

Annual Report



2017-2018

***Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Asheville***

2017-18 Annual Report

June 2018

Board of Trustees

Bruce Larson, President; Michele Gregory, Vice President; Dale Wachowiak, Clerk; Nora Carpenter, Judy Harper, Diane Martin, James Schall, Mariah Wright

In 2016-17 our Board of Trustees began working with the three “nested bowls” framework of governance practice, a framework employed by Unity Consulting of St. Paul, Minnesota. Its broadest bowl represents Values. Nested within it is one that represents Mission. Inside the Mission bowl is another that represents Ends. In brief, Values support Mission, and Mission contains Ends. The Values of Connection, Inspiration, Compassion, and Justice were identified by our Board during 2016-17.

During 2017-18 our Board discerned the remaining two bowls, i.e., Mission and Ends. This resulted from an extensive process during fall 2017 that engaged 132 adults and 6 YRUU youth.

Here is our Mission:

Our open and welcoming congregation connects hearts, challenges minds, and nurtures spirits, while serving and transforming our community and the world.

Here are our Ends:

Our Ends grow from our values: Connection, Inspiration, Compassion, Justice.

Connection and Inspiration . . .

- We create a vibrant spiritual environment where children, youth and adults develop and articulate their faith identity.
- We support our children and youth in their moral and spiritual development.
- We sustain our congregation with our generous gifts of time, talent and money.

Compassion . . .

- We create a community where people of all ages and backgrounds experience belonging, and feel loved and needed.
- We nurture relationships across generations.
- We support and sustain each other in times of need and celebration.

Justice . . .

- We challenge and support one another to put our values into action.
- We commit to practice and partner in the work of environmental and social justice, serving as a wellspring of hope.

The regular review of activities in relation to these Ends and our congregational Governance Document will continue to form the foundation of our Board's work in the upcoming year, just as they have during 2017-18.

Many thanks to **Kate Hartnett** for her leadership in realizing our new Mission and Ends!

Leadership Development Committee

Gay Lambirth, Chair, with Sarah Hartnett, Kristi Miller and Michael Vavrek

The Leadership Development Committee (LDC) is a congregational committee that is charged with identifying, cultivating and developing leaders for the congregation.

The Leadership Development Committee

- Consulted with Board Leadership, the Executive and Director of Lifespan Religious Education.
- Identified candidates to fill Board vacancies that occurred during the year.
- Made recommendations at the Board's request for committees, facilitators and sabbatical convener.
- Hosted a book group discussion of the book, *Serving with Grace*.
- Identified candidates for Southeast UU Leadership Experience (SUULE).
- Identified topics and resources for future leadership activities.

Lead Minister

Rev. Mark P. Ward

Friends, it's been one heck of a year – one of the most eventful and productive in my 14 years as your minister. We engaged in some challenging interior work – completing a process of feedback and reflection to revise our congregational mission and reshaping our personnel structure to bring us in tune with financial realities, while positioning ourselves to respond to the growing need for multigenerational ministry. At the same time, we kicked off a successful new midweek activity – The Wednesday Thing – that gave us a warm and engaging way to be together outside of Sundays.

But wait, as they say, there's more: We also undertook some significant social justice initiatives, including a comprehensive investigation of one of the most challenging issues of our time – justice for immigrants – then voting to serve as a sanctuary congregation and becoming one of the first congregations in Western North Carolina to offer shelter to an immigrant threatened with deportation. And we agreed to walk our talk in support of environmental justice by bringing to the congregation a plan to cover our new flat roof on Sandburg Hall with some 100 photovoltaic panels.

Any one of these initiatives would be a significant achievement for the year, and then amid all this we conducted one of the most successful annual budget drives in years. Wow!

So, I begin my report with an expression of gratitude to so many people who stepped up and took leadership to help make all this happen and also to the rest of you who showed up, whether it was to worship, RE classes, the Wednesday Thing, the all-church auction, small groups, social justice activities, board meetings, committee meetings, singing in the choir, maintaining our landscape, and more and more. The energy you brought to all of this speaks to your commitment to what we as a congregation are trying to achieve, which we summed up in our reframed values – Connection, Inspiration, Compassion and Justice.

It's an exciting time for us, but also a time of transition. The departure of Director of Religious Education Joy Berry last summer gave us an opportunity to think about how to adjust our staffing structure. Seven years ago when our congregation was straining with the pressure of growth and our 1/3 time pastoral care minister, Rev. Sarah York, retired and Director of Religious Education Taryn Strauss left, we decided to increase the hours of our second minister from 1/3-time to full time and seek out an experienced Director of Religious Education. Though we couldn't support the increases in our budget, we were lucky to have part of the proceeds of a generous bequest that we felt could supplement our budget for a few years until we had grown enough to support this increase.

Since then, we have been blessed with wonderful ministry from Associate Minister Lisa Bovee-Kemper and DREs Benette Sherman and Joy Berry, but the growth we hoped for didn't materialize. We did our best to hold costs down, including keeping senior staff to no more than cost-of-living

increases and reducing professional expenses. But that practice was unjust to our staff, and it didn't solve our problem.

So, it was plain that we needed to consider how to reduce staff. Toward the end of Joy's tenure, she indicated to me that she felt that with the able support she had from Lifespan Religious Education Coordinators Kim Collins and Jen Johnson, the DRE position could be done for less than full-time hours. Therefore, when Joy left, we decided to do without an interim and let Director of Administration Linda Topp handle the supervisory duties of that job. Linda's hours had been reduced to 30 hours because of budget cutbacks, so by returning to full-time, she had time to devote to this, and it helped that she had experience as a DRE and so understood the job. It's been challenging for Linda to juggle the administrative and DRE positions, but it has worked, though it's not a solution for the long run.

I had been in conversation with ministers of other congregations who have struggled with similar problems and learned of several who had combined the position of DRE and second minister. It seemed a good solution for us, since we were already exploring ways to break through the walls of upstairs/downstairs that separated Religious Education from programs for adults. We UUs have long proclaimed that faith development is a lifelong endeavor, so why not staff our church in a way to support that belief?

We developed the notion of a Minister of Faith Development position, who could lead Religious Education as well as Adult Programs and Pastoral Care, all dimensions of faith development. In conversations with senior staff, though, Lisa was clear that such a position was not how she saw her calling, and she was interested in exploring a lead minister position elsewhere. It is difficult to consider losing Lisa, and I am so grateful for her grace and support in this transition. She has brought so much to this congregation, and I am delighted to see her moving to a promising new ministry where her ample gifts can find good use.

I am also thrilled to look forward to welcoming Rev. Claudia Jimenez to the position of Minister of Faith Development at UUCA in August. I think you will be deeply impressed with her, both as a highly capable religious professional and as an enthusiastic and warm person. Many thanks to those who joined me on our search committee for their creativity and commitment to help make this happen: **Mary Alm, Barbara Brownsmith Campbell, Jim Steffe and Kelly Wedell.**



Worship

Leading and coordinating Sunday worship is one of my chief duties as your minister and something in which I take great joy and consider a high privilege. But even though I have the responsibility for making it happen, it is anything but a one-man show. My colleague, Associate Minister Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper, brought her gifts to this work on a schedule of about once a month, and we welcomed a number of guests into our pulpit as well. It is a great pleasure to work with our talented and accomplished Music Director Dr. Les Downs and I'm grateful for a hardworking crew

of A/V techs who make sure the sound and lighting work well. They are led by Lead A/V Tech **John Schuerman** with **Steve Carter**, Wendy Motz and **Jason Smith**.

I'm also grateful to the crew of Worship Associates who enrich our Sunday worship with their personal stories, their assistance hosting guest speakers and taking care of the logistics in setting up Sunday morning. Our Worship Associates this year were **Louise Anderson, Jane Bramham, James Cassara, Karin Eckert, Lisa Forehand, Jennifer Gorman, Nancy Heath, Isabel Horak, Laurel Jernigan, Charlie Marks** and **Bob Wilson**. I am indebted to them all for their fine work and fellowship.

A couple of years ago we changed the format for Sunday worship to include children in our services for the first 15 minutes or so. We created what we called a "Time for All Ages," designated for some presentation that we felt confident would be accessible to children, whether it was a story or skit or ritual: something to engage us all. This year UUCA member **Elizabeth Schell** raised the Time for All Ages (TFAA) to a wonderful new level with her brain hat and lab coat inviting us into the "spiritual laboratory." Elizabeth's creativity and flair made TFAA consistently one of the most effective parts of the service and offered a model that I hope to build on in the year ahead. Thank you, Elizabeth, for this gift.

Our worship year began last July with a reflection from my own Independence Day on our "self-evident truths" followed by a service by singer/songwriter Reggie Harris on "Who's Sitting at Your Welcome Table," then two guest speakers, Rev. Jake Morrill on "The Vulnerable Community" and Rev. Erika Hewitt on "Breaking, Broken, Healing, Whole," then our annual Poetry Sunday.

August began with a reflection from me on my mother's death and UUCA member **Sharon Van Dyke's** reflections on Oliver Sachs, then a service from Rev. Lisa on "In the Midst of it All" and our annual Water Service, "Back to the Source," which included wonderful water spirit puppets from **Jennifer Murphy**.

September, with a theme of Welcome, began with a service from UUCA member **Rev. Jeff Jones** on voluntary simplicity followed by two services from me, one reflecting on the Rumi quote, "You that love lovers, this is your home" and the other on the needs for spiritual practice, closing with a service from Rev. Lisa on "The Power of Proximity."

October centered in the theme of Courage began with my annual forgiveness service on "Othering" and my daughter Erica Ward leading a blessing of the animals with the help of UUCA member **Sarah Hargrove**, followed by a service from musician Joe Jencks on "What Is It to Serve?" and my service that invited us to consider the question of sanctuary, "Who's In My Circle?"

In November, as we considered the theme of Abundance, Rev. Lisa began with a reflection on the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's revolt against the Catholic church, followed by a service from me that invited us to consider how we decenter whiteness and invite other voices into our worship. We continued with my service on taking down walls, concluding with "Walden: A UU Celebration," featuring UUCA member **Gordon Clark** and wonderful music from **Les Downs** and guest Anna Hayward.

December, with its theme of Hope, began with a service from me, inviting us to consider, despite discouragement that we dig back in, one from Rev. Lisa asking, “Is Waiting the Hardest Part?” and then one from me asking if there is hope in resistance. Christmas Eve, arriving on a Sunday, included a almost-no-rehearsal pageant centered on “What I Long to See” for the early service at 11:15 a.m. and our annual candlelight service at 9 p.m. Revs. Lisa and Jeff Jones then organized a service on the Buddhist notion of “The Three Poisons.”

In January, we honored the theme of Intention with a celebration from me of the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda in Transylvania, proclaiming that “none would be satisfied” if their worship was compelled. Rev. Lisa followed with a sermon on “If You’re Not Right, You’re Wrong,” followed by a sermon from me for Martin Luther King Jr., Day, asking, “Is It Always About Race?” We concluded with a service coordinated by UUCA member **Rev. Clark Olsen** on stories of grandparents, featuring UUCA members **John Dupree, Sharon Leduc and Jim Steffe.**

Weather forced us to cancel our first service of February, but sticking with our theme of Perseverance, we continued with a service from me on the spirituality of money, one from guest Rev. Nan White on equipoise, and closing with our Celebration Sunday, featuring guest minister Rev. Mary Katherine Morn on “Stories of Us.”

March, with its theme of Balance, brought us a service from Rev. Lisa entitled “Teach Them Well,” then one from me, “The Rising of the Sap,” on trees, one on the “Spring Equinox” from Rev. Lisa, and one from me on climate change, “A Great Storm Rising.”

April, with its theme of Emergence, brought us an Easter service from Rev. Lisa on “Practicing Resurrection,” followed by a service from me on Mary Oliver’s poetry, “The Tiniest Nail,” with help from UUCA member **Karin Eckert.** We followed with my service on connecting with the body, “Body Work,” with help from **Wes** and **Kristi Miller,** then an Earth Day service prepared by our YRUU Class, and a service from me on how the story of the Tower of Babel might be understood to teach us “The Delight of Difference.”

May began with a service from Rev. John Saxon, executive director of the UU Justice Ministry of North Carolina, then our Coming of Age service, featuring ninth-graders **Sam Fleming, Gabe Gregory, Josh Reed, Owen Riedesel, Thomas Smith and Kaden Wright.** I followed with a service on “Getting Unstuck,” then a service from Rev. Lisa on leave-taking and concluding with Music Sunday.



Executive

My official role in the congregation’s governance is as Executive, which makes me accountable to the Board of Trustees and the congregation for seeing that the ministry of this congregation is carried out. The good work we did on rewriting our Mission Statement and the Ends Statements that the Board derives from that mission has given all this work sharper focus. It’s been rewarding working with the Board to help chart our direction ahead. With Joy Berry’s departure, it was

challenging this year to see the size of our senior staff group fall from four to three, including myself, Director of Administration Linda Topp and Associate Minister Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper. With the staff structure in play as well as the Mission and Ends Statements, it required us to be agile and good-humored in responding to congregational needs. I am so grateful to Linda and Lisa for their wisdom, hard work and companionship during this pivotal year. Deep gratitude also to Dan and Gina Phairas for their energy and creativity in leading our hugely successful Annual Budget Drive, which laid the groundwork for our future.



Passages

Finally, we remember those members of our church community who died in the last church year: **Jay Bretz, Caroline Briggs, Don Galloway, Alice Hancy, Bob MacPherson and Hank Richter.** We remember them as friends who gave much to this community and to the larger world, people we miss and are proud to hold in loving memory.



Music Director

Dr. Leslie Downs

Last July I attended the UU Musicians Network Conference and came back with new ideas for music for our services for the 2017-18 church year. I then bought some new music for the choir to sing, including an inclusive/affirming piece by UU composer, Elizabeth Alexander, and several social justice pieces by Brian Tate. In December the choir sang a Hanukkah piece by local composer, Jane Roman Pitt. I usually hire a soprano for every choir Sunday to augment our volunteer choir, but I found it necessary to hire additional parts for two Sundays in November. Having the additional trained singers always provides strong support for the choir.

In the fall I restarted the Multigenerational Choir. The attendance/participation has been good throughout the year and we have sung some fun songs about family and connectedness. I am happy to be able to provide a musical opportunity for our children as well as our many talented adults who are not able to sing in the choir.

During the past year we had many wonderful guest artists, including Chris Rosser, Tret Fure, Billy Jonas, Jason DeCristofaro, John Cobb and Misty Theisen. Our in-house band has flourished and has provided music for several services throughout the year.

I continue to get good and positive comments about the service music and music program from congregation members.

Associate Minister

Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper

As the 2017-18 church year draws to a close, there are a number of highlights to note from a busy and exciting time in the life of the congregation. Perhaps most notably, the congregation voted to become a sanctuary congregation. After a great deal of work on the part of the Sanctuary Working Group, who gathered information, answered questions, held town hall meetings, and more to help the congregation prepare for the vote, the Sanctuary Resolution was passed. Now that a guest is in sanctuary, we are seeing new ways to engage in living our values by supporting not only our guest, but the larger immigrant community.

UUCA is a congregation that cares for its members, both by providing emotional care & support and by assisting with acute needs for meals or rides. The TLC email blast, which comes out on Tuesday afternoons, has become a place for congregants to share both celebrations and crisis needs, and we are seeing increased sharing. The third phase of the Connector Program has been implemented and is showing positive results. The Connecting Stewards are finding that most folks they are visiting are engaged with the congregation at the level they wish to be. The ones who are not are receiving follow-up support. We are able to identify some themes in people's reports, which allows staff and volunteers to target programming and support more effectively. The Wednesday Thing has been a wonderful addition this year, and we've seen it reach people that aren't reached by Sunday programs, as well as build connections among generations.

All of these programs and more that are included in this report reflect the attention that the Board and congregation have put to the core values and mission of UUCA. It seems to me that the desired outcome is, in fact, happening, which is that the programs of the congregation are more relevant as they reflect the visioning work the Board has done.



Connections & Membership

Staff: Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper, Venetia (Venny) Zachritz—written by Venny Zachritz

Path to Membership

Leaders: **Janice May, Anna Ward, Linda Bair, Charlie Marks, Gene Lambirth, Bob and Eleanor Lane, Paula Massey, Ruth Christie.**

The Connections Coordinator's main job is to assist members and newcomers to feel connected to the congregation. Statistics show that the greater the connection the more likely it is that members/newcomers will be active contributors of time, talent and money within the congregation, represent the congregation within the community and remain members for longer periods.

Both members and newcomers feel better connected to the greater congregation because of the Connections program. They are given the information for both spiritual and social groups in which they can participate. New members are guided through the membership process with the help of a Connector and contact with their Connector is maintained for the first couple of years of membership. This allows Rev. Bovee-Kemper and me to address any dissatisfaction early and hopefully resolve any issues. New members and newcomers have reported that they feel very welcome within the congregation. They feel that there are many opportunities for involvement both spiritually and socially. New members appreciate the connection with an assigned individual as they navigate their way through their initial year. Newcomers have indicated that they enjoy the opportunity to meet other newcomers and staff at the potlucks and feel welcomed into the church community.

As the Connections Coordinator, I coordinated and facilitated 6 membership classes during the 2017-18 church year. This year we combined the Beginning Point class with the Wednesday Thing which proved to be a productive combination. In addition to potential new members, we had established UUCA members join the group, which added helpful insight to the benefits on being a member at UUCA. Similar to previous years, we have added between 40 and 50 new members this year.

There are 3 steps to the membership program. The first step is coordinating the Sunday Welcome Team. We know that a newcomer will return if they are recognized and have contact while they are visiting on Sundays. Therefore the task of the Sunday Welcome team is to make first contact. All volunteers for this task are trained on how to positively connect with our newcomers.

Once a newcomer has joined, the next step is to link a new member with a New Member Connector. With the help of volunteers, new members are contacted by a New Member Connector every few months for the first year of membership. This part of the membership program is positively received by both our new members and the New Member Connector and helps to resolve any dissatisfaction issues early on.

This year the final step of the Connections Program was implemented. The goal for Step 3 is to contact every single member of the congregation and check in with them to determine if their spiritual needs are being met and if they are feeling connected within the congregation. There are 14 volunteers that are contacting members. Feedback for this part is beginning to trickle in and will be reviewed.

Additional duties also include organizing newcomer events; assisting with the Wednesday Thing; on-going recruitment of volunteers; and identifying and recognizing our newcomers.

Wednesday Thing

Coordinators: Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper, Kim Collins, **Missy Reed**

The Wednesday Thing has been a huge success this year, with 30-50 people of all ages participating weekly. This was a new program that was launched in September 2017 in order to

provide the UUCA community with an opportunity outside of Sunday mornings to be together, to share a meal, to worship, and to engage in multigenerational community. It includes a shared meal, a short multigenerational evening worship service, and programming options for all ages.

In the fall, Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper convened a Development Team with representatives from major program stakeholders within the congregation. Thanks to **Julie Stoffels, Joy McConnell, Linda Topp, Les Downs, Missy Reed** and **Brett Johnson** for serving on that team and getting the program up and running. Further thanks to Les Downs, Venny Zachritz & Kim Collins who provided staff support to this program, and to Rev. Mark Ward for assisting Rev. Lisa with leading Vespers services, especially in the beginning. Extra special thanks to **Missy Reed** who took over food, volunteer, and money logistics for the second half of the year, and to **Nancy Heath, Ann McLellan, Nick Murphy, Sally Witcamp, the Miller family** and so many others who stepped up many times to do set up and clean up.

The stated goals of the program were as follows:

To offer opportunities for lifespan faith development.

To help the congregation as a whole to build community by creating and participating in multigenerational community.

To provide a third worship experience outside of the Sunday morning time slot.

To access individuals and groups that can't or don't attend on Sundays.

To be accessible to all ages, including families with children. Childcare is provided for 6 and under. There is NOT be an expectation of separate religious education programming as on Sundays.

Initially, The Wednesday Thing was a staff-led initiative in order to be clear about goals and best practices for making this a successful program with longevity. We also knew that this type of program does not work long-term without full-bodied support from lay leadership. Therefore, a large part of the staff's work included outreach and mentoring of small groups, committees, action groups, and lay leaders to support the program.

As new church programs often are, the Wednesday Thing was and is resource-heavy, and there was less time available than had been hoped for the outreach and leadership development component of the proposal. Therefore, it is recommended that in the 2018-19 church year, extra energy and focus be given to developing a structure to manage broader lay participation in all aspects of the Wednesday Thing. Recommendations for this process are part of the program documentation that is being shared with staff as Rev. Lisa departs. The folks who attended each Wednesday were super-helpful and most of the time ensured that the tasks of set up and clean up were completed. Since "most of the time" needs to be "always" without relying on the cleaning service or other staff to complete the tasks, it would be beneficial for the long-term success of this program to have a bit more of a formal structure to the volunteer roles with sign-ups ahead of time.

We successfully worked to recruit and support lay people to lead Vespers and adult faith development programs. Hosting duties and multigenerational programming, while well-executed this year, were heavily supported by staff. The Wednesday Thing was created as and remains a venue for continuing to explore “full church faith development” and build the skills that are necessary in a community working toward fully-integrated multigenerational ministry. Continued focus on developing this aspect of the program to support the vision for the congregation’s ministry should fit well within the expertise of the new Minister of Faith Development.

UUCA Gathering at The Mountain

Coordinator: **Larry Wheeler**

The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, located in Highlands, NC is UU-based and was founded in 1979 with a goal of serving Southeastern youth with summer camps, but also providing programming for adults and families.

UUCA held its 5th annual Gathering at The Mountain in October, 2017 with over 125 UUCA’ers attending – 34 adults, 42 parents and 50 of their youth with them. Rev. Lisa was with us for the weekend, offered a workshop entitled “This I Believe,” plus presented the Sunday service. All gathered for Morning Circle singing each day, fireplace and campfire gatherings, shared great meals from Friday dinner to Sunday lunch, enjoyed social hour ahead of dinner, and enjoyed the always-great talent show!

Other programs included hikes (both for mixed ages and adults), low ropes and initiatives, high ropes (40 feet above ground level), multiple crafts offerings, mountain dulcimer, pilates, labyrinth meditation, lake walk, garden tour and wild edibles search, getting to know the chickens, mountain-top history walk and slide show, and star-gazing. Childcare was also available for 4’s and under. Some people were happy to sit on a cabin deck or the big lodge deck to read, talk and enjoy the incredible 360-degree views from our 4200-foot location. The dining hall is open 24/7 for drinks and snacks.

Our attendance grows each year because it’s a great opportunity to get to know each other much better and the facilities are very welcoming!



Congregational Care

There are currently five active Pastoral Visitors working with Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper & Rev. Mark Ward to provide care to congregants with acute or chronic illnesses, personal/family crises, or ongoing grief. These dedicated volunteers are **Jill Preyer, Myrtle Staples, Carol Taylor, Karin Eckert, and Ephraim Schechter**. **Michael Vavrek** is on hiatus. We are grateful to **Leigh Benson-Greer & Cecilia Rawlins** who completed their Pastoral Visitor service this year.

Pastoral Visitors continue to work to make the congregational care ministry here at UUCA more accessible and more visible in our community. They send cards at the holidays and when they hear about deaths or challenges in families within the congregation. Gratitude to **Beverly Cutter** for setting up Meal Trains and other assistance from UUCA when congregants are recovering from surgery or illness or the birth of a child. This Loving Community (TLC) email continues to come out on Tuesday afternoons and feedback has been entirely positive, with congregants reporting that they feel they are getting more and better information about joys and sorrows in the community.



Small Group Ministry

Leader: **Joy McConnell**

During the 2017-18 season there have been seven covenant groups, including three groups for parents, as well as three theme groups. These groups have served 90-100 people.

Much gratitude to our group facilitators: **Nancy Bragg, Nora Carpenter, Lisa Forehand, Martha Kiger, Gay Lambirth, Paula Massey, Ami Milliken, and Ellen Welles**. I have also served as a group facilitator.

Something to note: We will be training new facilitators in order to organize new Covenant and Theme Groups for the 2018-2019 congregational year. If you are interested in being either a facilitator or a small group member, please contact Joy McConnell at joyelayne@aol.com or by calling 828-808-4710. We will be staffing a table on some Sunday mornings this summer to recruit new people for existing groups that lose members and new groups which we hope to start in the fall.



Earth & Social Justice Ministry (ESJM)

Steering Committee: **Nancy Heath, Julie Ransom, Dan Clere, Robert Gerard (Julie Stoffels completed service this year)**

The Earth & Social Justice Ministry Steering Committee exists to support the congregation's action groups and to facilitate communication between the congregation and the action groups. This year was the second year in which the action groups that came out of 2016's Just Change workshop were in operation, as well as some ongoing initiatives, were active. ESJM Steering Committee members continue to solicit feedback from congregants and groups while they work to administer the budget, vet potential new initiatives, and support advocacy work as led by the ministers.

Of special note this year is the Big Stuff, Little Hassle group, which came out of Just Change. The participants in this group worked very hard to implement the project they'd envisioned when they made the proposal to Just Change, and were creative and flexible in finding a Plan B when their original plan did not come to fruition. I note this because sometimes good work is put into an idea

that doesn't unfold as expected. The relationships built and learnings that come from such work are often just as valuable as the envisioned program itself.

Anti-Racism Group Action (ARG!a)

Leaders: **Eleanor Lane, Cecilia Rawlins, and Elizabeth Schell**, and many more awesome folks!
Written by **Elizabeth Schell**.

This past year was an especially challenging one for the ARG!a Team. Many members felt the understandable call to put all their energy into pushing for a congregational vote on becoming a Sanctuary congregation. Though we found this work very fulfilling and were glad for the final positive vote (in late fall of 2017), we were frustrated by the need for such an extended process when we believed the decision to provide sanctuary was so clearly aligned with our UU principles. But large group/congregational processes are complicated. As justice-seekers, we know that patience is not something we hold in great reserve. We do feel that the work towards building a Sanctuary community and collaborations pursued with other faith communities and the Latinx community can only deepen our commitment and ability to make a positive contribution toward the Movement for Black Lives within and beyond our congregation and city.

Members of ARG!a bring a racial justice lens to multiple roles within the congregation and beyond. **Michael Beech** continued to attend and create report backs from the Citizens Police Advisory Council. **Cecilia Rawlins** is on the Voter Engagement Coalition as a UUCA representative and is also president-elect of Children First/Communities in Schools and represents them on the Racial Justice Coalition. **Eleanor Lane** is deeply involved in the work of Motherread and has been connecting in other congregants to this important, collaborative work of relationship building and resource connecting. ARG!a members also intentionally bring a racial justice lens to congregational service as Welcome Team members, eco-justice work in the Earth Community Circle, Community Plate Team, and giving feedback to the search committee for the new ministry position. Members of ARG!a have also continued individual and collective work of building relationships and partnerships with Asheville SURJ, Building Bridges, and the Racial Equity Institute.

In August 2017, **Elizabeth Schell** led a GA Report-Back Session that included a PowerPoint presentation and overview of work going on at a denominational level, especially in relation to Black Lives of UU. Though some good conversation and goals came out of this meeting, energy continued to be taken up by support for the vote toward Sanctuary, which extended late into the fall. Throughout the year ARG!a members felt isolated and unsupported but couldn't really figure out how to remedy things. Everyone involved seemed very stretched thin.

During the summer of 2017 we continued to hold weekly space on Friday mornings at 23 Edwin for accountability and collaboration in racial justice. These meetings are a collaboration between Asheville Showing Up for Racial Justice and UU ARG!a. In September, in hopeful solidarity for preparing 23 Edwin for Sanctuary, we moved our weekly meetings to Monday nights (6:30-8:30pm) in RE Commons and began having different weekly topics:

- **First Mondays: SURJ 101.** This is a space for exploring Showing Up for Racial Justice core values of movement work and supporting racial justice.

- Second Mondays: Calling-In Session. This is a space for brainstorming and role-playing complex conversations and situations relating to racial justice; space for practicing calling in and being called in on words, intent vs. impact, and microaggressive actions.
- Third & Fourth Mondays: educational space for exploring issues, including a series held this spring on racism in housing practices (redlining, urban renewal, and gentrification).

These Monday night meetings are held at UUCA in order to make them more accessible to UUCA members and friends. Meetings have been attended by both congregants and community members and fluctuate from between 4 and 12 people per meeting. Meetings are safe, but not necessarily comfortable, spaces for sharing, engaging, learning, and unlearning. We hope that UUCA will continue to collaborate with ASURJ in hosting these meetings.

Building on our desire to connect with racial justice work with RE, **Elizabeth Schell** volunteered with YRUU to lead a session once a month. These four sessions included topics of white skin privilege, meritocracy, prejudice vs. racism, personal vs. institutional racism, impact vs. intent, nonexistence of reverse racism, etc.

We tried to continue to have a Coffee Hour presence with materials at the Earth & Social Justice Ministry table. In the late summer of 2017 we revamped the ESJM bulletin board. We have felt very cut off from ESJM and have wondered whether it still exists as an umbrella group to coordinate amongst ESJM action groups. We would love to be reached out to and connect up with other action groups so that we can collaborate and build connections between issues. All things are connected.

Goals for the coming year:

- We want to continue to build on relationships with Asheville SURJ, Building Bridges, and Racial Equity Institute, in both supporting the work of these groups within the larger community, but also leveraging our resources to continue to make the educational offerings of these groups available and amplified within and among our congregation.
- We would love to build on the Community Plate program so that we are continuing to not only financially support People of Color led organizations and programs in Asheville, but that we are also building meaningful partnerships to leverage resources on their behalf.
- We also want to collaborate with others in providing intentional support to the new incoming staff member, Rev. Claudia Jiminez, Minister of Faith Development, who will be the only person of color on staff.

Earth Community Circle

Co-chairs: **T. S. Pennington and Sunita Patterson**

Monthly meetings were held on third Wednesdays during the Wednesday Thing, except there were no meetings in July, September, and December. Attendance ranged from 7 to 15 people. The action group email list consists of about 70 people who have signed up over the last 1-1/2 years.

Events organized this year:

- Go Low Carb(on): Reducing Your Carbon Footprint event, with speakers Marcus Renner (Conservation Pros), Brad Rouse (Energy Savers Network), and Beatrice Nathan (Cool Communities program), 9/19/18, attended by 25 people
- Cool Community group to reduce individual carbon footprints, facilitated by **Sunita Patterson**, 5 meetings in October through March, 7 participants total
- A Different Way: Living Simply in a Complex World, Northwest Earth Institute course, 6 sessions facilitated by **Joy McConnell**, **Mary Stevens** and **Sunita Patterson**, 12 participants total
- Hillcrest orchard planting and orchard maintenance day, 10/28/18, ~12 participants
- Potluck picnic, 6/10/18, attended by ~6 people
- Demonstrating Our Values through Eating course, 6 sessions in March and April, facilitated by **Rebecca** and **Bob Bringle**, 9 participants

Other efforts of the action group this year:

- Participation by several group members in the multigenerational water-themed service, 8/27/17
- Sponsorship of Youth for Environmental Stewardship's January and February meetings
- Green tips published regularly in the *Weekly eNews*, coordinated by Jodi Clere
- Assessment and information-gathering for Green Sanctuary reaccreditation application, led by **Wink Zachritz** and **Grace Curry**
- Periodic tabling in Sandburg Hall to share information about our efforts and how to save energy and to lend out Kill-a-Watt meters
- Insulation work completed to improve energy efficiency of 23 Edwin, thanks to a matching grant from **Michael Stevens** and multiple holiday donors
- Experiments with gathering compost and reducing waste in the kitchen
- Participation in Energy Savers Network volunteer energy efficiency improvements in limited-income homes (**Ed Prestemon**)
- Participation in Creation Care Alliance events to gain ideas and inspiration from other area faith-community green teams (**Sunita Patterson**, **T. S. Pennington**, **Joy McConnell**)

The major effort going forward is the solar panel project for Sandburg Hall. We hope to gain approval from the congregation on June 3 to proceed with fundraising for a 100-panel, 35-37 kW solar energy system that will generate 48,000 kWh of power per year. **Bob Roepnack**, **Dan Clere**, and **John McGrann** researched the system, obtained 4 bids, crunched the numbers, and created a proposal for the congregation. If the congregation approves the project at the June 3 meeting, we will shift to fundraising. Proceeding this year will allow us to take advantage of a Duke Energy rebate that will save us 25% of the cost.

Also in 2018-19 we hope to apply for Green Sanctuary reaccreditation as a demonstration of our ongoing congregational commitment to sustainability. We also hope to reduce the food and other waste produced at church meal events such as the Wednesday Thing.

The current Cochairs are seeking to rotate their roles to others. **Rebecca Bringle** will be taking over one of the positions in October; a second Cochair is needed.

Hunger and Homeless Ministry

Joyce Sexton, Chair, **Joyce Birkenholz**, **Sally Carlson**, **Barbara Kruszewski**, **Jim Lee**, **Judy Mattox**, and **Sherry Wothke**. Written by **Barbara Kruszewski**.

Isaac Dickson Food Pantry Collection

Coordinator: **Sally Carlson**

During the months of March, April, and May 2018 our committee held a church-wide food drive to help support the new food pantry at Isaac Dickson Elementary School. The congregation donated requested snacks that included Power Bars, Fruit Cups, Microwave Mac and Cheese, Tuna or Chicken Snack Pack, Vienna Sausages and Instant Oatmeal. These snacks were delivered every Wednesday to Dickson by a committee member.

Haywood Street Respite Care Center

Coordinator: **Barbara Kruszewski**

Our 29 volunteers have continued to serve one meal a month on the second Saturday of each month since 2014. Haywood Respite Care was started and is operated by Haywood Street Congregations to provide a safe, healing place for homeless men and women who leave the hospital and need more time to completely heal. Three of our UUCA volunteers each month prepare a meal for 10 (salad, main course, dessert), which serves 8 patients and 2 patient coordinators. We always welcome new volunteers to this committee.

Sock and Winter Clothing Drive for Homeless

Coordinator: **Barbara Kruszewski**

In February 2017, the UUCA Homeless/Hunger Committee held a Sock Drive of new socks for both men and women, and the over 200 pairs were divided between A-HOPE Day Shelter, Haywood Street Respite Care Center, Beloved House, and The Salvation Army. In addition, a Winter Coat collection for men occurred at the same time, and divided and delivered to the same shelters.

Pritchard Park Breakfasts

Coordinator: **Barbara Kruszewski**

Our group which feeds the homeless in Pritchard Park on for to 5 Sundays per year consists of 12 core UU members and 7 core Quaker members. This combined faith community is one of 16 that participates in these breakfasts. Scheduling is coordinated by United Church of Christ, which additionally on a weekly basis provides hot coffee, hot grits, paper plates, forks, etc. Depending on the time of year, our group feeds from 160 to 120 homeless folks. All food items are donated by group members. Additional resources from UU are not required.

MANNA Food Delivery to Area Schools

Coordinator: **Jim Lee**

This has been a difficult school year (2017-2018) in terms of getting MANNA Packs to hungry children at Isaac Dickson. School workers and AmeriCorps workers have helped coordinate food deliveries in the past. However, AmeriCorps workers, who were the major coordinators, did not return in the 2017 -2018 school year, leaving schools understaffed. Consequently, Isaac Dickson has not requested MANNA food packs as of January 2018. The school is in the process of establishing a food pantry to be furnished with donations, but at this time we do not foresee resuming MANNA pack deliveries to Dickson.

We also found it necessary to delay the start of our plan to help MANNA deliver food packs to several other schools in the area, thus freeing up MANNA personnel to other duties at the distribution center. We were able to begin this expanded service in January 2018, when 3 of our volunteer drivers (**Ed Prestemon, Melody Goldberg, and Jim Lee**) began deliveries to Bell Elementary and Haw Creek Elementary. Deliveries involve as many as six boxes (10 bags of food in each box) to as few as one box.

We intend to expand further in the 2018-2019 school year to potentially six additional schools. That happens to coincide with the number of additional members who volunteered to drive this school year but were not needed. We are hopeful that they will be willing to volunteer for the 2018-2019 school year as we expand to additional schools.

Summer Lunch Program for Low-Income Children for 2017

Coordinator: **Judy Mattox**

In cooperation with the Buncombe County Schools, volunteers from UUCA and a few other churches, including UUs from Black Mountain, served 10 weeks of free lunches Monday through Friday, at 5 sites in Buncombe County, serving children who ordinarily qualify for free or reduced-price lunches at school. We served sites at: Woodbridge Apartments in EMMA, Northwest Asheville' Curci Mobile Home Park in Reynolds School area; Wellington Estates in Arden; Black Locust Trailer Park in Woodfin; Ridgeview Trailer Park in Swannanoa.

Thanks to the following volunteers who faithfully guaranteed that lunches were served every day, and to any others whose names we may have missed: **Martha Shepard, Rod Jackson, Meredith Norwood, Susan Graber, Sally Carlson, Jane White, Bergan Murray, Natalie Polinko, Jan Beech, Michael Beech, Sherry Wothke, Bill Wothke, Deb Holden, Rose Patz, Fred Patz, Karen Ward, Michael O'Sullivan, Linda Stover, John Stover, Ruth Erlich, Bill Erlich, Rebecca Hertz, Bill Hertz, Mary Douglas, Tom Douglas, Joyce Birkenholz, Trevor Wallis, Catherine Douglass, Johnny Douglass, Nancy Heath, and Larry Wheeler.**

2017 UUCA Pie Party

Coordinators: **Sally Carlson, Sherry Wothke, Joyce Birkenholz, Barbara Kruszewski, Joyce Sexton**

On the last Sunday in August, 2017, the Hunger and Homeless Ministry held it's only fundraiser, our annual Pie Party, in Sandburg Hall after service. Congregants were asked to bake and donate

pies of their choice, including vegetarian, meat/chicken and dessert pies while all attending were asked to donate money to MANNA Food Bank. In addition, 3 special pies were raffled off, resulting in additional funds for MANNA, and these were donated by **Joy McConnell, Barbara Kruszewski, and Rik Schell**. Over \$2,000 was raised and a check was sent to MANNA Food Bank.

Motheread

Coordinator: **Eleanor Lane**

At Hillcrest Apartments, Motheread provides tools to the mothers of children birth to five and beyond to bring books to life while reading to the children to increase critical-thinking skills. The group also builds an intentional “family” with the women who reside in Hillcrest and those in the greater community. Four women from UUCA have been active, weekly participants with Motheread and have created meaningful relationships with the mothers. As a “family,” we celebrate birthdays, have showers for expectant mothers, have holiday potlucks, get through challenging times together and celebrate growth and reaching goals. Last summer Motheread partnered with the Sierra Club of Western North Carolina for the Kids Adventure Club, which had five summer outings for children from seven to 16.

Through the involvement of the UUCA women, the congregation at large has been involved in providing resources for Christmas gifts for the mothers’ children, providing generous resources and access for the Kids Adventure Club, partnering and providing household goods and, most recently, partnering and providing childcare so the mothers could workout, nap (for a new mom) and get a massage to support healing from emotional trauma.

Peacemaking Potluck

Coordinator: **Bruce Larson**

Peacemakers meets the second Wednesday of every month “To explore peace and the way of peace so that we might practice and promote peace in all of our relations.” Its members are those who gather. It usually meets in Jefferson House from 6:45 to 8:00 pm.

Peacemakers is the continuation of the Peacemaking Potluck, which met from March 14, 2007 through August 9, 2017. The new name was adopted to support The Wednesday Thing, which made the potluck unnecessary. Peacemakers began meeting on September 13th.

Information about Peacemakers is communicated through the weekly UUCA email, inserts in the Order of Service, and a monthly email, “The Month Begins,” by distribution list; the list has 60 addresses and is maintained continuously.

During the twelve months covered by this report, Peacemakers:

- Read and discussed *Just Mercy*, by Bryan Stevenson. May and June 2017.
- Viewed and discussed an interview with Bryan Stevenson. July.
- Discussed “Five Habits of the Heart,” a reading adapted from Parker Palmer’s 2011 book *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. August.

- Discussed “Five Habits of the Heart” in relation to the seven UU principles. September.
- Listened to Samantha Davis speak of her junior year abroad in Bosnia. October.
- Caught up on the activities of the group and how we would move forward. November.
- Shared “Stories of Peace.” December.
- Viewed and discussed the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize lecture, by representatives of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. January 2018.
- Did not meet due to inclement weather. February.
- Read and discussed *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*, edited by Mitra Rahnema. March and April.

44 *distinct* people participated in the activities Peacemakers during the 12 months covered by this report, up from 37 in the prior year. Average attendance was 12, up from 9 in the prior year.

During the year, we sought to: (1) complete our reading and discussion of *Just Mercy*; (2) continue with now traditional events; (3) continue to align more closely with the activities of the Earth and Social Justice Ministry; and (4) develop knowledge and skills that can be used for dialogue within our congregation and beyond, especially around peacemaking. Goals (1)-(3) were attained, while (4) is a work in progress.

Acting Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Dr. Linda M. Topp, CCA, Staff: Kim Collins and Jen Johnson, Lifespan Religious Education Coordinators, RE Council Members: Louise Anderson (Chair), Greg Gregory, Ann McLellan, Katherine Murphy, Melissa Murphy, Gina Phairas, Missy Reed (partial year), Steve Reines, Jim Steffe, Kelly Wedell

This was a delightfully adventurous, busy, successful year for our children’s and youth’s religious education programming. Following Joy Berry’s resignation as our Lifespan Religious Education Director in June and our discovery that it was a bit too late in the summer to replace her with an interim RE director, we got a little creative. By July 1 we had made the following staff changes:

- Linda Topp increased her hours from ¾-time to full-time and became the Acting LRE Director.
- Kim Collins, Lifespan Religious Education Coordinator, had her work hours increased from 25 to 30 hours per week.
- Jen Johnson was promoted to Lifespan Religious Education Program Coordinator and had her work hours increased from 15 to 20 hours per week.

So with a reconfigured staff and fewer staff hours to work with, we made a decision at the start that our goal for the year would be to hold things “steady.” No new programs. That silly idea lasted exactly one month. By August we had re-instated the Coming of Age program (Joy had made a decision to not offer it this year). By September we had started the Wednesday Thing, not exactly a program of RE, but one that we are heavily involved in, providing childcare, adult RE

programs, multigenerational options, and more. Kim Collins is a co-coordinator of the Wednesday Thing. In December we created a new version of our Christmas pageant and in February we ran a Mystery Friends program. So much for holding things steady.

Absolutely none of this could have happened without the commitment and experience of Kim and Jen. They organize, notify, communicate, nudge, measure, observe, think ahead, support, advise, help out and do everything else in their repertoire to keep the programs, teachers and kids on track. It was a terrific year for me as I got to be part of this fantastic team.

The year started with an RE Council day-long retreat in July, led by Rev. Tandy Scheffler. By the end of that day, the Council members were energized and clear on their role in religious education programming. As they met each month, they worked on a variety of issues (including a Council mission statement and a "respect covenant,"), made decisions about programming, and worked hand-in-hand with staff on recruitment activities for the 18-19 church year.

Here's more of what we worked on.

By the Numbers

- 31 total unique registrations for Religious Education children and youth programs.
- Highest attendance was 145 on 9/10/17 (first day of RE)
- Average weekly attendance is 95 - this is significantly lower than last year's reported averages, but we believe the difference is due to the large sizes of last year's 7/8 Our Whole Lives (OWL) and 9/10 Coming of Age (CoA) classes. We had not offered either of those the year before which caused the large class sizes. Since both of these classes have "mandatory" attendance they definitely have an impact on average numbers.
- Every Sunday we need about 24 volunteers plus 5-6 staff (includes child care workers) to implement our programs.
- We also offered 3 adult RE classes outside of The Wednesday Thing, all facilitated by volunteers: "The Wisdom Jesus," "A Different Way: Living Simply in a Complex World," and "DOVE: Demonstrating Our Values through Eating."
- Each Sunday we had a total of 12 unique classes/group including our nursery and preK programs. We also offered 4th-5th OWL for 10 sessions on Sunday mornings this spring.

9:15 Religious Education Program Offerings

- Time for All Ages (Sanctuary)
- Nursery, PreK (childcare)
- All Ages Religious Education based on Spirit Play.

The attendance of school-age children at this session ran low all year, averaging 4 or 5 children per week, with occasions when only one or two were present. Consequently,

in order to reduce the need for adult volunteers, we offered only 1 activity per Sunday instead of the original 2 activities per Sunday). We also did extra advertising, directed emails to families who attended the second session but had no older children to affect their choice, and discussed the issue with the RE Council. Over the year we were unable to find a way to increase attendance at this session. Furthermore, we have no brilliant ideas, either.

11:15 Religious Education Program Offerings

- Time for All Ages (Sanctuary)
- Nursery, PreK (childcare)
- Spirit Play for K-3rd (2-3 activities)
- 4th Love Connects Us
- 5th-6th Riddle and Mystery, The Gospel According to the Simpsons
- 7th-8th Our Whole Lives
- 7th-9th Alternate for visitors and those not taking OWL or CoA: Neighboring Faiths
- 9th Coming of Age
- 10th-12th YRUU



Highlights of the Year for Children & Youth Religious Education

Multigenerational Programming and the Wednesday Thing

We know the work of integrating families with young children into the everyday life of the congregation will always be a work in progress. Nonetheless, we are getting better at it, with of course much room for further improvement.

Our most obvious space for multigenerational experiments comes during the new-this-year Wednesday Thing. Here we eat together and attend an all-ages vespers service before splitting up for various programs. We originally hoped that we would offer a multigenerational program each week, where children and non-parents could participate in the same session. Things did not work out that way for a variety of reasons.

Just as we were pondering how to address this difference between desires and outcomes, we scheduled a Saturday of workshops with UUA Southern Region Co-Lead Connie Goodbread. Connie met with the RE Council in the morning and led an all-congregation workshop in the afternoon. From this we took away a variety of great ideas, with three pieces of advice standing out: 1) we are already successful as a multigenerational congregation, 2) it is always and everywhere a work in progress, 3) keep at managing expectations of non-parents and parents alike.

Several issues that arose as we continued the Wednesday Thing programming and that bubbled up during Connie's workshop were centered on expectations of parents and children regarding supervision and behaviors. Following that weekend, the RE Council discussed the various stakeholder needs that we juggle (parents need time away from children, children need to be safe,

non-parents should not be subjected to “wild” behaviors, children and non-parents need spaces to interact) and suggested an all-congregation covenant that could outline a “way of being together” as a community. This community covenant is called “Respecting Each Other” and was distributed to all congregants on 2 Sunday mornings, was linked in several issues of the *Weekly eNews* and is posted on our website.

Intermediate Youth Group

Conceived by **Juliana Austin** with help from **Melissa Murphy**, a cooperative group of parents led our flock of intermediate-age kids in a program that connected middle them in a fun, new way. Activities included providing a breakfast for Room in the Inn, attendance at a Mountain Con, bowling, a corn maze, and a game day. The happy result is better bonding now (among students AND parents since this group was designed to include parents in the activities) which we hope will have the long-term effect of higher retention in the YRUU group. About 35 youngsters were eligible for this group and average attendance was around 11 or 12.

Coming of Age

As noted, this wasn’t originally planned for this year, but staff members felt it should be offered. We asked last year’s teachers what they thought and they agreed that we shouldn’t skip a year. Fortunately, we were able to quickly recruit teachers (thank you **Mike Horak** and **Gay Lambirth** for repeating, **Brett Johnson** for offering so much help and advice, and **Julie Ransom** and **Susan Andrew** for adding female voices to this class of six young men). Then students and mentors. We also made a few changes to the program. This year for the first time, we added attendance at a Con at The Mountain as part of the program. And instead of declaring where the class might go for their end-of-year trip, we asked the parents to make that decision. That way, they could choose a place that they felt met the goals of the trip and that they were willing to pay for.

This is a very person-intensive program for the congregation, requiring much staff time and high commitments from teachers and families. The addition of mentors is just another layer of complexity. Having said all that, it is totally worth it, often considered a capstone of our RE programming.

YRUU (high school youth)

This class is a challenge for every congregation in the denomination as it requires a special level of knowledge and sensitivity in its adult leaders and an unusual commitment from teens who are overly busy. For the leaders, there is a constant recalibrating of how much “leadership” should come from the adults and how much can be handed over to participants. For the participants and leaders, there is the constant challenge of making attendance on a Sunday morning “worth it.”

This year had its ups and downs, with attendance flagging over the year. The program followed a four-session pattern every month and we found that the cooking day usually drew the most participants. In April, the prospect of leading a worship service for Earth Day focused some of the participants and that group did a simply marvelous job. They showed off a new (to the congregation) technology (an interactive quiz) and provided a well-thought-out message. Much appreciation goes to the adult leaders of this class: **Gordon Clark, Tony Reed, Dan Damerville, Wendy Fletcher, Caitlin Hunsucker.**

Our Whole Lives

This is a strong focus for Kim Collins and that has resulted in a very strong OWL program for UUCA. Despite the fact that these classes require special training by all teachers, we are able to offer 7th/8th-grade OWL annually along with alternating offerings of 4th/5th grade OWL and K/1st-grade OWL. Only the 7th/8th-grade version is offered as a year-long Sunday morning class. The others are shorter sessions and are offered at other times.

Neighboring Faiths

RE Council members have made it clear that this is a highly valuable, “fundamental,” curriculum in the UUCA class progression and they would like it to be one of the classes that every child ends up taking-similar to OWL and CoA.

Themes and Spirit Play

UUCA subscribes to a UU service called Soul Matters which produces packets of materials based on monthly themes throughout the year. Rev. Mark Ward’s report lists the themes we have used this year. The RE staff promotes the use of these theme materials in three ways: 1) Spirit Play stories are selected with the month’s theme in mind, 2) teaching teams are sent emails that include links and references to materials that might be relevant for their particular classes and 3) we print a few theme-based selections for handouts and populate a section of the *Weekly eNews* called “Taking It Home” so all of our congregants have some access to these excellent, curated materials each week.

Volunteer Appreciation

The RE staff is exquisitely aware that our programming cannot possibly happen with a multitude of volunteers. Consequently, not only do we arrange for some end-of-year thank-you event, we also communicate our gratitude to individuals and teaching teams throughout the year through personal emails and handwritten notes.

As this is being written, the staff is planning a big appreciation event for volunteers, including a catered dinner. This has not been done for the past three years but, as noted, we believe that honoring the efforts of teachers and RE Council members is important.

Worship

In addition to an amazing and fabulous Time for All Ages at the start of every worship service at which all classes except OWL and Coming of Age regularly attend, children in Spirit Play classes also participate in rituals that help start their session. In March we instituted a candle-lighting with joys/concerns, "What's in your heart today?" and have provided a way for children to make a monetary offering. Youngsters in older grades incorporate a "check-in time."

Participation in an offering is an idea we’d like to continue to work on as the RE Council has agreed that generosity is definitely a value we would like to teach. This year we did not communicate this new ritual well enough to firmly establish it. That’s something we would like to work on next year.

Miscellaneous

Kim Collins attended a UUA Renaissance Module Training for Multicultural Religious Education. She will also attend General Assembly for further learning opportunities.

Jodi Clere has been a leader in planting vegetable gardens in the playground as well as behind 21 Edwin Place, which have been sources of fun, education and taste-testing for our kids.



Recommendations/Suggestions/Ideas for Next Year

Multigenerational Programming shall always be an area that will require our attention, even as we get better and better at leading and participating in them.

For the Coming of Age program, I would sustain the model we tried this year of having parents choose the end-of-year trip. Although General Assembly has been the trip the past two years, next year’s GA will be in Spokane, WA, perhaps not as economically accessible as Kansas City. I would also make a definite demarcation between costs covered by UUCA, costs covered by a supplies fee (if necessary) and costs to be covered by the families. Having just run the program this year, I would say that all the program costs (including retreats, food, journals, etc.) be covered by the UUCA operating budget. Until the operating budget covers all the cost (it doesn’t quite yet), I would still have parents pay as much as \$100-\$250 per child, still covering program costs. All trip costs should be paid for my fundraising.

For the YRUU program, I would designate a staff member as part of the teaching team. Staff members are trained in working with youth and have more time to devote to the planning and preparation that this class needs.

For worship, we hope we can sustain the exceptional Time for All Ages segment that Elizabeth Schell led this year, and we hope to do a better job of integrating a monetary offering in RE classes.

Director of Administration

Dr. Linda M. Topp, CCA

In general, the activities that are grouped under “administrative support” help the Executive stay within the Executive Limitations as laid out in the Board’s Governance Document. Although the Board remains the responsible entity for the workings of the congregation, the Board has delegated all programming and administrative functions to the Executive while the Board maintains a very deliberate “watchful eye.” This gives the Board time to do its most important work, that of working with the congregation to set the vision and direction for the congregation.

Administrative support entails six major areas of responsibilities: general administration, human resources, buildings & grounds, finance/accounting & fundraising, and communications.

The day-to-day work involved in providing administrative support for the activities of the congregation is not necessarily annual report-worthy. Details of specific areas of church administration are reported to the Board on an annual cycle that is part of the Governance Document. Here is a rundown of the highlights of our year.



General Administration

Our database transition from ACS (which many congregants knew as MY INFO) to Realm (also owned by ACS Technologies) was even rockier than we had expected. The reasons that we changed our database were good ones and still stand; Realm has a much more modern user interface and was expected to make the office end of the work more efficient. We were aware that Realm was still under development, but we had waited several years until they agreed that the move would benefit us.

Unfortunately, there are some features of Realm that have been making us (especially Tish Murphy and **Jerry McLellan**) crazy. Most notably, the requirement that a congregant needs a link to first log in to Realm and that the link expires within 24 hours of sending has caused untold distress for congregants and office personnel alike. More than a year after our initial conversion from ACS to Realm, about 200 of our members and friends (individuals) have not logged on to Realm. This means that none of these people have access to their giving records.

Another issue is that Realm has a privacy setting that is not communicated clearly to users. If a member makes their record “private,” no one can see any of their information except office personnel and they are not listed in the directory. On rare occasions, a person really wants that

level of privacy. But usually, all they want is for their fellow congregants to see their contact information and no “outsiders.” In that case, the setting should not be private.

And finally, we have not been able to create the “master report” that we would like to see during and after the annual budget drive. Realm has various quirks that prevent us from creating the exact report we want.

The account executive and technical director for Realm are painfully aware of our problems and Tish works with them very frequently to help resolve them. Nonetheless, we are still in the transition process more than a year out.



Human Resources—Things Change

After the Board voted on the 2017-18 budget last year but before the June annual meeting, we learned that our Lifespan Religious Education Director, Joy Berry, was resigning. This was a little late in the normal timing of an interim search, so after a 2-month-long, unsuccessful effort to find an interim, we came up with a different plan for the leadership of the religious education program for 2017-18. Specifically, we made the following adjustments:

Linda Topp increased her hours from ¾-time to full-time and became the Acting LRE Director. She was also given a raise.

Kim Collins, Lifespan Religious Education Coordinator, had her work hours increased from 25 to 30 hours per week.

Jen Johnson was promoted to Lifespan Religious Education Program Coordinator, was given a raise, and had her work hours increased from 15 to 20 hours per week.

During the course of the fall it became clear that our 30-hour per week bookkeeper, Becky Donald, was ill and having trouble working her full hours. We contracted with our former bookkeeper, Christine Magnarella Ray, now located near Boulder, CO and owner of Do Good Books, LLC, to assist on an hourly basis. At mid-year Becky needed to resign. Since March, we have permanently contracted with Do Good Books, on a monthly basis, to provide all of our bookkeeping services. Since we were already functioning fully electronically, this has only required a few adjustments in our office; we need to scan print documents (most of our bills are already electronic) and we need to print checks here (most of our payments, including all of payroll, are electronic as well—direct deposit or electronic fund transfers).

No minister took a sabbatical this year.



Buildings & Grounds—Buildings Are Old. Things Break.

I could not do the rest of my job without the time donated by our Building Managers. Deepest thanks to **Dena Gettleman, Ian Fischer, Larry Holt, John McGrann, Tony Reed, Bob Roepnack** and **Glenn White**, plus newcomer **Clyde Hardin** for applying their many skills and time to our buildings.

Building and grounds expenses are paid as follows:

If an item is less than \$500, it is paid out of the Operating fund's Buildings & Grounds account. If a repair is less than \$1,000 and doesn't extend the life or increase the value of that item (like routine maintenance/repairs), it is also paid out of the Operating fund's Buildings and Grounds account.

If an item/repair is \$500 or more and extends the life/increases the value of that item, then it is paid out of the Capital Fund. If a repair is more than \$1,000 (even routine repairs), it is also paid out of the Capital Fund. What if there is no money in the Capital fund for such items/repairs? Then it must be paid out of the Operating Fund or the Contingency Fund. Since the only source of income for the Capital Fund is a \$10,000 transfer from the Operating fund each year, we almost always have to access Operating or Contingency for large repairs—such as the Sandburg Hall roof.

Each year there are substantial recurring charges to the Buildings and Grounds account. These include bi-annual check-up/maintenance of all of our heating and cooling units, annual checks of our smoke alarm systems (Main and 21 Edwin), annual checks of fire extinguishers, monthly pest control, and gutter-cleaning which come to a total of approximately \$5,000. The remainder of the year's budget goes to repairs. This year we budgeted an additional \$7,500 for those repairs, which we exceeded.

Here are the year's unanticipated purchases/repairs over \$200:

Main building – 1 Edwin Place

- Replace Sandburg Hall roof
- Partial carpet cleaning for Sandburg Hall
- Additional electrical outlets in the kitchen
- Adjustments to the Sanctuary performance lighting
- Repair of exterior lighting
- New exterior faucet for Memorial Garden
- Repair HVAC (PTAC) unit in large administrative office

21 Edwin (Jefferson House)

- Sign permits for new signs at 21 and 23.
- Repair and rewiring for furnace

23 Edwin

- Replace heating/cooling unit

The Grounds

Grounds work has been led (with a great deal of labor added) by **Nancy Herbert, Bob Roepnack** and often **Ann McLellan**. Approximately \$6,300 was spent on tree care across the campus. About a third of that went to the preservation of three specific trees; one in the front yard of the main building (maple), one in the Memorial Garden (maple) and one near the handicap ramp, in the Forgiveness Garden (redbud). The rest was for general pruning and tree removal. Additionally, many new plants were added all across campus.

Solar Panels and a New Roof

A sub-group of the Earth Community Circle (“Green Sanctuary”) has been working since the fall to create a plan for installing solar panels to the roof of Sandburg Hall. A vote to proceed with the project, including fundraising, will come up at this year’s annual meeting. While actively pursuing this idea with contractors, it became obvious that we needed to replace the flat roof (which has far exceeded its lifetime) whether we added solar panels or not. The total project cost for the new roof will be around \$80,000. This includes relocation of all the HVAC units on the roof and replacement of one of them.

Memorial Garden

Memorial Garden team: **Ruth Christie**, Chair; members **Arthur Aaronsen, Shirley Boenheim, Ann Sanders Cargill, Richard Kark, Kathi Rice, Angie Robinson, Venny Zachritz**

In addition to the regular maintenance of the Memorial Garden and surrounding flower beds, the team dealt with the recovery of the Memorial Garden area after the arborist’s work to free up the root system of the Japanese maple in the center of the interment bed. The dying off of several branches showed that the Japanese maple was under stress. This is still a work in progress.



Finance/Accounting & Fundraising

The Annual Budget Drive (ABD) – “Stories of Us”

Co-Chairs: **Dan** and **Gina Phairas**, written by **Gina Phairas**.

Our co-chairs teamed up with a small but mighty crew including; **Iris Hardin, Judy Harper**, and Anne Harper for event planning, **Kristi Miller** for communications, **Jerry McLellan** for communications and statistical record keeping, **Larry Wheeler** for follow-up coordination and Linda Topp for advising, coordinating with staff and when needed, cheerleading.

The team had several large goals they wanted to tackle this year. In addition to a \$680,000 financial goal (a 6% increase over last year’s Operating Budget), they also worked to help members and friends feel more connected to UUCA and to create a sense of celebration in giving.

How It Happened:

Working on the feeling of connection started before the actual budget drive with the “Stories of Us” series. These monthly pulpit talks by members were designed to show the congregation how they impact each other’s lives through UUCA. The stories were told by a diverse group of congregants from teens to seniors in an effort to lift the voices of members not always heard from the pulpit. Excerpts from these stories were used during the drive on a bulletin board in Sandburg Hall, at the Leadership Reception and were shared on the UUCA Facebook pages.

This practice of gratitude and reflection is one the ABD team hopes will continue as a monthly “Stories of Us” series throughout next year.

Leadership Reception

The Leadership Reception was a great kick-off to this year’s ABD and provided the opportunity to both thank leaders of the congregation as well as provide the first “ask” of the campaign. Attendance was high with nearly 100 people participating in the event held at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. Attendees were invited based on their leadership in one of three areas: commitment of time, talent or financial resources; they received a “Save the Date” postcard as well as a written invitation.

To further the goal of connection, the ABD team used assigned seating to help ensure each table was diverse in age, type of leadership commitment, and role of volunteering at UUCA. The tables were then teamed up for a video trivia game designed to help them get to know each other and to highlight UUCA stories of gratitude.

Rev. Mark Ward presented both the financial state of the congregation as well a message of inspiration for giving. **Gina Phairas** gave her personal story of how UUCA impacts her family and her giving. She also presented the “Plus One” theme, explaining how reaching the financial goal this year would require members to consider moving up a pledge level.

The UUCA “house band” created a celebratory atmosphere and door prizes were given out to encourage mingling after the presentations. All of the congregational leaders were active in this year’s campaign. By the time of the Celebration Sunday at the end of February, these donors had contributed about 30% of our goal.

Celebration Sunday

The ABD culminated in a single event, Celebration Sunday, on February 25th. Prior to the event, Dan and Gina did an invitational skit from the pulpit, sent an event reminder automated call to all congregants and Linda Topp posted *Weekly eNews* reminders and blog posts about the event.

It took the ABD team, the choir, Les Downs, the UUCA Band, guest speaker Rev. Mary Katherine Morn and lots of smiley-faced balloons and banners to create a very special Sunday morning that was indeed a multigenerational celebration of the financial commitments of UUCA members.

Gina and Dan did another skit about the “Plus One” theme encouraging members to increase their annual commitment and members brought their commitments forward in a special giving ceremony in which all ages participated.

Results

The ABD was a financial success with projections showing the congregation will meet the \$680,000 financial goal.

Just as importantly, member engagement during the drive also increased. About 25% of households increased their annual commitment and to this day, Dan and Gina continue to receive feedback from members about how positive the campaign experience was this year.

UUCA has once again proven itself to be a generous congregation.

Legacy Circle Committee

Beverly Cutter, Chair; members **Myrtle Bennett, Mike Horak, Aubrey Le Fey, Mara Sprain**

The Legacy Circle Committee has been focused on securing estate gifts that will generate 10% unrestricted matching funds from a \$5 million grant awarded by UU of Shelter Rock (NY) for a collaborative legacy campaign with selected UU entities. Our congregation was a pilot test site for the unrolling of the program.

As of May 11, 2018 more than 35 congregants had completed the paperwork to have their legacy commitment matched. Commitments can be made until June 30, 2020. The 10% unrestricted matching funds will be released to us in 2019 and 2020. UUA reports that UUCA is experiencing more success in securing legacy commitments than any other participating UU organization.

UUCA Auction – “The Things We Do” - November 11, 2017, 5 to 9pm, Asheville Event Centre
Leaders (and super volunteers): **Judy Galloway, Ann McLellan, Judith Kaufman, Tory Schmitz**
And other volunteers: **Steve Carter, Jennifer Gorman, Joy McConnell, Karen Morris, Robin Loew, Renate Schuchardt, Virginia Bower**, and volunteers (kids and parents) from The Coming of Age Class

The auction is many things. It is a fundraiser, a fun party, a year-round community builder as result of the services that we offer to each other at auction, and this year it was also a demonstration of UUCA’s commitment to social justice through selection of a caterer, Green Opportunities, who is helping youth and adults train for sustainable jobs.

Some say the 2017 Auction was the best so far. Profits broke the old record to add about \$25,000 to UUCA’s budget. The well-attended party was enlivened from the beginning by the sounds of UUCA’s own “house band” (**Brett Johnson, PJ Brito, Paul Moore, and Will Jernigan**) as the silent auction got underway. To encourage folks to circulate, the room was set up primarily with high-top tables and food was served at food stations scattered throughout the room. It broke from the past in several important ways: (1) No “things” were sold at auction, only services and experiences were sold, (2) Ticket prices were lowered to \$20.00 and a “pay as you can” option was

offered to minimize financial barriers to participation (3) Pre-bidding began in Sandburg Hall on Sundays before the auction (4) The Live Auction was shortened, (5) Desserts were offered after the close of the Live Auction, (6) When the Live Auction ended at 8:00 pm, a DJ began with theme music for the event, The Temptations' "The Way You Do the Things You Do." Many stayed and danced until closing at 9:00.

There appeared to be a variety of folks in attendance, including many active parents. Many of all ages took to the dance floor. There was good feedback from participants regarding the new format and features and consistent good remarks on the venue. We had a party, we raised a significant amount of money, we did some good work.

Used Book Sale, Holiday Craft Fair, Equal Exchange Coffee Sales and Acoustic Journeys

These fundraisers aren't in the same league with the auction, but all funds are appreciated! Thanks to the Book Sale leaders, **Martha Shepard** and **Ephraim Schechter**, Holiday Craft Fair leader, **Sammy Fong**, and Equal Exchange seller/organizer, **Phil Roudebush**, for adding money to our Operating Fund. Thanks to **Sylvie Delauney** for adding a fundraising component to her guided trips to France. And thanks to **Don Baker** for reviving a long-time concert program here at UUCA. We've held 3 concerts as part of our new Acoustic Journeys concert series. After paying the NC admission tax, we split the "gate" 70/30, with the artist getting the larger share.

Note that this is the last year for our used book sale. All the leaders have worked hard enough and long enough over many years to deserve a break, while no new leadership has come forward.

Our fundraisers netted the following:

- Book Sale - \$5,563
- Holiday Craft Fair - \$554
- Equal Exchange Coffee Sales - \$886
- Sylvie Delauney's trip - \$1,400
- Acoustic Journeys - \$1,098

Building Rentals

Our buildings provide three benefits for UUCA: they are home to our own programs and activities; they are a source of funds; they are resources we offer to the community. As a source of funds, rentals contribute about \$20,000 to our income, or about 3% of our total income. Our single largest rental is the ½-time cooperative preschool that uses 21 Edwin (Jefferson House) on school-day mornings. Second and third place go to WomanSong and the Asheville Chamber Music Series, respectively. Since the primary use of our spaces is for our offices, worship and programming, rentals come in second place when allocating space. However, we are also a source of free meeting space to non-profits serving people we feel can benefit from the gift. Groups that have occasionally or regularly used our spaces for free include CIMA, Guardian ad Litem, the Literacy Council, Jewish Community Center, Building Bridges, Campaign for Southern Equality, Faith for Justice, Racial Equity Institute, Youth OutRight, Mountain Area Interfaith Forum, Mountain People's Assembly, Asheville Showing Up for Racial Justice, and area UU ministers. We also

provide very steep discounts for the WENOCA Chapter of Sierra club, Narcotics Anonymous groups, WomanSong (rehearsing at UUCA for more than 25 years), the Mexican Consulate, Buncombe County Elections, Buncombe County Dept. of Human and Health Services, and Buncombe County Educator's Association.

Finance/Accounting

The Finance Advisory Committee members are **Wink Zachritz**, Chair, **Ann Cargill**, **Sammy Fong**, **Bob Lane**, **Ann Perry** and new addition **Clyde Hardin**.

As reported last year, despite changes in our bookkeeping staff, we will be updating our accounting system to a new chart of accounts, with the transition to occur on July 1. This should greatly simplify the booking of transactions, making it easier to hire a new bookkeeper (or contractor) in the future.

In addition to providing advice and counsel to the Director of Administration and reviewing our financial reports, the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) conducts biannual mini-reviews of randomly selected accounting transactions in several categories (payroll, accounts payable, bank statements) of the congregation's accounting system.

At the beginning of this fiscal year, Becky Donald notified us that she hoped to resign as soon as we could replace her. After a failed search, we realized that the complexity of our accounting system was scaring candidates. Consequently, Becky continued to work reduced hours and we added Christine Magnarella Ray to the system. We all intended to convert the accounting system sooner than July 1, but we never found the hours to do it. However, we expect to complete the plan by the annual meeting and begin to use the new system July 1.

This year we continued to invest a small share of our reserves (\$30,000) in Mountain Bizworks as a socially responsible community investment. This is up from \$20,000 last year.

The proposed budget for 2017-18 is included at the back of this report. As of this writing, the bottom line for 2017-18 looks to be well within the budget range despite massive unanticipated staffing changes. As is always the case, a few line items have gone over-budget for reasons that were unpredictable at the start of the year, and some lines will end up under budget. Additionally, we had higher contributions from nearly every source than we expected.



Communications

The website is our key communications outlet. It is updated nearly daily and has become the repository of much information about this congregation. Whenever you have a question about operations, policies, procedures, programs or just about anything else, check the website. One easy way to do that is to use the search box at the top of the home page.

Tish Murphy handles the weekly changes about worship services, and posts sermons. Linda Topp manages changes or additions of pages, slides, widgets, menus and more!

Tish Murphy creates the *Weekly eNews* (Linda Topp usually edits), Venny Zachritz creates the weekly *This Loving Community*. Kim Collins is best at posting to UUCA's Facebook pages, Rev. Lisa is second-best, and Linda Topp comes in a poor third. We also have volunteer **Kristi Miller** helping out.

Tish is also responsible for producing all orders of service, including creating a special Word version of the *Weekly eNews* as the insert.

PROPOSED and PROJECTED EOY BUDGET FOR 2017-18

	PROPOSED 2017-18	PROJECTED FINAL 2017-18
INCOME		
Fiscal & Administration Income		
Sustaining Support - financial commitments	638,000	633,000
Reserve for uncollectible pledges (6%)	(38,280)	-
New pledges, post paid pledges	18,930	28,300
Other Contributions (includes one-time gift of \$3,000 in 2017-18)	33,400	38,700
Distributions from both endowments (5%)	12,500	14,400
Other Income - Rentals, Fundraising, Short-term investment earnings, \$18K in Community Plate	70,300	73,700
Board-approved transfer from previously set-aside Elmslie Bequest for mor	6,600	-
Capital Development Fund (for mortgage)	13,200	13,200
FISCAL & ADMINISTRATION TOTAL INCOME	754,650	801,300
EXPENSES		
Worship and Music		
Outside speakers	2,500	2,000
Service supplies, Worship Associates	1,150	1,200
Music Program	8,000	10,800
WORSHIP & MUSIC EXPENSE TOTAL	11,650	14,000
Religious Education Expenses		
RE supplies and equipment	2,800	2,300
RE special programs (CoA, YRUU, adults)	2,300	1,400
RE volunteer vetting, training, appreciation	3,000	4,450
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXPENSE TOTAL	8,100	8,150
Congregational Care & Connections Expenses		
Covenant/small groups, Pastoral Visitors, supplies	600	600
Membership development	2,100	2,000
Congregational events	500	5,000
Wednesday Thing		
CONG. CARE & CONNECTIONS EXPENSE TOTAL	3,200	7,600
Outreach Expenses		
Earth & Social Justice Ministry incl. Community Plate distributions	16,000	24,000
GIFT Program (4% of income)	28,700	29,200
UU Relations	-	-
OUTREACH EXPENSE TOTAL	44,700	53,200
Governance and Congregational Support		
Advertising	-	1,500
All administrative costs, including computers and software, office-kitchen-hospitality supplies, copier leases and more!	40,250	55,700
Insurance (liability & workmen's comp)	9,800	10,700
Facilities & Equipment (includes cleaning service)	69,600	78,500
Mortgage Payment	13,200	13,200
Staff and Volunteer Development incl. Leadership Development Comr	18,860	16,400
Board Support	2,000	6,200
Bank/Credit Card fees for processing donations	1,800	2,400
Annual budget drive, planned giving, non-ABD fundraising expenses	19,100	21,600
Transfer to Sabbatical Fund	-	-
Transfer to Capital Fund (Maint. & repair above \$500)	10,000	10,000
GOVERNANCE & CONG. SUPPORT EXPENSE TOTAL	184,610	216,200
TOTAL PROGRAM AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$ 252,260	\$ 299,150
TOTAL PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$ 502,390	420,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	754,650	719,150