Journey to Recognition as a Lay CM by Charlotte Droogan

Greetings to Everyone,

This is a brief overview of the journey from being a volunteer with The Night Ministry to being recognized as a Lay Community Minister, accountable to my congregation and its elected Board of Trustees.-

In the summer of 2001, after serving six years as a board member of the Universalist Unitarian Church of Joliet ,-I met with my minister, the Rev. Emily Gage, to draft a letter to the church board outlining my desire to be more fully engaged with the congregation as a representative of our denomination and our church in the city streets of Chicago.The church board voted on this issue and gave me the support I needed to proceed with an outline of what I would do to educate the congregation about the history of lay ministry in general,my already deep involvment in particular and and my desire to serve --my congregation in this capacity.

Emily and I prepared a list of the things I would do monthly for the next year which would culminate in an official vote at our Annual Meeting the following June.-This list included worship services,a video of the work The Night Ministry ---provided to the people-of the nighttime streets of Chicago, my history with this group , small group discussions of my already six year commitment to the program----and my desire to carry the flame of our particular religious philosophy to both unchurched and -churched alike.

In June of the following year, 2002--at our annual meeting the vote was taken by the congregation to officially recognize me as their lay minister, support me in my work and plans were made for a small covenanting ceremony during worship and celebration later in the summer.The director of The Night Ministry was present at this later worship service and spoke as part of the -proceedings that included my family and friends.

The hardest part of this whole process was finding a way to bring this desire to serve into something workable outside my church into the larger community of our denomination. I had been a member of the Society for the Larger Ministry for several years, always attended its annual meeting at GA<but found no official way to move forward . I, ultimately, after talking with many supportive ministers -decided to follow the advice of The Rev. Linda Hart, who at one time worked with the Night Ministry , to design my own ministry and get it out in the world of conversations about the future of our denomination and the role of lay ministers in bringing the world closer to our vision of the Beloved Community.-

Obviously today, we have deep commitment to the furure of lay ministry in the Society for Lay Community Ministries. I have been proud to share my story of the journey . I have been part of the Working Group since its inception--and look forward to helping other lay minsters reach their particular goals.

Charlotte Droogan