

June 14, 2016

From: Eden Church Council – Edwardsville, IL

To: Rev. John C. Dorhauer - United Church of Christ

Subject: God is Still Speaking 2.0

Our Council received the attached letter from a congregant who requested that we formally protest the tone and content of some of the slides in the 2.0 Toolkit. This congregant's view is consistent with the views of most of our members. We voted to remain in the UCC on May 15, 2016 with 60.1% voting to leave and 39.9% voting to maintain our association with the denomination. This vote would have required a change to our constitution which requires 2/3 of the members present to vote in favor of changes so the proposal did not pass and we will maintain our present covenant. However, it was the early release of some of the slides from the Toolkit that fomented the current controversy and the consequent desire of a majority of our members to separate from the UCC. There was already significant discontent over our Conference very ambitiously promoting the Rainbow Camp which was presented at our conference's camp facility last summer but it was the 2.0 identity campaign and the Chicago Seminary's Second Coming condoms which provided the tipping point for a congregational vote.

We are located in the Illinois South Conference in the middle of the country's heartland as it is often called. It is very likely that the cavalier tone of some of the slides in the 2.0 Toolkit will distance more of the ECOT (Evangelical, Conservative, Orthodox, Traditional) thinking congregants in our conference than these slides will engage progressive thinkers and seekers in the communities surrounding our Midwestern churches. This is likely to result in a net loss in UCC membership in the near term in the central part of the country. We are wondering if that is part of your intent; the steady 'purification' of the denomination by alienating those with more traditional beliefs. If that is your intent, we would like to know that. It seems that way from the views expressed in some of the weekly podcasts – particularly in a podcast about 8 months ago which stated that the 30ish people were your target as they will be the leaders of the future church.

We wonder if our denomination has time for the 30 something group that you hope to attract to come of age to the point that they can provide the leadership and resources required for the denomination to sustain itself. It is doubtful that you have that much time at the rate that the denomination is diminishing. While it is fairly obvious that you do not seem to have much regret about alienating the 50-80 year old ECOT congregants that reside between the coasts, it is not good stewardship, in our opinion, as this group is still hauling most of the freight in our Midwestern churches. Incidentally, there are many young people in our church who align with ECOT views who are also feeling alienated by the direction of the denomination toward Progressive Theology.

We have noted over the years that progressive Christians seem to be tolerant of almost anything other than an ECOT based perspective. It appears that rather than accepting and valuing diversity the denomination seeks to design a specific demographic which is diverse in a way that you value as contrasted with actually being diverse. The value that is placed on diversity does not seem to include the ECOT perspective. If we are mistaken in this belief, we would be very happy to learn that we are mistaken. We like to be right as much as the next person, but would be happy to be wrong about this apparent aspect of our denomination.

If you are going to dedicate a portion of the church's resources to promoting the 2.0 Toolkit, we would like to see the forum on your website re-enabled and a segment of the UCC website dedicated to a collection of essays from the ECOT members of the denomination where people throughout the country could post and read some counterpoints to Progressive Theology. Do you value diversity enough to do that?

Thank you for taking time to read and consider our views. We look forward to receiving your reply to our request.

Attachment: Letter from one of our members May 10, 2016