, because it is not possible to map extensive detail on the spiral diagram in a way that would be readable and useful for visual analysis. Therefore, a Congremap makes use of snapshots. A snapshot is a detailed view of one period of time from the life of the congregation. There is no set time period reflected in each snapshot. A snapshot could reflect only one year if there were significant events and/or a lot of high intensity interaction during that time period, or it could highlight five, 10, even 20 years. A typical snapshot encompasses three to eight years. A snapshot is an enlarged view of one section of the larger spiral which allows for considerably more detail to be included. The spiral diagram loops around; this means that unlike a typical linear timeline, some of the snapshots will move in time from right to left, or from bottom to top, or from top to bottom, rather than following the traditional left to right horizontal timeline. This format is purposely designed so that it will tap into the more visual, artistic and creative side of the human brain, expanding the viewer's perspective. This is balanced with a detailed, written, rational analysis which is also part of the Congremap.

Here are three examples of snapshots in different orientations. At this point, it would be helpful to focus only on the orientation of the main line rather than on the details included in the

diagram. The details, shown in Appendix B, will be explained in the next section. All three of these examples come from the WCUUC spiral. In the first example, the timeline shows the years 1983 to 1989. The timeline runs from the left side of the page to the right as would normally be expected in an English timeline. The second snapshot shows the years 1975 to 1978. It runs from the bottom of the page to the top of the page because that orientation matches the placement of that time period in the larger WCUUC Spiral. The final snapshot, showing the years 2003 to 2006, runs from the right side of the page to the left, opposite of the orientation of a typical English timeline. The snapshot is diagrammed this way in conjunction with its location in the larger WCUUC spiral.

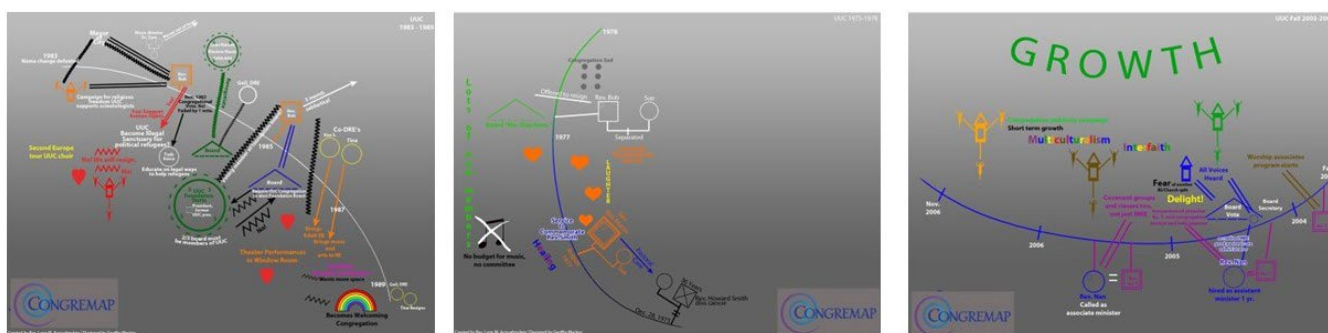


Figure 2. Orientation of the timeline in WCUUC diagrams for 1983-1989, 1975-1978 and 2003-2006.

A complete Congremap includes the main spiral diagram and individual snapshot diagrams which cover all the time periods included in the larger spiral. While it is important when using a Congremap to map out at least a rough version of the larger spiral and more than one snapshot, a complete Congremap is not necessarily needed for every situation in which this tool will be used. Just as a therapist may choose to utilize a genogram by mapping out a simple two-generation map of an individual's family or a very detailed three to six generation diagram depending on the

needs of the particular client, a Congremap can be mapped and analyzed in varying degrees of detail based on the goals of congregation at that time.

### **Symbols**

The symbols on a Congremap are designed to represent roles and relationships between people, that are common to congregational life. Some of the symbols are drawn directly from the genogram. Others have been created for use in this model. Any relevant symbols from the genogram model may be used. Additional symbols can be created to meet future diagramming needs, which are not addressed through these symbols. The key to the symbols for a Congremap includes symbols for a minister, a denomination, a congregation, a called minister, the end of a ministry, a committee, a congregational board, people leaving a congregation and various other symbols related to congregational life. In addition to the emotional systems symbols used in a genogram diagram, I have added a symbol for anxious or anxiety. The complete key is shown in figure A-1.

### **Interfaith Application**

The Congremap can be used in a wide variety of different religious traditions, and in different denominations within a religion. In order to make this possible, two requirements must be met. First, the tool needs to be able to map a wide variety of congregational structures. In order to ensure its applicability to multiple settings, I tested the Congremap on congregations from three different religious traditions. Second, the tool itself cannot be based in a theological structure or perspective, but it needs to be able to incorporate significant theological perspectives from the tradition of the congregation which is being mapped. This is why no theological terms are used or portrayed in the basic symbols. Theological viewpoints can be added in the words used on the

diagrams. In addition a theological component can be included in the written analysis of the diagrams as appropriate and when desired.

### **Color**

Colors are used in the Congremap to portray certain qualities and emotions. The colors chosen for the diagrams in this thesis and the meanings assigned to those colors represent meanings of colors as they are generally used and understood in Western society. See figure A.2. Because people from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds view color meanings from a variety of perspectives, I recommend that participants agree on a key to the color meanings before the Congremap process begins. It is important that meanings are not randomly assigned, but that the majority of people in the congregation can fairly easily identify each color with its chosen meaning. At the same time, it is important that there isn't a significant subgroup who have a strong negative reaction to a particular meaning assigned to a particular color. If agreement cannot be reached in a timely manner, that in itself is an emotional process to portray in the Congremap.

In addition, care has been taken to choose enough different colors to add a detailed range of emotion to the diagrams, without overwhelming the viewer with so much detail and complexity that the tool becomes cumbersome; therefore it is best not to add to the list of colors and meanings used in a Congremap. If less detail is needed in certain areas for a particular congregation, a smaller color palette could be used.

### **Placement of Symbols**

Generally in each snapshot, the ministers and the staff members of a congregation and other

religious professionals are mapped on one side of the line, while the lay people including the board, committees and individuals from the congregation are mapped on the other side of the line. Since the orientation of the line changes in the various snapshots due to the spiral shape of the main diagram, it does not matter which side of the line is used for the staff and which for the laity, and it can change from snapshot to snapshot.

### **Computer Formatting of Symbols**

The computer-formatted version of these Congremaps is designed to be used in PowerPoint presentations. At this point, mapping the symbols in a computer version of the diagrams requires a trained graphic artist. I hired a graphic artist, Geoffry Mackey, to create the computer version of the diagrams presented in this thesis. He mapped the diagrams using the program Adobe Creative Suite CS5.5 which is prohibitively expensive and takes training to use. All of my original drawings were done with color markers on poster paper. I photographed those diagrams and emailed them to Mr. Mackey with detailed notes regarding wording and colors. Every time I wish to make a change in one of the diagrams, I have to send the requested changes to Mr. Mackey. As a result, the computer version of the tool is time consuming and expensive to use at this point in time. I hope that eventually a user-friendly computer tool will be designed for mapping Congremaps. For now, people wishing to use this tool can utilize the old fashioned method of poster board and markers. Photographs of carefully hand drawn posters can be assembled for a PowerPoint presentation.

## *How to Use a Congremap*

### **Outside Facilitator**

An outside facilitator who is not in any way a part of the congregational system is needed to facilitate the process of gathering information and mapping out a Congremap. This facilitator cannot be a past or present minister or lay leader from the congregation, or a past or present member of the congregation or a non-participating family member of a congregant. Even a congregation member who only attends worship services is part of the system. The facilitator could be a member of a neighboring congregation, as long as that congregation is not a recent spin off of the congregation being studied. Ideally the facilitator will have some knowledge of congregational systems, and understand the basics of Bowen Theory.

### **Gathering Information**

The process of gathering information is part of the tool. Congregants gain insight from the questions asked, and from hearing what they personally choose to share in relation to what other participants choose to share. A Congremap cannot be created by a single individual, nor can it be created by three or four people alone. The value of the tool comes in hearing and mapping out a variety of perspectives and understandings of events and people's actions and reactions in relation to those events and happenings.

The tool is only as detailed, accurate and in depth as the information participants are willing to share during the process of gathering information. It is also only as detailed and accurate as the consultant's ability to listen very closely to all that is shared. The Congremap is always a work in progress. Additional perspectives and further details can always be added or changed.



In order to create the Congremaps presented in this thesis, I spent time with each congregation on three separate weekends.

### **First Visit: Goals**

On the first visit to each congregation I worked to build trust with congregation leaders and assess the suitability of the site. The goals of the first visit were:

- 1) To introduce myself and the Congremap tool and to explain the process that would be used to create a Congremap
- 2) To develop relationships with the ministers and lay leaders
- 3) To evaluate the potential to access the depth of information needed to create the Congremap, and to discern the congregation's interest in participating

To accomplish these goals, I met with the minister, board members and other interested congregants for dinner on Friday night. After the dinner I did a presentation about the Congremap and answered questions. During the weekend, I met one-on-one with the senior minister of the congregation, met with a group of lay leaders from the congregation, gathered written histories of the congregation and diagrams of church structure, attended a Sunday service and coffee hour, received a guided tour of the building and grounds, and attended a church function taking place that weekend.

### **First visit: Meeting with the Minister**

During the meeting with the senior minister I asked him or her to share the story of his/her call to the congregation, talk about how that related to their previous life and calling, and describe how his/her ministry and life has progressed since then.

### **First Visit: Meeting with Church Leaders**

I spent approximately two hours with church leaders at each congregation. I asked ministers and board chairs to invite people who are or had been either official or unofficial leaders in the congregation, as well as people who had been in the congregation for a long time and could share details about the history. During this time, I asked those gathered to share key events from the history of the congregation which have led the congregation to where it is at this point in time. I not only asked for details about what happened, but I encouraged participants to share from their own perspective what they had seen or heard about the actions and reactions and interactions of people who were involved in the events. I encouraged participants to share their own perspective and interpretation even if it was different from what had already been shared. I took notes on everything, paying particular attention to how willing people were to talk, and to listen to different perspectives. At the Unitarian Universalist congregation seven people participated. Each had been involved in leadership at various times over the years. One was a founding member. At the Episcopal Church six people participated. Most of them were current members of the vestry. At Unity 11 members participated including the minister. Five had been in the congregation for more than 20 years. Participants from all three congregations said that they gained insights into their congregation through this process.

### **Consent Forms**

In order to ensure confidentiality in this research, I required the ministers, every participant in the information gathering groups, and all the people who participated in individual meetings to sign a consent form. The consent form explained the nature of the research and let them know that I would not share their names or the identity of their congregation in the thesis or in any

subsequent published materials. I also let them know that I would share names and identities in the presentation I would give to their congregation; however I would not share any personal details from individual interviews, which had not already been shared with the congregation as a whole. [See Appendix D.]

### **Second Visit: Goals**

The goals of the second visit were to gather detailed information about the emotional systems in the congregation and to explore the ways in which a congregational emotional system may or may not relate to the emotional systems of families within the congregation. To accomplish these goals I met with a group from the congregation, and set up individual meetings with the minister(s), with people who participated in the group meetings, and with some other members who chose to participate. Some people chose to participate in those meetings as couples.

### **Second Visit: Preparation**

Before the second visit at each congregation, I read through the written history and notes from the first visit and assembled a rough time line with key events. I put the time line on a series of sheets of poster paper broken down by key time periods. At this point I did not attempt to put the timeline in a spiral format. I asked ministers and board chairs to set aside a two-hour block of time for me to meet with official and unofficial leaders of the congregation who represented various times in the congregation's history. I asked them to specifically invite people who had been involved in decision making in the congregation over the years and those who had been involved in shaping the congregation. I suggested this could include founding members and long time members, newer members who had been involved in recent leadership, program staff, board of trustees, committee chairs, church historians, ministers and anyone else who they considered

official or unofficial leaders in the congregation in past years or at present. In addition, the meetings were posted in newsletters and announced at the services, and were open to anyone who wanted to come. I asked for people to sign up ahead of time so that I would have the option to arrange for several meetings if so many people signed up that they wouldn't each be able to participate.

### **Second Visit: Meeting with congregation**

I scheduled a group meeting at each congregation of 1 ½ to two hours. I began the meeting by asking participants to use a blank sheet of paper to write a description of their own involvement in the congregation, using either words or pictures, or a timeline. I had colored markers available and invited them to choose colors, which expressed their feelings regarding their involvement. I told them these papers would be for their personal reference; I would not ask them to hand them in or share them with the group. Some participants did choose to give those notes to me at the end of the session.

During these meetings I invited participants to share in a similar fashion to the first weekend, but this time I focused on specific key time periods and events. I asked for a lot of detail. I encouraged people to share their perspective on key events in the history of the congregation and to relate how they and others responded and interacted with each other at those times. In addition, I asked them to listen as others shared perspectives, which might differ from their own. As people spoke, I took notes with markers on the poster sheets for all to see. I experimented with asking participants to share which color expressed their feelings about the event and writing the notes in that color. This worked well in some cases. Other people weren't at all interested in color.

I held two small group meetings at the UU congregation. Seven people participated at the first meeting. Most had been involved when the previous minister served the congregation, and they focused heavily on that time period. A lot of negative energy was stirred up, which was difficult for some. I asked that the second meeting focus specifically on all that had happened in the congregation since 1998, after the tension-filled departure of the previous minister. Eleven people participated.

I held three group meetings at the Unity church congregation. On Friday night, 12 people attended, including the minister and her husband. On Saturday afternoon, seven people participated including the minister. The Saturday session was less helpful since many newer members participated who could not share a depth of history or participate actively when others did share more depth. On Sunday I specifically asked for people to gather who had been in the congregation at the time of the fire. This time six people participated including people who had been leaders at the time and a young woman who had been in the youth group at that time. They shared a depth of information and perspectives.

At the Episcopal congregation I held only one group meeting. Thirteen people participated including the minister. Some had been in the congregation for decades; others were more recent members. They all actively participated. I could have benefited from an additional small group session with that congregation in order to gather more details on interactions between people.

If I were to do this work as a congregational consultant I would ask for two to four group meetings focusing on different time periods. I found that certain individuals focused on specific

time periods more than others depending on when they were involved in leadership and when events happened that had a large impact of their own life. When I asked for a group to gather at Unity Church and specifically talk with the time period during and immediately after the fire, a group of people attended who had been heavily involved during that time period and had a lot to share. On the other hand, at a group meeting the day before, it was hard to get much information about the time period during the fire because the participants either weren't involved in the congregation at the time of the fire or they were more interested in talking about events that happened in the earlier years. Ideally groups would consist of 10 to 15 participants. This allows each participant to share in depth. If more people want to be involved, I could develop a format which would include asking participants to write down additional thoughts at the end of the session and hand in their comments to me. I would aim to have as many people as possible share in the context of the group before announcing that I would seek additional comments in writing because the back and forth conversation is an important part of the process. With a larger number of participants however, people may not be able to share all they want to share without being given the chance for additional written comments.

### **Second Visit: Individual meetings**

The individual meetings were designed to explore the ways in which a congregational emotional system might relate to the emotional systems of families within the congregation. To accomplish this I met with individuals and couples. I asked each person a series of questions about their experience and involvement in the congregation, their emotional connection to the congregation, their immediate family and their extended family. [See Appendix E.] At the first congregation, I scheduled the meetings for half hour each with a 15 minute "break" between to allow for the unexpected. Often the interviews continued through the 15-minute break. When I suggested

scheduling hour-long individual interviews at the second congregation, leaders felt that would be intimidating, so I stuck with the previous schedule. At the third congregation I asked for 40-minute interviews with a 20-minute break between interviews. This format worked well. Some interviews ended in 40 minutes. Some interviews ran the whole hour. In all cases I was able to ask for and receive detailed answers to all the relevant questions. Some participants lived alone and did not have what they considered immediate family; therefore I did not ask the questions in that section.

### **Third Visit: Preparation**

After the second visit with each congregation, I looked over notes and decided whether it would be helpful to attempt to contact one or more previous ministers or leaders of the congregation. In the cases in which I decided to conduct additional interviews, I scheduled a phone interview. I received consent forms from these individuals before interviewing them. When I did additional interviews with previous ministers and staff, I was careful not to share anything with the current congregation, which was not public knowledge or that had not already been said in one form or another.

A lot of time could be spent interviewing additional participants in the history of the congregation who are no longer a part of the congregation. A congregational consultant would need to decide how many additional interviews to do based on the goals of the congregation. Congregational goals may focus on a certain time period or on certain types of interactions. For this thesis, I was interested in testing the tool. Could I map out emotional systems of a congregation from a series of interviews in a way that would be useful to the congregation? It

was not necessary to interview all the previous ministers and staff. After conducting additional interviews, I compiled the information I had gathered in Congremap format and put together a PowerPoint presentation.

### **Third Visit: Presentation and Discussion**

At each congregation I spent between 45 minutes and two hours with the minister and leaders of the congregation. I presented the PowerPoint of the diagrams I had created, and my preliminary analysis of the patterns I observed in the diagrams, as well as changes I noticed over the course of their history. I reminded them that the tool itself doesn't change anything; it simply presents the life and history of a congregation from a different angle. I presented my observations to encourage leaders and members to think about questions such as these:

What characterizes your congregation?

What patterns can you observe?

What role have you played or do you currently play?

Then I engaged the group in discussion of their own analysis of the patterns based on the diagrams. I wrote down their additional insights regarding events and emotional responses.

I was only given a 45-minute time slot at a retreat of the board of trustees to present my analysis to the UU congregation. Unfortunately, the minister was called out for an emergency and couldn't participate. The limited time frame did not allow the board to provide much additional input to my analysis. From my experience doing this research, a 1 ½- 2 hour time frame works best for the final presentation/discussion.



At Unity West, I presented the diagrams to a group of 11 people on Saturday afternoon, and received additional input and insights. We met for a full hour and a half plus lunch. This time frame worked well. On Sunday morning, I joined the minister during the worship service to present an overview of the research. I showed the diagrams to the congregation and gave my analysis of patterns of interaction over the years. The presentations sparked rich conversation.

Rev. Eva described the whole Congremap experience this way:

“The invitation by The Reverend Lynn Acquafondata for our congregants to come together to share insights and ideas about the history of our spiritual family for her research brought a new level of connectedness to the congregation. As is common in many other spiritual communities, there tends to be a certain amount of migration of individuals -- perhaps especially in a tourist area such as ours -- and we find that we are a blend of both longtime participants and relative newcomers to our group. It is unique for a spiritual community of any size to have the same senior minister for more than thirty years, and yet I seem to have lived several "lifetimes" during these three decades. It was interesting to see which congregants came to us during these various "incarnations," and especially invigorating to see them sharing observations and ideas together. A few had "settled" here before I arrived, and could share their overview of before and after the congregational "common era." But most had arrived at some point in the process and were much intrigued to hear about the life and times of our church in former times. We were able to witness together how far we'd come. In three decades, a great deal of change takes place. Just as grandchildren gain a broader sense of identity by listening to the tales of their grandparents, generations of churchgoers often listened with wonder at tales of the former days. I believe that many felt more "a part of something" larger than its parts through this experience. It is said that generational transition can take generations. This sort of sharing, however, gently guided and respectfully transmitted, nurtured a sense of family, of oneness, of a shared journey. I believe that this bonding brought forth a stronger sense of "we." As the Master taught, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Gathering around the "hearth" of appreciative, encouraging inquiry, our people looked into the "campfire" of wonder together and across the firelight into each others' eyes. In the midst, we found something greater than an assortment of individuals. We found that we have come a long way together, and that progress in each individual journey brings all of us further down the path.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rev. Eva Cole, email, September 20, 2012.

At St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, I met with 36 people including the minister, for 1 ½ hours following a Sunday service. I had some technical difficulties with the PowerPoint, but was able to have the diagrams printed out for those gathered. I presented an overview of the research including showing the diagrams and giving my analysis of patterns. Those gathered shared additional information about the emotional systems in the congregation over the years. In addition, I decided to interview a previous minister by phone. I incorporated the extra information from those conversations into my final analysis.

### **After Third Visit: Follow-up with Congregation**

After the third visit, I revised some of the diagrams and wrote up a detailed analysis. In two cases I did an additional interview with a previous leader. I presented the final report through email, due to the limitations of distance.

### *Analyzing a Congremap*

Analysis of a Congremap aims at identifying patterns of behavior, response and interaction in a congregation. I begin analysis of a Congremap by organizing the diagrams in chronological order in PowerPoint format. This makes it easy to flip back and forth between the snapshots. Next, I choose a specific element, for example, tension. I look through all the diagrams paying attention to all the places I see the symbol for tension. I notice if there are any patterns related to that element. There are many ways of doing an analysis. I like to start with a big picture perspective. I do this by flipping through the diagrams one after another, fairly quickly, looking for only one element. In this way, I get a sense of how one element is more present in one time period than another, or how one element manifests in one way during one time period, and another way later on. For example, I often start an analysis by flipping through the diagrams and noting the range of colors used in each time period. Are there certain colors that appear over and over? Is there a color that only appears in only one place or in only one time period? I will give examples of this in the detailed analyses later in the thesis. After I get a big picture perspective, I take that same element and look for that element in shorter time periods, for example a decade or the length of one clergyperson's tenure. Again I look for patterns within that time period. Next, I look at the same element during a specific situation or event. What else is happening when a specific color appears or when the tension symbol appears? Next, I move to another time frame and repeat the process. After I go through all the time periods on a detailed level, I go back to the big picture view by flipping more quickly through the diagrams, looking for the same element. This time I notice whether I now see a pattern on a big picture level that I had overlooked before when examining the diagrams on a more detailed level. I go back and forth between the big picture view and the detailed view as many times as needed. With the element of color, I look for the

range of colors, and then I choose one color that appears often, for example dark green, which symbolizes money. I repeat the process of going from a big picture analysis to a detailed view and back to the picture analysis, as many times as needed to get a good sense of what patterns might exist regarding that one color.

There following are the elements I look for. There is not one correct method, but I generally find it most helpful to look for elements in the following order:

**Colors:** Look for the range of colors in each snapshot. Notice specific colors that repeat over and over. Go through the diagrams looking for only one color.

**Emotional symbols** (tension, closeness, emotional distance, anxiety): Start by looking for the zigzag lines of the tension symbol in each snapshot. Notice when the symbol occurs and look for patterns of interaction when that symbol appears. Next, look for the parallel lines indicating a close relationship. Notice when the symbol occurs and look for patterns of interaction around it. Repeat with the other emotional symbols.

**Significant events** (coming and going of ministers, congregational splits, tragedies, celebrations): Notice what interactions occur around significant events. Are there similar responses or interactions in relation to one kind of event? Are there similar responses or interactions that precede one kind of event such as a congregational split? Are certain patterns of behavior related only to a particular type of event, or to one time period, or do they occur over the entire life of the congregation? If there is a change in a pattern at one point in time, can I notice anything preceding the event or during that event that might have triggered a change in response?

**Interactions:** Look for patterns in interactions between people in one role with people in another role. Look for patterns between people in similar roles. Look for patterns of behavior exhibited by one person in his or her interactions with the congregation and with his or her personal family. If the diagram is mapped out in enough detail regarding this one person, can I determine if this person interacts in similar ways in his or her current life and in his or her childhood? Are there distinct differences between that person's interactions at the congregation and at home, or in different time periods?

### **Case Study A: West Coast Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

The diagrams for Case Study A are included in Appendix A. As I present an analysis based on the WCUUC Congremap, please refer to these diagrams. I started analysis of WCUUC by flipping through the snapshots and noticing the range of colors used in each diagram. The colors give an overall sense of the emotion and intensity of emotion in each time period. In the period from 1975-1982 there is a lot of light green for growth and orange for creativity. See figures B.3 and B.4. Starting in 1983, dark green, the symbol for money becomes more prominent and red, showing passion or anger shows up more often. See figure B.5. In the years from 1990 to 1998, red, the color of anger and passion is prominent, as well as dark green for money. See figure B.6. The colors are much more subdued in 1998 and 1999 with some blue mixed in which denotes healing and peace. See figure B.7. From 1999 to 2007 there is a vibrant rainbow of colors with lots of blue starting at 2003. See figures B.8 and B.9. At the end of 2007 when tragedy strikes, the colors become somber accentuated by red. See figure B.10. Rainbow colors begin to return in 2008. See figure B.11.

I continue to follow the process described above, moving to analysis of the emotional symbols, then to significant events and finally to interactions between people. Some clear patterns emerge.

### **Resilience**

WCUUC has dealt with some very difficult and painful situations over the years including the death of two ministers (1954 and 1975), two major split offs and the tragic Christmas Eve car crash outside the church that killed five members in 2006. In all cases the congregation worked through the situations, and found ways to heal and move forward in new and positive ways. After the death of the 36-year-old Rev. Smith to cancer in 1975, the congregation waited seven months, then welcomed a new minister (Rev. Bob Martin). The congregation allowed Bob to lead a healing process and then to partner with the congregation for 20 years. After the Director of Religious Education, Pat George, left in 1980 with a group of members from the congregation, the congregation moved forward with the building of the Nature Window Room and took the congregation in new directions. When severe tensions developed ten years later, leading to a strongly divided and contentious congregation, the resignation of the minister and the resignation of a large segment of the church including the DRE who split off to form a new congregation, this congregation again found a way forward. WCUUC went through a healing process which led to the congregation's ability only two years later to call Rev. Ko Tanaka who stayed for 10 years before leaving to take a position at the UUA. His tenure brought the congregation together in new and peaceful ways.

## **Creativity**

Throughout the years, but especially from the years of Rev. Bob Martin's ministry forward, this congregation has undertaken highly creative projects and used creative approaches to address problems. As can be expected of the use of creativity in general, some of the projects and approaches have been more warmly welcomed by the majority of the congregation than others, but there is no denying that creativity has been a key component of the leadership and orientation of this congregation through the years. Examples of this congregation's creativity include:

- Many creative social justice initiatives (some which worked well and others which didn't succeed)
- The building of the Nature Window Room and the many artistic and environmental programs hosted in the Nature Window Room over the years
- The boards' decisions in 1968 and 1991 to support their minister in taking a part-time job outside of the congregation as a way to deal with financial difficulties
- The formation of The Foundation.

## **Central Role of the Minister**

Ministers have historically had a lot of influence in this congregation. A clear example of this took place in the early years during the ministry of Rev. George Jones. In 1959 Rev. Jones personally opposed the merger of Unitarianism and Universalism. The congregation voted overwhelmingly against merger. A year later, Rev. Jones changed his mind and became a supporter of merger. The congregation voted again. This time the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of merger. This pattern of strong ministerial influence continued in various ways through the years. The minister has often been the person to initiate changes and projects. Until Rev.

Ko's ministry, the minister usually initiated social justice. Before Rev. Ko, those who were interested in social justice joined the minister. Rev. Ko has attempted to give power back to the congregation. This has worked to a certain extent especially through programs such as the lay pastoral caregivers and the worship associates. The congregation still turns to Rev. Ko for approval and to ask his opinion even when it involves areas which are the responsibility of the congregation rather than the minister.

It could be that this power which is given to ministers in this congregation and the very central role ministers have played is a part of the reason why the "ghost" of Rev. Bob Martin is still present in the background consciousness of the congregation. When I talk about a "ghost", I mean that some members of the congregation still give negative influential power to Rev. Bob. The consciousness of his presence and influence is still there in the background. This is clear when I hear people today who still reflect on all that happened during Bob's ministry with quite a bit of strong emotion 15 years later.

### **Unhappy Partings with Ministers**

Of seven settled ministers: two died in office (1954 and 1975), one had a negotiated resignation (1998) and two left for financial reasons (1972, 2008). The reasons for the departure of Rev. Jones in 1965 were not clear in the written history.

Rev. Ko left in 2010 to serve the UUA. This was the first time that a parting with a minister could be considered a "happy" parting. The announcement of his departure was greeted with appropriate sadness, but also with understanding, acceptance, and a sense of pride in his



accomplishments and the joint accomplishments of minister and congregation.

### **Areas of Tension**

Three major areas of congregational life have repeatedly caused tension in the congregation over the years. These areas are:

- Money, often connected in one way or another to the congregation's relationship with a minister
- Children
- Social justice

Tension in a congregation is not necessarily a bad thing. It is energy, which can be directed in many different ways. Some ways in which tension is used and directed can further the health and development of a congregation, other ways can be potentially destructive. The Congremap analysis of WCUUC shows this congregation tends to direct tension in one or more of the following ways:

- Engaging in a new initiative, which directs the energy towards a positive goal. This method of focusing tension has been used with the building of The Nature Window Room (1982), the formation of The Foundation (the 1980's), and the hiring of an associate minister (2004).
- Factions and split offs which are symbolized by a large arrow with people on it that points away from the congregation. Going through the diagrams there are five times in the history of this congregation in which groups of people from the congregation responded to tension by splitting off to form their own congregation or join another one.

This happened in 1962 in response to tension over money and the minister's salary; in 1967 over social action issues, when a group who had been close to the previous minister left the congregation; in 1980 when a group close to the director/minister of religious education left, and in 1998 in response to the resignation of the minister and the high level of tension in the congregation. In 2003, five people responded to the tension over how to use the large bequest given to the congregation by resigning.

- Reaching out for help and support from experts outside the congregation. This pattern began during the ministry of Rev. Bob Martin. Most often this is seen in the diagrams as a symbol for the denomination with a line labeled "mediation" or "consultant".

## **Money**

There has often been tension in the congregation over the minister's salary, and there has consistently been tension over money in one way or another when a minister leaves. In order to analyze this tension using the Congremap, one can look through all the snapshot diagrams and notice where the color dark green, representing money, is used. Every time dark green appears, there are tension lines nearby. Significantly, groups of people leaving the congregation or a minister leaving also often appear when there is tension regarding money in the congregation.

In 1962, opposition to an increase in the minister's salary led to 24 members deciding to leave the church. In 1969 the congregation was having financial troubles and the board was paying only half of the minister's salary. This led Rev. Fullerton to resign. In the 1990s intense tension developed over the minister's salary and retirement package. Tension also circled around the financial role of The Foundation in relation to the congregation. The formation of the Foundation

could be viewed as a creative approach to dealing with financial issues, or it could be seen as a way for a group of people to pull back from full participation in the congregation, not engaging in a split off, but holding back financial participation. Members of the congregation disagreed, but the brunt of the tension was directed towards the minister. The way in which these financial tensions were handled in the 1990s, played a significant role in the resignation of the minister. Financial tension escalated after Rev. Martin's departure focusing on his severance package. These financial tensions were also a part of what led to the split off of 129 members, including the DRE who formed a new congregation. Again in 2008, associate minister, Rev. Nan left in large part because it was not clear there would be enough money to continue paying her salary. Many people responded with hurt and upset, and did not connect her decision to leave with finances. In general when tension with money occurs in this congregation, a group of people in the congregation either resigns or pulls back from participation or forms factions in the congregation. Significantly Rev. Ko's resignation in 2011 did not involve any financial tension.

## **Children**

Throughout most of the history of the congregation, the religious education program grows and develops and attracts a lot of people and then some kind of major tension breaks out between the religious education program and the congregation and the program declines again. This can be seen clearly by looking through the snapshot diagrams for the symbol for RE committee (a small circle with people inside, labeled "RE committee"), and by looking for symbols for the religious education directors and RE ministers.

There have been two split offs in the congregation in which a group of families left with a

director of religious education. In the late 1970's Rev. Pat George gained a large following in the congregation, then she resigned her position as Minister of Religious Education in 1980 due in large part to conflict with the minister, though there may have been other tensions as well. When she left the church along with a group of families who had children in the RE program, the religious education program went from 107 children to 63 children. The program remained at this lower level of attendance for many years. Instead of wallowing in pity or blame or lingering disappointment, the congregation responded to the tension of the split off by focusing energy on a major creative undertaking. This can be seen in the color orange for creativity and light green for growth. The congregation focused their energy on a plan being developed by Rev. Martin and Dr. Tom to build the Nature Window Room. The Nature Window Room opened within two years and the congregation's budget increased by \$59,000.

During the late 1990's, extreme tension developed in the congregation. Some of the tension was directed towards the RE program, most of the tension was directed towards the minister. In 1995, tension developed between WCUUC and the district RE program regarding a situation at a youth conference. The church board responded with one of the congregation's usual patterns, by cutting off connection with the district and not paying dues for two years. The picture of this interaction is a little hard to find in the diagram because so much else going on at that point. See figure B-6. In 1995, there is a small symbol for committee, and a symbol for the church board, as well as a symbol for the denomination (three church buildings next to each other with circles over the top of each.) The symbol for a cut off relationship is used between the church board and the denomination. A time period like the one between 1990 and 1998 which has so much emotional intensity and so much going on at once could be broken down into even smaller, more

detailed diagrams. This could help a congregation to focus more specifically on interactions and patterns during that decade.

During this period in the 1990's the minister had a close working relationship with the DRE and had a lot of support from families with children in the congregation. When Rev. Martin was forced to resign in 1998, many families in the religious education program were upset. In the fall, the board gave a vote of no confidence to Kim S., the director of religious education. She resigned shortly after and joined the families with children who left and formed a new congregation. Those remaining in the congregation had plenty of anger and blame and great sadness as a result of this split off, but they also directed energy into choosing to seek help by calling an accredited interim minister to guide the congregation in healing and finding ways to move forwards. I did not get information showing the details of what made that healing possible in a relatively short span of time, but it is clear that the congregation dealt with the high level of discord and moved forward in a healthy way. If a congregation was interested in a detailed analysis of this healing process, greater focus could be put on gathering information about that time period.

Significant tension developed in the congregation in 2003 after a founding member left a large bequest. Her gift combined two trigger points for the congregation, money and decisions relating to children. In the end it was decided to use the money to hire a Minister of Religious Education. A few members who felt like they had not been included in the decision-making responded with anger. In the end, a handful of people followed one of the long time patterns of the congregation by resigning and leaving the congregation. The rest of the congregation used the other long time

congregational pattern of moving forward and engaging in the new experiment as they prepared to welcome an associate minister.

In 2006, the Christmas Eve Car Crash occurred. In addition to being a shocking and deeply disturbing tragedy, it hit right on a congregational trigger point because it involved young children and it deeply affected the religious education program. The congregation used a long-term pattern of dealing with tension by reaching outside the congregation for multiple sources of expert help including hospice counselors and other ministers. In addition, the leaders in the congregation worked intentionally to provide healing services to the congregation.

When Rev. Nan resigned as associate minister in 2008, some people in the congregation felt hurt and abandoned. Many were fearful of trying to call another associate minister. Many held back from getting attached to the new contract minister, Rev. Stu, for fear of losing him.

Today there is some low level tension between families with children and older people over the children's story and the intergenerational services. The congregation appears to be addressing this tension with a creative approach of Spirited Sundays, a once a month intergenerational service in a lively format.

It is interesting to note that the written history says there were disagreements in the congregation regarding religious education and the role of children in the late 1960's, but it does not specify what those disagreements were.

## **Social Justice/Social Action**

Tension over social action and social justice issues has been intense throughout much of the history of the congregation. To analyze this issue with the Congremap, look for the symbol for social justice outreach (a church building with lines coming out three sides of the building, each connected to a person). See figure A.1. Also, notice what color is used when this symbol appears.

In the 1960's, part of the congregation criticized Rev. Fullerton for being too involved in social action and others criticized him for not being involved enough. The symbol for social justice at this point is red, showing passion and anger. See figure B.2. The criticism led to a major split off when 30 percent of the congregation left to start a congregation in Next Door County. Later on, in 1984, emotions ran high in the debate over whether to make the church an illegal sanctuary for political refugees. Again the symbol appears in red, showing passion and anger. See figure B.5. Up until recent years, social justice was primarily initiated by and directed by the minister. These programs often stirred up passionate emotions for and against the issue being addressed or the approach being use. Tension related to social justice has not been an issue during Ko's ministry. The Congremap does not clearly show why this has changed, however two distinctly new approaches were embraced by the congregation over the past 10 years. Social justice is no longer primarily initiated and directed by the minister and a social justice council with teams was implemented in 2009. In the most recent decade, the symbols for social justice are shown in a variety of colors, orange, green, brown, black and red. See figures B.9 and B.11.

## Case Study B: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

As I present an analysis of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church based on the Congremap, please refer to the diagrams in Appendix B. I begin analyzing the Congremap for St. Stephen's by organizing the slides into a PowerPoint format in chronological order so I can easily flip through the snapshots. Then, I look for overall patterns in colors. In the early years, the St. Stephen's diagrams are heavy in the color light green, symbolizing growth and freshness, and also the color brown indicating a traditional and dependable approach. See figure C.2. In 1990, there is a lot of blue symbolizing peace and stability, but it is quickly followed by large dose of red indicating the intensity of passion and then anger. See figure C.4. In 1997 the color pattern changes to dull, subdued colors. See figures C.5 and C.6. Brighter colors start to appear again around 2002. See figure C.7. By 2003 the predominant color is blue for peace and stability. It is accented by the vibrant colors of yellow, orange and light green. See figure C.8.

Next I look through the diagrams in detail to note where the symbol for tension occurs. Often the symbol for tension directly connects the congregation and the diocese. Sometimes the symbol for tension does not directly connect anyone in the congregation with the diocese, but the symbol for the diocese is nearby. For example in the spring of 1997, figure C.5, the tension symbol connects the minister and the vestry, however the symbol for the diocese is nearby and indicates that the diocese was directly involved in the situation which set off the tension. Also, in 2005, figure C.8, a tension line connects the minister and the fellowship committee. On closer examination, it is clear that the tension is related to a letter send by the diocese to the church wardens telling them they could not have a separate checkbook for the fellowship committee.



### **Traditional Versus Innovative Approaches**

Looking through the diagrams in the kind of detail described above, some themes and patterns emerge. The most striking pattern is decades of tension between traditional and innovative approaches to congregational life and worship. Most of the time this tension manifested in varying degrees of animosity and antagonism between the congregation and the diocese. At a couple of points in the history of the congregation, this tension was openly expressed between members and/or leaders of the congregation. At other points in the history I believe there were unexpressed tensions, which did not bubble over and were instead dealt with in creative ways.

Fr. Edward Evans, who came to the congregation in 1969, had a traditional, formal, clergy-centered style of ministry. He set clear rules and boundaries. For example, his office was set behind the secretary's office. No one met with him without an appointment, not even the staff. He followed the rules set for him by the diocese. However, he was also young, energetic, more liberal than the rest of the diocese, and politically savvy. He was able to move the congregation forward in new directions, which pushed the boundaries of a very conservative diocese. In his early years, a woman was elected to the vestry for the first time. He also hired a choir director who was in a same sex relationship.

Fr. Edward Evans was open to having a woman minister on staff at a time when the rest of the diocese opposed women ministers. When a progressive bishop appointed Rev. Lori Turner as associate, against the wishes of the diocese as a whole, Fr. Evans was fine with it. He didn't actively participate in the development of new initiatives led by his associate, but he also didn't

interfere. In the earlier years, the congregation had let the rector run the church himself. Rev. Lori believed in lay leadership, and a less central role for clergy. She encouraged the development of prayer and meditations circles and outreach programs. The congregation responded with enthusiasm and took on more personal ownership of the congregation. Fr. Evans continued in his role as a traditional, clergy-centered minister. If he felt any tension regarding the new initiatives, he did not express it openly. He did not attempt to stop congregants who were energetically supporting lay development as encouraged by Rev. Lori. However when Rev. Lori and some congregants started talking about creating a healing prayer center at the church and using it as an outreach program into the community, the diocese began to respond with concern. These progressive initiatives now had the potential to increase in visibility and importance for the congregation and pushing beyond the walls of the congregation. It was at this point that Fr. Evans started to express concerns as well. In 1990 he left the congregation to take a position in the diocese. Over the years since 1990, there has been an increasing role of the congregation in leadership, spiritual development and outreach. With the increasing role of the laity at St. Stephen's, the tensions with the diocese have increased, as well, until recent years. Long standing tensions with the diocese eventually began to deescalate several years after Rev. Joy became rector especially after a new bishop top office in 2010.

### **St. Stephen's Versus the Diocese**

As I explore some of these tensions with the diocese in depth, I start by looking through each of the snapshot diagrams to find all the places where the symbol for the diocese appears. Then I observe what other symbols are present at those points, look for patterns in action and reaction, and notice who else is involved. I notice that when the diocese symbol appears between the

years of 1993 and 2003, the vestry is always involved in some way, and there is always a tension symbol connected in some way between the diocese and the vestry, or in the case of the resignation of Fr. Tom in 1997, there is a tension symbol nearby which is indirectly related to the diocese. See figures C.4, C.5 and C.6. These tension symbols are either black, the color of the endings; or red, the color used to indicate anger. In addition, even though the tension symbol isn't used in the vestry's interaction with the diocese in 1991, the vestry had to put pressure on the diocese in order for Rev. Lori to be appointed priest in charge. See figure C. 4. It is possible that a small tension line could have been used here, or the colors orange and green side by side could have been used to indicate an unsettled feeling.

It is significant to note that within two years of the St. Stephen's vestry putting pressure on the diocese to appoint Rev. Lori as priest in charge, the diocese allowed Fr. Brad to be called to St. Stephen's without telling the vestry about investigations into his handling of finances at his previous congregation. The diocese operated out of a directive, clergy-centered model. They did not think the congregation needed to know. The congregation, which had become more involved in leadership, was livid with the diocese for not telling them about the existence of the scandal before Fr. Brad was appointed, and then removing him suddenly with absolutely no warning and no involvement from the congregation. Notice all the bright red tension lines at this time in figure C.4. It is interesting to note that all the tension and negativity the congregation felt about the situation was directed at the diocese rather than at Fr. Brad. There are no lines of tension between Fr. Brad and anyone in the congregation. That anger directed at the diocese likely reflects not just anger at the Fr. Brad situation, but also lingering dissatisfaction with the reluctance of the diocese to appoint Rev. Lori as priest in charge and to support her ministry.

There was no direct confrontation between the congregation and the diocese for several years after that, but the anger simmered. Fr. Tom stirred those simmering emotions in the method he chose to announce his resignation. See the right hand side of figure C.5 at 1997. Fr. Tom chose to bring the Sr. Warden to meet with the bishop without saying why he was calling the meeting. At the meeting with the bishop, Fr. Tom announced his resignation. This action once again connected the vestry and the diocese in a highly charged emotional issue in which the lay leaders were in the dark until the very end. It's not clear whether the bishop knew the purpose of the meeting ahead of time or not.

Tensions with the diocese were exacerbated in the next years by both the lengthy search processes, (See figure C.6), and then the diocese insistence on Rev. Joy being appointed priest in charge in 2000. See the left hand side of figure C.7. By that time the diocese had become progressive enough to support women clergy. It is possible that the diocese chose to appoint a woman who was fresh out of seminary to this congregation because they were less invested in St. Stephen's success than in the success of other congregations. If that is the case, Rev. Joy went on to prove them wrong. It is also possible that the bishop was wise in understanding the needs of St. Stephen's, and that he realized Rev. Joy would be the perfect match. In either case, this question was on the minds of congregants in the first year or two of her ministry. Was this the perfect match, or was the diocese deliberately trying to undermine the congregation?

The next time the diocese appears in the diagrams comes a year and a half later when a seminary student, Rachel S., who was a member of St. Stephen's parish, spoke publicly about being in a committed relationship with a same-sex partner. The bishop was outraged, and told Rachel she

could not continue on the path towards ordination. See figure C.7. Note the symbol for a cutoff relationship between the diocese and Rachel S., and note the tension lines. Members of St. Stephen's parish had a variety of responses. Some sided with the bishop. Many others had grown to love Rachel and supported her call to ministry; they directed anger towards the diocese for suppressing the calling of a talented individual. These members reached out to Rachel with love and support. Some also remembered the long and successful music ministry of Gary, and pointed to that as an example of why gays and lesbians should be able to be ministers. Others said a music director is a very different position than a priest and that the rules need to be different. Through all of this, Rev. Joy, did not take sides, but listened and helped people process their own reactions. Rev. Joy's response is shown in figure C.7 in words and with the color blue which represents healing.

A year later, a symbol for the diocese appears in relation to reaction to the ordination of Gene Robinson. The snapshot for that time period does not indicate tension between the local diocese and St. Stephen's regarding the ordination of Gene Robinson, but I am aware that there was a lot of tension in the denomination as a whole over the issue. See figure C.8. Maybe a symbol could have been used to indicate this denominational tension, or a symbol could have been used to indicate that the diocese opposed the ordination of Gene Robinson and felt tension with the larger denomination over this point. Again Rev. Joy did not take sides openly, but listened carefully to various perspectives and helped congregants talk to each other about these issues. Like Rev. Joy's response to the Rachel S. situation, her response to congregational reaction to the ordination of Rev. Gene Robinson is shown in figure C.8 with words and with the color blue which represents healing.

Interestingly, the next spark between the congregation and the diocese came at the end of 2004, after Rev. Joy had been appointed as rector and after the congregation had officially accepted her. The diocese told the congregation they couldn't have a separate checkbook for the fellowship committee. This created quite a bit of anger in the fellowship committee. See figure C.8. This time however, the pattern changed because people on the committee directed their anger at Rev. Joy, not the diocese. This is shown with a tension line and an arrow pointing from the fellowship committee to Rev. Joy. This is the last time in recent years that there was any tension mentioned which was in any way connected to diocese. I wonder if it might be possible that through the act of not responding negatively to the diocese, the congregation was able to take responsibility for its own issues and move on. On the other hand, blaming the pastor can also be a way of deflecting responsibility. It is important that Rev. Joy dealt with the tension directed at her in a constructive way, even though the decision about one checkbook was not her responsibility. She did not redirect the congregation's anger towards the diocese, which would have fed into long standing tensions. Note in figure C.8 that the Rev. Joy did not return the tension directed at her by the fellowship committee. The tension line is connected between them by a one-way arrow. In the most recent year presented in these diagrams, a new bishop took office who reached out to St. Stephen's in a positive way which has considerably eased the long-standing tensions. See figure C.8, bottom right. A couple of individual congregants hold onto a deep-seated anger towards the diocese, but overall, there is more of a sense of acceptance and even appreciation for the diocese.

### **Approaches to Worship and Social Justice**

The tension between traditional and innovative approaches to worship peaked around the same

time as the tensions with the diocese. In many ways this tension was related to the role of the congregation in relation to the role of the minister. The congregation retained a traditional style of worship and worship music until Rev. Joy came. She introduced more progressive elements in collaboration with lay leaders.

I wonder if the congregation and pastors maintained this traditional approach to worship for more than three decades despite innovation in other areas of congregational life, in part because of the development of the prayer center in the 1990s which gave the congregation an outlet for more progressive approaches to worship through week night prayer services and meditation groups, and through spiritual direction sessions and retreats. During that time period, Rev. Lori encouraged active lay decision-making and participation. This provided an outlet for more progressive approaches, so no one pushed for new approaches on Sunday morning.

Tensions regarding worship developed during Fr. Tom's ministry. He was called as rector in 1996 after a long and difficult search process. He was received with great hope and enthusiasm. People felt the Holy Spirit in his presence, and really believed he was the right priest to lead them. Not long after he arrived, he began to introduce contemporary music into the worship services. This is indicated in figure C.5 with the musical notes which are represented in orange, the color for creativity. The notes however are crossed out to show that the initiative was rejected. Fr. Tom did not consult with the congregation or try to collaborate with the long time beloved music director, Gary. This led to a conflict between him and Gary, who had a very traditional musical style. This is shown with the tension line between Fr. Tom and Gary. Gary resigned shortly after Fr. Tom arrived, causing great grief and anxiety in the congregation. In the

end contemporary music was not accepted into worship in those years. Not only did Fr. Tom make a bold clergy-centered move in a congregation which increasingly valued congregational input, but his decision disrupted a decades long and highly valued relationship between the music director and the congregation.

Shortly after this confrontation over music, Fr. Tom made another clergy-centered move which backfired. At the time, the congregation was still feeling strong emotions regarding Gary's resignation, and though Fr. Tom didn't share it at the time, he himself was dealing with personal questions about his own calling. In this unsettled atmosphere, the youth director and Fr. Tom engaged on an ambitious plan. The congregation had talked from time to time about doing some sort of outreach program to help make a positive difference in eliminating poverty and racism. The youth director suggested partnering with a local homeless shelter to bring a group of high school aged youth to church on Sundays. The homeless youth would attend services and participate in the youth group. Fr. Tom thought it was a great idea and the plan went forward right away. He did not take time to educate the congregation about the program and its potential impact, nor did he invite the congregation to take an active leadership and decision-making role. The program involved engaging the congregation in very personal one-to-one interaction between their young people and the young people from a homeless shelter. This is shown in figure C.5 with the symbol for social justice labeled "homeless children to church." The symbol is in orange to show this is a creative initiative. However, the response to the initiative is written below the social justice symbol in red which symbolizes passion and anger. No one in the congregation was prepared for the clash of cultures and values that would occur. The homeless young people had very different live experiences than the current youth group members, and



they interacted differently with each other than the long time youth group members did. Parents were already anxious and protective of their children, wondering if they really wanted to expose their children to the world in this way and at this time. Then one Sunday morning, two of the homeless youth were caught exchanging illegal drugs on church grounds. Outrage erupted in the congregation, which led to the end of the program and the firing of the youth director. The program was too personal and too ambitious. There had not been nearly enough preparation done ahead of time. In addition there was already a high level of tension in the congregation due to Gary's resignation. A year later Fr. Tom also resigned, sighting his own personal struggles, as the cause. However both his stance on worship music and his initiative with the youth were presented in top-down fashion, which clashed with the increasing lay leadership in the congregation.

Several years later under Rev. Joy's leadership, St. Stephen's tackled a social justice initiative again through involvement with a local interfaith social justice network. This time they had acceptance by the congregation as a whole, and met with lots of success. Figure C.8 shows this initiative with the symbol for social justice labeled "join justice network". The symbol and the words are in light green which is the color symbolizing growth and harmony. The diagram shows that Rev. Joy engaged in this initiative during a time of peace and stability for the congregation. The timeline at this time period is colored blue symbolizing peace, stability and trust. This calm time period of began after Rev. Joy was accepted as rector, and after the situation with the fellowship committee checkbook settled down. This time of stability, happiness and warm relations continued, probably even deepened after Rev. Joy's grandson was born with spina bifida. The congregation stepped forward to be supportive to Rev. Joy and her

daughter, and started a committee to raise money for treatment and prevention of spina bifida. In figure C.8, parallel lines symbolizing a close relationship connect Rev. Joy and the committee that raised money for spina bifida research. It was during this time of stability that Rev. Joy began to explore getting involved in the interfaith organization.

The model Rev. Joy used to encourage participation in this social justice initiative was opposite of the approach used by Fr. Tom and the youth director. Fr. Tom's program brought social outreach into the heart of the congregation, worship and family life, in a very personal way without engaging the congregation in dialogue, preparation and congregational approval. Involvement in the interfaith organization was a collaboration between Rev. Joy and the congregation. Joy engaged lay leaders in dialogue about the program, gained their support and then got involved in projects sponsored by the group, alongside members of St. Stephen's. Some members remained leery about social justice outreach and criticized the pastor's involvement especially when she spoke with passion about the work of the interfaith organization. However, those who didn't want to be directly involved, didn't have to be involved, therefore tensions did not escalate. Rev. Joy listened and engaged critical individuals in discussion about their concerns, so they could be part of the process even if they did not agree. In addition, the work of the organization takes place in the community rather than in the St. Stephen's church building or on church grounds. Members of the congregation were thoroughly prepared and could be involved at whatever level they chose, or not involved at all. This time there was no threat to the stability of the congregation. The only danger with this model is that it could keep the work of social justice outreach too distant from the congregation as a whole. The work doesn't affect those people who choose not to be involved. It is possible that the congregation might have

moved from one extreme-- getting quickly involved in deeply personal relationships on their own turf, to the other extreme—keeping social justice at too safe of a distance.

### **High Energy Versus Depression or Disillusionment**

This congregation has been characterized throughout most of its history by high energy, enthusiasm and creativity. In the first six years St. Stephen's quickly developed from a mission start, renting space in schools, to a parish, which owned its own building and had its own priest. That energy continued through the ministry of the music director Gary and through the collaboration between assistant minister, Rev. Lori, and the congregation in developing the prayer center. In the past decade the energy was manifested in lots of lay participation, a warm and welcoming atmosphere on Sunday mornings and outreach initiatives.

However there was a notable period between 1997 and 2000 when the congregation went through a time of anger and disillusionment. The snapshot for that time period uses a lot of dull colors, black and gray. See figure C.6. None of the participants in this Congremap process mentioned any creative initiatives taking place during this time. It seems like the focus at that time was primarily on finding a new rector. As the pastor search failed over and over during this time, energy drained. It sounds like the congregation was in a time of depression. Though the congregation was satisfied with the interim priests, lay leaders did not find ways to take control of the search process or to bring creative approaches to other aspects of congregational life during that time. The congregation let the diocese take charge, and they put up with the failures in the system. A particularly poignant time is shown in figure C. 6, by a heart floating away in a cloud with the words "Rev. Almost Pastor" written inside in rainbow colors. At this point a

pastor almost accepted the call to serve the congregation, but he turned it down when his wife refused to move to St. Stephen's. This is shown below the heart with the symbol for a male minister connected to the symbol for his wife. Above the wife are the words, "No!". The vestry responded with anger and disillusionment. This is shown with words and with tension lines between the vestry and the hoped for new pastor and the diocese. On the one hand, it might be natural for the congregation to respond negatively to the drawn-out struggle to find a pastor especially when they came so close to finding someone in 1999. On the other hand, the congregation had struggled to find a permanent pastor once before in 1991, but at that time, after one pastor search failed, the congregation did not experience depression and anger in the transition that followed. Instead, the congregation took control by insisting that the diocese appoint Rev. Lori as priest in charge. Figure C.4 shows an arrow from the vestry to the diocese with the words, "appoint Rev. Lori priest in charge". The diocese did appoint Rev. Lori. Congregational life continued at that point in time with the enthusiasm and high energy, which have characterized this congregation through most of its history.

### **Case Study C: Analysis Unity Church of the West Coast**

As I present an analysis based on the Congremap for Unity Church of the West Coast, please refer to the diagrams in Appendix D.

#### **Clergy-Centered Leadership and Female Leadership**

The minister has been the central most influential person at Unity West over the course of its history. For most of those years, the senior minister has been a woman. During the three times in which a male minister served the congregation, there was a strong female in the background. Rev. Carol, the congregation's first minister did not retire after she stepped down as senior minister, instead she became associate minister under Rev. Norman T. After he left, Rev. Carol continued as associate minister under Rev. Greg S. She stepped out of day-to-day ministry and became minister emeritus when Reverends Jack and Eva took over. Reverends Jack and Eva ministered together for the first four years, but the congregation favored Rev. Eva as a preacher. Following the divorce of Eva and Jack, Rev. Eva continued to minister at Unity West for another 29 years. Now Rev. Greta plays an important role as associate, preaching at least once a month. Rev. Greta is Rev. Eva's daughter. The symbol used for Rev. Eva is the three-layered circle indicating a clergy-centered congregation. See figure A.1.

At Unity West, the minister's family and the congregational family are not separate. This is the same style of minister/congregation relationship as that of the founders of the Unity movement, Myrtle and Charles Fillmore. James Dillet Freeman wrote about the history of Unity. "There was a warmth about the Fillmores that drew friends to them. When people came for help, the

Fillmores took them into their hearts. They were even likely to take them into their home....There was a kind of family feeling about Unity.”<sup>15</sup> Charles and Myrtle Fillmore developed Unity as a couple, with Myrtle taking the lead on the healing ministries, and Charles taking the lead on the publishing. Myrtle and Charles Fillmore shared responsibilities between themselves, and with other family members. Their sons and later in-laws and grandchildren took on leading roles. As the movement developed, the Fillmores shared leadership with a circle of close associates. Ideas and perspectives, which came from people outside of their inner circle, were rejected if Charles and Myrtle Fillmore disagreed.

Rev. Eva’s family has taken on many important leadership roles in the congregation over the year. In addition, the leaders of the congregation who aren’t related by blood become part of the Cole’s extended family. This can be seen clearly in the leadership teams section of the diagram for 2010. See figure D.7. Alex Cole, Rev. Eva’s husband is on staff. Ed Cole, Alex’s brother is on staff, and also serves as an associate minister. Rev. Greta, Eva’s daughter is an associate minister. In the leadership diagram for 2004, Rev. Greta’s husband, Jeff, is on staff. From 1979 to 1983, Rev. Eva and her then husband, Rev. Jack had a team ministry.

### **Money and Ministry**

From the start of Rev. Eva’s ministry, there has been a clear and continuing pattern in the relationship between money and ministry. To examine this pattern, I looked through the diagram for dollar signs and the color symbolizing money, dark green. In 1979, Rev. Eva was so enthused about ministering to this congregation that she and her husband were willing to come at any

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<sup>15</sup> James Dillet Freeman, *The Story of Unity* [Unity Village, MO: Unity Book, 2007] 107-108.

price. The congregation had been planning to call one minister, not two. They offered to call both ministers for a price only slightly more than they would have offered to one minister. Revs. Eva and Jack happily accepted. When Eva and Jack divorced, and Rev. Jack left the church, the congregation then cut Rev. Eva's salary in half. Eva accepted this arrangement without argument, even though she was now doing much more work. She set out to prove herself again, and didn't worry about the money. Her marriage to Alex reduced the initial financial concerns.

Jumping ahead to 2007, an appreciation dinner was held for Rev. Eva, which caused tension in the congregation due to its cost. In 2011, when the congregation had their first year-end deficit totaling \$40,000 deficit, Rev. Eva offered to take the burden by reducing the salary for the ministers and the staff. The congregation agreed to this. The tension then moved from a financial stress on the congregation, to a financial stress on the ministers and staff. See figure D.9. A year later, a nearby house went up for sale, the congregation raised \$250,000 to buy the house so that they could re-open their Interfaith Study Center, which had to close as a result of the fire. The project went forward bringing a lot of new energy to the congregation, however the minister and staff still struggle financially. The minister was thrilled with the purchase and the excited about the Study Center and the new focus it would offer for the congregation. She did not express concern about finances.

### *Case Studies of Family Systems in Relation to the Congregation*

A Congremap can also be used to analyze overlapping patterns between the family systems of an individual in the congregation and the congregation as a whole. Most often this technique will be used in relation to the minister or another prominent leader in the congregation. However it can be used in other cases as well, as illustrated in Case Study G. I will start this section by analyzing the family systems of the ministers in relation to the congregations they serve.

#### **Case Study D: Analysis of the Family System of Rev. Eva in Relation to Unity West**

At Unity West there is such a close connection between the minister's family and the congregation, that analysis of Unity West cannot stand alone without analysis of the minister's family in relation to the congregation. A genogram of Rev. Eva's family is pictured in figure 3.

Looking through the congregational diagrams there is a clear overlap between what happens in Eva's personal life and what happens in the congregation. Some of it is directly related. Other aspects are closely parallel, though one doesn't cause the other. Rev. Eva and Rev. Jack began ministry at Unity West as a married couple in 1979. They brought their daughter Greta. Within four years they had decided to divorce. For a few months they continued to minister together. After Rev. Jack remarried and Rev. Eva announced her engagement to Alex Cole, their team ministry fell apart. Tension broke out between them. They realized they could not minister together anymore. Rev. Jack left the congregation with 18 members of the church, and started a new church Down the Road. This is indicated in figure D.3 by the arrow pointing away from the



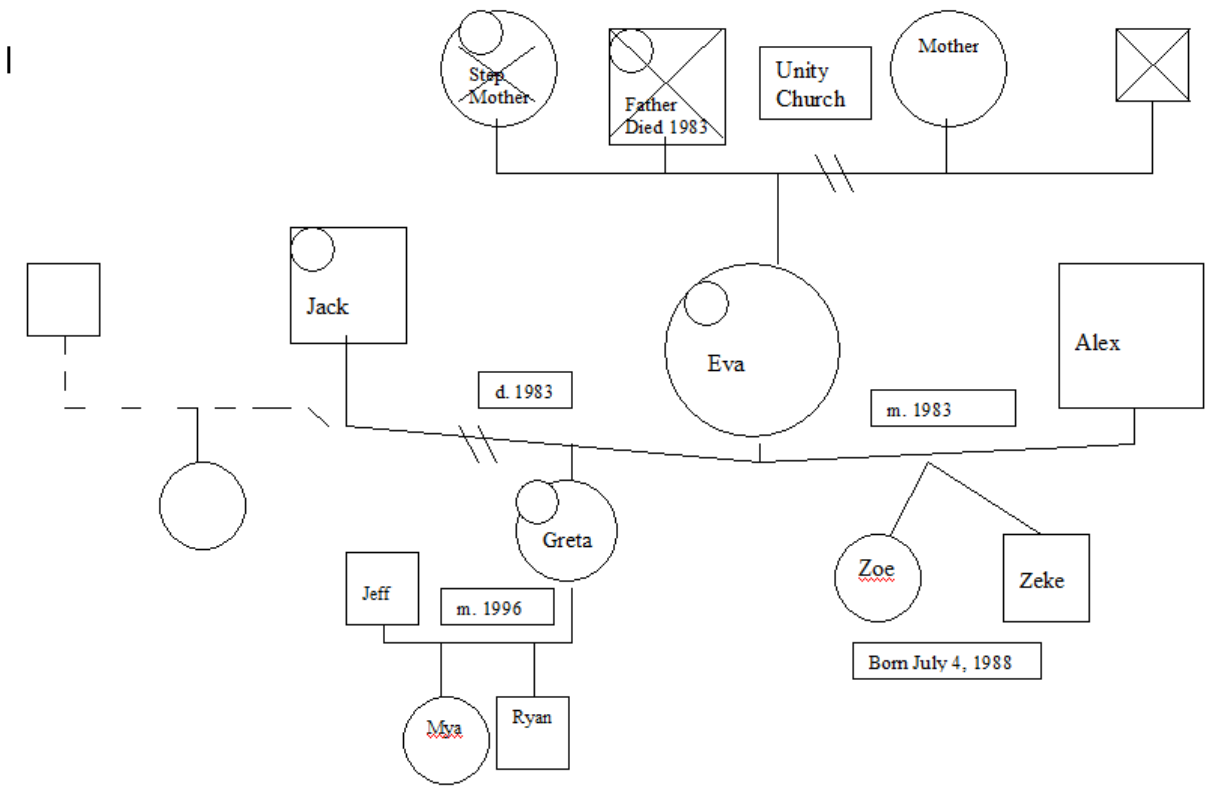


Figure 3. Genogram of Rev. Eva Cole's family.

congregation to a symbol for another church. The board asked Rev. Eva to stay with Unity West, but cut her salary in half even though she did the work that Rev. Jack would have been doing as well as her own previous work. In addition, at that time she recommended that the church send money to help support Rev. Jack's new church as a sign of good will. The board did this.

It was a time of great tension for Rev. Eva and her family as well as for the church, but the tensions resolved fairly quickly when Rev. Eva married Alex. The colors in figure D.3 shift from black symbolizing death/endings and red symbolizing passion as well as anger, to orange for creativity and yellow for joy and then in figure D.4, light green symbolizing harmony and growth. The congregation chose to accept Rev. Eva as human and focused on the positive energy

coming from the joy of new love and the hope for the future. Rev. Eva had to renegotiate what her ministry would look like as the only minister, and she had to prove to the congregation that she could stand alone. After that took place, the congregation entered a period of stability, as did life at home for Eva, Alex and Eva's daughter, Greta.

In 1987, Rev. Eva became pregnant. A few members left due to prejudice regarding a pregnant minister. Eva was very noticeably pregnant because she carried twins. The majority of the congregation was thrilled. The start of dramatic congregational growth began at the same time that Eva and Alex were dramatically increasing the size of their family. This is shown on figure D.4 with lots of light green and also the word "growth" written large and portrayed in light green.

Two months before the twins were born, Eva was unexpectedly reunited with her first-born daughter. She had not told the congregation about this daughter, whom she gave birth to as a teenager. The very pregnant, Eva, decided to share the story with the congregation and to introduce her oldest daughter to the congregation on Mother's Day. It took great courage, openness, honesty and vulnerability for Eva to share this story. She did not know how the congregation would react. The colors of the words describing Rev. Eva's action and the congregation's reaction show the emotions involved. For example, the words "honesty" and "others reveal secrets" are in dark purple symbolizing hope, wisdom and honesty. The words "humanness" and "no judgment" are brown symbolizing wholesomeness, earthiness and dependability.

The congregation embraced Rev. Eva and her daughter and responded with great love and hope. Because of Eva's vulnerability and openness, and willingness to show her flawed human side, congregation members started to become more open and honest and vulnerable with each other as well. The bond between minister and congregation was very strong. The birth of Eva and Alex's twins, Zoe and Zeke in July, strengthened the bond even more. The congregation continued to experience tremendous growth in membership and energy, which lasted for several years. At the same time Eva's home life was filled with activity and the energy of young children.

The overlap of what was happening in minister's family and in the congregation took a different turn in the spring of 2004. By then Eva's daughter Greta had finished seminary, got ordained and had been serving for Unity West as an associate minister for several years. During that time she had also married Jeff and given birth to two children. In the spring of 2004, Rev. Greta started to pull back on her duties as associate minister. She wanted to explore her identity separate from her mother. Finally in April, 2004, she announced her resignation. She and her husband and children left both the church and her family, and cut off contact as they began to try to develop a separate identity. This was a time of intense struggle and pain for Rev. Eva's family, and a sad time for the congregation who loved Rev. Greta and her family. Figure D.7 shows a genogram for Rev. Eva's family including the cut-off between Greta and her family in April 2004.

Then two months later, on the second weekend of June 2004, Eva's twins who were now teenagers and avid tennis players each won a big championship games in the same day. Zoe won a girls' double tournament. Zeke won in boys' singles. They were all set for a big celebration the

next day, when the family woke up to the sound of fire trucks on their street. A fire had ravaged the church in the middle of the night throwing Eva's family and the church family into a time of devastation and painful exile from their building and the church community as they knew it. Many members left because they couldn't handle the shock and the messiness of the time of transition. This is shown with the arrow pointing away from the congregation in figure D.6.

During the year after the fire, as the building was being rebuilt, the overlap between the minister's family and the church family became very intense. The church rented space at nearby churches for special events and during inclement weather. They met in big tents in the parking lot whenever the weather permitted. Since Rev. Eva lived nearby, she and her husband opened their garage for church use. The church staff and church board met there, walking through her home and to use the bathroom. A drawing on figure D.6 shows the board and staff working from Rev. Eva's garage. Three parallel lines between that symbol and Rev. Eva show that this was an overly close or enmeshed emotional relationship at this time. In addition, Rev. Eva and her family took key roles in dealing with the renovation. The board and many members of the congregation also stepped forward to volunteer and take on responsibility for healing, renovation and moving the congregation back into the rebuilt building and into a new life together. The fire did lead to congregation members taking on increased responsibility. In the end, the church reopened with modern adaptations and new energy. Rev. Eva and the congregation made something valuable out of the devastation.

**Case Study E: Analysis of the Family Systems of  
Rev. Ko Tanaka and Rev. Bob Martin in relation to WCUUC**

The most striking similarity between Rev. Ko's family life and the history of WCUUC is in the prominent role that relationship cut-offs have played. As a young man, Ko's father began to study and practice Buddhism, which angered his Shinto family. His father was a government official and appearances really mattered to him. When Ko's father married a Buddhist wife and renounced his inheritance due to a vow of poverty, his grandfather disowned his father. Ko and his brother, Masato, grew up without knowing their paternal grandparents. They were close to their maternal grandparents. When Ko's brother became an adult, he connected with his paternal Uncle who offered him a government position. Masato, Ko's brother, joined his uncle and disowned his immediate family. Ko was 13 at the time and did not see his brother for 10 years after that. Ko said that throughout the rest of his life, he thought often about his brother, and felt as though his brother was there, but not there. Ko and his parents grieved, but they also moved on with life, becoming more immersed in Buddhism and reaching out into the community to help people in need. Ko developed a close friendship with his maternal cousin.

When he turned 23, Ko's brother, found Ko at college. He offered Ko a government position and offered to introduce him to an available Shinto woman. Ko refused. Two years later Ko met and married, Hisea, a Buddhist. He invited his brother and paternal grandparents to the wedding. They refused to attend. Ko brought his bride to his brother's house a year later to meet Masato.

Ko and his wife and daughter, decided to move to the United States in 1993 so that Ko could enter a Buddhist monastery in California. Before leaving the country, Ko brought his wife and

daughter to visit his brother. It was a formal, somewhat uncomfortable visit, during which time he met his maternal grandmother for the first time. She was drawn to the baby and invited them to return the next day for lunch. However when Ko and his family returned the next day, a servant met them at the door and said the family was out and would not see them. He later heard that his grandfather found out that he was going to study at a monastery and told the rest of the family that a Buddhist could not set foot in his house. After Ko and his family moved to California, Hisae, an activist, found a job. Soon she met a group of people from a nearby Unitarian Universalist Church. Ko and his family started attending the UU church and Ko developed a strong call to ministry. He began attending Starr King School for the Ministry, the same year that his wife gave birth to their son, Juro. Shortly after Juro was born, Ko's parents came to live with them.

Ko wrote letters to his brother and his maternal grandmother and sent them pictures of the children. Often the letters were returned unopened. In 1997, however Ko received a letter from Masato with a picture of his brother, his brother's wife and their newborn son. Ko heard from his brother on and off for the next seven years until his brother became a high-ranking government official. Two years after that Ko tracked him down in Japan and requested that he bring his family to meet his brother's family. His brother refused saying that he could not host Buddhists and Unitarian Universalists in his home. Ko decided to let go of his attempts at relationship. He told his brother if he ever changed his mind he would be more than welcome to come visit him and his family in America. This can be all be seem in the genogram of Rev. Ko's family in figure 4.

## Ko Tanaka Family Genogram

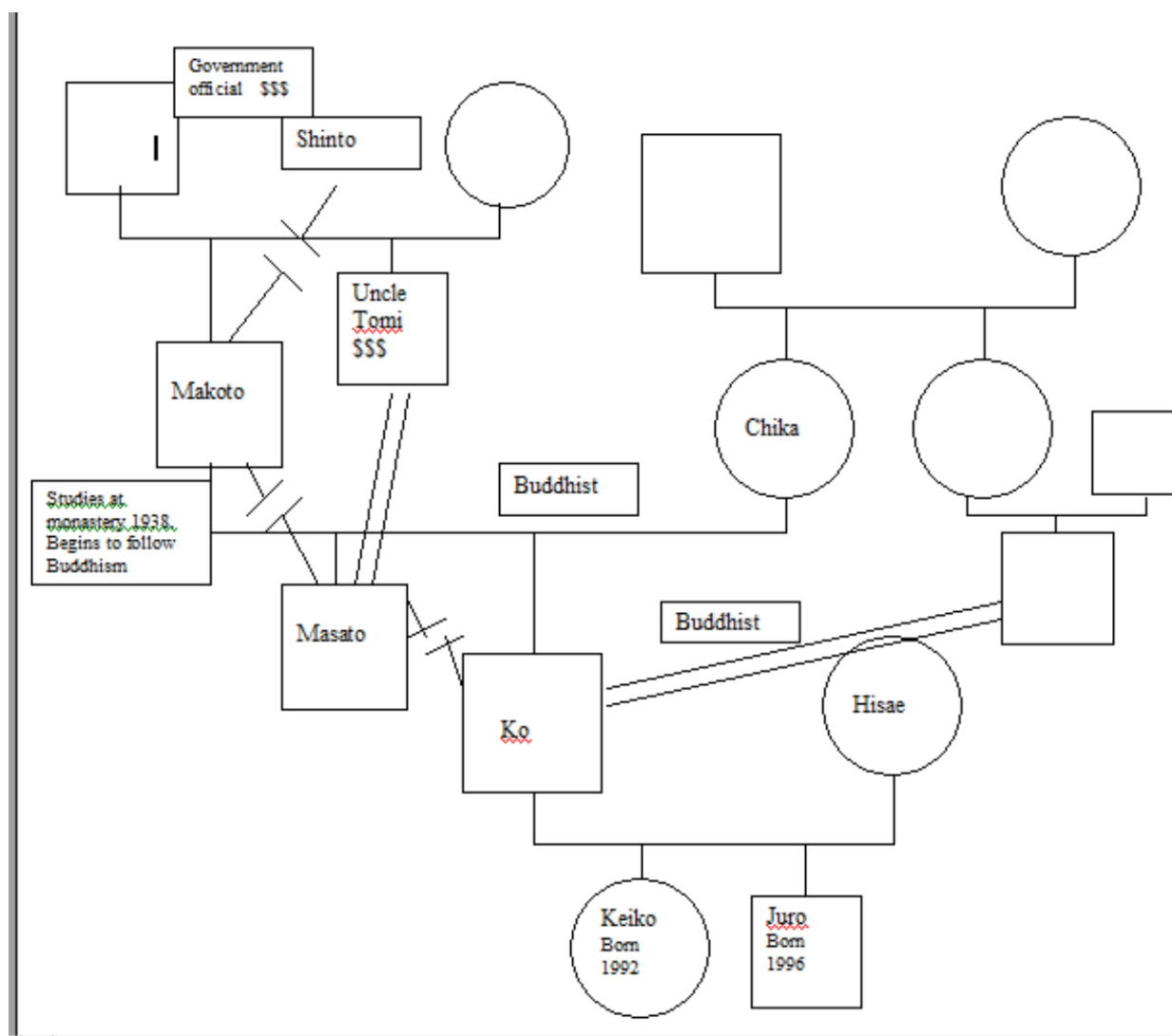


Figure 4. Genogram of Rev. Ko Tanaka's family.

In the congregational analysis, I wrote about the role congregational splits played in the history of WCUUC. There were five times in the history of the congregation in which groups of people from the congregation responded to tension by splitting off to form their own congregation or joining another one. The resilience of the congregation in response to the two most recent major split offs parallels the resilience of Ko and his family in both acknowledging their loss and also moving on with life and getting involved in the community in positive ways.

After 52 members left the WCUU Church in 1980, the congregation didn't dwell on the loss, but moved forward with the building of the Nature Window Room and the new focus of programming. This is parallel to Ko developing a close connection to his cousin after his own brother disowned the family.

In 1998, after Rev. Bob was forced to resign and a large group of families left the congregation to form Family Church of New Hope, there was a lot of anger and bitterness, but the congregation reached out for help and went through a healing process. This healing process allowed WCUUC to call Rev. Ko who had a long and successful ministry with them which brought the congregation together in new and peaceful ways. At the same time, some individuals held on to their anger and bitterness and still speak with negative intensity about Rev. Bob and his ministry. This may be parallel to the fact that Ko's family also includes his paternal grandfather and his uncle who condemned people for having different values and forced the family to conform to societal expectations. The two approaches are held side by side. At WCUUC this is true as well. Most of the congregation has moved forward in healthy ways, but some hang onto the anger and bitterness related to Rev. Bob's departure and the split off of The Family Church of New Hope. This is why a ghost figure of Rev. Bob remains in the diagrams.



In the same way, Ko's brother remained a ghost like figure in Ko's life until recently. Masato was there, but not there, until finally Ko reached out to his brother one last time in 2005 and set the relationship to rest. Unlike Ko, WCUUC as a whole has not dealt with and set aside their unresolved cut off relationships. They still hold Rev. Bob and the Family Church of New Hope at a distance, which allows people to retain the entrenched perspectives they held 12 years ago. The congregation has not sought to invite Rev. Bob back for a visit or to honor the positive aspects of his ministry with them, nor have they sought to engage in joint activities or a cordial, supportive relationship with the Family Church of New Hope.

In Rev. Bob's family, cut-off relationships played a role as well, though not in his family of origin. Instead, the cut-offs came through his two divorces, which took place while he served the WCUUC. Rev. Bob's family of origin also included tension over religion. His father was Anglican and raised Bob's older brother and sister Anglican. His mother was Catholic and raised Bob Catholic. This can be seen in figure 5.

Tensions at WCUUC sometimes have included a theological component particularly around atheism/agnosticism versus spirituality, but the central areas of tension have involved money, children and social justice outreach. Rev. Ko's ministry has lessened any underlying theological arguments because of his strong interfaith focus.

It is interesting to note that when Rev. Bob left the congregation and the large group split off to form Family Church of New Hope, it left WCUUC feeling like they had become a "house with

### Bob Martin Family Genogram

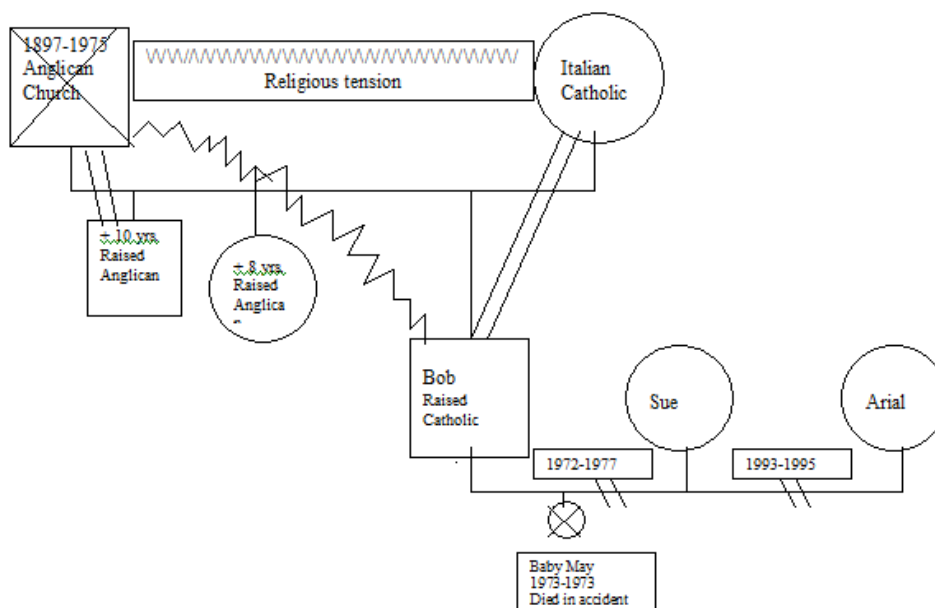


Figure 5. Genogram of Rev. Bob Martin's family.

no children". Both Rev. Bob Martin, his predecessor, Rev. Howard Smith, who died young, had no children. When they were serving the congregation, they each were in a sense the "house with no children". That pattern changed when Rev. Ko and his wife came to WCUUC in 2000 bringing their children. This changed the dynamics in the ministerial/congregational relationship in a significant way.

Another parallel in the lives of Rev. Ko's family of origin and the history of the congregation is in the tension surrounding money. In Rev. Ko's family, the presenting issue of major tension is Ko's father, Makato's decision to break with the family's Shinto religion and become Buddhist.

However underlying that and maybe even more important than the stated religious issues is tension over money. Ko's grandparents were wealthy and had significant governmental influence. Makato's decision to break with their religious heritage involved him renouncing their wealth and status in society. Ko's brother, Masato's decision to reconnect with his grandparent's family and to disown his parents and brother centered on his desire for money and status. I did not note similar monetary tensions in Rev. Bob's family of origin, though I have less detailed information on his family of origin.

### Case Study F: Analysis of the family system of Rev. Joy Brown in relation to St. Stephen's Episcopal

There are some parallels in the way Joy and her family have related over the years and in the patterns of relationship between Rev. Joy and St. Stephen's. The genogram in figure 6 shows the structure of Rev. Joy's family.

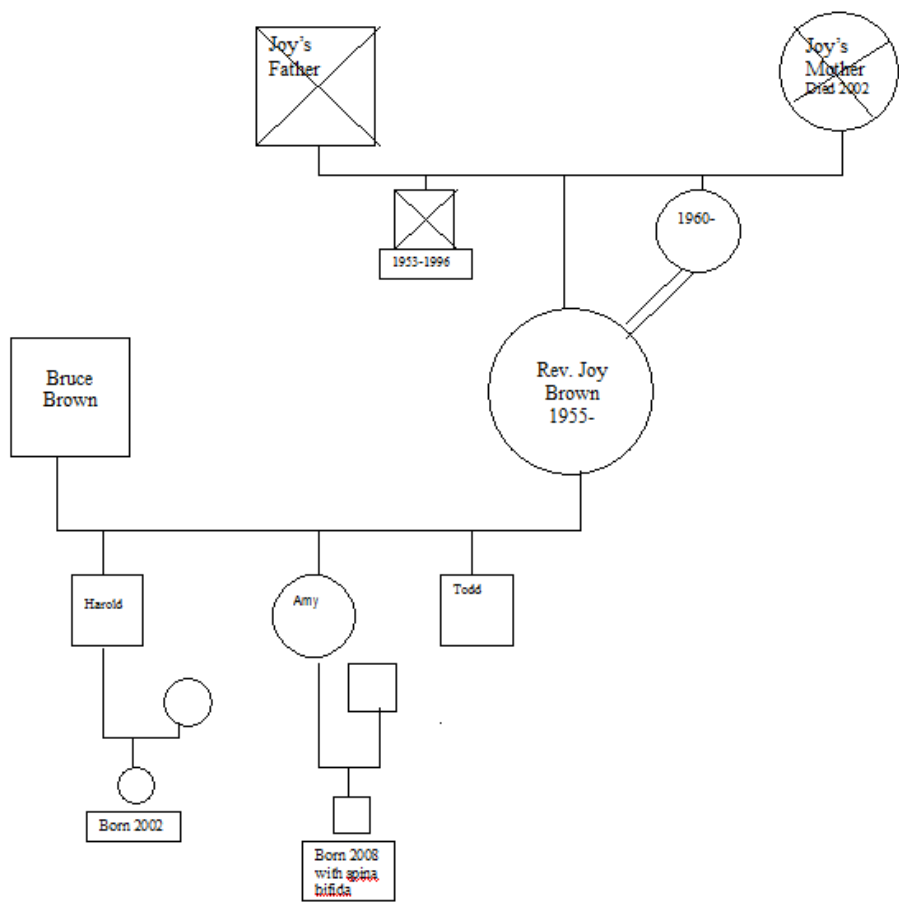


Figure 6. Genogram of Rev. Joy Brown's family.

One critical time period from Joy's childhood can be diagrammed as shown in figure 7.

**Joy's Childhood- Fall 1956**  
**Joy age 1**  
**Family Joins Together to Face**  
**The Unexpected**

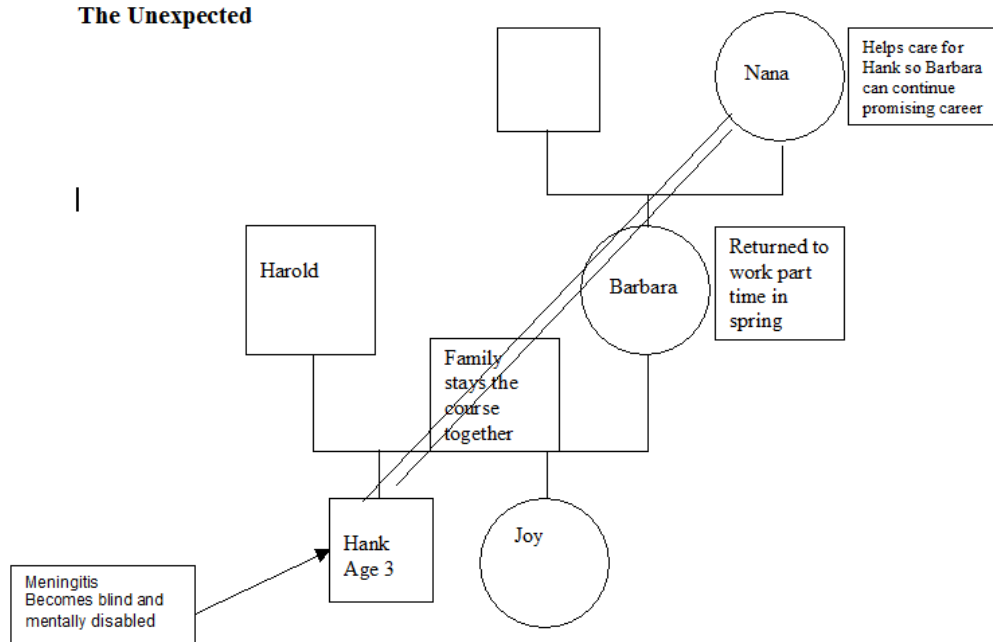


Figure 7. Joy's childhood, fall 1956.

In the spring of 1956 Joy's mother, Barbara, had returned to work part-time in a promising career. She was excited about that career and her husband, Harold, was supportive. Hank had just turned three years old and Joy was a year and a half. Everything worked out well until the fall, when Hank came down with bacterial meningitis. As a result he became blind and mentally disabled. Joy's family joined together to take care of Hank and to support each other through their shock and grief. Her mother took a few weeks off from work while Hank was hospitalized. When Hank came home, Barbara's mother took over childcare while Barbara went back to work part-time.

There is a close parallel between this time period and the way in which Rev. Joy's family and her congregation joined forces to help Rev. Joy and Joy's daughter, Amy, and son-in-law to face the

birth of a child with spina bifida. The congregation made it possible for Rev. Joy to take several weeks off after the birth of the baby to help her daughter. When she returned to the congregation, she was able to leave work on short notice when emergencies arose. Joy's husband provided childcare Sunday mornings, so that their daughter and son-in law could attend church together. Rev. Joy was able to move forward with her ministry priorities and be supportive of her family. The congregation also formed a committee to raise money for spina bifida research and treatment. This made Joy's family feel supported and cared for. Figure 8 shows the interactions between Joy's family and St. Stephen's in 2008.

#### Rev. Joy and St. Stephen's 2008

#### Facing the Unexpected

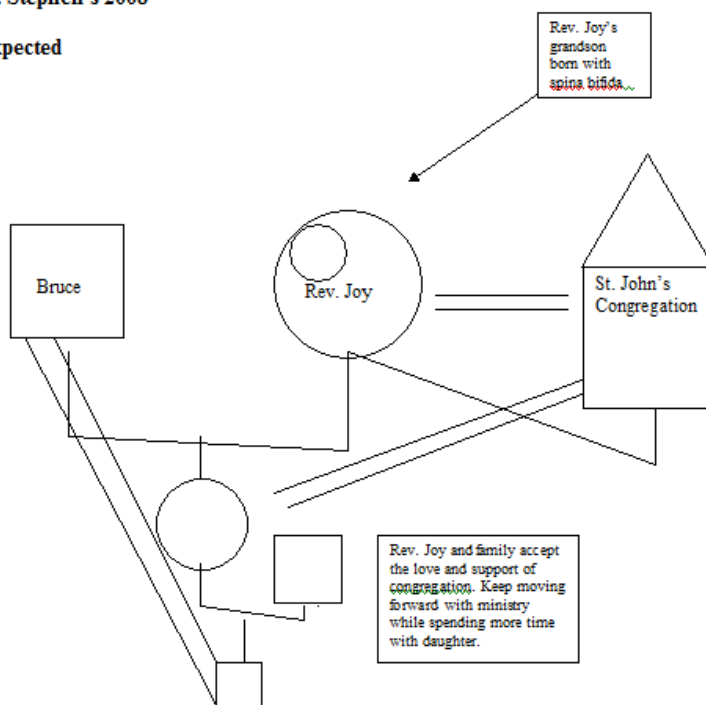


Figure 8. Rev. Joy and St. Stephen's, 2008.

Joy's style in parenting and in family relations is non-authoritarian. She lets people make their own choices and agrees to disagree. When she believes something really need to change, she

takes her time and gains the support and collaboration of the other person or people. For example in 1998 Joy's mother was having a hard time taking care of herself at home. Joy could see that she would not be able to continue living alone for much longer, and that she more than likely she would need to move her mother into a senior community. Joy approached the subject very slowly and patiently with her mother, gaining her mother's acceptance step by step along the way. First she very gently helped her mother realize that it was time to give up her driver's license. She asked her mother if it would be o.k. for her to start receiving meals on wheels. Then she gained her mother's o.k. to gather information about senior communities. Eventually her mother agreed to move to a senior community, but when the time came to move, her mother didn't want to go. Joy dropped the subject and waited to bring it up to her again a week later. At that point, her mother felt more ready and Joy had no trouble bringing her mother to a nursing home. These interactions can be diagrammed as shown in figure 9.

Diagram's of Rev. Joy's family in relation to her ministry

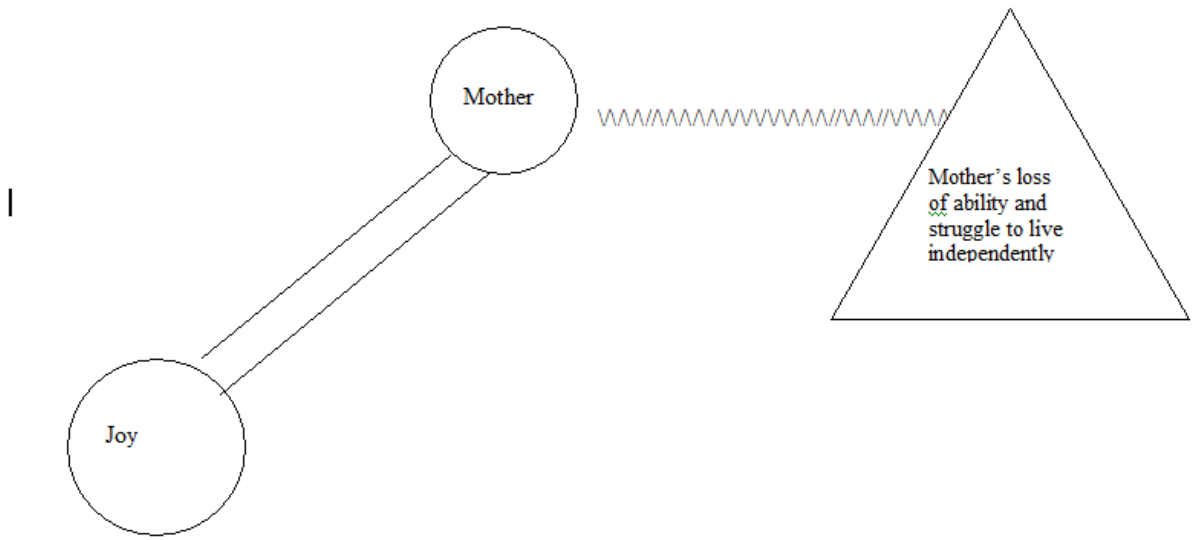


Figure 9. Rev. Joy's family in relation to her ministry.

Joy did not become a part of the triangle between her mother and her mother's loss of abilities. Instead she maintained close contact and support of her mother through the process, and guided her mother in making the decisions she needed to make as a result of her decline in health.

Joy's way of gaining participation and letting family members work through their own issues without becoming the lightning rod herself is similar to her approach as minister at St. Stephen's. For example at the end of 2004 when the diocese told the fellowship committee they could no longer have a separate checkbook, committee members reacted with anger and chose to direct their anger at Rev. Joy rather than the diocese. Rev. Joy did not return the anger or take sides for or against the diocese. Instead she let the situation unfold as it would, trying to be patient and to listen to people as they expressed their emotions. In the end five or six families from the fellowship committee left the church. The congregation restructured the way fellowship events were organized by creating a more open and inclusive planning team. Rev. Joy did not try to redirect the tension or take it away from the congregation, but instead helped them work through it themselves. This could be diagrammed as seen in figure 10.

This is a sample of how a Congremap can be used to recognize and understand patterns between a minister and a congregation. In this case, the patterns of interaction appear to have been very beneficial to St. Stephen's. Hopefully understanding what has worked in the past and why it worked, will help the minister and congregation to continue and even expand on these patterns of behavior.



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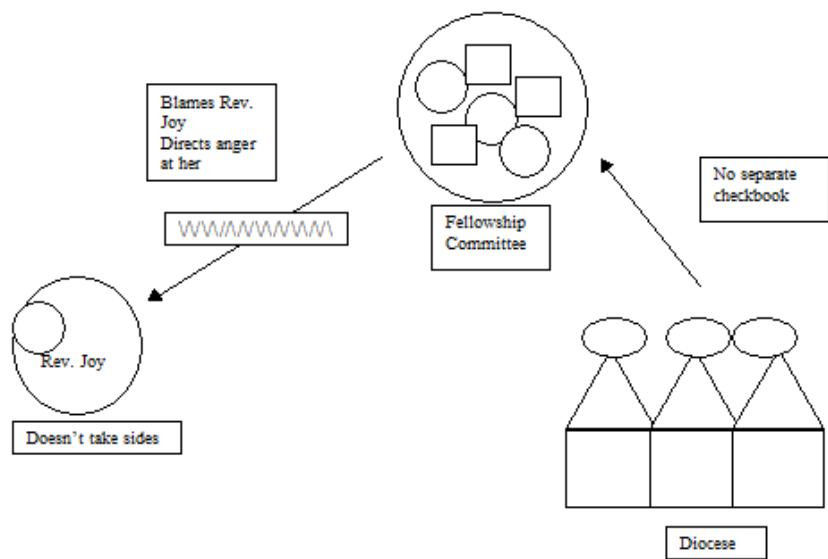


Figure 10. Rev. Joy and St. Stephen's, 2004.

**Case Study G**  
**Analysis of the Family System of Tomasso and Gina in Relation to WCUUC**

A Congremap is not limited to the study of ministers or congregational leaders. The tool can be used to analyze the emotional systems of families from the congregation in relation to the emotional systems at their congregation. To show how this tool can work, I share an analysis of Tomasso and Gina. This is a fictionalized version of one of the more dramatic cases that was shared with me. Tomasso came to WCUUC in 1999 at a time of major change in his life. A year later, his wife Gina came to the church with their children, Sabina and Guido. A genogram of their family can be seen in figure 11.

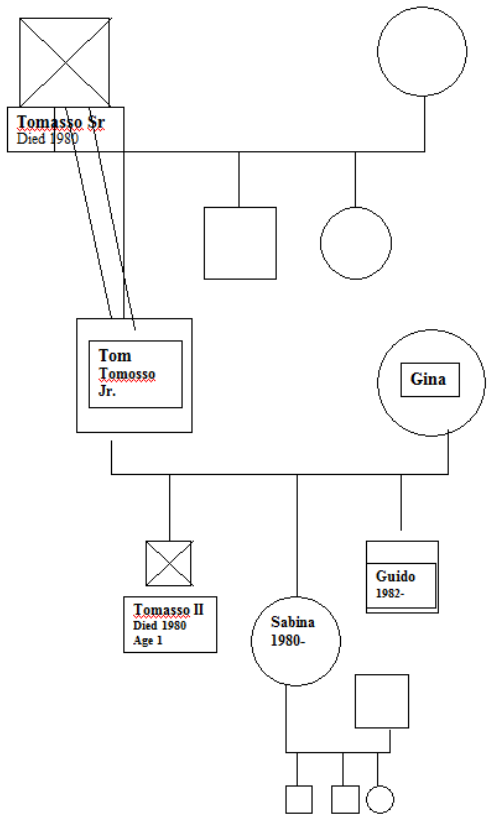


Figure 11. Genogram of Tomasso and Gina’s family.

Tomasso Jr., is the oldest child of a patriarchal Italian family. He is very close to his own father. In his earlier years he had what could be considered an overly close, enmeshed relationship with his father. Tomasso named his first son, Tomasso II. He expected his son to carry on the family lineage. Tomasso II however died at one year of age in a car accident. Tomasso had taught his wife Gina to drive, but as the head of the household, he preferred to do the driving. The day of the accident, Tomasso let his wife drive. Their car was hit from the side by a car that ran a red light. The baby died instantly. The accident was not Gina's fault, however Tomasso blamed himself for the child's death because he had let her drive.

There is an interesting parallel to the previous minister, Rev. Bob, whose only child died in an accident at six months of age. Tomasso, however, never met Rev. Bob and Rev. Bob did not blame himself for his daughter's death. Therefore that parallel may or may not have any relevance.

At the time of Tomasso II's death, Tomasso and Gina's daughter Sabina was two months old. In order to deal with his grief and guilt, Tomasso, began abusing drugs and alcohol. A previously devout Catholic like his father, he blamed God, as well as himself and stopped going to church. By the time Guido was born, Tomasso was heavily into his addiction and was absent most of the time. Tomasso, made it clear that Guido, as the surviving male would need to carry on the family legacy, but he provided no mentoring for his son. Guido did not wish to follow in his father's footsteps.

Tomasso's role as a father and his role in his extended family suffered greatly for the next eight

years as he struggled with addiction. In his family of origin, he was the oldest of three and therefore considered the responsible one and the family leader after Tomasso Sr. died. However at family gatherings, he was now often unable to give sound advice and sometimes didn't even show up. Finally in 1988, an incident in his extended family made him realize that he needed help. He checked himself into a drug rehabilitation program and started his road to recovery. As part of the extensive therapy he underwent and his realization that he needed to separate himself from the daunting expectations of his family of origin, he changed his name to Tom.

Then Tom decided he needed a spiritual life. He no longer felt comfortable in the Catholic Church, so he tried the Unitarian Universalist church. At WCUUC, he found a congregation, which had just been through major tensions with the resignation of a long time minister and the loss of most of the young families with children who had split off to form another congregation. The congregation he entered however was in a healing phase, just like himself. They were beginning to let go of their anger and bitterness and starting to plan a new future.

When Gina and the children joined Tom at WCUUC, the new minister Rev. Ko had just been called. Tom's family, like the church family felt a great sense of hope and optimism. They set aside the negative patterns of the past and opened their hearts to a new way of living.

As Tom became more involved in the church he began to notice the equal standing women had in the congregation. This made him reflect on the sexist roles in his family of origin. He began experimenting with interacting with wife and daughter and sister and sister-in-law in new ways, which encouraged them to take on equal power. Ultimately this led to his daughter Sabina

realizing it would be her role to carry on the family traditions and legacy. Tom slowly began to accept this and to mentor Sabina.

As patterns in his family started to change, Tom brought those new patterns back to the church as well. He became known as the man who would speak out anytime he saw any hint of unfair treatment of women or children, or if he saw any hint of marginalization of anyone in the congregation who had a minority position or perspective.

## CONCLUSION

A Congremap can definitely give leaders and members of a congregation important information about patterns in the emotional system of a congregation over the years, and it can give insight into what one's own personal role or roles may be in the present time. How people choose to use or ignore that information may at times be obvious and measurable. I found however, that more often, the responses were subtle and individual, though still very important. For example, Rev. Eva said that her biggest learning from the Congremap process is that her primary focus and primary responsibility lies in speaking "the Word" to her congregation. Her responsibility is to use the spoken word of her Unity faith to encourage the congregation, to support them and to lovingly name it when she and the congregation and society fall short, and then to guide the congregation to refocus on the larger goals and values of Unity and of the church community. This is and has been Rev. Eva's greatest gift and true calling through the years. The Congremap process helped her realize that it is the congregational leaders' primary responsibility to put that Word into action. She does not have to do it all. This is a relief to her. She believes that if she focuses on her true calling, "the rest will come."<sup>16</sup>

Rev. Joy Brown and the Vestry at St. Stephen's said the Congremap work helped them to see the ownership and confidence their church has today and to put into perspective what it has meant to be a congregation which has often been on the cutting edge of change in a much more traditional Diocese. It helped them to understand the tools the congregation now has to work through difficult issues, and how those tools have been developed over the years. The Conogram helped

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<sup>16</sup> Rev. Eva Cole, email conversation, September 20-21, 2012.

them fully realize how much people love St. Stephen's. They believe the Congremap and analysis will be particularly helpful for incoming Vestry members and other leaders and staff, especially those who haven't been around for a long time. Rev. Joy was drawn to the section in the analysis which showed the similarities between her leadership style in her family and in the congregation, particularly how she has faced issues directly and avoided triangulation in both settings. These insights can help her to see the value in continuing these methods of interaction and leadership.<sup>17</sup>

One of the members of the WCUUC found healing in the Congremap when he saw in visual format how central a role he had played at the time of the congregational split in 1998. At the time, he had chosen roles that he thought would keep him in the background. Since then, he has thought of himself as being in the background during that time. But, he said, "It was an eye-opening moment for me to see my name in the center of one of the circles on the diagram. It hit me that I really was in the middle of that controversy in several different ways, from the beginning, until the very end." This perspective doesn't take away his lingering pain, but it helps him understand his intense response.<sup>18</sup>

### *Learnings*

Though it is clear that the Congremap is a valuable tool for congregations, there are some things which I plan to do differently when I work with congregations in the future. I was not able to spend as much time as I had planned during the last visits with two of the congregations. This

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<sup>17</sup> Rev. Joy Brown, email conversation, October 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, email conversation, November 2012. I did not keep this person or his role on the disguised congregational diagrams presented in this thesis.

was due to the limitations of schedules and finances. Both the Episcopalian and the Unitarian Universalist congregations are located across the country from me and had very full schedules. I was only able to spend 45 minutes presenting my analysis and engaging in conversation with the WCUUC board, and two hours presenting the analysis and engaging in conversation with a group from St. Stephen's. Though I spent more time presenting my analysis and engaging in discussion at Unity Church, it still felt incomplete. I was able to prepare and email a much more detailed analysis to all three of the congregations after my final visit, but I did not have a chance to sit down with them in person and discuss it.

When I work with congregations using this model in the future, a number of additional steps in the analysis phase would be helpful. I plan to spend a minimum of two hours presenting diagrams and analysis and engaging in discussion. This could also be expanded to two or three separate group presentations of two hours each, if enough people are interested. After that I plan to write up the final detailed analysis and present it to the congregation in person or in writing within a couple of weeks. This time frame is important in order to make sure the previous work is still fresh in their minds. For this research I sent the final analyses out to the congregations in different lengths of time ranging one month to six months. A quicker turnover of information is important because a Congremap analysis is in many ways time sensitive. Though the information and insights gained are useful long after the analysis is complete, congregations are constantly changing. An analysis of information gathered six months ago is no longer up to date due to developments in the past six months.



### *Tools for Reflection and Action Planning*

After presenting the final detailed written analysis, I believe it would be helpful to give congregations additional tools to help process this information and form personal and congregational goals and action plans. I have designed some materials to ensure that congregational leaders make the best use possible use of the Congremap by thinking about possible applications to the life of the congregation, and setting some goals. These materials include:

- Individual Engagement and Reflection Exercises
- Group Reflection Exercises
- Action Planning Process
- Reflection on Progress Exercises

#### **Individual Reflection Exercises**

Hand out and/or email the individual reflection exercises to participants immediately following the presentation of the final written analysis. See Appendix G. These exercises are designed to be done individually over a four to six weeks period by people who participated in the Congremap process. Individual reflection is intended to be completed before the group reflection meetings. Ministers are strongly urged to share their individual responses with a mentor, therapist or trusted colleague. Congregants who did not participate in the Congremap sessions can engage in the individual and group reflection exercises after reading the analysis and studying the diagrams.

Individual reflection exercises start by observing one's own actions, reactions, responses and

interactions while participating in one's congregational community and with one's family and close friends at home. After that, individuals are asked to respond in a material form. This can involve writing responses by hand or on the computer, speaking into an audio or video tape or creating a piece of artwork such as a drawing, painting, poem, story or piece of music. Taking reflections out of one's head and giving them a tangible form allows for a deeper level of processing which in turn leads to a greater potential for personal and communal growth and development. Next the exercises ask participants to reflect on the Congremap analysis from one's own perspective and then tie it to reflection of one's own family system.

It is important to stress that responses are for personal use, though participants may choose to share parts of those responses in the group discussions. Instructions note that the four questions can be answered in any order. In order to encourage a meaningful level of reflection, the instructions ask participants to focus on no more than one question per day. One way of answering the question is to focus on one question per week. Another way of reflecting involves starting to answer each question on one day during the first week, then deepening the responses in the following weeks.

### **Group Reflection**

I recommend that group reflection occur four to six weeks following the presentation of the final written analysis of the Congremap. This time frame is long enough to allow participants to engage in significant individual reflection before participating in group reflection, but short enough that group discussion and action planning will take place while the analysis is still fresh in people's minds. Congregations could hold the group reflection discussions and action

planning process on their own or call on the Congremap facilitator to guide them through the discussions. If an outside facilitator is involved, discussions could take place in person or online by means of Skype or another teleconferencing tool.

Select enough subgroups to obtain small groups of between 10 and 20 people with each person only participating in one subgroup. Subgroups can include: current lay leaders, staff and minister, old time members (30 years or more), newer members (five years or less), the social justice team, the religious education team, the women's group, the men's group, the youth group, people who only attend Sunday services, etc. Even though some members will have multiple categories of involvement in the congregation, each participant will be asked to choose only one subgroup meeting to participate in. This is recommended in order to give each person an equal voice and to keep the logistics and time involved in this stage of the process manageable.

Allow 1 ½ to two hours for discussion. Ask participants to re-read the Congremap analysis before coming to the group discussion or allow time at the beginning for participants to re-read the analysis. Have the diagrams available to review as needed. The group discussion questions are listed in Appendix H. The questions ask group members to reflect on the main points of the Congremap analysis and reflect on the role of the subgroup as a whole in relation to these points.

### **Action Planning Process**

The Action Planning Process moves the work of the Congremap from analysis to action. See Appendix I for a detailed worksheet. The ultimate goal of the Congremap is for congregations to identify healthy patterns of functioning and intentionally continue these patterns, and to identify

unhealthy or unhelpful patterns and to work at changing those patterns. The Action Planning Process aims to put the new insights gained by people in the congregation into practice.

When engaging in this exercise follow the decision making process typically used in this congregation. Depending on the size and polity of the congregation, this process may involve a board or vestry making decisions, a task force recommending action steps to the board or to the congregation, or it may involve the whole congregation gathering to make decisions by consensus. We will call this decision making body the Action Planning Team in the rest of this text. The Action Planning Team will gather to work through the Action Planning Process.

The Action Planning Process begins with the Action Planning Team naming three major areas of learning gained from the Congremap process. These learnings can come straight from the written analysis or they can draw from understandings gained over the weeks following the final presentation of the Congremap. Next the team is asked to think about emotional process and envision together what they would like the congregation to be like in five years. After that the team is asked to create two goals, which could lead the congregation towards this vision of its future. It is important that these goals relate to emotional process not to programming, materials, or products. For example some emotional process goals include:

- Deepen our understanding of patterns that work well in this congregation
- Increase communication between \_\_\_\_\_ (old timers and newer members, leadership team and congregation, traditionalists and progressives).
- Work on decreasing our anxiety and reactivity on issues related to \_\_\_\_\_ (money, leadership, welcoming new members, etc.)
- Work on changing our pattern of avoiding discussion of \_\_\_\_\_ (a past traumatic event, a controversial issue, money, etc.)

Goals that are not appropriate for this process because they are more oriented towards programming or use of materials include things like:

- We would like to add onto our current building.
- We would like to increase membership.
- We would like to start a new social justice outreach program.

After goals are identified, the Action Planning Team is asked to brainstorm three possible action steps that could take place right away to reach the first goal. Then they are asked to list action steps that might be taken over the next year or two to reach the first goal. Then they are asked to list action steps that might be taken over the next three or four years to reach the first goal. Finally they are asked to choose from among the three possible action steps identified earlier on, and agree on one action step the congregation will take right away. Similarly the Action Planning Team is asked to select one action step the congregation will take over the coming year and one action step the congregation can take in future years. The whole process of discussing and selecting action items is repeated for the second goal.

### **Reflection on Progress Exercises**

Once goals and action steps have been identified for the congregation as a whole, subgroups are asked to meet again to discuss how that subgroup can contribute to the goals and support the chosen action steps. The subgroup is encouraged to agree on and write down one way to support the action steps and to revisit that commitment as a group every six months or so to assess progress. The congregational leadership does not need to monitor subgroup commitments. It is the responsibility of the subgroups to maintain their commitments and hold each other

accountable.

In addition all clergy and staff are required to set individual goals and personal action steps which directly relate to the congregational goals. All other members are strongly encouraged to set individual goals and personal action steps as well. Questions to reflect on include:

- How might I personally contribute to achieving these goals?
- What is my personal action plan to help bring about the congregational goals?

Personal goals are not to be shared with the subgroups or with the congregation as a whole, however it is encouraged that participants share their goals with one trusted person who is then asked to help the individual reflect on his or her progress every few months.

Congregational leadership is encouraged to assess progress towards the goals several times a year. It may also be helpful to review the Congremap diagrams and analysis at one-year intervals, and periodically update the Congremap to track the congregation's progress towards its emotional process goals.

*Final Thoughts:  
Changing the World at the Intersection of the Congregation and the Family*

It takes a considerable amount of time and effort to create a Congremap and use it to the full extent of its capabilities. There are many benefits to using a Congremap including self-reflection, community reflection and action planning aimed at increasing the healthy functioning of family and congregational emotional systems, but the ultimate goal of a Congremap is much larger.

There is a powerful energy at the intersection of the congregation and the family. Sometimes clergy and congregants use that energy in destructive ways. The clergy sexual abuse scandal and its cover-up in the Catholic Church is a prominent example. Every day in congregations of all religions, people take other kinds of actions which are legal and common, but lead to harmful results. When a young person hears a sermon and begins to hate himself or herself due to what is seen as an “unacceptable” sexual orientation that power is at work. When a congregation operates through accusations or intimidation or uses secret meetings to make decisions, that power is at work.

On the other hand, clergy and congregants sometimes use that same power to make sweeping positive reforms. Martin Luther King Jr. used the power at the intersection of his own congregation, Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, and the family systems of the members within the congregation and his own family system to make changes which brought about the Civil Rights movement and led to positive changes in society as a whole. At the same time, every day in much smaller ways, clergy and congregants use that power in quieter, but vitally important ways. A child remembers a Sunday school lesson and stands up to a bully in the act of hurting a

classmate on the playground. A businessperson takes to heart a lesson from the rabbi and resists pressure to increase profits at the expense of the poor.

At times clergy and congregants use the power at the intersection of the congregation and the family intentionally in positive or negative ways. Often its expression comes from a random mix of family systems at work over the history of a particular congregation. The Congremap aims to help every congregation to intentionally develop its full positive potential. Congremaps are designed to help clergy and congregants in the ambitious task of changing the world at the intersection of the family and the congregation.



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Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. Herndon, VA; The Alban Institute, 2006.

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*Appendix A*  
**Keys to the Symbols and Colors**

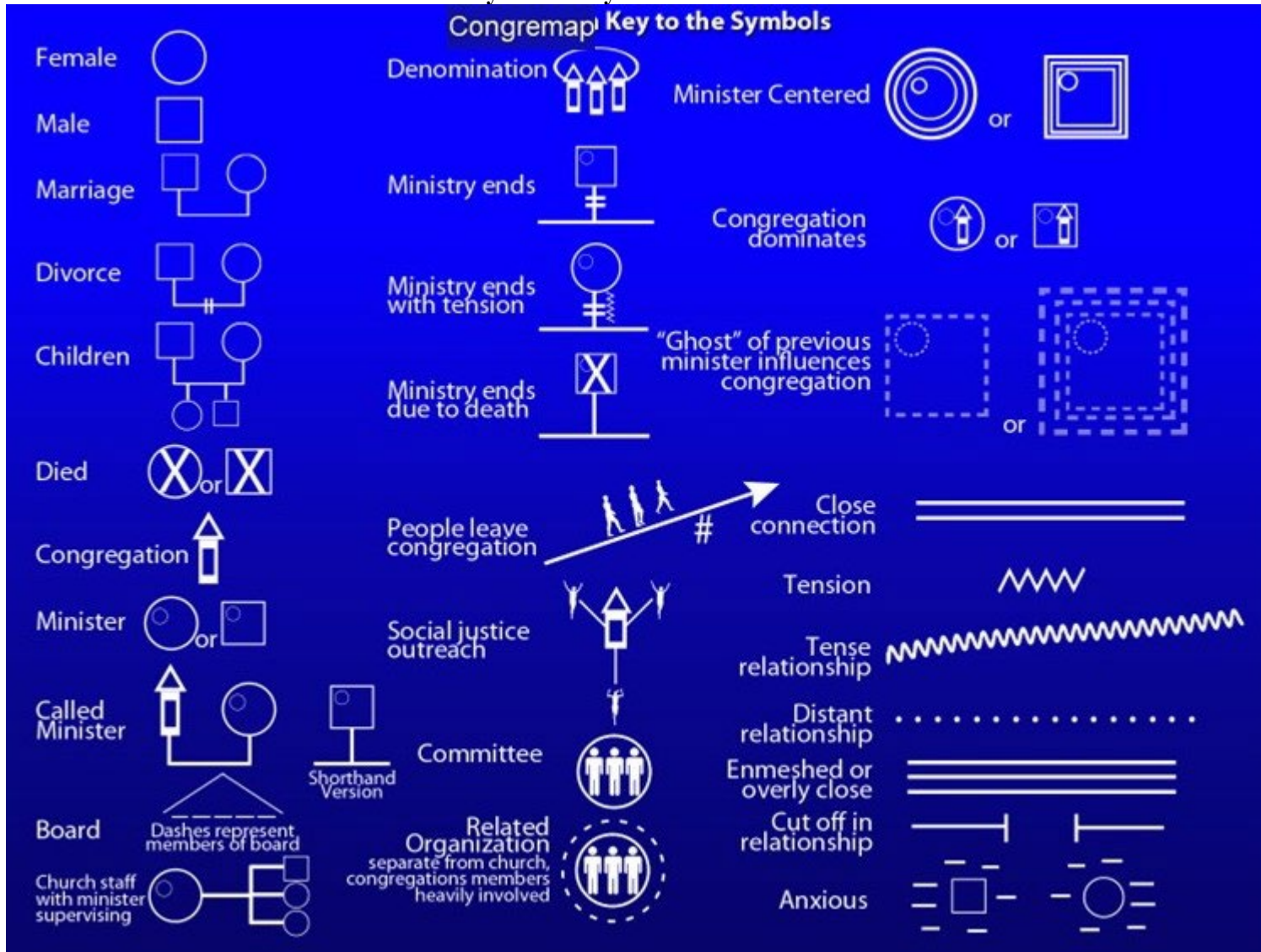


Figure A.1. Key to the symbols.

## Color meanings for Congremap Diagrams

**Black:** Death, Endings, The Unknown, Mystery, Power, Elegance, Formality

**Gray:** Neutrality, sorrow

**Purple:** Hope, wisdom, spirituality, honesty

**Blue:** Peace, stability, trust, confidence, faith

**Green:** Growth, fertility, harmony, freshness, safety

**Dark Green:** Money, financial

**Yellow:** Joy, happiness

**Orange:** Creativity, enthusiasm

**Pink:** Romance, charm, playfulness, tenderness

**Red:** Love, Anger, Passion, Desire, Intense commitment

**Brown:** Traditional, nature, wholesomeness, earthiness, simplicity, friendliness, dependability

**Orange and Green side by side:** Unsettled



Figure A.2. Key to the color meanings.

*Appendix B*  
**Congremap for West Coast Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

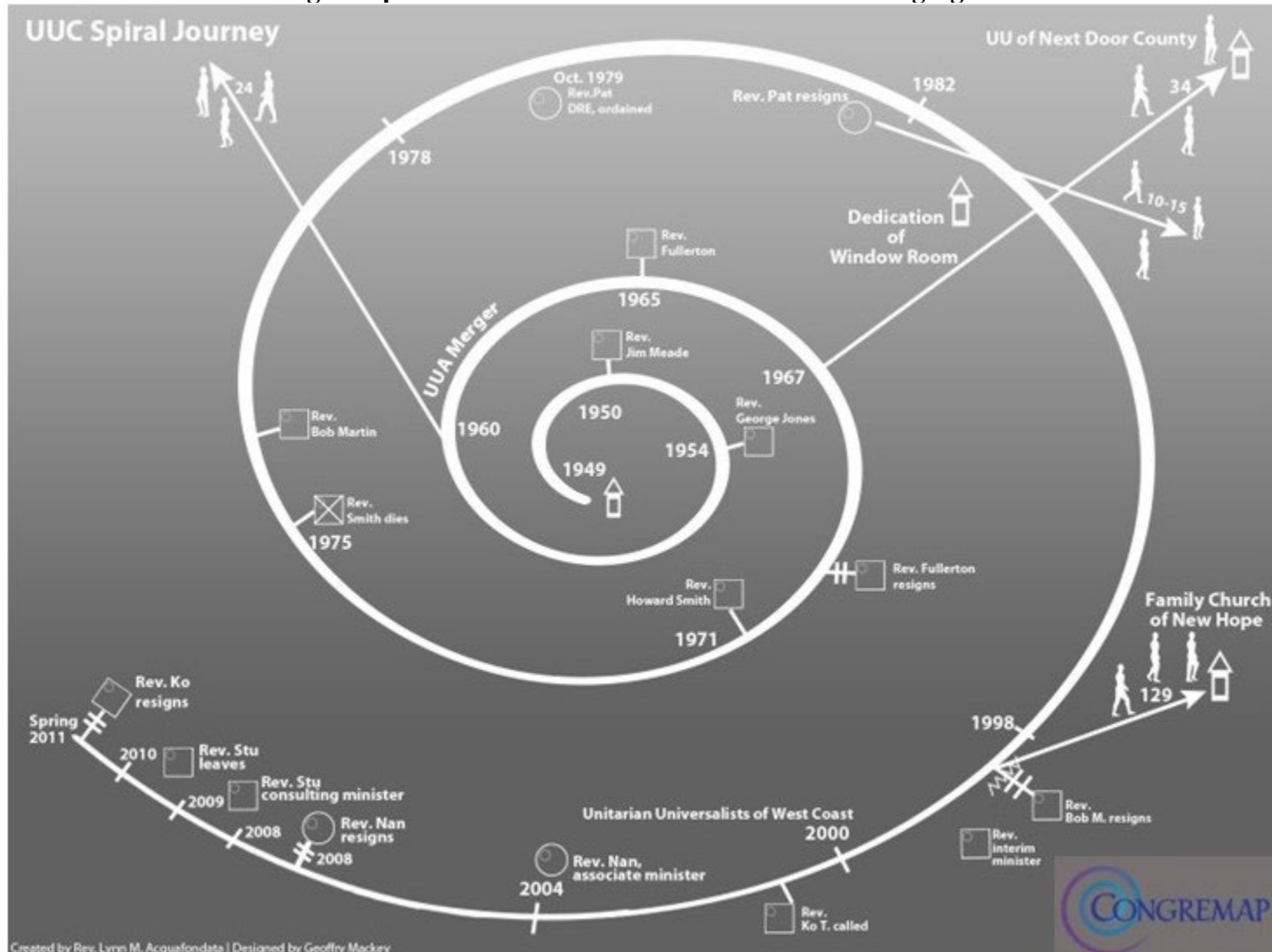


Figure B.1. WCUUC spiral.

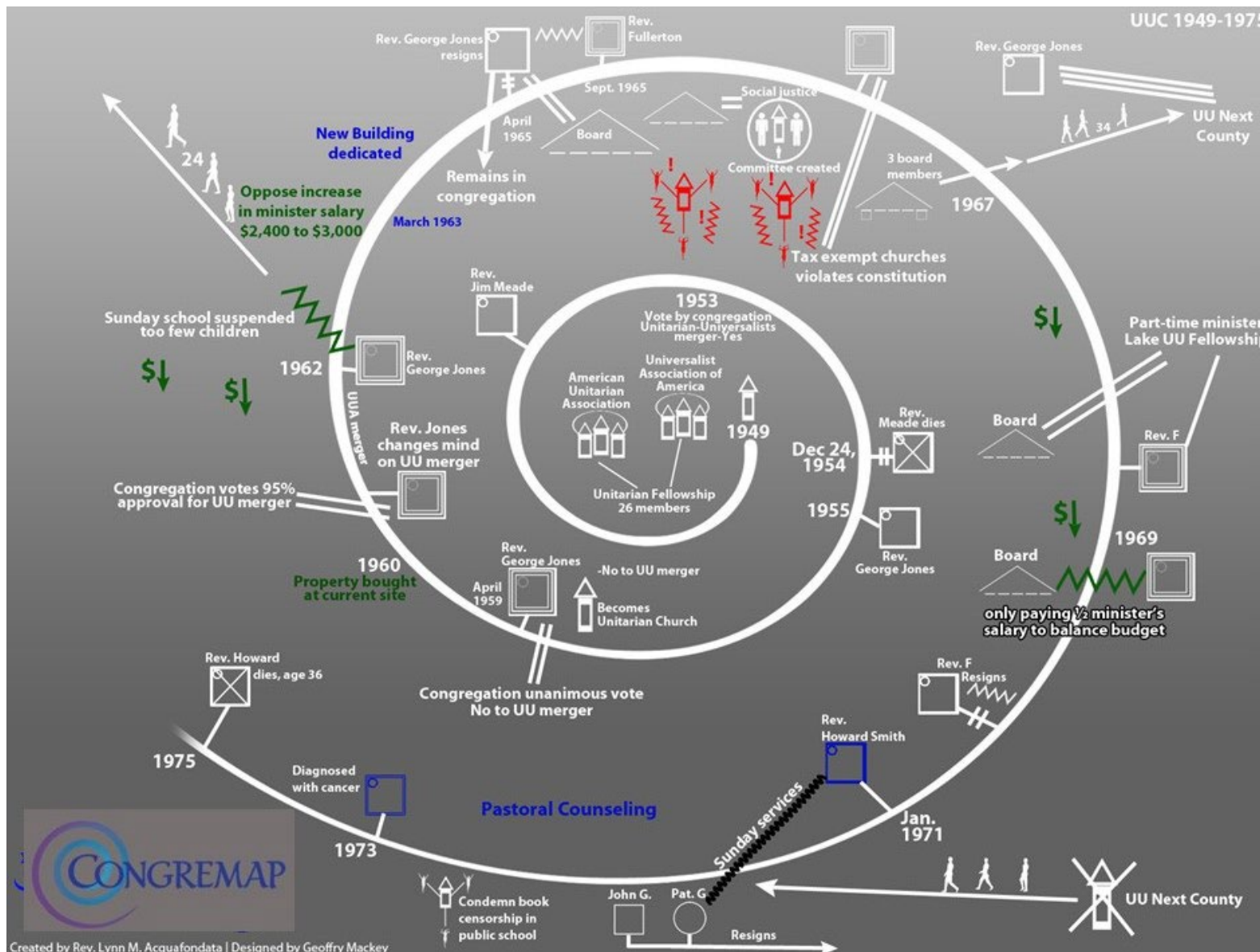


Figure B.2. WCUUC 1949-1975.

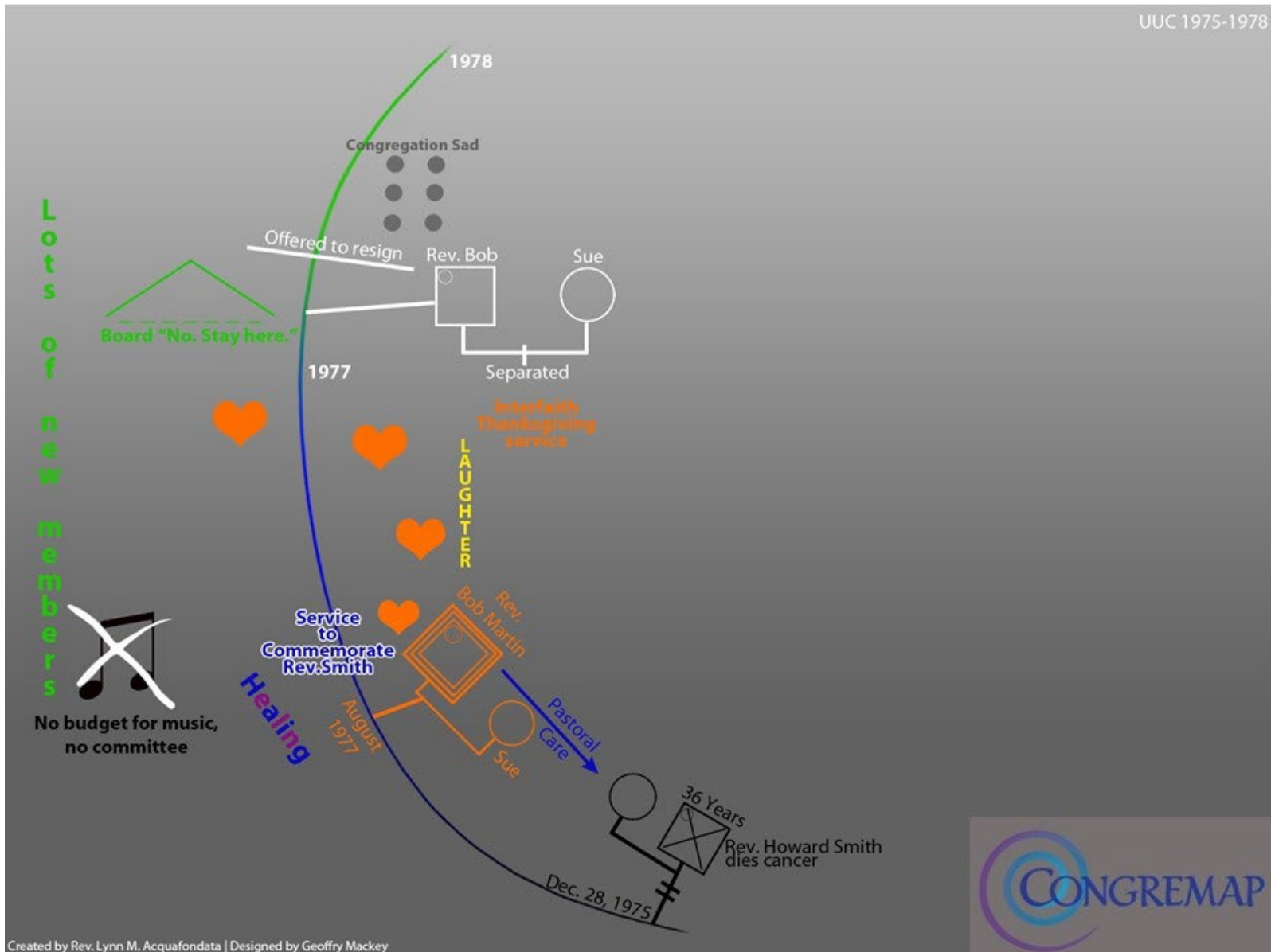
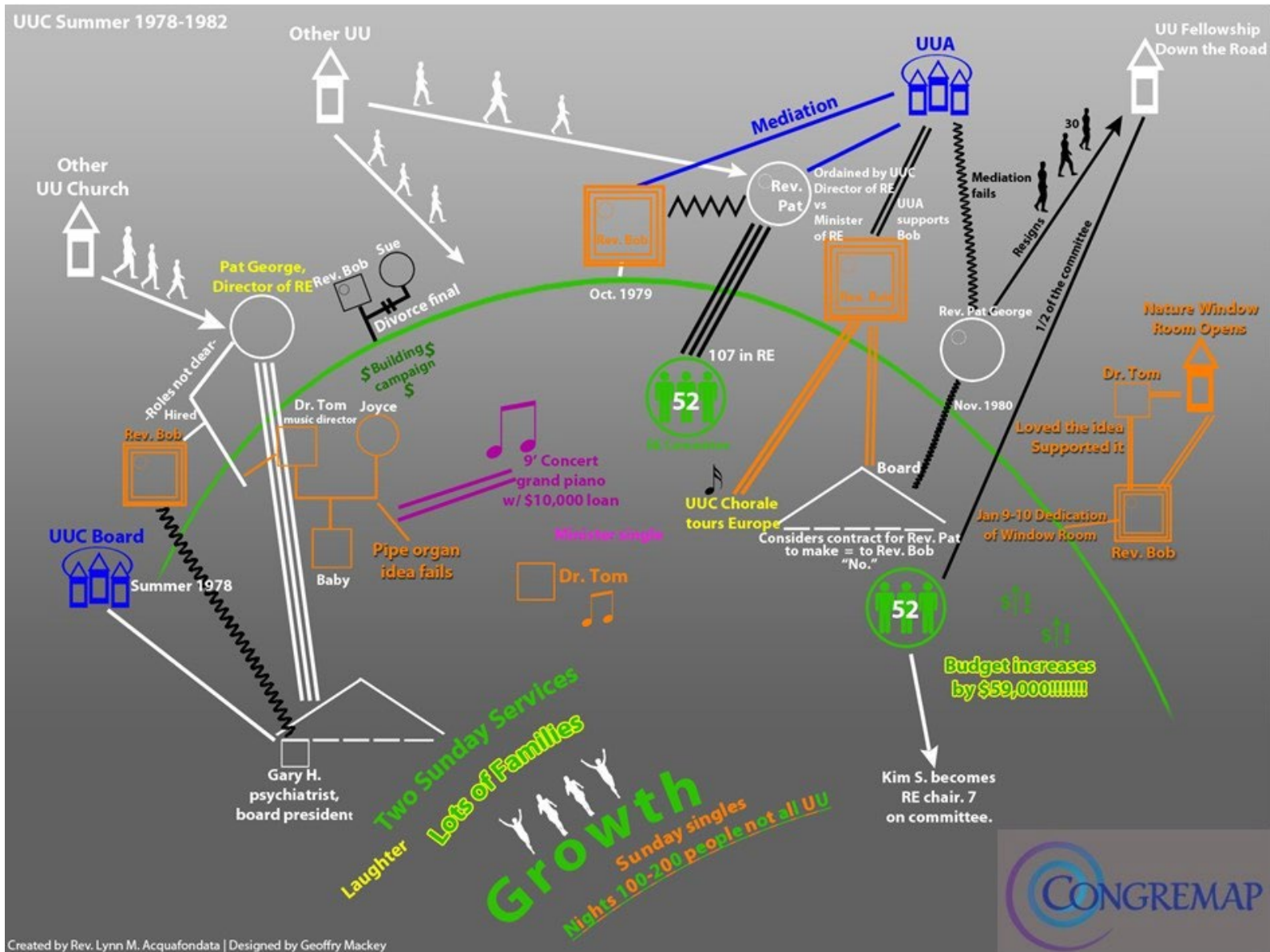


Figure B.3. WCUUC 1975-1978.



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Figure B.4. WCUUC 1978-1982.



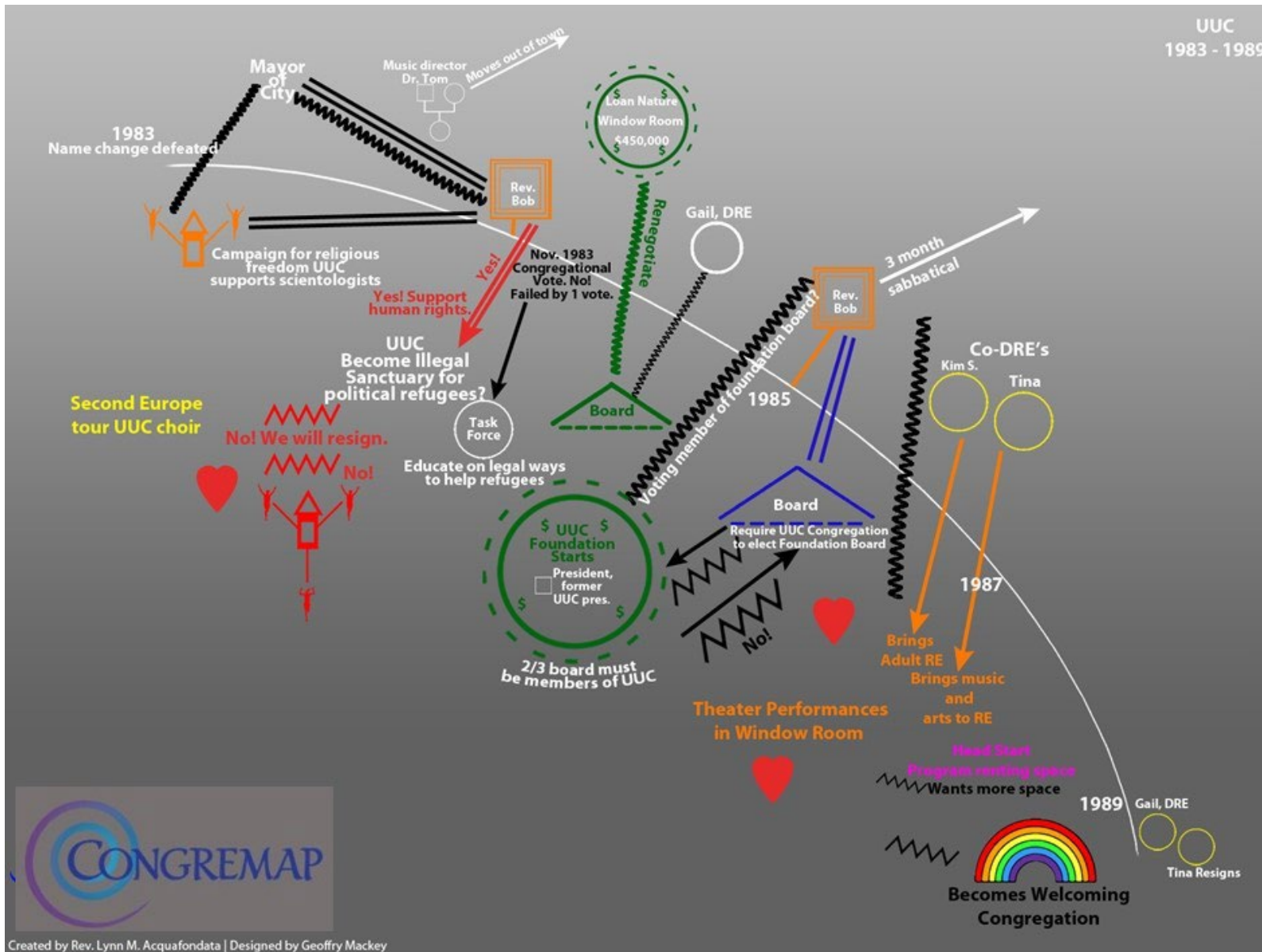
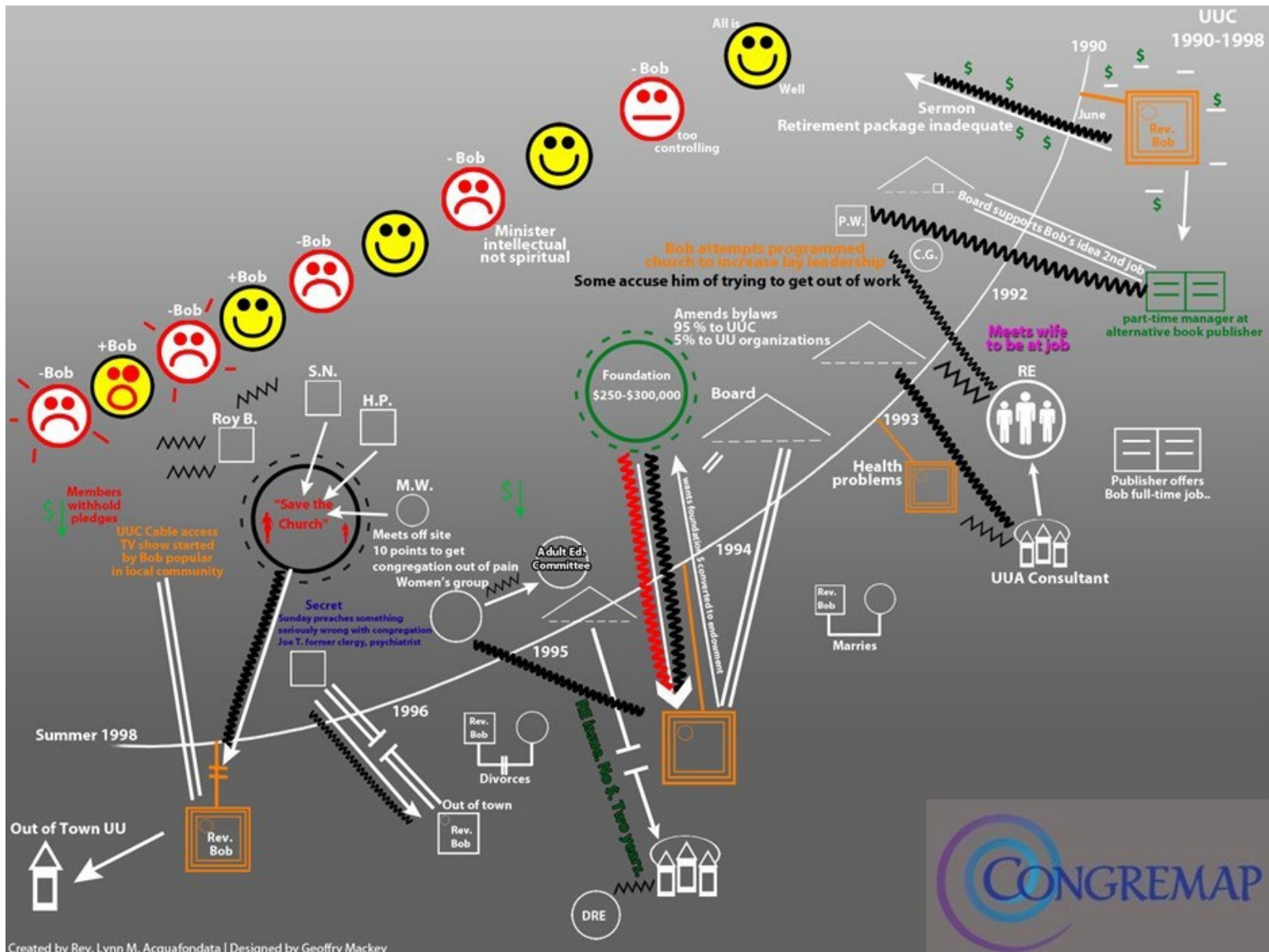
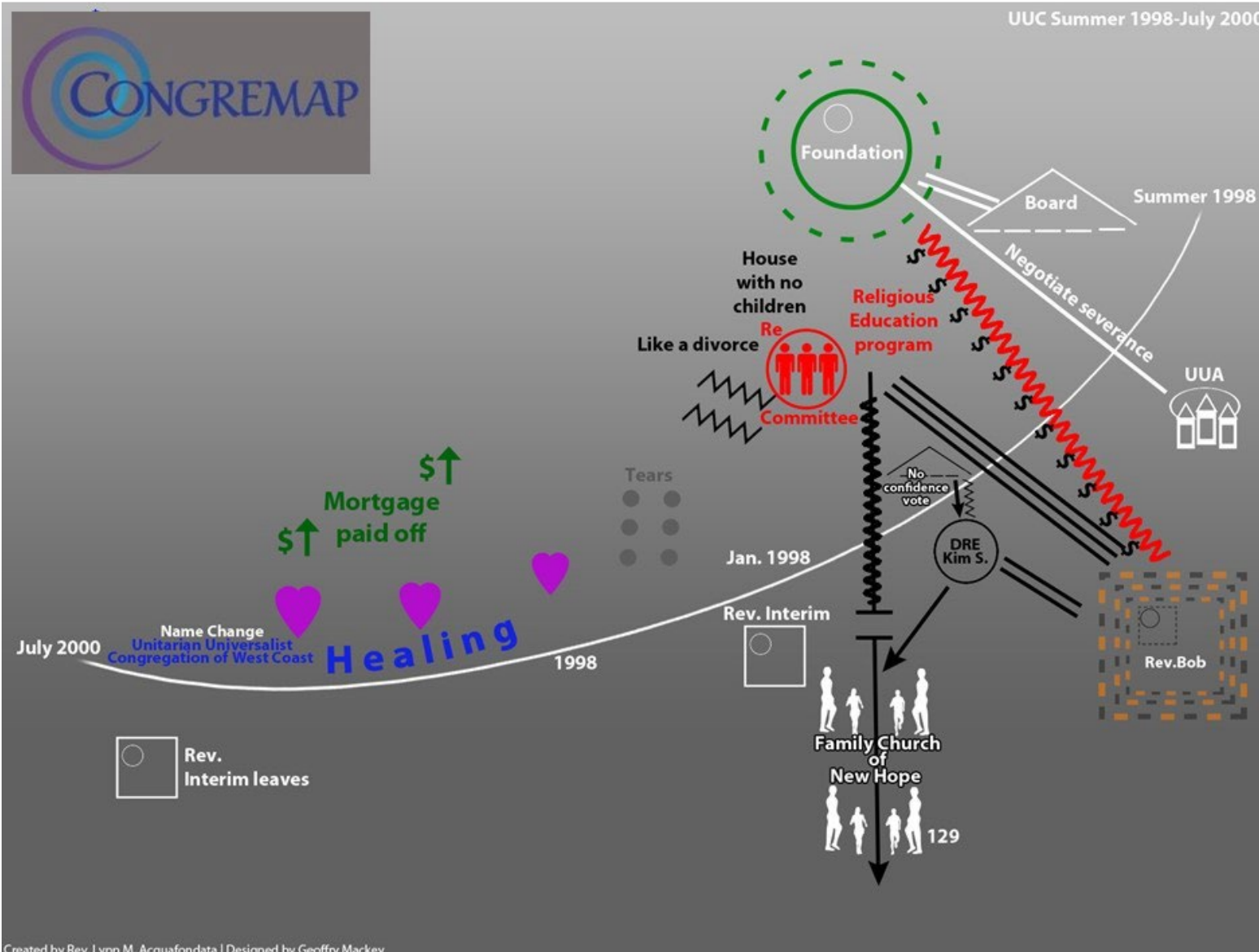


Figure B.5. WCUUC 1983-1989.



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Figure B.6. WCUUC 1990-1998.



Created by Rev. Lynn M. Acquafondata | Designed by Geoffry Mackey  
Figure B.7. WCUUC 1998-2000.

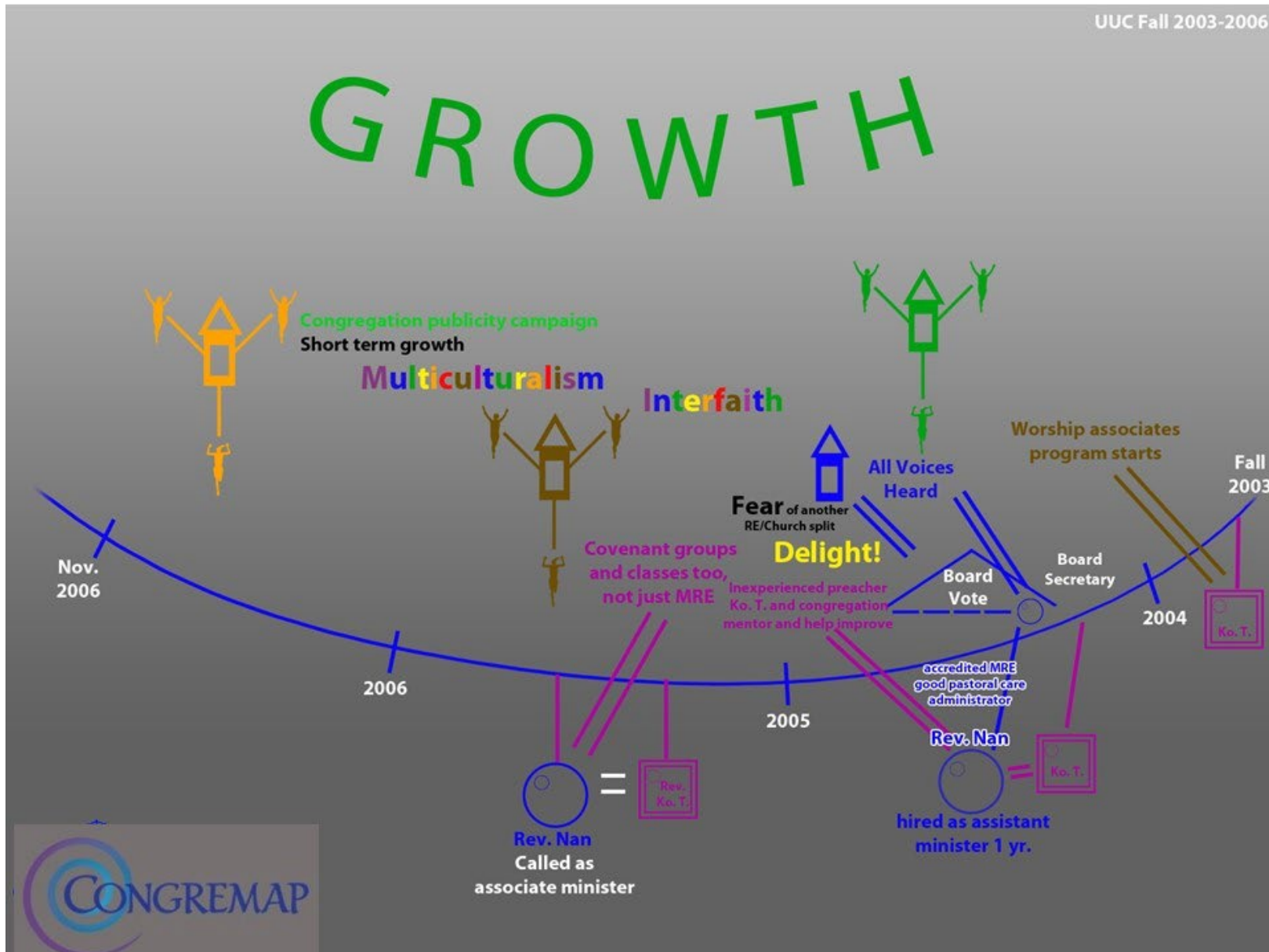


Figure B.8. WCUUC 2000-2003.



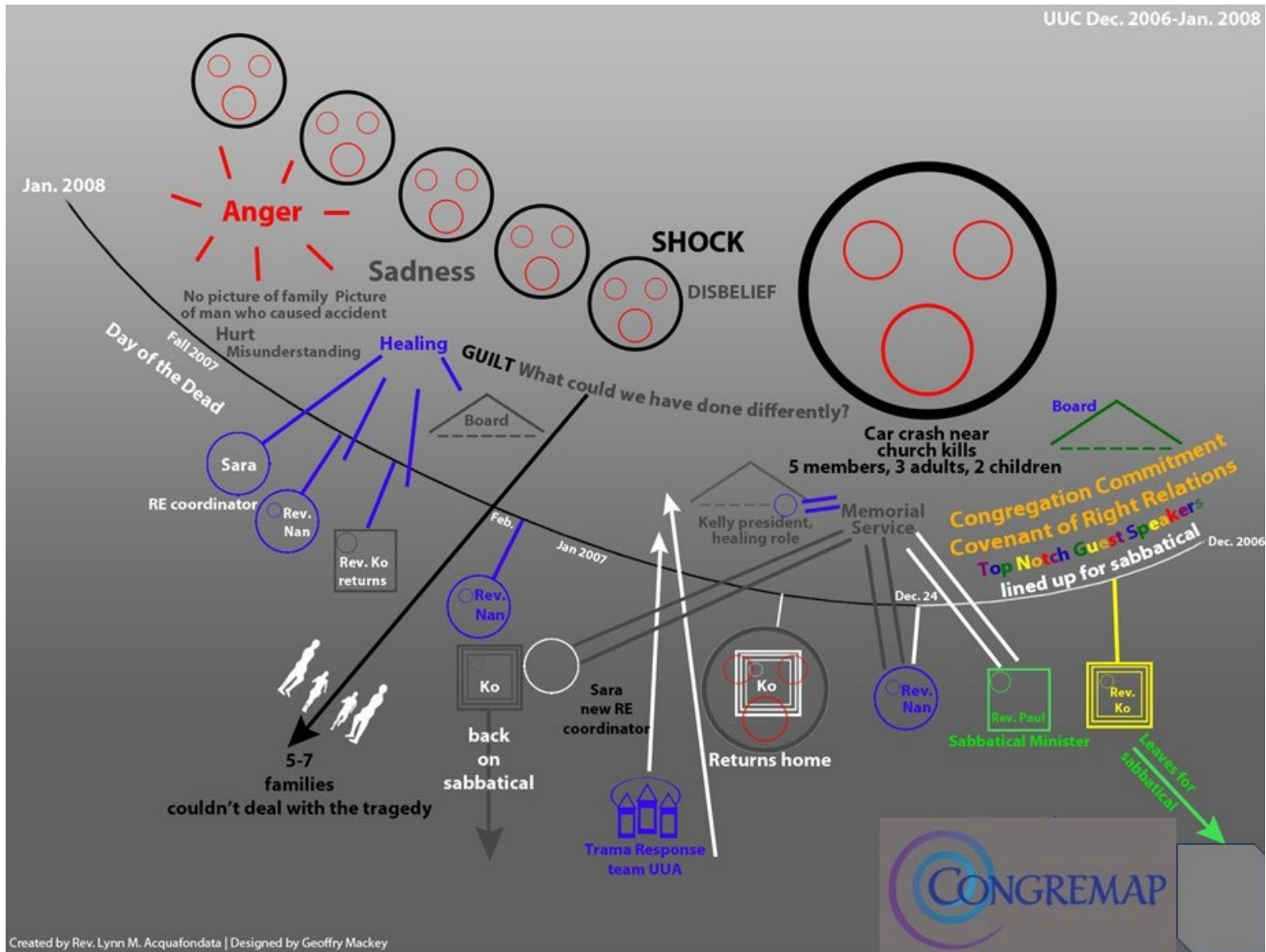


Figure B.10. WCUUC 2006-2008.

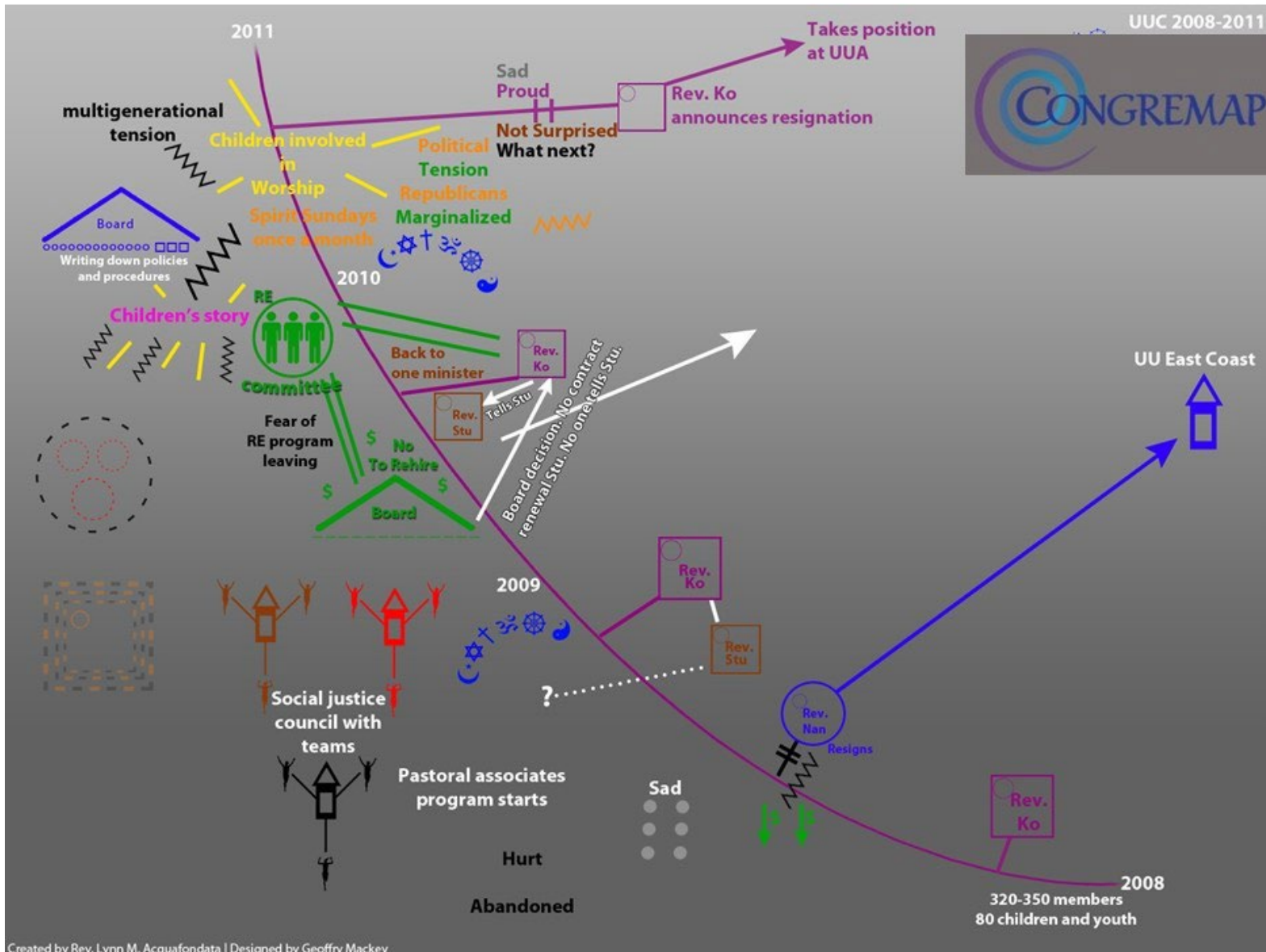


Figure B.11. WCUUC 2008-2011.

### Appendix C Congremap for St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

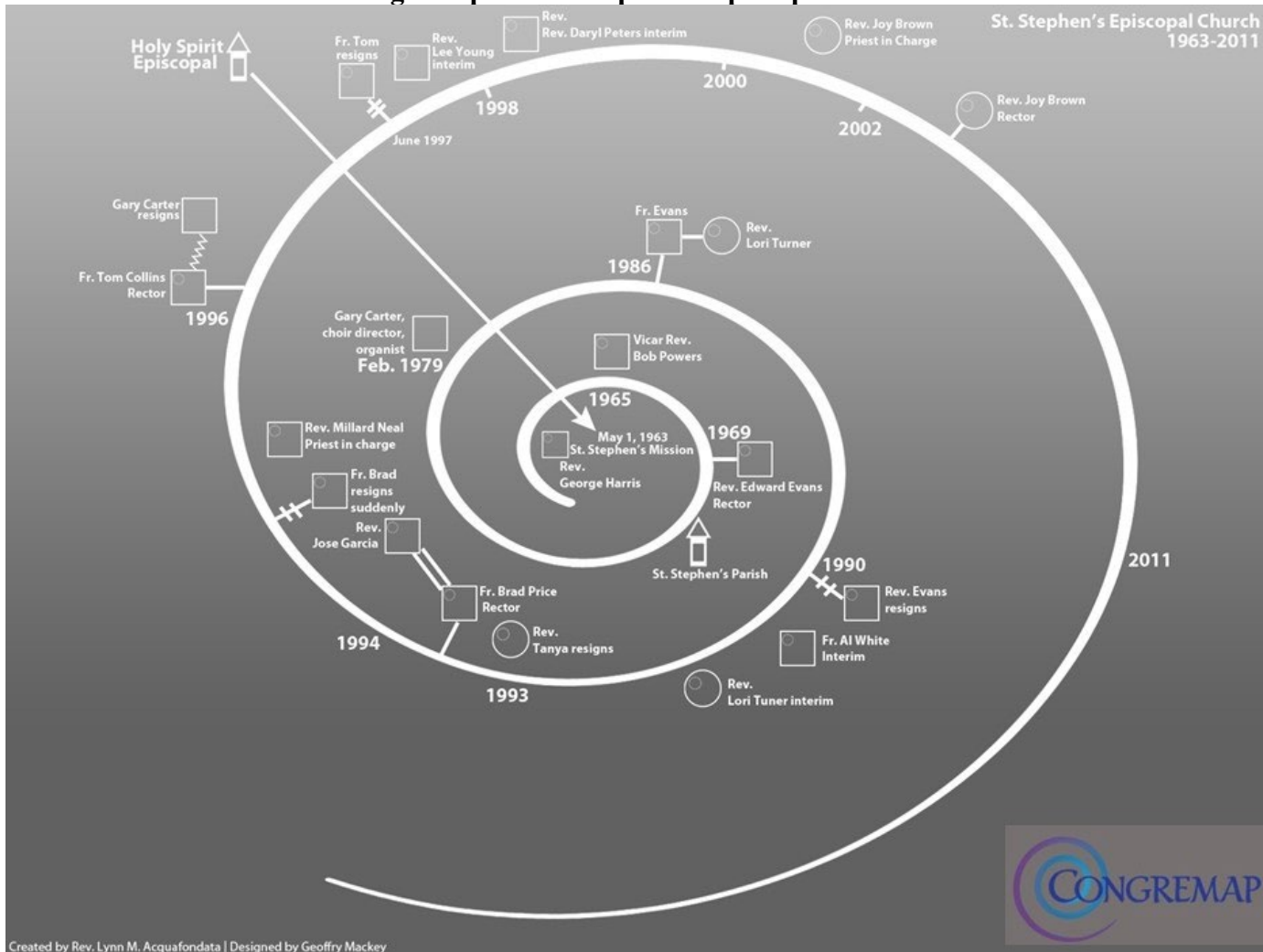


Figure C.1. St. Stephen's spiral.



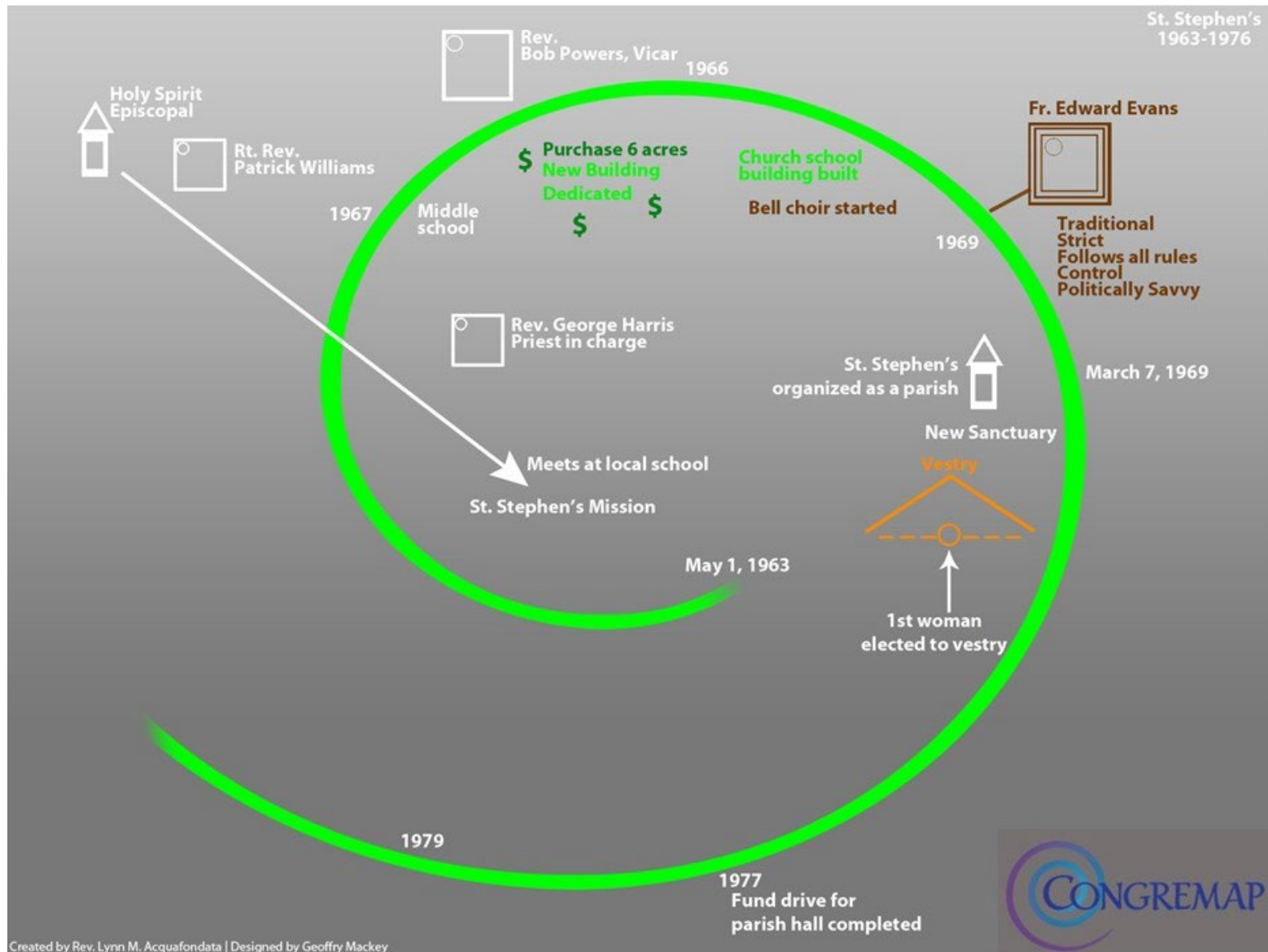


Figure C.2. St. Stephen's 1963-1976.

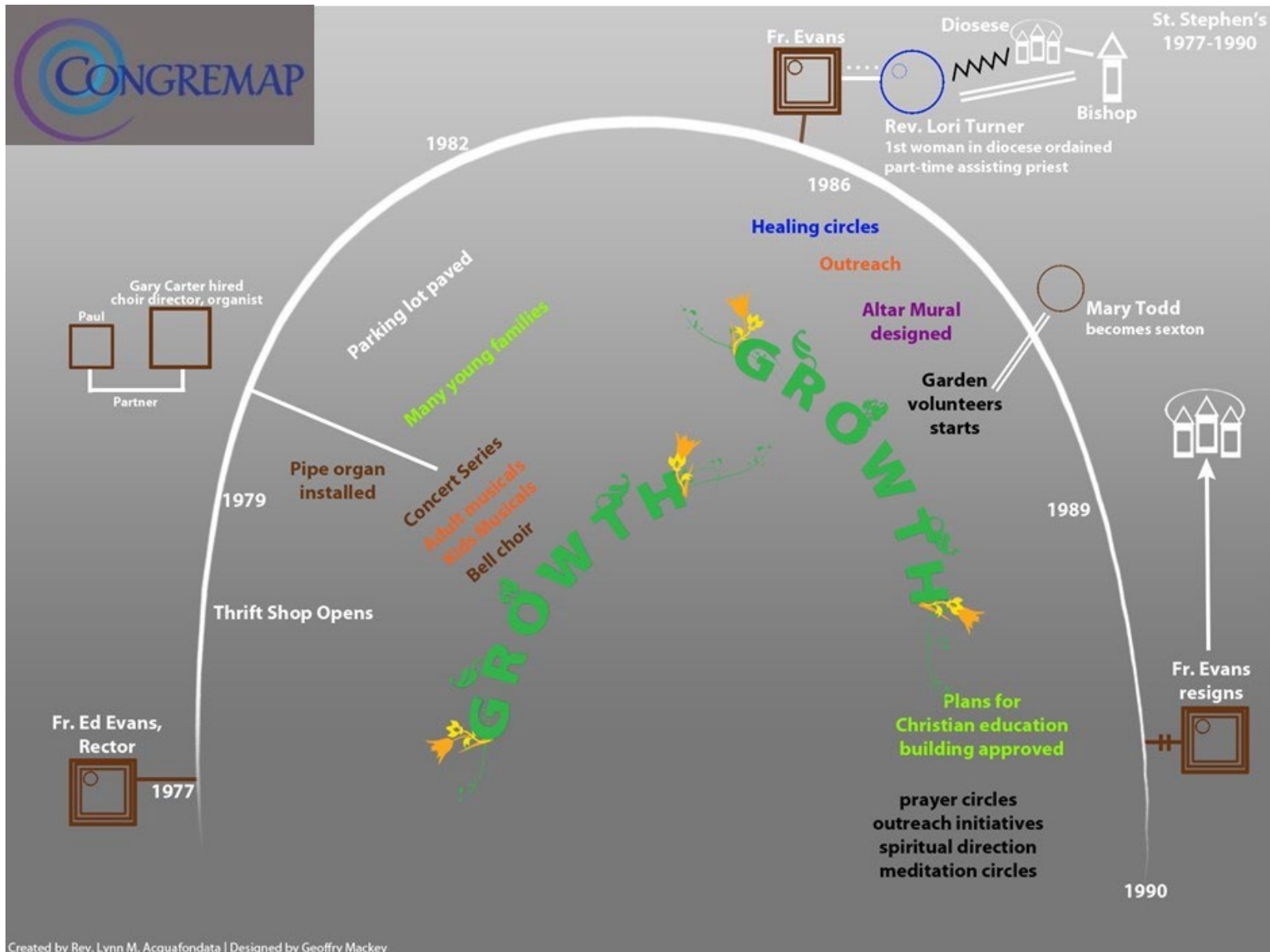


Figure C.3. Stephen's 1977-1990.

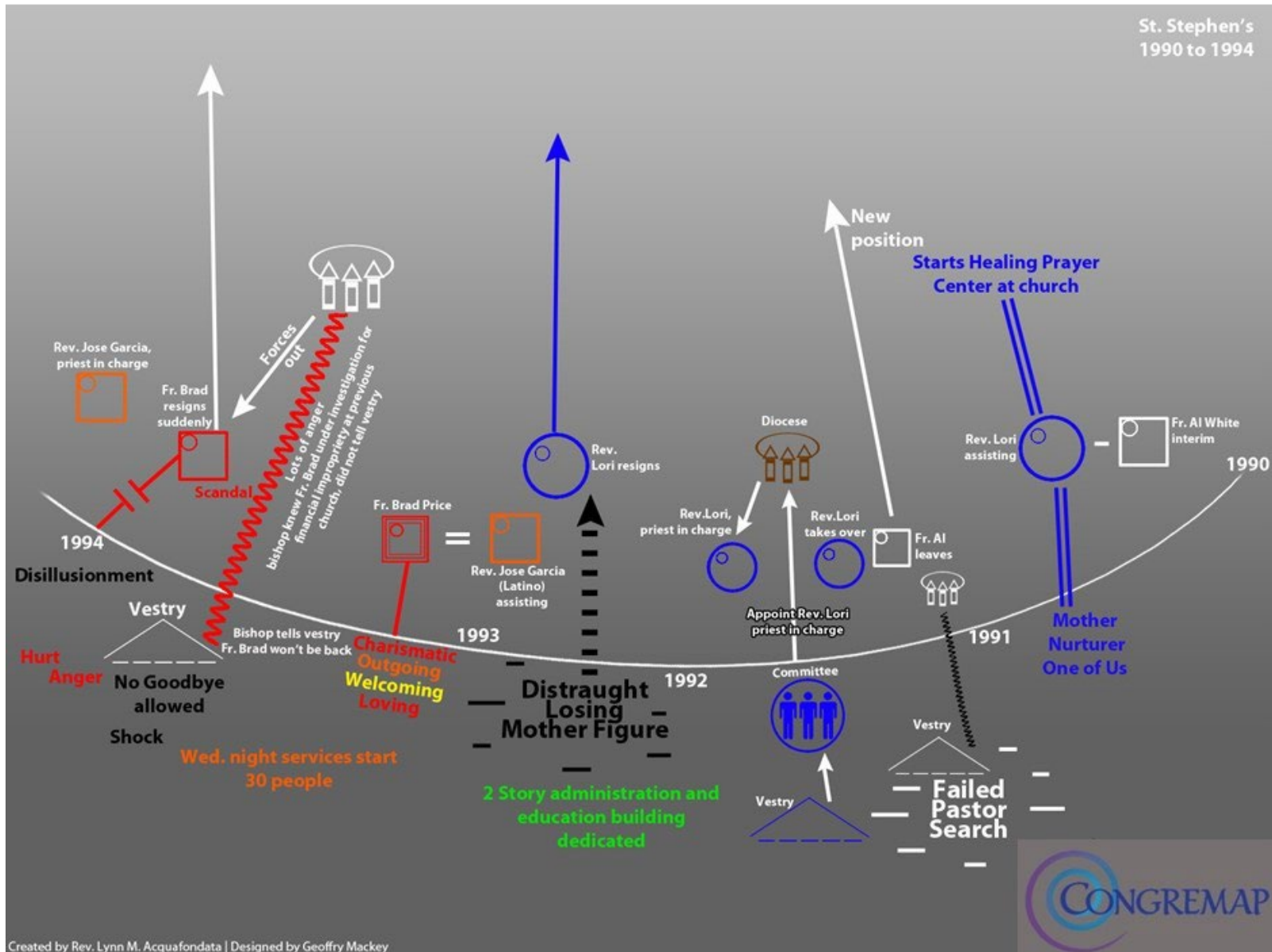


Figure C.4. Stephen's 1990-1994.

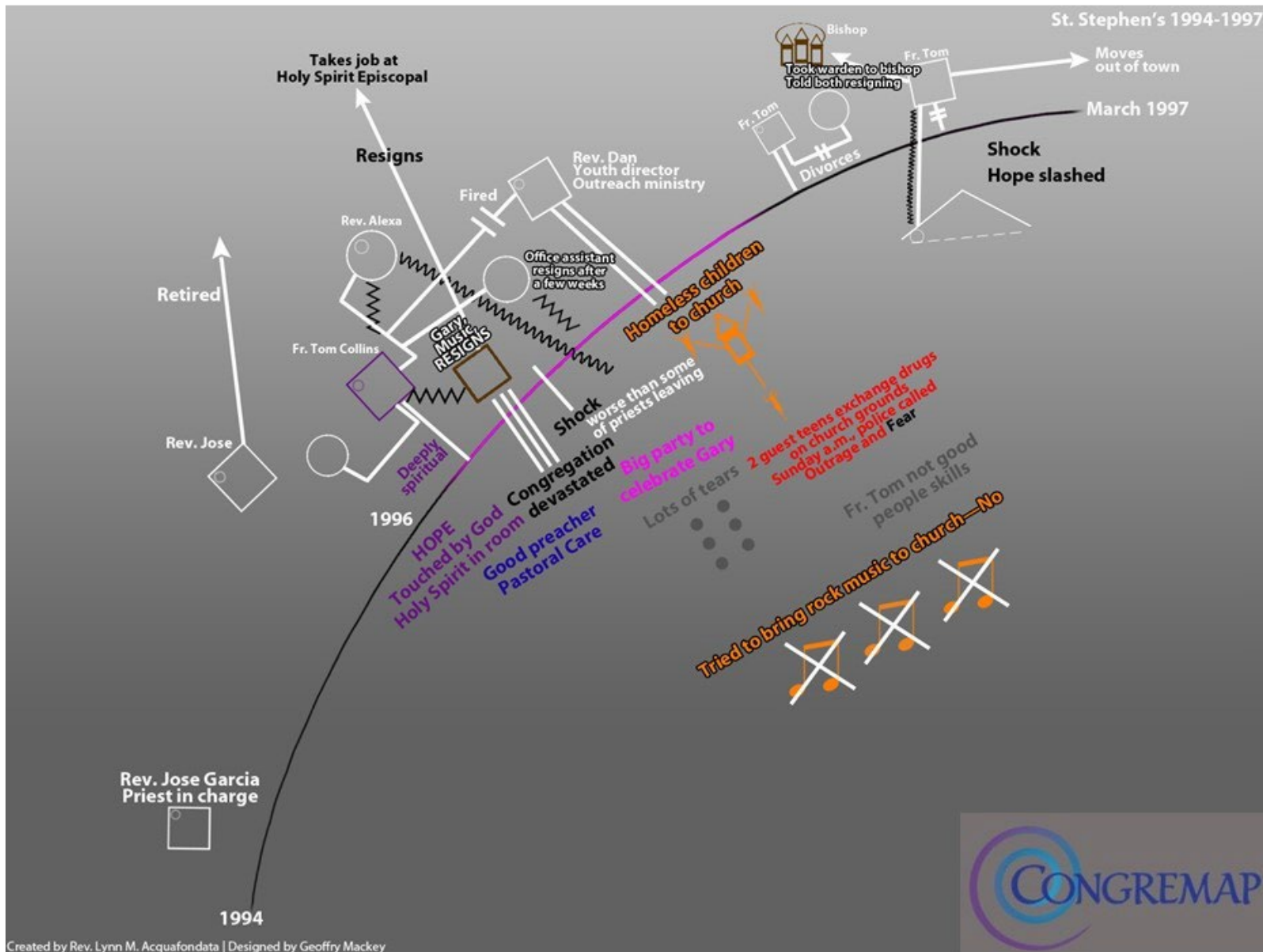


Figure C.5. Stephen's 1994-1997.

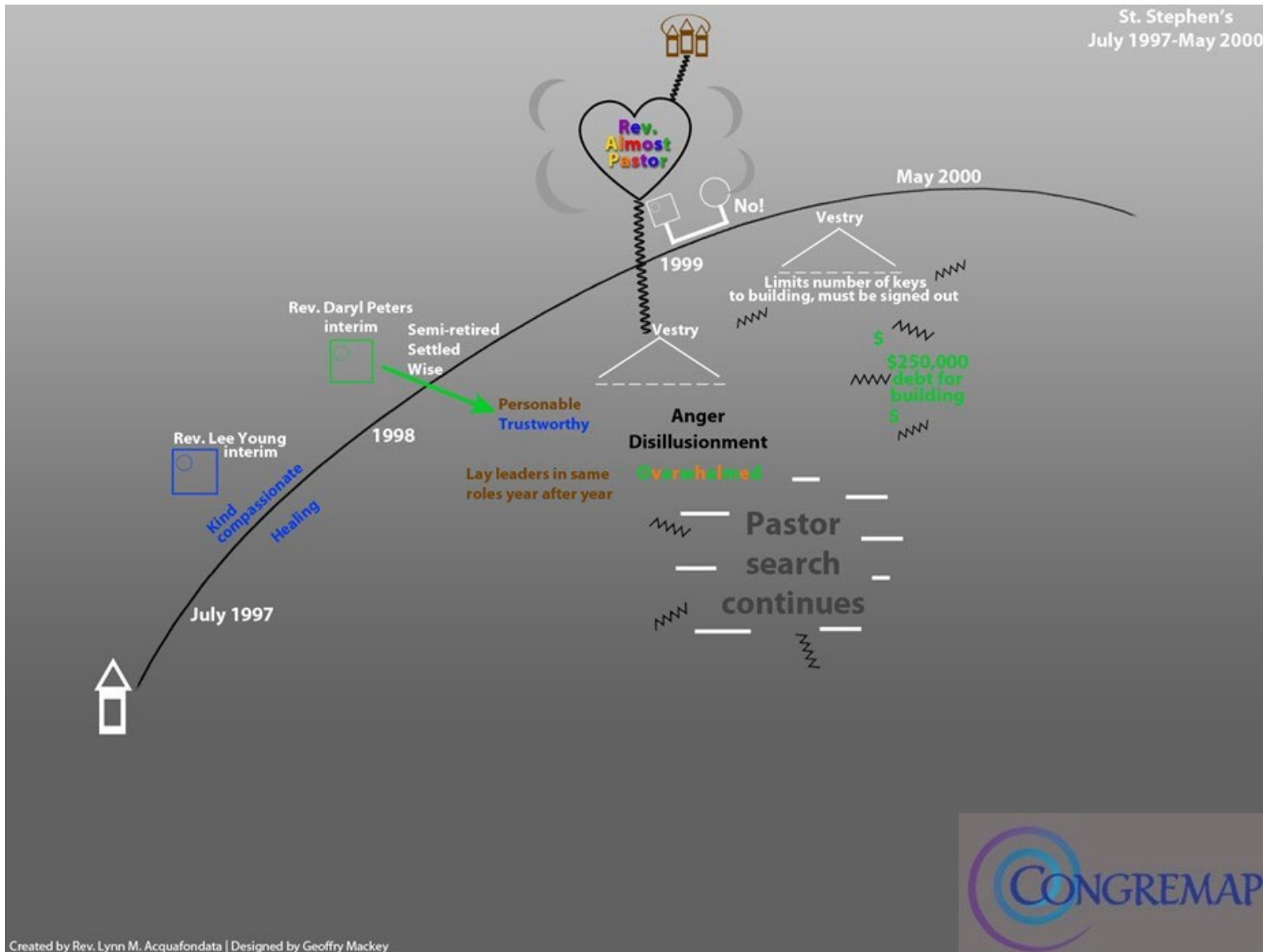


Figure C.6. Stephen's 1997-2000.

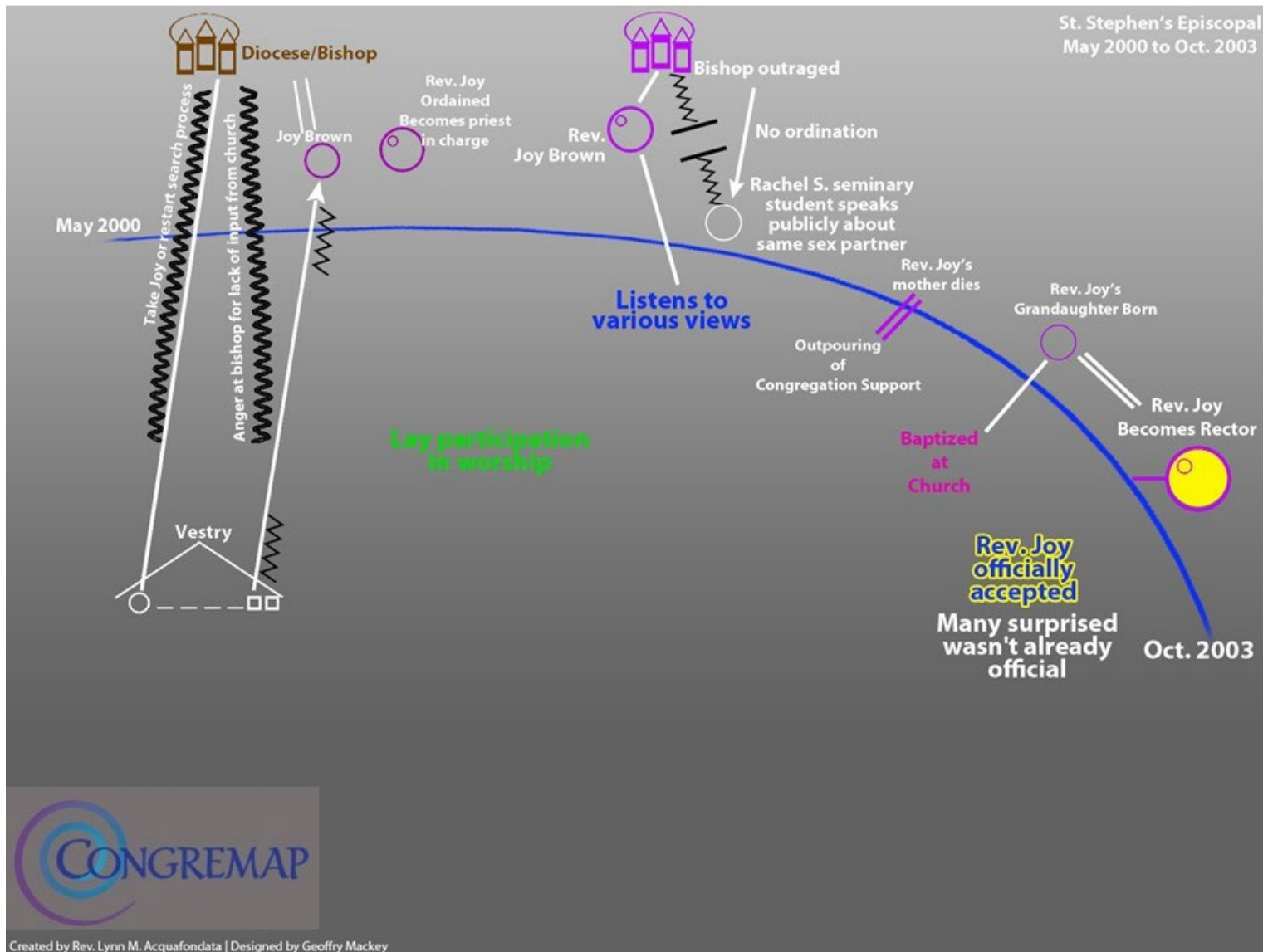


Figure C.7. Stephen's 2000-2003.

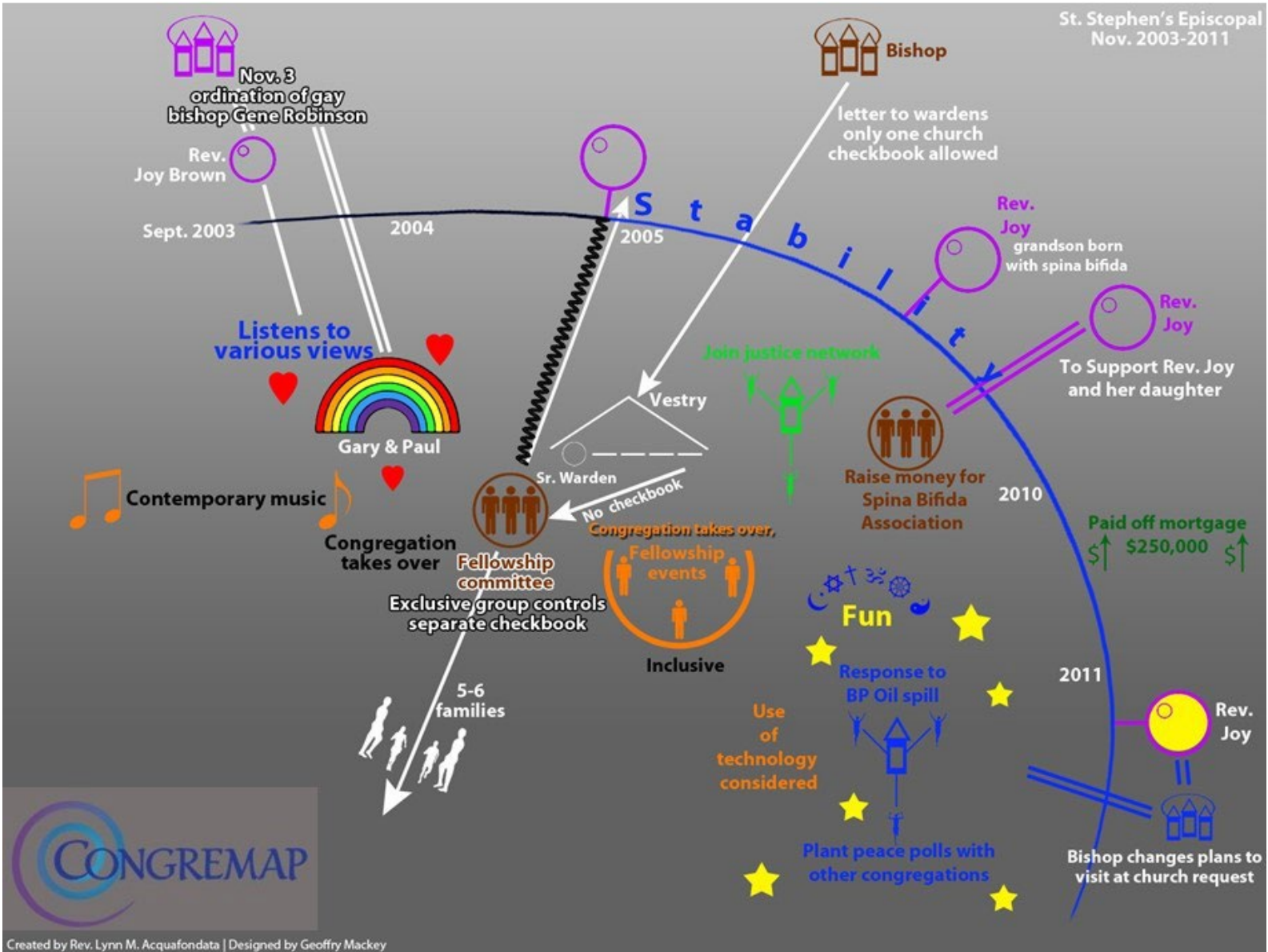


Figure C.8. Stephen's 2003-2011.

**Appendix D**  
**Congremap for Unity Church of the West Coast**

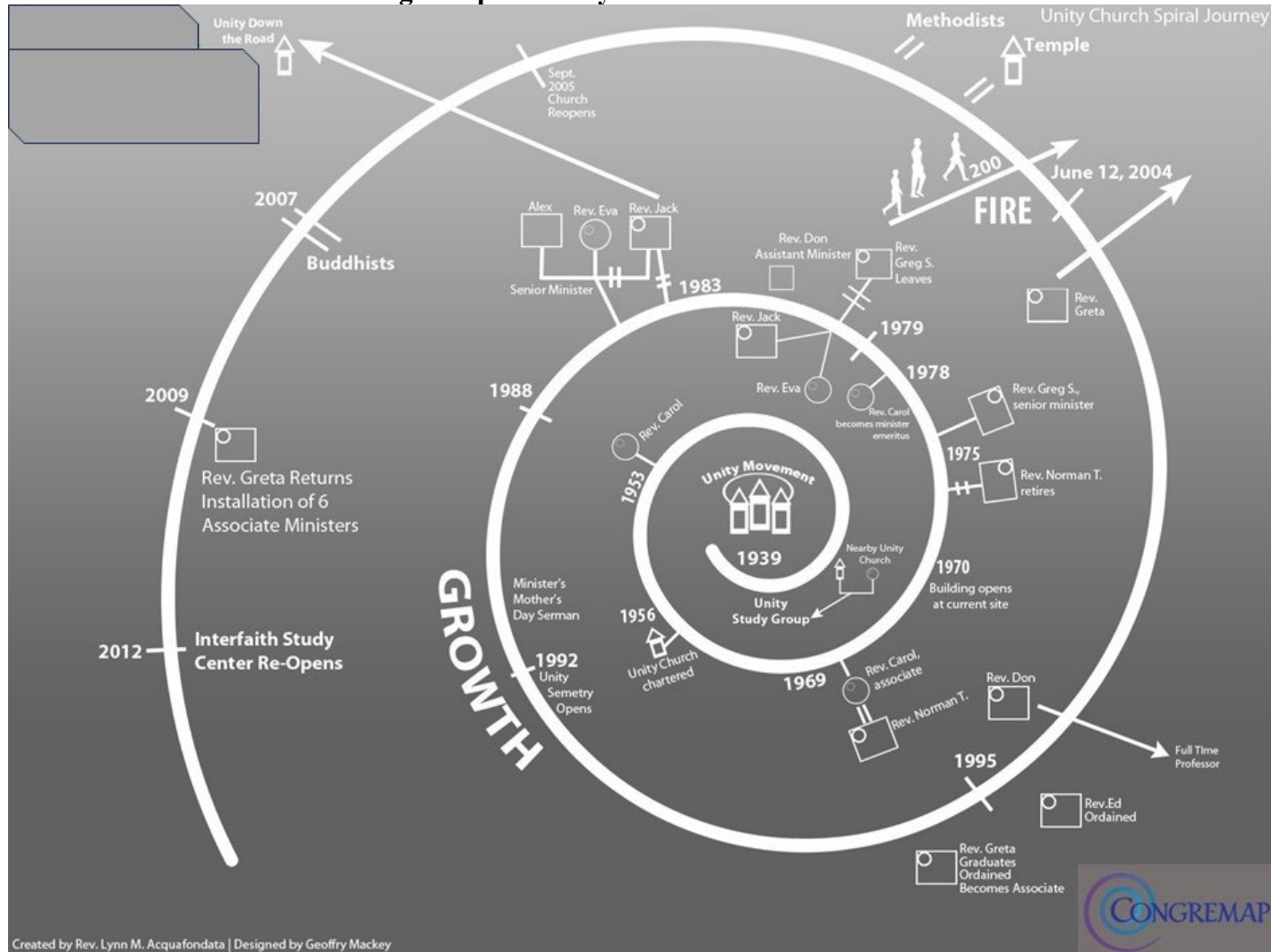


Figure D.1. Unity Church spiral.



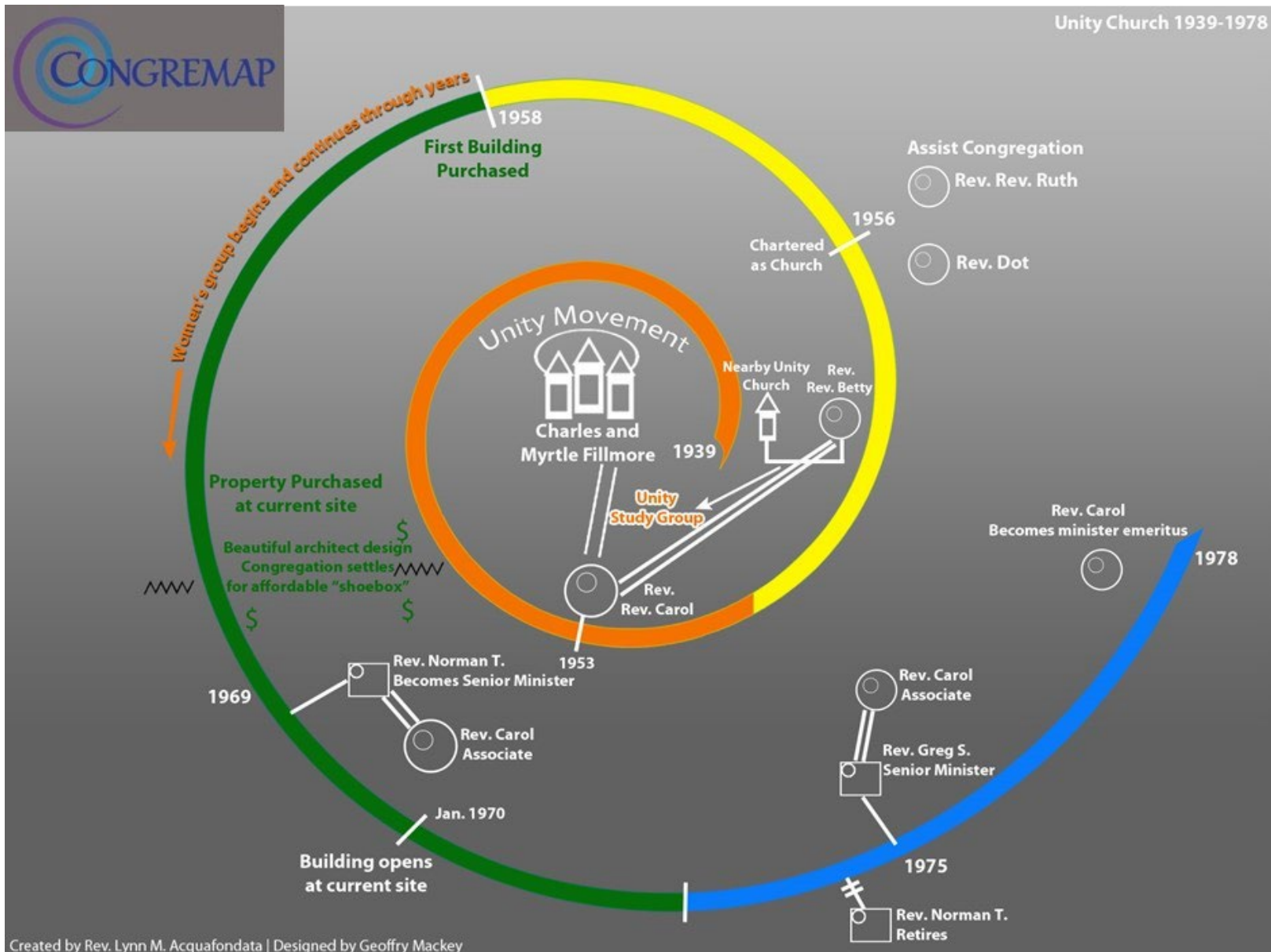


Figure D.2. Unity Church 1939-1978.

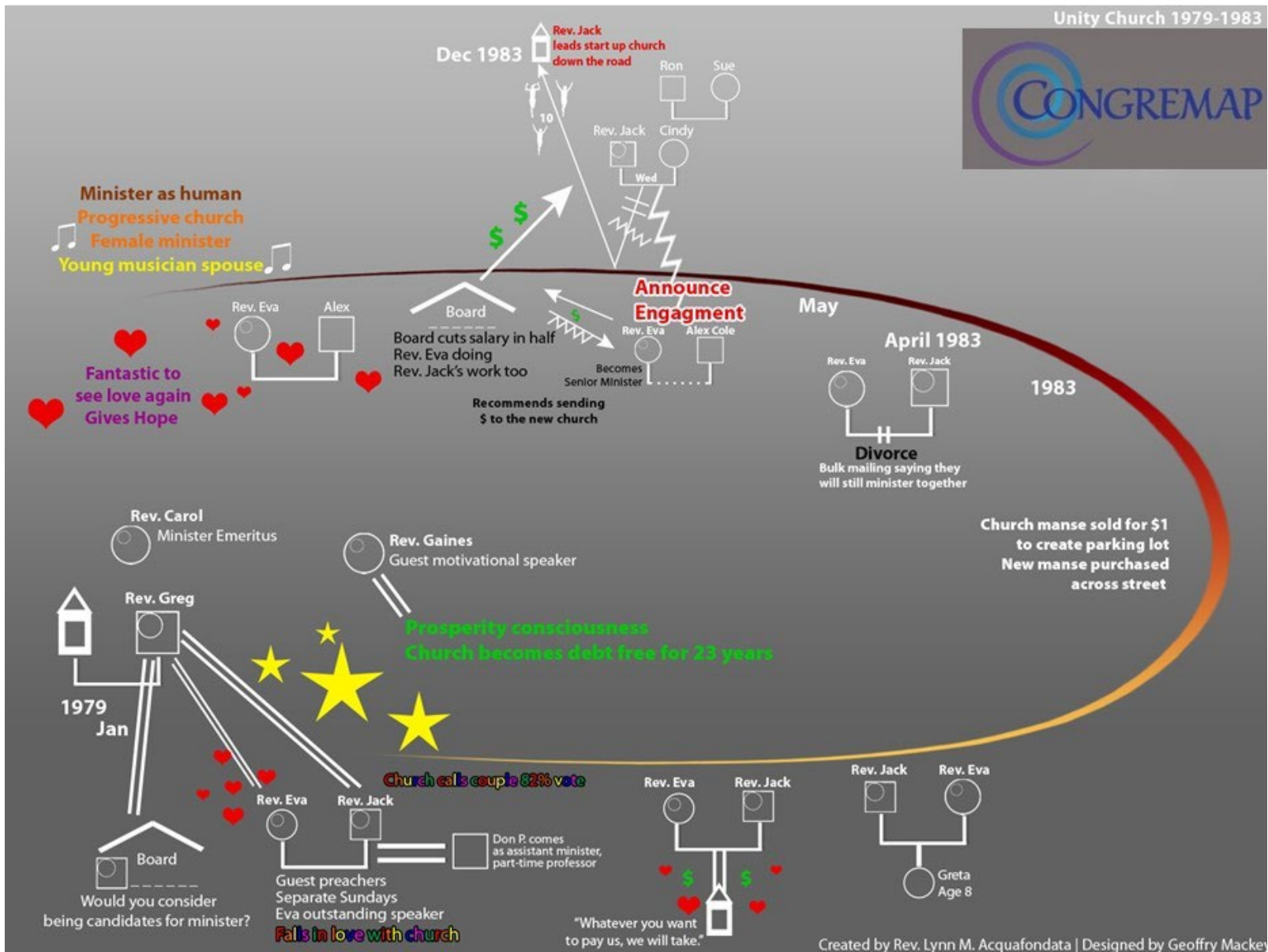


Figure D.3. Unity Church 1979-1983.

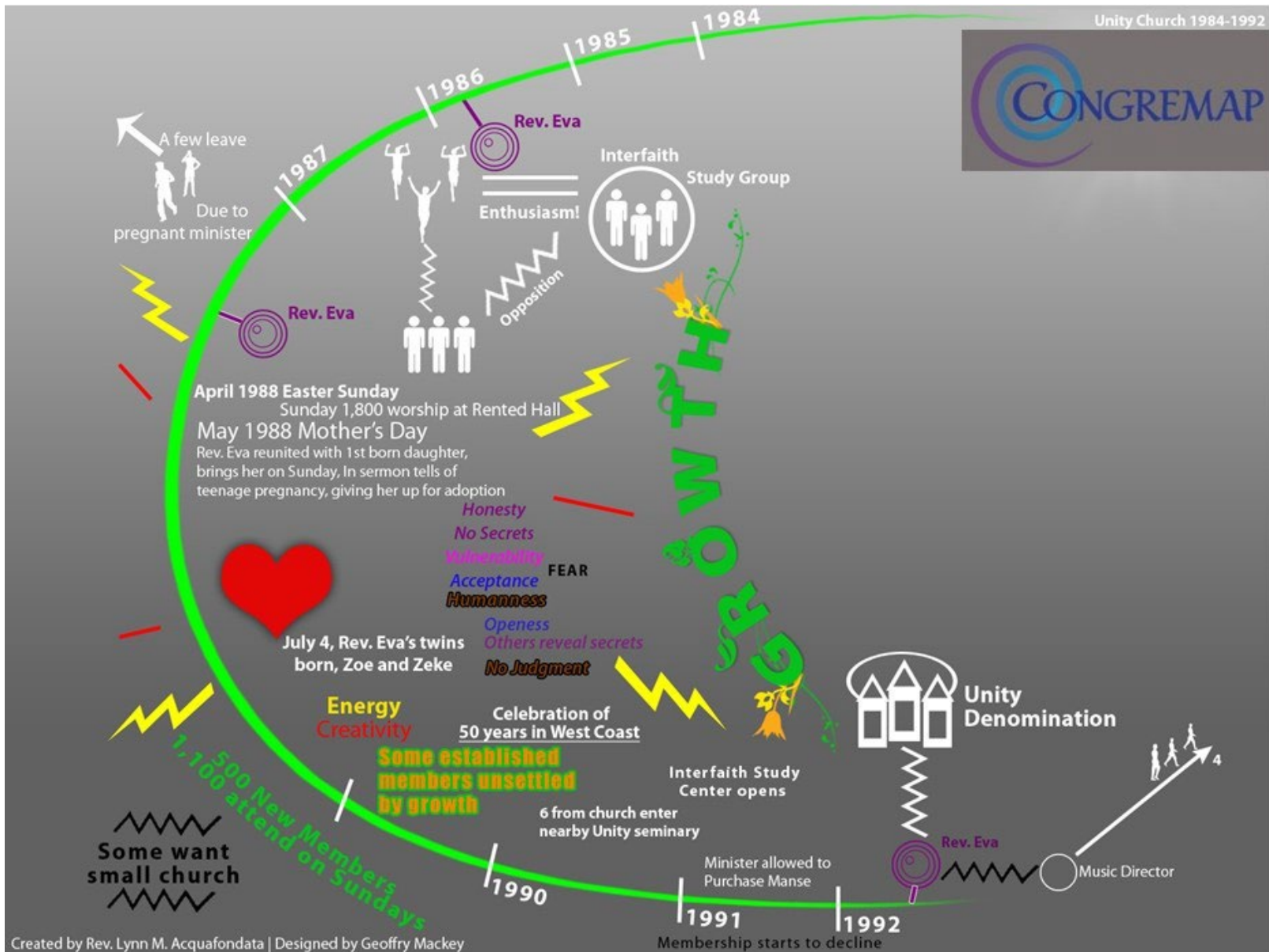


Figure D.4. Unity Church 1984-1992.

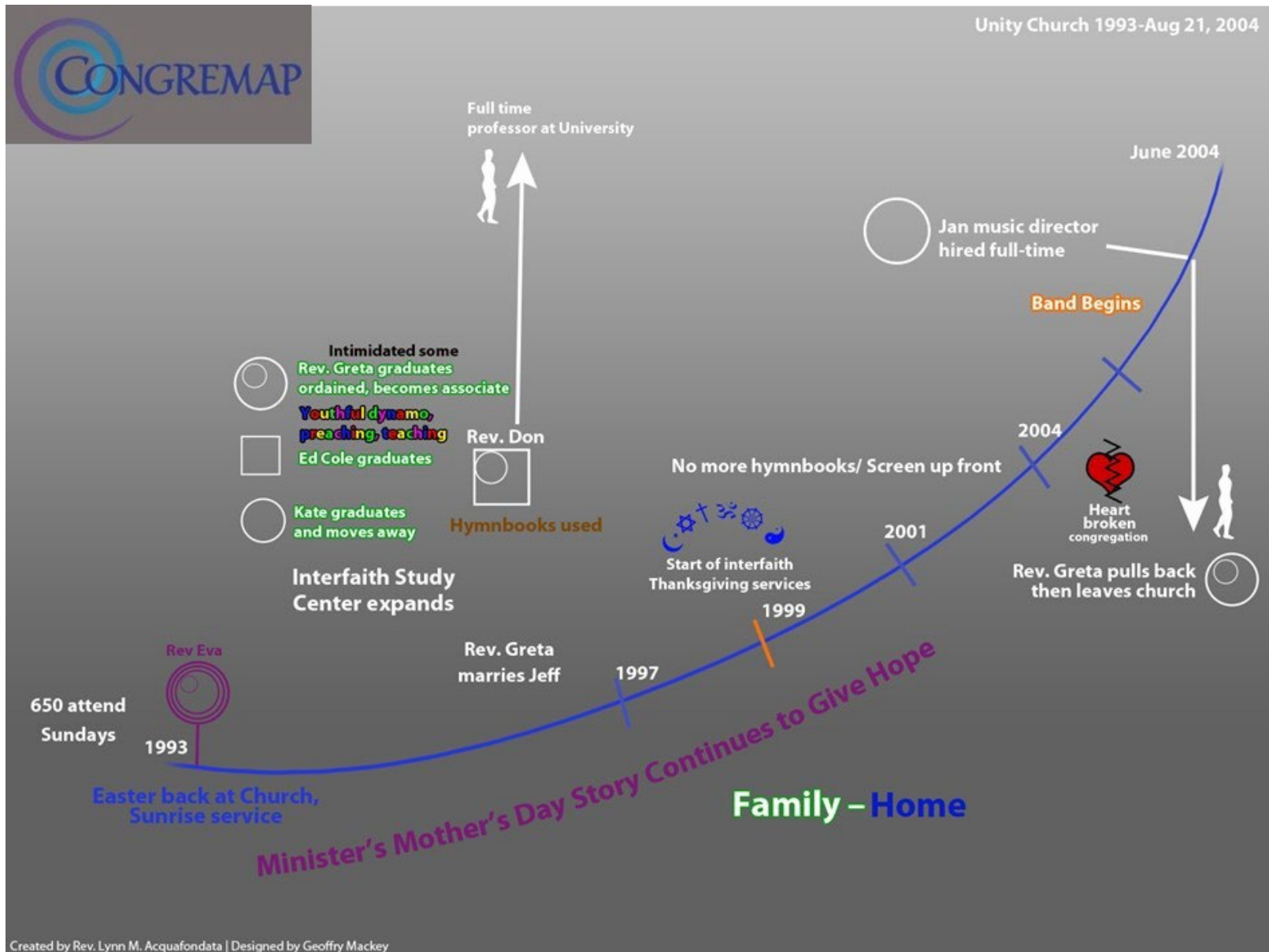


Figure D.5. Unity Church 1993-2004.

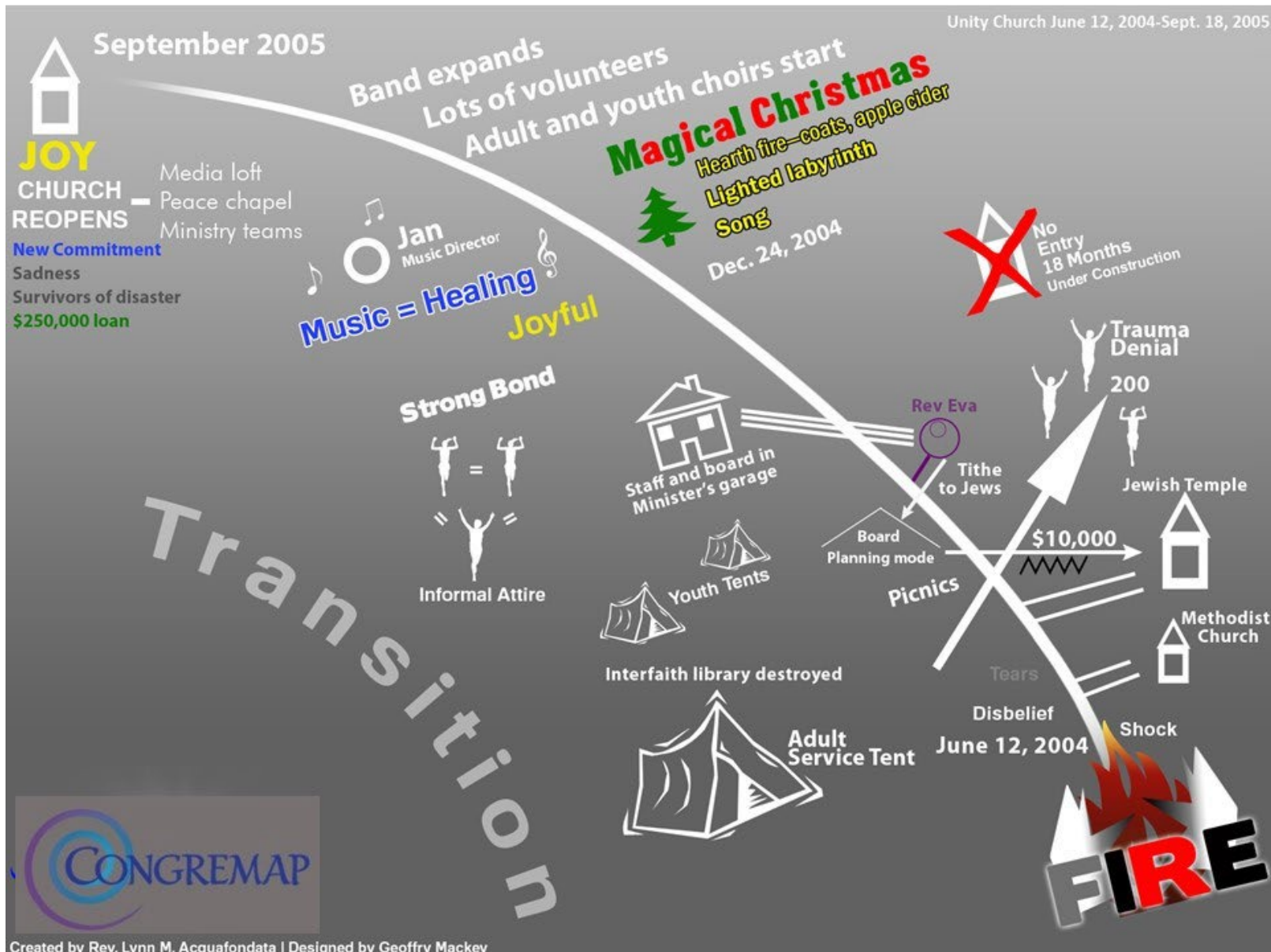


Figure D.6. Unity Church 2004-2005.

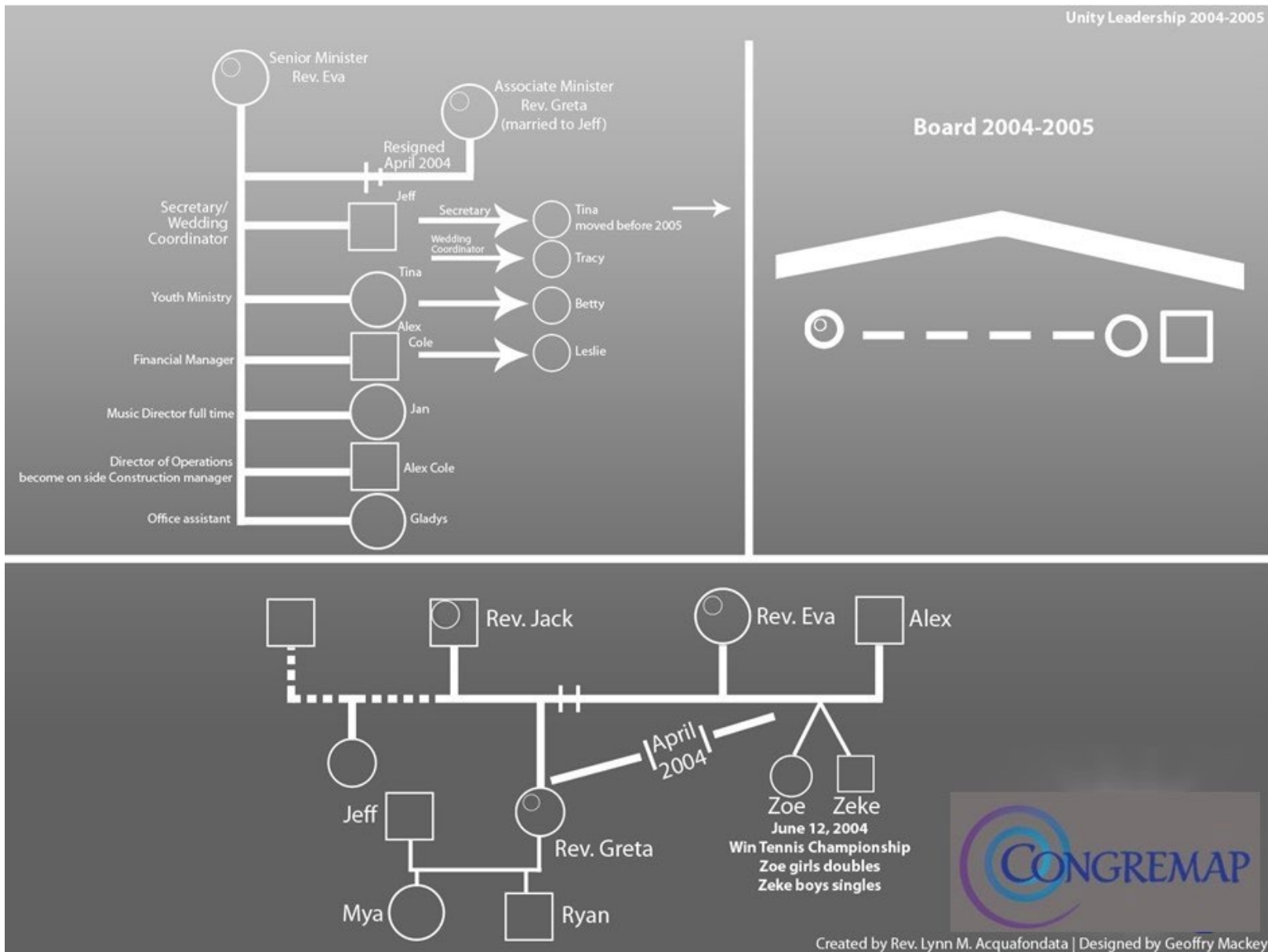


Figure D.7. Unity Church leadership 2004-2005.

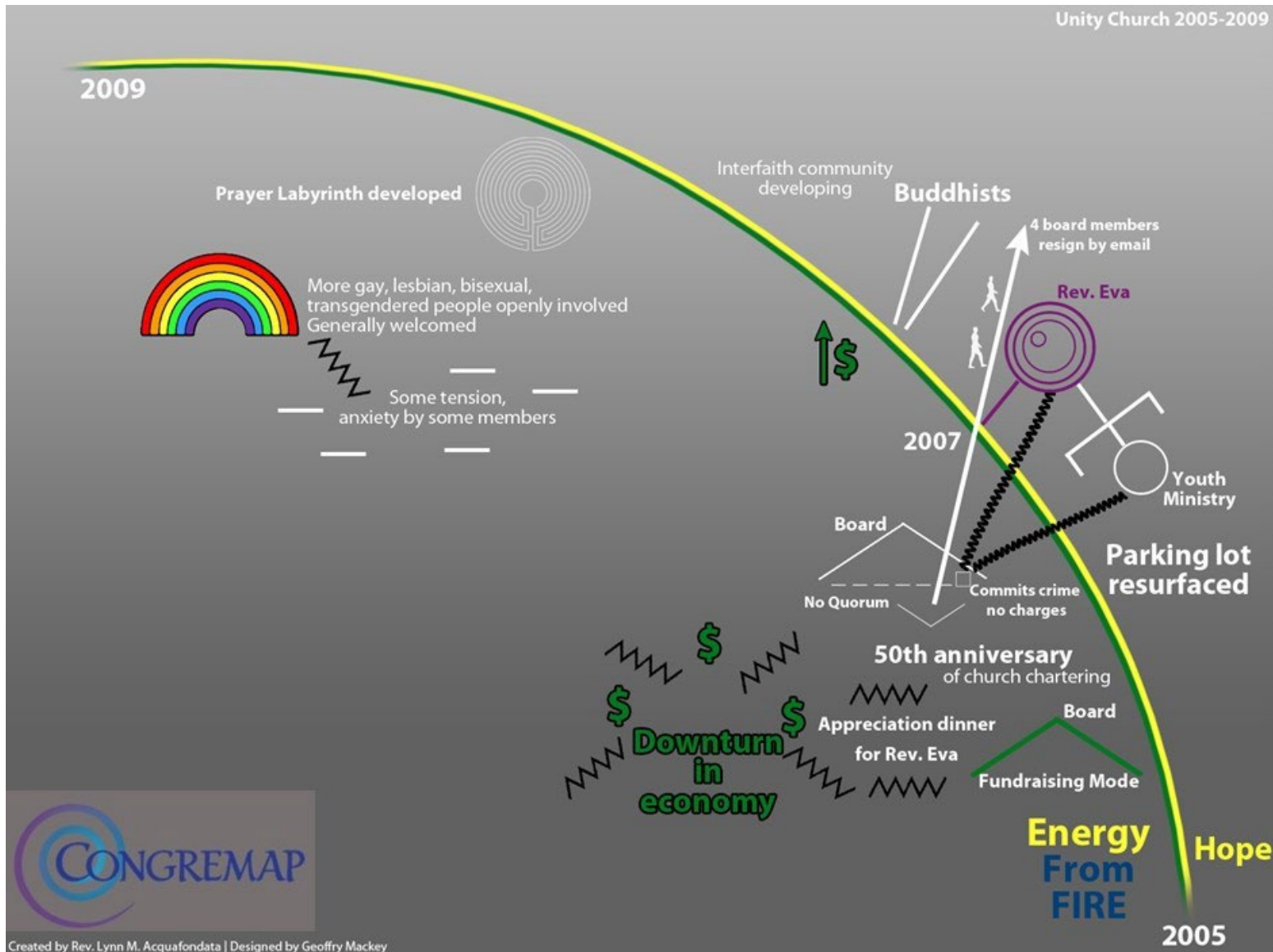


Figure D.8. Unity Church 2005-2009.

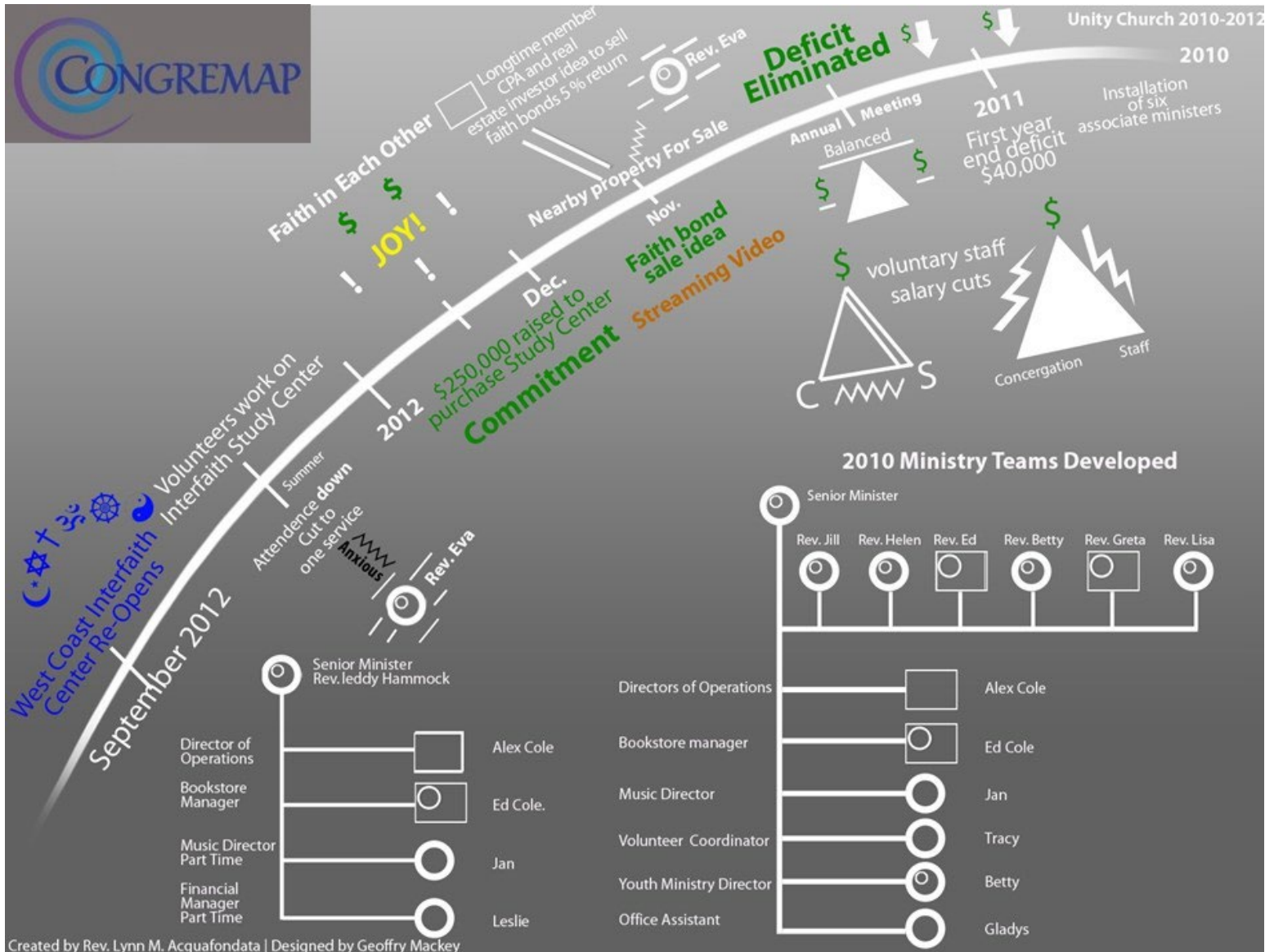


Figure D.9. Unity Church 2010-2012.



***Appendix E***  
**Consent Form**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to Rev. Lynn M. Acquafondata, Doctoral Candidate at Meadville Lombard Theological School, for my participation in the research study entitled:

“The Interaction of Congregational and Family Systems in Congregational Development”

It has been fully explained to me that the purpose of the study is as follows:

To create tools which help ministers and lay leaders to identify systems patterns within their congregations and between the congregation and their own families with the hope that over time this understanding will lead to healthier congregations and healthier families.

1. Data will be collected via in person and phone interviews.
2. My name and any identifying personal information will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any future publications except in cases in which the information is already public or if I have given prior approval.
3. The name of the congregation I belong to/served and identifying information will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any future publication.
4. My name and/or identifying information may be used in the verbal presentation to the congregation I represent, but only in cases in which the information is already public or if I have given prior approval.
5. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time.
6. I understand that by participation in this study I may help the researcher gain a better understanding of the systemic issues involved in the interaction of family and congregational systems. The researcher hopes that participation will also lead to personal insights for the participants which may or may not relate to the purpose of the study.
7. I understand that the student intends to seek publication of this thesis and will follow terms of this contract in publication.
8. If I have further questions concerning the research study, I am free to contact Rev. Dr. Neil Gerdes, faculty advisor, at any time. He can be reached at 773/256-3000, x225.
9. I have received a copy of this consent form.
10. I have read and understand the purpose of this study and voluntarily consent to participate.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

The Reverend Lynn M. Acquafondata, 234 Rockingham Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15238 (412)963-6128

## *Appendix F*

### **Individual Interview Format**

These are the questions which I asked during individual interviews. All interviews were in person verbal interviews.

#### **Question related to congregational involvement:**

Describe your most recent arrival to the congregation for a weekly service or for some other activity? What was that like for you?

Can you tell me about your involvement in this congregation? When did you join? Does your family participate? In what ways have you been involved? How are you involved now?

Can you share a story from your experience at this congregation which is a good example of the purpose or mission your congregation strives to live out?

We all have needs and expectations of the institutions we belong to. What is a good example of the needs and expectations you have of this congregation?

What about other people's needs and expectation of the congregation? What example illustrates other people's needs and expectations?

Tell me about a time when you disagreed with something that went on in this congregation or when you felt uncomfortable with another person here.

Tell me about a healing or empowering experience you have had at this congregation.

If your relationship or ways of relating to the congregation have changed significantly over the past 10 years, please give an example that illustrates how things were different back then.

Describe a scene from the future of this congregation. What do you anticipate?

Has being a part of this congregation enhanced your personal relationships in anyway? Can you think of a story that illustrates how you have experienced that? (If not, ask for a story that explains the distinct separation between congregation and personal life.)

#### **Questions related to the interviewee's immediate family**

Can you share some basic factual details about your immediate family? Who is in your immediate family? Who do you live with? What about your extended family? Who is in your extended family?

Describe a typical scene from daily life in your immediate family (those you currently live with or are most involved with on a regular basis.)

Most families have some typical patterns they fall into. Describe a scenario which explains some of these typical patterns in your immediate family. Who does what, when and how?

Think about your basic needs and expectations in family life. What is an example which best illustrates your needs and expectations?

Think of a time when you disagreed with someone in your immediate family. Describe what that was like. What happened? How did you respond?

Tell me about a special memory from your family life.

If your relationship or ways of relating to your immediate family have changed significantly over the past 10 years, please give an example that illustrates how things were different back then.

### **Questions relating to the interviewee's extended family**

Describe a typical scene from the time you spend with extended family.

Most families have some typical patterns they fall into. Describe a scenario which explains some of these typical patterns in your extended family. Who does what, when and how?

Think of a time when you disagreed with someone in your extended family. Describe what that was like. What happened? How did you respond?

If your relationship or ways of relating to the your extended family have changed significantly over the past 10 years, please give an example that illustrates how things were different back then.

Who do you most identify with in your immediate or extended family? Can you give me an example showing why you identify with this person?

## *Appendix G*

### **Individual Engagement and Reflection Exercises**

Please read the following engagement process and questions soon after reading the final Congremap analysis. Respond to the questions over the next four to six weeks. The responses are for your personal use though you may choose to share parts of those responses in the group reflection discussions, which will take place in 4 to 6 weeks following the presentation of the final written analysis of the Congremap. Responses can be written by hand or on the computer, spoken into an audio or video tape, or expressed in an artistic form such as drawing, painting, music, poetry or storytelling. It is encouraged that responses take a material form and not remain in the head of the participant because this allows for a deeper level of processing which in turn leads to a greater potential for personal and communal growth and development.

The questions can be answered in any order. Do not focus on more than one question per day. Start with your favorite question or with one that seems easiest to you. You may choose to reflect on one question each week or start answering each of the four questions on a separate day during the first week, then develop the answers in more depth in the following weeks.

1. *Focus on yourself as a participant in your congregational community.* As you attend services, activities, meetings and social events at your congregation pay close attention to your own actions, reactions, responses and interactions. Notice the emotions you feel in various encounters and situations. Do not seek to change what you are doing or feeling, just notice and record. Write down each event in a journal or log or use an artist format to record your actions, reactions, responses and interactions in each situation.
  
2. *Focus on yourself at home.* Notice how you act, react, respond and interact with your family and close friends. Choose two or three situations from the week. Do not seek to change what you are doing or feeling, just notice and record. Write down what you observe in a journal or log or use an artist format to express your actions, reactions, responses and interactions in each situation.
  
3. *The Congremap from your perspective:* Think about the Congremap analysis and review your notes from that process.
  - a. Name one pattern that was pointed out in the analysis. Start with the first one that comes to mind. Reflect on your own interactions, responses and emotions in relation to this pattern. Can you see yourself as a part of this pattern? Don't evaluate yourself. Don't try to change anything. Just notice and record what you notice.
  
  - b. Name another pattern that was pointed out in the analysis. Reflect on your own interactions, responses and emotions in relation to this pattern. Can you see yourself as a part of this pattern. Don't evaluate yourself. Don't try to change anything. Just notice and record what you notice.

c. Repeat this process as you reflect on other patterns.

4. *The Congremap and your family:*

- a. Name one event in the history of the congregation that sticks in your mind following the presentation of the Congremap and reading the analysis. This can be an event you were a part of or one that you weren't a part of, but that touches you emotionally in some way. What was that event? Who responded in what ways? If you were there, how did you act or respond emotionally? If you weren't there, how do you think you would have acted or responded? How do you wish you had acted or responded emotionally?
- b. Can you think of an event in the life of your family that causes you to feel similar emotions or to act in similar ways? What was this event? How did you feel? What did you do or not do? What was your role?
- c. Write down your responses to these questions in a journal or log or use an artist format to record your responses.

## *Appendix H*

### **Group Reflection Discussion**

Allow 1 ½ to two hours for discussion. Ask participants to re-read the Congremap analysis before coming to the group reflection or allow time at the beginning for participants to re-read the analysis. Have the diagrams available to review as needed.

Ask one person to take notes.

- 1) Discuss the main points of the analysis. What do you see as your subgroup's role in these processes?
- 2) Are there any patterns you can identify in this subgroup that you see as productive and helpful and that you would like to continue doing?
- 3) Are there any patterns you can identify which relate to this subgroup that might benefit from change or at least an experiment with a different way of acting and reacting?

## *Appendix I*

### **Action planning process**

A. Identify three major learnings from the Congremap process.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Thinking in terms of emotional process, what would you like the congregation to be like five years from now?

C. Choose two goals that stem from the learnings listed in section A which could lead the congregation towards the vision of its future listed in section B. These goals should be related to emotional process not to programming or materials, or products.

For example DO try goals such as:

- Deepen our understanding of patterns that work well in this congregation.
- Increase communication between \_\_\_\_\_ (old timers and newer members, leadership team and congregation, traditionalists and progressives).
- Work on decreasing our anxiety and reactivity on issues related to \_\_\_\_\_ (money, leadership, welcoming new members. etc.).
- Work on changing our pattern of avoiding discussion of \_\_\_\_\_ (a past traumatic event, a controversial issue, money. etc.).

**Do NOT** use material or programming goals such as:

We would like to add onto our current building.

We would like to increase membership.

We would like to start a new social justice outreach program.

---

Goal #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Goal #2 \_\_\_\_\_

D. What are three possible action steps that could be taken right away to reach Goal #1?

1.

2.

3.

What are some action steps that might be taken over the next year or two to reach Goal #1?

1.

2.

What action steps might be taken in three or four years to reach Goal #1?

1.

2.

What are three possible action steps that could be taken right away to reach Goal #2?

1.

2.

3.

What are some action steps that might be taken over the next year or two to reach Goal #2?

1.

2.



What action steps might be taken in three or four years to reach goal #2?

1.

2.

E. For each goal, review the possible actions steps and choose one action step the congregation will take right away, one action step the congregation will take over the coming year and one action step the congregation can take in future years. Put a star next to those action steps.