

Reimagining Our Collective Missional Call

Illinois South Conference UCC Annual Meeting
October 14, 2021

Intro to Mission

- **Vision:** The ministry's ultimate goals
- **Mission:** What the ministry does; vision in action
- **Purpose:** Why the ministry exists



Is “mission” the most helpful / appropriate word?

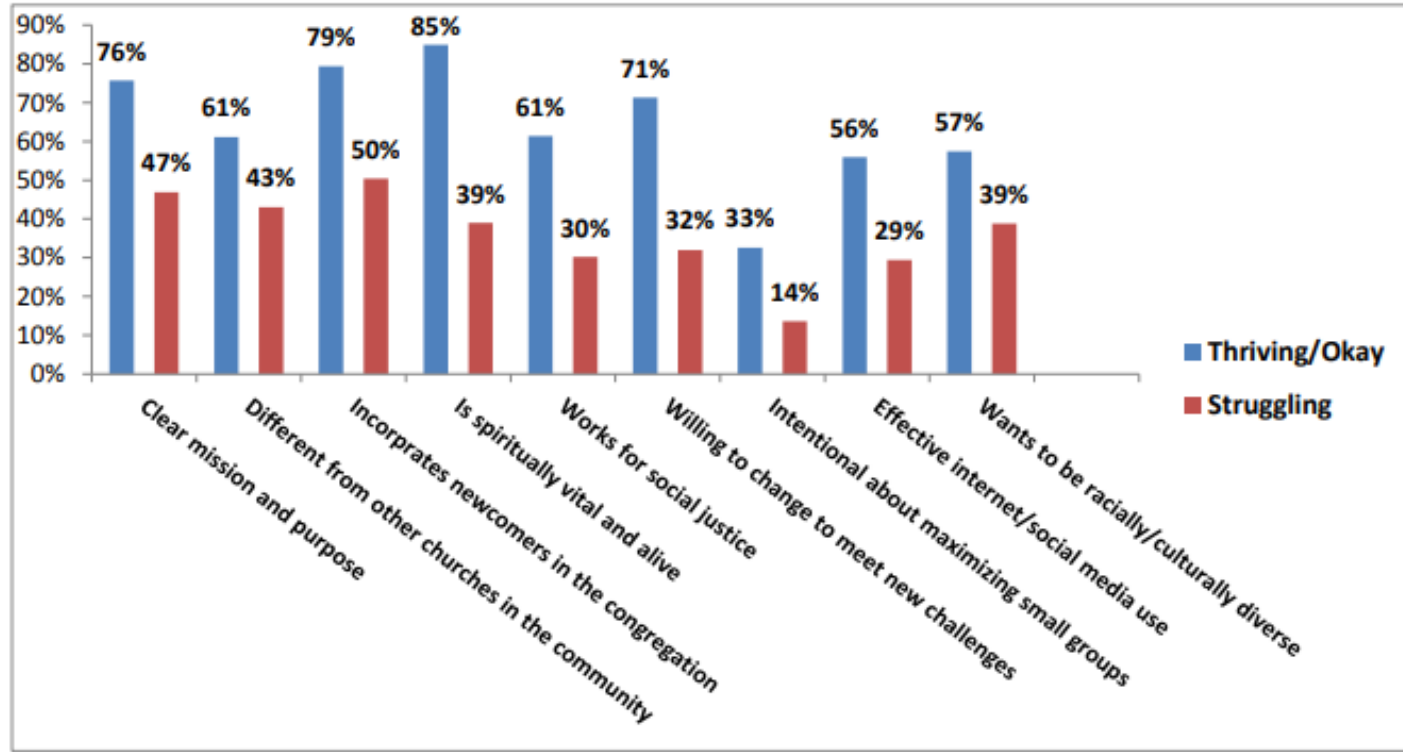
Tensions
in the
Who We
Are and
the What
We Do



Clarity and
Specificity
Are
Everything

UCC Research on Mission

Figure 1: Mission and Identity in UCC Congregations



Source: www.ucc.org/research

UCC Research on Mission (cont.)

Engaging Spirituality: Faith and the Future - Surveys and Focus Groups with People under 40

- Self-identify as highly spiritual and experience the divine most through music and/or art, spending time with family or friends, spending time outdoors/in nature, serving their communities/helping people directly
- Do not tend to be dogmatic; seek out texts and practices from a variety of traditions
- Pray/meditate regularly
- Seek and participate in the well-being of their communities

Engaging Spirituality: Faith and the Future (cont.)

- When making important decisions, personal experiences and research are most relied upon, along with friends and family (not social media, institutions, or holy texts)
- Connection is critically important; want to be a part of something that gives meaning and creates connection to others
- **Desire the church and its institutions to lead the way in caring for the least of these in society rather than focusing on self-preservation**



Innovation and Inspiration: What's New in the UCC?

Themes across applications	% of ministries reflecting this theme
Specific articulation of Queer support	65%
Religious healing/making new religious home	51.67%
NOT focused on Sunday morning	23.33%
Interfaith aspects	20.05%
Missional organization connected to a church	20%
Food justice	18.33%
Digital and/or online ministries	16.67%
Specific focus on youth/children	11.67%
Focus on homelessness and/or ending poverty	10%
Bilingual	8.33%
Focus on small groups	6.67%
Storytelling	6.67%
Explicit activism and community organizing	5%
Specific focus on Native/Indigenous support	5%
Bar-based ministry	5%
Revitalizing Sunday worship	5%

**Reports on
New and
Renewing
Spiritual
Communities
funded by the
National UCC**

Reimagining Theological Education: Student and Ministry Trends

Seminary Students

- Spread throughout the U.S. (and beyond)
- Less affiliation with mainline denominational traditions; more non-Christian and interfaith students who seek to do meaningful work in the world
- Majority are second-third career, working full-time (or multiple part-time jobs) and going to school, and/or caring for families
- Increasing percentage of LGBTQIA+ students and students of color
- Those within mainline traditions are seeking to lead inclusive, justice-focused ministries.

New and Emerging Ministry Paths

- ❖ Community / Movement Chaplaincy
- ❖ Spiritual Entrepreneurship
- ❖ Social Justice / Community-Based / Decolonial Ministries



New and Emerging Educational Initiatives

- ❖ **Frontline Faith** - new online education initiative of the UCC:
<https://www.frontlinefaith.org>
- ❖ **LIFE Program at Eden Seminary** - offers educational opportunities for lay leaders and those considering licensed ministry:
<https://www.eden.edu/non-degree-programs/life/>
- ❖ **Walker Leadership Institute at Eden Seminary** - focuses on business and organizational leadership:
<https://www.eden.edu/walker-leadership-institute/>
- ❖ **Wednesday Gatherings at Chicago Theological Seminary** - online during lunch time: <https://www.ctschicago.edu/wednesday-gatherings/>

New and Emerging Religious Issues

ai.iliff



THE INSTITUTE FOR
RELIGION, POLITICS & CULTURE



Vitality and Visioning in Rural Ministry

A ReSource course offered by Iliff School of Theology

Fall 2021



Course Introduction

Week 1 - October 26: Debunking Myths and Defining Vitality

Week 2 - November 2: Discerning Ministry Visions

Week 3 - November 9: Planning and Living into the Vision

Week 4 - November 16: Putting It All Together

Because of the shifts in traditional church attendance, especially in rural settings, many churches are struggling to see how they can best serve the needs of their communities. This course seeks to reframe the idea of “vitality” as it is traditionally conceptualized in ministry, by looking through the lens of liberation theology.

Time: Tuesday evenings, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm MST

Dates: Tuesdays beginning October 26th and ending November 16th

Course Leader: Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Assistant Professor of Leadership and Formation, and the Director of the Office of Professional Formation

Registration Cost: \$25 per individual or \$50 per group (no limit on group size)

[Registration Link](#)

Questions and Discussion

CONTACT:

Rev. Kristina I. Lizardy-Hajbi, Ph.D. (*she/her/ella*)

Assistant Professor of Leadership and Formation

Director, Office of Professional Formation

Co-Director, Doctor of Ministry in Prophetic Leadership

Certificate in Latinx Studies Coordinator, DU/Illiff Joint PhD in the Study of Religion

Illiff School of Theology | 2323 E. Iliff Ave. | Denver, CO 80210 | klizardy@illiff.edu