

Rhode Island Conference United Church of Christ
A Report & Resource for Our Local Churches, September 2011

*This litany is based loosely on the plenary discussion at the RI Conference UCC Spring Meeting
on May 7, 2011, in response to the focus scripture, Joel 2:28-32.*

A LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE, RECONCILIATION & RESOLVE

One: Our church is not the church we remember. There are fewer of us, and we are older. We compete with the workplace, youth activities, travel, other churches, and the economy.

All: Where have all our people gone?

One: We live in the tension between a secular society that assigns us to a place of irrelevance and a public religiosity that narrows the faith to one we can't accept.

All: Even in our own pews we watch people caught between these polarities.

One: We are overwhelmed by a world filled with disasters and rebellions, energy crises and unemployment, hunger and homelessness, technology and the speed of change. The issues seem more complex and are often beyond our understanding.

All: The crises tug at our heartstrings, and we affirm the Biblical witness to care for the poor and the vulnerable.

One: Our sons and daughters and grandchildren think church is boring, a waste of time, and too dogmatic, and they sometimes take us to task for our hypocrisy when we don't practice what we preach.

All: We grieve that they do not find the community and companionship that brought meaning to us. We are disheartened that church for them is not what it was for us.

One: Our young people remind us that God is bigger than our institutions, outside of our local churches, and beyond our Christian world view.

All: We love the old traditions, the hymns and the language, yet we acknowledge that these are trappings and that we need new ways to be "church."

One: We picture a church where all are welcome, where we are filled with the Spirit, where we work for peace by working for justice.

All: We imagine a community where churches are as important as hospitals and where people go to find spiritual healing and wholeness.

One: We will stop worrying about numbers and money and traditions. We will develop ways to open windows to new ideas and doors to new communities. We will align our theology with core values in Jesus' teachings and make passing on the faith to the next generation a priority.

All: Since God is still speaking, we will listen.

One: We will love each other, strengthen each other, and equip each other to serve. We will encourage our pastors to empower lay leaders.

All: Here we are, God; send us out into the world as agents of your reconciling love. Amen.

*Data compiled and litany crafted by the Rev. Betsy Aldrich Garland, Church Life & Leadership
For the RI Conference UCC Board of Directors*