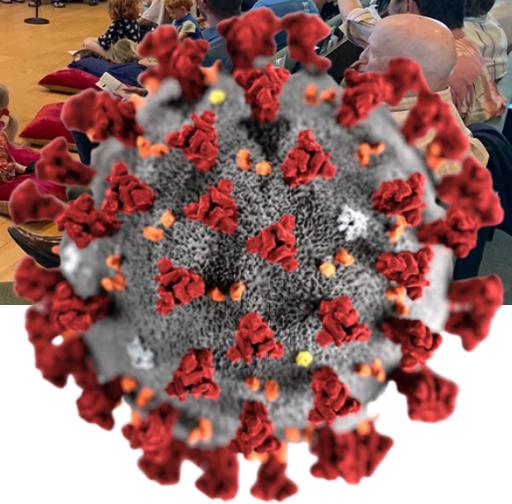


Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville



Annual Report
2019-2020

2019-20 Annual Report

June 2020

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Ryan Williams, President; Cecil Bennett, Vice President; Judy Harper, Clerk; Louise Anderson, Michael Beech, Nora Carpenter, Clyde Hardin, James Schall, Mariah Wright

Our congregation uses policy governance to guide its work. In brief, the Board discerns congregational values, mission, and ends in conversation with members, and the Executive (Rev. Ward), working with staff and members of the congregation, acts to realize the mission and ends in light of congregational values. Knitting together this work is a Governance Document that discusses (i) Ends, (ii) the role of the Board, (iii) the relationship between the Board and the Executive, and (iv) limitations on the Executive. The Board monitors the work of the Executive toward realizing congregational mission and ends via scheduled reports developed by the Executive. The work of the Board is cyclical. In 2016-17, it discerned congregational Values. In 2017-18, it discerned congregational Mission and Ends.

Based on online training modules from the UUA website, the Board established a set of three priorities and one guiding question to help shape the 2019-2020 year. The first two priorities were 1) hire the best candidate for the interim minister position, and 2) increase Board visibility in order to help support stability during the transition period.

These priorities were based on the announcement in July of 2019 that Reverend Mark Ward planned to retire at the end of June 2020. This announcement set into place much of the work of the Board during the 2019-2020 year. The first priority of finding an interim led the Board to decide on pursuing a 2-year interim minister before beginning the search for a long-term, called minister. This was based on the recommendation of the UUA and on the ongoing research and discussion amongst the Board members. The Board spent multiple sessions discussing transition issues related to congregational stability, interim expectations, and the best practices for an interim search process. An Interim Search Committee was created consisting of **Charlie Marks, Liz Rumbaugh, Tory Schmitz**, and Ryan **Williams**. Their work would include completing an information packet on the interim search database for the UUA, determining interview questions and criteria, reviewing applicants, conducting the interviews, and making a recommendation to the Board. The Board reviewed this work and process in an ongoing manner throughout the year up until March of 2020.

The second priority was based on the belief that increasing Board visibility was important in the coming transition in order to promote congregational awareness and connection to UUCA leadership during a time period that could likely lead to anxiety or discomfort due to transition. Board members established a once-a-month conversation group at the Wednesday Thing, set up a table for questions in Sandburg Hall following services, and worked to increase participation as greeters and ushers on Sundays (while wearing new brightly colored Board of Trustee name tags). As president, I spoke at a number of services to discuss the transition process with the congregation.

The third priority was to reflect and enhance our welcoming practices to foster increasing awareness of inclusive practices in our physical and social practices. This priority was decided on following church leadership's participation in training with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). The Board had agreed on participation in this training at the recommendation of Reverend Claudia Jiménez. The IDI is a tool that is used to help develop the multicultural lens through which policy governance is enacted at UUCA as our leadership sets the tone for a faith community that is welcoming to all, as we seek to address issues of white fragility and unintentional lack of hospitality toward members of marginalized communities. The proposal involved commitments from the Board, Staff and other designated members of the congregation to take a 45-minute online assessment, do an individual interview via Zoom, and then participate in a six-hour group training that took place on Saturday, Nov. 16th. The cost was \$100 per person. Cost for the entire board was \$900. Further funding came from the Staff Development budget. In addition, Board members hosted two sessions on IDI principles during Wednesday Thing gatherings.

In addition to the work around these three priorities, the Board also approved Rev. Tiffany Sapp and Rev. Jeff Jones to be Community Affiliated Ministers with UUCA. A Safety Committee was established (reestablished) with Board Member Michael Beech serving as committee chair. Additional members included **Ben Fleming, Greg Gregory, Kim Stewart, Wink Zachritz, Tom Dessereau,** and **Ian Stewart,** with Venny Zachritz and Linda Topp providing staff support. Their work was to study and further develop the UUCA plan on handling campus emergency situations.

The work of the Board and congregation as a whole experienced an unprecedented shift in March when, due to COVID-19, all on-campus gatherings were suspended. As a result, Board meetings starting in April took place online via Zoom. Reverend Mark Ward proposed postponing his retirement for an additional year, which the Board gladly and gratefully accepted. The work of the ministerial transition and interim search process will begin again in the 2020-2021 year where it left off. Activities during the post-closure period included authorizing Linda Topp to serve as our representative in applying for funding from the Payroll Protection Program of the CARES Act, a congressional funding support provided by the federal

government due to COVID-19. The Board also approved signing an easement with the city of Asheville in order to address stormwater run-off repair.

In response to the inability to gather for the Annual Meeting, the Board approved holding the vote for approving the Meeting Minutes from 2019, making a change to the bylaws regarding term limits for the Leadership Development Committee (LDC), and electing new members of the Board and LDC via online voting and mail-in ballots.

The Board also approved the 2020-2021 budget.



James Cassara, Chair, Susan Andrew, Bill Kleiber, Natale Polinko, and Bob Wilson

Despite the obvious interruption to our lives and having to pivot to a new paradigm of interaction, I am proud of our accomplishments over the past twelve months. With the term-ending departure of two members, we were able to recruit **Natale Polinko** and **Susan Andrew**, both of whom have seamlessly come on board and done exceptional work since day one. Natale and Susan join holdovers **Bob Wilson, Bill Kleiber**, and staff liaison Linda Topp. The synergy and cooperation among our committee has made my role as chair a joy. Because neither Bill nor Bob have expressed an interest in taking over as chair, and with Susan and Natale new to the LDC, I have, with the permission of the Board of Trustees and a required bylaw change, agreed to stay on for another term.

Our emphasis for this year was on the “Development” aspect of our work, which begins with identifying the potential leadership of our congregants and supporting those who are ready to step forward and assume a greater or different role at UUCA. As such we held a pair of leadership development workshops, in early November and late February, both of which were well attended and received. As Chair of the committee I have attended and presented at all but one new member class, with Bill Kleiber ably taking that missed slot. Our intent is to become a more visible part of the congregation, letting folks know who we are and the vital work we do.

Our most important function remains the procurement of new Board members. It is a process that begins in the fall and is completed by mid-spring. I am truly thrilled with the three

candidates we are presenting for the year ahead and look forward to the LDC becoming an even more creative and viable part of the community.



Rev. Mark P. Ward

MINISTRY OVERVIEW

“If you want to make God laugh,” Woody Allen once said, “tell him your plans.”

The plans I had were that 2019-2020 would be my valedictory year here, completing 16 years in ministry at UUCA. I announced my intentions back in August to retire in June 2020, thinking that it would be helpful to give you a good stretch of time to plan for my replacement. And you used the time well. Last fall the Board decided to seek an interim minister who could prepare the congregation for a full search in a couple of years. They appointed an Interim Search Committee, and early in the new year they were in touch with the Settlement Department at the UUA for information about how to go about searching for an interim.

All was going swimmingly until the coronavirus arrived on our shores in January, blossomed into a pandemic, and then in March shut down public gatherings in North Carolina. We shifted right away to virtual worship and Zoom meetings, bravely hoping that this would tide us over until we could return to our regular mode of operations.

But it quickly became clear that we would not “return to normal” anytime soon—if ever—that North Carolina, indeed the country, was in for historic disruptions in coming months. Amid all this, it became clear to me what a mess it would be for this congregation to attempt to change lead ministers in the middle of this turmoil. So, I contacted the Board and offered to stay another year to help you navigate through this storm.

They agreed, and so we launched into a process of reimagining what congregational life will be like during a time when, for the safety of our people, we cannot meet together. It’s been challenging, requiring all of us to figure out how to do the things that are central to the mission of this congregation without being in each other’s presence.

Worship has become a YouTube video posted Sunday morning while faith development, small group ministries, committees, social groups, and staff meetings are all Zoom calls. And we are calling, Zooming, FaceTiming, Google Hangout-ing and all the rest with each other to stay connected, to remind ourselves we are connected.

As I write, it is plain that we will not be returning to in-person meeting, worship and all the rest, for some time. And yet, the ministry that we do, while perhaps not an “essential service,” is an essential part of our lives and an essential voice and actor in our times. As one cartoon I saw recently put it, our building may be closed, but the church is open. All that we do as a congregation to change lives is as important as always: the inspiration that we get from worship and faith development, the vital connections that bring us together as a community, the compassion we give to each other and cultivate in all we do, and the justice that we seek to bring about in the world.

So, we’re going to keep at it. Your staff and lay leadership are committed to staying on task, and we invite you to dive in and join us. It’s going to be different for a while. We’re exploring new media and developing new skills, and all of it with the intent of serving this congregation’s mission as best we can. Changing times can be a little disorienting, but they are also exciting because they invite us to try new things and be creative in what we do. There are few experts here. We’re all just doing the best we can.

WORSHIP

Though ending in uncertainty, our worship year was a strong one, and it wouldn’t be possible without the many talented people who I partner with to make it all happen. I’m especially grateful for the contributions of my colleague, **the Rev. Claudia Jiménez, our Minister of Faith Development**, who leads worship about once a month, and several wonderful guests who brought their gifts to our Sunday worship. I also greatly enjoy my partnership with our **Music Director Dr. Les Downs** to help weave the right blend of music and words that offer inspiring week after week.

This year I also want to make sure to credit the work of our **Director of Administration Linda Topp**, who from March through May, stepped in to figure out how to make worship happen online and pulled together the many smart phone videos that we threw at her and created beautiful worship services.

That work was finally taken over by our versatile sound techs – **Jason Smith and Steve Reines** – who are beginning to shift their duties from the work of staffing our sound system, recording our services and preparing them to be posted online to becoming online video editors for an evolving worship service.

And I am grateful for the gifts that our talented team of Worship Associates brought to Sunday worship each week. Our team this year included **Susan Andrew, Jane Bramham, James**

Cassara, Karin Eckert, Laurel Jernigan, Charlie Marks, Carol Taylor, Bob Wilson, and our two youth Worship Associates Boheme Dessereau and Ronan Jeffrey.

Our summer services began with the Rev. Scott Hardin-Niere, executive director of Caring for Creation on “The Breath of Life,” then the Rev. Ed Brock on “Optimal Relationships,” and UUCA member **Rev. Tobias Van Buren** on the nature of time, “It’s About Time.” **Sammy Fong, Virginia Bower** and **Charlie Marks** led our traditional Poetry Sunday at the end of July.

In August, I led off with thoughts of what we see in the night sky, “Out of the Stars Have We Come,” then guest minister Rev. Julienne Lepp on “The Journey,” with Thoreau as a guide. **Minister of Faith Development Rev. Claudia Jiménez** followed with “The Theology of Improv,” and Rev. Claudia and I concluded the month with our traditional Water Service, “Love is the Water.”

September began with my service on pastoral care with “What We Can Expect of One Another,” then returning to two services on how love is “The Doctrine of This Church” and Rev. Claudia’s service, “There Are Covenants Among Us.” We hosted the Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, president of the UU Service Committee, for her service on “Common Courage.” We closed the month raising up Pride Day with “Out and Proud: A Celebration.”

In October Rev. Claudia led our annual service on forgiveness, with “Transformed by Forgiveness,” and UUCA’s Affiliated Community Minister, the **Rev. Jeff Jones**, followed with “Be the Change: Language Matters.” My service “Who Belongs?” followed and the month closed with Rev. Claudia’s “Day of Remembrance.”

Rev. Claudia led November with “Service of Remembrance” and then we hosted two pulpit guests: the Rev. Meg Riley, senior minister of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, “Worthy Now,” and the Rev. Tamara Lebak, “In Our Own Tongues.” The month concluded with my service, “Who, What Deserves Our Attention?”

December began with a service by UUCA member **Iris Hardin** on the challenges of Alzheimer’s disease with “The Long Good-bye.” My service, “Open to Awe” followed and then Rev. Claudia’s service “Reverence is a Choice.” I followed with a nod to a famous Unitarian with “Charles Dickens & a Unitarian Christmas.” We ended the year with our Christmas Eve services, “A Children’s Christmas Pageant, with a Twist” and our Candlelight Service, concluding with “A Service of Music, Revels, and Stories” with the recorder ensemble, Musicke Antigua.

The New Year began with my first in a series of sermons on our seven UU principles, “The First One,” with a focus on the work of Mr. Rogers. We followed with “UUs and the Magi” by UUCA member **Phil Roudebush**, and our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day service led by Rev. Claudia, “From Concern to Action.” January finished with my service on the second UU principle, which referenced the work of Bryan Stevenson.

February kicked off with a service centered on a conversation by Rev. Claudia and me on “My Small Part,” how we are each contribute to our community, and then my service on the third principle, that included an exploration of Jonathan Haidt’s, “The Righteous Mind.” Our Annual Budget Drive team led the next service, “Living Bravely, Giving Generously,” and we concluded the month with our YRUU class leading the service, “Friendship and Community.”

March began with Rev. Claudia’s service, “Rekindling the Moral Imagination,” and our Celebration Sunday service, concluding our annual budget drive, on March 8.

But then everything changed. With the announcement of the pandemic of the COVID-19 coronavirus, we cancelled in-person worship and shifted to pre-recorded video worship. Rev. Claudia, Worship Associates, Les Downs and our musicians, and I shifted to recording sections of the service on our smart phones and Director of Administration Linda Topp combined them all to create a finished product that ends up “unlisted” on our YouTube channel. Links are sent out each Sunday to protect copyrights as much as possible.

My service on the fourth principle was our first video service, followed by my service on “The Problem of Heaven.” Our Affiliated Community Minister, the **Rev. Tiffany Sapp**, led the next one on ‘The Wisdom of ‘What Now?’

April began with my service on the fifth principle, followed by my service on Easter, which explored what the Easter Story and Camus’ “The Plague” had in common. Rev. Claudia led an online Flower Communion service, complete with a PowerPoint of members with their favorite flowers. I followed with an Earth Day service that explored common themes in the COVID-19 pandemic and the Climate Crisis.

In May Rev. Claudia invited us to consider how this time we are passing through could be a moment of transformation. I followed with a service on our sixth principle and how it is grounded in our history and yet under threat today. Our Coming of Age class followed with their annual Credo service, with their thoughts expressed on video linked with music. I followed with my service on our seventh principle and **Rev. Jim McKinley** closed the month with a service on “Ya Gotta Own It,” inspired by a raft trip with his daughter.

In response to the nationwide protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, Rev. Claudia and I addressed the anguish in a service entitled, “What Justice Demands.”

Music Director Les Downs led a Music Sunday service one week later than normal due to that shift in scheduling that includes congregational musicians, guest musicians and testimonies from choir members. We plan to continue worship services through the summer, some recorded and perhaps some live.

The final service in June will be a 10am live service from the UUA’s General Assembly, which has also been moved to an online experience.

I end this report amidst great uncertainty: we have no idea yet when it will be safe to meet again on our campus at 1-23 Edwin Place. Some staff members work periodically and individually out of offices, but we have no person-to-person meetings. All church activities have been shifted to the video realm, and we acknowledge that it could be a year or so before that changes.

That year of social distancing will pose a challenge for us to consider how to keep and continue to build our community, and yet we are committed to doing so. At a time when our lives are turned upside down, we need a centering place, a source of hope and inspiration, connections to people who share our values, and a prophetic voice we can align with to help bring about the changes that justice demands in our bruised world.

My plans certainly have changed, but in truth I am both cheered and proud to know I will be with you another year. We all will be working on a way forward in this altered landscape, but what is plain is that we cannot go it alone. It is all the more reason to double down on the hope that covenanted community offers, to seize the new opportunities we are given and commit ourselves to whole-hearted, compassionate and courageous living. What a moment we have!

PASSAGES

Finally, we take note sadly of those members of our community who died in the last year, all them remarkable people in meaningful ways who leave behind loved ones and a community that grieves losing them.

David Christie, Ann Davis, Mike Davis, Norman Earle, Paul Fleisig, Pat Godbold, Doris Harter, Lou Hunley, Brigette Oliphant, Sherman Stambaugh, Pete Tolleson, and Bill Wothke.



Dr. Leslie Downs

Every summer I attend the annual Association of Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries Conference, where I am exposed to music that other congregations are doing that we have not done, as well as new music that will work well for our services. This past year the choir sang several anthems by composers whose music was introduced at various AUUMM conferences.

These include Mark Miller, who was the choral clinician for last summer’s conference, as well as two women composers, Amy F. Bernon and Linda Kachelmeier. This year the UUCA Choir (listed below) continued to grow, both in numbers and as a solid ensemble. We welcomed several new choir members from the congregation, and I continued to occasionally hire ringers (trained professionals) to provide additional support. The choir had a very excellent singing year until we had to stop for COVID-19 quarantine.

Our All-Ages Choir was not as successful this year as in the previous year. Typically, they meet several times a year and provide a singing opportunity for our children and for adults who are not able to commit to singing in the UUCA Choir. This past year we tried having rehearsals before dinner on Wednesday evening and between services on Sunday and never found a time that worked well for everyone interested in participating.

We were fortunate this year to have some wonderful guest artists whom we pay, including Finn Magill, Chris Rosser, Jason DeCristofaro, and Tret Fure. Our in-house musicians, including **Brett Johnson, Paul Moore, Will Jernigan, Sandra Goodson, Wes Miller, Juliana Austin, Michelle Reines** and **Steve Reines**, continued to periodically provide music for our services.

UUCA Choir Members 2018-2020

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Ellen Brown	Gail Ashburn	Ned Cabaniss	Rusty Bryant
Mary Cornielsen	Judy Clouse	Dennis Campbell	Mike Ellis
Karin Eckert	Beverly Cutter	Fred McDougall	David Garver
Colleen Finegan	Beth Gage	Doug Hibshman	Jarrold Geoffrey
Melody Goldberg	Joyce Hooley-Gingrich	Mark Medlin	Adam Griffith
Michele Gregory	Carol Howard		Richard Kark
Barbara McDonald	Nancy Nehls Nelson		Langdon Martin
Suzanne Neilson	Connie Silver		Ann Thompson
Gwenn Roberts	Kris Stewart		
Myrtle Staples	Linda Topp		
Cynthia Teves	Debbie Ward		
Suzanne Williams	Kathy Quinlan		
	Diane Zolnaski		



Rev. Claudia Jiménez, CRE

MINISTRY OVERVIEW

Committee on the Ministry (CoM): **Barbara Campbell, Ben Fleming, Lisa Horak, Jim Steffe and Tobias Van Buren**

Major Portfolios: Faith Development, Justice Ministry

Year two at UUCA has been a time of continued learning and relationship-building. I feel a greater connection with the congregation, know more of our members and have a better understanding of the congregational culture. I am grateful for the Committee on the Ministry that has been my sounding board and support as I navigate the joys and frustrations of ministry. A special thank you to Carol Taylor for her service on CoM last year and to Tobias Van Buren who has replaced her. This committee, with Rev. Ward and myself, submits yearly evaluations to the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee as I engage in the three-year process of becoming a Fellowshiped minister. In February, I received a letter granting me a first renewal of Preliminary Fellowship. Now I have two more years to go. We will submit all the evaluations for year two on July 1. As part of the discernment of my first-year ministry I requested to shift focus from pastoral care to justice ministry. Although I still offer pastoral support as needed, I believe it has been a worthwhile experiment (see Justice Ministry Annual Report). I am grateful UUCA leadership supported this change.

As I strive to fulfill my ministerial duties, my appreciation for UUCA staff and the myriad volunteers engaged as part of teaching teams or councils is more heartfelt than ever. I recognize that folks are busy and volunteering or participating in programs can be challenging. That means that programs like "Mystery Friends," the Teacher Appreciation Dinner and Wednesday Thing meals had to be canceled due to lack of interest, volunteers, or both. We reached out through surveys, town hall meetings, and emails to inquire what programs are of interest. This year I learned that staff provides support, but the congregation owns the programs; attendance and participation guide where we invest time and resources. This

provides an opportunity for creativity and experimentation as we explore how to best serve the spiritual needs of UUCA.

Faith development is what we do 24/7: in worship, programming for all ages, justice work, and even committee work. I have no doubt that in these times, when there is so much brokenness, fear, and inequity in the world exacerbated by the uncertainty and losses caused by the pandemic that the work of spiritual deepening is more important than ever. Faith communities have an important role to play answering the questions: What sustains our spirits in these times of economic, emotional, and civic precarity? What is the role of the church in a world where inequity, oppression, and white supremacy persist? My key portfolios, faith development and justice ministry, are crucial areas if we are to be a congregation that inspires and works for justice. And, that means your participation is important.

Because of COVID-19 we shifted to online church on March 15. Most of our programs (and meetings) moved to online platforms. Some RE volunteers were available and ready to continue meeting regularly as a class via Zoom. Neighboring Faiths and Coming of Age leaders made the pivot quickly and resumed meeting with only a week gap. YRUU advisors organized a few Sunday afternoon Zooms with our high school youth group. Understandably, not every volunteer or class could make that big change. However, teachers from both the 3rd-4th grade and the 5th-6th grade classes sent some “taking it home” lessons that families could implement and learn together. OWL classes were not permitted to meet online due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Our religious educators, Kim Collins and Jen Johnson, have been doing outstanding work making the shift and exploring ways to support families. For example, they led the effort to create a library on our YouTube channel with recorded stories accessible to parents and organized a bi-weekly parent check in via Zoom. Staff is also providing spiritual nourishment at home via weekly family emails, Facebook, and blog posts with resources for families and providing pastoral support via emails, calls, and cards to some UUCA families. Jen Johnson mailed a personal card with seed paper to plant at home to each registered family. As summer approaches we are planning Summer RE online and await the Board’s decision about the possibility of online RE in the fall. We are grateful that we had almost a full year of in-person RE and wonder what the new RE year will bring.

All the program reports included in this document correspond to areas of responsibility that fulfill UUCA’s values and mission. Each staff member summarized their areas of focus. RE Coordinator, Kim Collins: YRUU, OWL, Childcare, Non-Wednesday Thing adult programs. RE Coordinator, Jen Johnson: Spirit Play, CoA, Neighboring Faiths, Elementary, Teacher Training.

Representatives of the various Justice Ministry action groups and Faith Development spiritual deepening groups also submitted their annual reports. As I compile all these documents I recognize and am grateful for all the volunteers who make our faith development and justice programs possible. Thank you!

MULTIGENERATIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT

The Wednesday Thing

Planning Team: **John Bloomer, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Linda Topp, Rev. Claudia Jiménez**

NOTE: Special thank you to outgoing members **Winslow Tuttle, Rev. Jeff Jones, Elizabeth Schell,** and **Kim Collins** and to our hosting team: **Winslow Tuttle, Tobias Van Buren, Bob and Jane Hite, Kim Collins**

This year we continued regular programs: TED Talks, Peacemakers, Parents Supporting Parents, and the Odyssey. The Odyssey presentation was modified to become an interview with **Gina Phairas** as the vehicle for the sharing of a UUCA elder's life story. New programs included the *Darkening the Doorways* book discussion facilitated by the Anti-Racism Immigration Action Group (formerly the Recommitting to Black Lives Matter action group), sessions to inform congregants about UU experiences at The Mountain and General Assembly and Transition Talks with Board President **Ryan Williams**.

Our experimentation in building multigenerational community during Wednesday Thing continued this year with intentional activities such as drumming, fiber friends knitting circle, storytelling, spiritual experiences, and Zumba sessions geared toward families. The planning team continued efforts to recruit hosts for the pre-Vespers supper and **Elizabeth Schell** volunteered to recruit Vespers leaders. Despite our efforts, our goals of greater multigenerational engagement and volunteers to host meals were not successful. Furthermore, attendance numbers continued to fluctuate as they have done in the previous two years. The Parents Supporting Parent group was disbanded due to lack of attendance. We are grateful to **Jill Preyer** for facilitating this group.

The planning team discussed the value and importance of a midweek worship/faith development opportunity. The challenge we faced was the investment of staff time and resources when attendance was low. We decided to continue the experiment with a twist: discontinue meals and offer only two programs: one multigenerational, one adult-focused. When the pandemic hit, we were experimenting with this new approach. I took Vespers online via Zoom. We average 16 attendees per session. We have had numerous volunteer Vespers leaders, Music Director Les Downs provides music, and features such as virtual breakout rooms

and using the chat function to share joys and sorrows help create a greater sense of connection. Online Vespers will continue into the summer to maintain connection while our building is closed.

Whole Church Worship

This year there were nine whole-church worship services including the holiday pageant directed by Sandra Goodson and two services led by YRUU and Coming of Age youth. Every Sunday there was a Time for All Ages that corresponded to the worship theme. This year Worship Associates and others were invited to offer the story. I shared resources and support as needed. One of my goals has been to create more opportunities for having diverse voices engage in worship.

After the pandemic, the first recorded whole church service was the Flower Communion. I used two hymns recorded by one of our families and invited the congregation to share selfies of themselves with a favorite flower to create a PowerPoint shared during the service. As we continue online worship, every service has the opportunity to be “whole church.” RE staff and I have reached out to families inviting them to participate by being readers, chalice lighters, or offering the Time for All Ages. Music Director Les Downs has also reached out to families to record hymns for worship. We are seeing increased family participation now that recording components is an option.

UUCA Gathering at the Mountain

Planning Team: Kristi Miller, convenor, Larry Wheeler, Nancy Heath, Sarah Hargrove, Anna Martin, Mariah Wright, Cecil Bennett, Myrtle Staples, Colleen Finegan and Adam Griffith

Submitted by Kristi Miller

Vision: The purpose of the UUCA Gathering at the Mountain is to foster intergenerational relationships, to appreciate nature in a uniquely UU setting, and to have fun.

Approximately 140 congregants attended the 7th annual UUCA Gathering at the Mountain on October 11-13, 2019. Rev. Ward was in attendance all weekend. For the first time we had a family trivia night on Friday, and the fire-pit was up and running for the first time in a few years due to good weather. Workshops included *Soul Collaging* with **Nancy Bragg**, *Tie Dye* with **Colleen Finegan**, a teen/adult workshop with Bob Fox, and a writing workshop with local author, **Bob Wilson**. There was music throughout the weekend thanks to the Sandburgers. We had a talent show, a costume contest, several hikes, arts and crafts for all, labyrinth walks, and a garden tour. The weather was (relatively) warm and sunny, which was a relief to all of us! In addition, we had paid child-care workers in attendance for the first time.

The committee reviewed evaluations, debriefed, and planned for 2020 on March 8. Changes for 2020 include plans for a more thorough online evaluation system, “getting to know you” bingo, vegetarian breakfast, recording Larry Wheeler’s History presentation, and asking youth for input into the schedule: **Katie, Brent** and **Faith** were mentioned. Post-COVID-19, the committee is on holding pattern until we learn if it will be possible to gather safely in the fall.

CHILDREN & YOUTH FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kim Collins and Jen Johnson, Religious Education coordinators

RE Council Members: **Kay Aler-Maida, Jennifer Gorman, Amy Moore, Margaret McAlister**

First, some numbers:

We had 81 families register for religious education with a total of 131 children and youth.

Our average attendance for regular RE Sundays from September 8 through March 1 was 94 total (74 children and youth and 20 adults).

Our highest attendance in this same time period was Sunday, September 22 with a total of 126, including 102 children and youth and 24 adults. Our lowest attendance was on Sunday, January 5 with a total of 72, including 48 children and youth and 24 adults.

Beginning Sunday, March 22, all RE was moved to digital platforms. Coming of Age, Neighboring Faiths, and Spirit Play met regularly on most Sundays. YRUU and a group of 3rd-6th kids met on alternating weeks. I have calculated the average attendance during this time using data from Sundays when 3 or more RE classes met. Our average attendance for those Sundays from March 22 through May 17 is 38 including 22 children and youth and 16 adults.

Teacher Training

Every August we host RE teacher training, inviting 50-60 volunteers to learn and discuss how to lead in Religious Education at UUCA. We enjoy this time to meet, reconnect, hear the “wisdom of the room,” prepare, and share excitement of the upcoming RE year. Last August we were fortunate to welcome UUA’s Southern Region staff member and Faith Development Specialist Nancy Combs-Morgan. She co-led our training, discussing relationship building, inclusivity and multiculturalism, covenant, childhood development, and more.

All Ages Faith Development - 9:15am

We offer one RE class at 9:15am and invite kids of all ages to participate.

We changed our model for the early service RE program this year, recruiting a four- person volunteer teaching team. We used a UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum, [Love Surrounds Us](#), to explore the seven UU Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, and neighborhood. Like the majority of our classes at 11:15am, a curriculum provided a structure and lesson plan to guide the leaders and minimized the need to invent a plan of their own each Sunday.

The team members were mostly new volunteers to RE and not coincidentally, all parents of the young attendees. It provided an opportunity for these families to form a stronger connection through both time spent together and navigating the joys and challenges of leading the mostly 5-8 year-old group. Appreciation goes to volunteers leading the charge: **Noah Hall, Allison Hardesty, Maggie Reynolds-Poist, and James Rumbaugh.**

Our new structure—curriculum + volunteer-led (vs. staff-led, theme-based RE in recent years)—was mostly a positive change. Choosing an established curriculum saved staff time and will likely continue once we return to “normal,” in-person classes. However, the change of having a volunteer-led team has a significant trade-off for this group. Because Kim and Jen were less integrally involved, which was attended by many of our youngest UUCA or visitor families, there was a gap in reaching and nurturing these families. This can be a beautiful yet tenuous time in the life of a child and family new to UUCA. The consistent presence that staff provides builds a more immediate and far-reaching impact, especially with young children. Something to consider for next year is a hybrid model of volunteer led with staff assistance.

Grade Level Children & Youth Faith Development Programs - 11:15-12:30

Each program is facilitated by a four-person volunteer team that coordinates lessons with staff support. Teacher training and planning time occur late August each year.

Spirit Play (K-2nd Grades)

This has been a staple RE program at UUCA for many years with a foundation of important stories. This engaging model utilizes story baskets to both show and hear the story from a trained storyteller. We again offered Spirit Play to our Kindergarten-2nd graders at 11:15, including an opening circle, joys and sorrows candles ritual, story, and center activity (the contemplation room, art or movement). As with most of our RE program, volunteers were key to the success of Spirit Play: trained storytellers and center leaders execute much of the Sunday plan. At least one staff member was always present for consistency of this young group and typically led the opening circle.

Our Spirit Play volunteer base often dwindles as the year progresses and this year was no different. We hosted a Spirit Play training in January to spark interest, enthusiasm, and commitment. Co-led by volunteers Anna Olsen, Ann McLellan, Will Jernigan and (staff) Jen, we welcomed a core of 10 new and veteran volunteers. A storyteller (only) training was held the year before but with expanded vision and goals for this Spirit Play training, we included center leaders as well. We received positive and helpful feedback, and all learned something new by being there. The Spirit Play-specific training is something to repeat in future years.

New baskets! Staff chose some new books that reflect a wider cultural lens to incorporate into Spirit Play. Two of our experienced storytellers wrote story scripts and curated items to make them into Spirit Play story baskets; these were wonderful additions to our existing selection. Thank you, **Jennifer Oversmith** and **Nancy Perna**!

Spirit Play is supported by many hearts, minds and hands but special thanks to frequent volunteers **Juliana Austin, Anna Martin, Kristi Miller** and **Nancy Perna**.

Elementary (3rd -6th Grades)

We had two classes at 11:15 to cover this age group. Both used *Tapestry of Faith* curricula as the basis for their lessons.

Due to the number of kids anticipated in classes, we added 3rd graders to our “regular” grade level classes whereas in the past, they have been a part of Spirit Play. 3rd-4th graders used [Toolbox of Faith](#) to learn what tools Unitarian Universalism offers them and could often be heard chanting, “Pump, pump, pump it up! Pump that UU spirit up!” at the end of class. The teachers shifted to providing online resources for families to do at home once the class stopped meeting in person. **Wendy Fletcher, Jennifer Gorman, Katherine Murphy** and **Mariah Wright** comprised the brave teaching team (they gave these kids hammers and sandpaper in class!).

The 5th-6th grade class was a big one (22 registered kids!) and was superbly led by **Mame Fleming, Cliff** and **Laura Hall, Melissa Murphy**, plus **Tobias Van Buren**, who stepped in later in the fall to round out the team. They explored some big questions in search of their own truth and understanding through the [Riddle and Mystery](#) *Tapestry of Faith* curriculum. The teachers shifted to providing lesson links for families to do at home once the class stopped meeting in person.

Neighboring Faiths- (7-9th Grades)

This enriching and fundamental class is based on learning about and experiencing different world religions and draws from a few of our UU sources, namely “Wisdom from the world's

religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life” and “Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.” Neighboring Faiths gives the participants perspective when navigating both their community with largely Christian roots and a world that respects many faith traditions. This class is designed to support both the knowledge and the **experience** of a variety of religions. Normally, the lesson pattern includes a first introductory “grounding” week in a particular faith, followed later by a visit and a recap/debrief, all the while relating it to Unitarian Universalism. They were able to visit at least 5 houses of worship this year before the “COVID pivot” and welcomed 3 guest speakers via Zoom after that as they continued to meet “live” online most Sundays. Kudos to this dedicated teaching team: **Kay Aler-Maida, Lach Franquemont, Jon Miles, and Bill and Kari Williams.**

*Note: 9th graders who are not in Coming of Age can opt to join Neighboring Faiths or YRUU.

Coming of Age-CoA (9th grade)

This program requires a big investment of time and resources. Youth enroll to participate the previous spring or summer and they, along with their families, are asked if they are committed to the program schedule. Along with the usual Sunday class time, several additional events are important and meaningful parts of the CoA experience, including two ceremonies; three retreats; monthly mentor/mentee meetings; a youth conference; credo rehearsal; plus the extra meetings, tasks, and energy for trip planning and fundraising...and normally a summer trip! This is all to support the youth as they explore and define what their individual beliefs are, what faith and Unitarian Universalism means to them, and what nourishes their spirit. Oh, and then putting that “credo” down on paper and saying it out loud to their (supportive) home congregation! A big year indeed, and a UU rite of passage.

This year, six 9th graders (all young women) took this brave journey and delivered their credos in a recorded worship service May 17. Guiding and supporting them were 4 committed facilitators (**Tom House, Brett Johnson, Kimberly Mason, and Gina Phairas**), their awesome mentors (UUCA members **Nora Carpenter, Rev. Terry Davis, Iris Hardin, Lisa Horak, Paula Massey, Kelly Wedell**, plus stellar mentor coordinator **Mike Horak**), and their families. Most of the year hummed along with all of the normal fun and challenge it usually does until a couple of big bumps in the road - some personal and some we all experienced. But these amazing people—**all** of them, young and less young—forged ahead, re-routing without GPS, and made it to their destination safely and on time. They unfortunately missed out on some of those very special events, but we plan to celebrate the year to honor this year’s Coming of Age cohort properly when we can. Their UU College of Social Justice trip to West Virginia was also suspended, but we are committed to coordinating a trip/experience when we have a better

picture of our future, as it is another special part of the CoA program that we don't want the youth to miss.

Despite the resources it requires, Coming of Age is a monumental program for what it allows these youth AND all of their supporters to do and learn. This program provides a unique opportunity for youth to gain an adult ally outside of their usual network of support. It is said that kids need five special adults in their lives outside of their parents to thrive. This—their UU congregation—is a great place to find and foster that important relationship. And this bond isn't one-sided; the adults involved in this program are strengthening their connections and deepening their own faiths, too! And for those congregants who (this year) viewed the recent Credo Service, did it make you reflect on your own faith and beliefs? Bonus: the Soup Sundays and “Big Event” dinner and entertainment the Coming of Age families host as fundraisers are great traditions and opportunities for multigenerational community-building. We are grateful for the congregations participation and generosity!

Last year's Coming of Age trip

Because the 2019 annual report was produced before last year's Coming of Age trip, here is a quick recap and quotes from the June 2019 trip: 9 teens, 4 adults, 2 vans, 7 days, 1500 miles, 3 new UU congregations, connections, service learning projects, New York, hiking, UU values, cooking pancakes at host family's home, Farm Sanctuary, conversation, animals, expanding horizons, “Fam Con,” painting a barn, Cornell University, ornithology lab, swimming, sleeping on church pews, budgeting, entomology, support.

“This trip was such a unique experience. I learned a lot of information at Farm Sanctuary that was heartbreaking but was really a wake-up call for how I can make a difference. I am really grateful to the donors for making it possible for us to go on this exciting trip!” *~youth*

“One of the best experiences of my life. A true bonding trip. The animals were cute. It made me think about becoming vegan.” *~youth*

“I know that when I thought about my children coming to UUCA, I envisioned that my kids would have a community of peers, outside of school, that shared their values and were supportive. This CoA group gave me faith that that is possible. Each of these students had different personalities and yet they have a strong bond and truly supported each other during the trip. Their connection was strong, but even got stronger through spending time together on the trip learning, working, having fun, and exploring their UU identity.” *~chaperone*

Blog post about last year's trip: <https://uuasheville.org/coming-of-age-youth-thanks-uuca/>

YRUU (10th-12th Grade)

We decided to try something different for YRUU this year. The group has struggled with cohesion for the last several years, so we hoped that the introduction of a formal curriculum (*Virtue Ethics*), along with a great team of advisors, would help give families clearer expectations and boost regular attendance. Things looked promising at the beginning of the year, but we did experience an attendance slump later in the fall, along with some feedback from a couple of members of the group that they were not enjoying the new format. We attempted to get more formal feedback via a survey, as well as inviting the kids to a special group meeting to share their ideas. We were not able to get as much feedback as we had hoped. Focus was shifted to planning for the youth-led service in January. Despite some struggles with attendance and commitment, the service was great, and the kids received lots of love from folks in the congregation. We decided to shift the focus of the group away from the curriculum in order to try and encourage more attendance. We had hoped to make it more of a small group experience, similar to a covenant group.

Since in-person gatherings were suspended in March, the YRUU group has met online with low attendance 3 times. We do plan to continue to meet over the summer while we work on a plan for the fall. We feel it is important to keep providing the opportunity for connection with their church peers, even with low attendance. We are serving the youth that need that connection. Our wonderful team of facilitators included **Steven Reines, Steve Lapointe, Sarah Hargrove, and Langdon Martin.**

Social Justice Integration

Our goal is to become more intentional about integrating opportunities for learning through service and participation in social justice action. This year we incorporated lessons leading to the MLK, Jr. March and Rally with time to process the experience the following Sunday after the event: Every 11:15 RE class from UUCA was represented at the march! There were kids from every class - Spirit Play through YRUU! However, there were not enough children in each class to justify an entire follow-up session as planned.

One of the highlights was a session and art project for all age groups in partnership with BeLoved Asheville. Three BeLoved staff/volunteers facilitated the session. The goal was to discuss intersectionality between homelessness and racism and introduce the *Beloved Tiny Village Project* to our youth.

Our Whole Lives

Our OWL program continued to be successful and robust this year, until it was interrupted by the COVID-19 crisis. We offered 7th/8th grade OWL for a mix of UUCA and community students, led by our excellent, OWL-trained facilitator team of **Shawn Landreth, Sarah Kirkpatrick, and Deb Turner**. We faced a bit of a speed bump at the beginning of the year when our 4th planned facilitator was not able to continue. **Dan Phairas, Nancy Perna**, and LREC Kim Collins stepped in to fill out the schedule and continue to support this important program. Many thanks to Dan and Nancy! Our program was suspended in March and was not able to be moved online. Direction from the OWL program office at the UUA is that the program is not suitable for online learning for a variety of reasons. We did provide parents with some resources via email so that they could continue their child's sexuality education at home.

We also offered 4th/5th grade OWL in the winter and were able to get through 6 of the 10 sessions before having to cancel the rest of the class due to COVID-19. **Mame Fleming, Joy McConnell**, and Kim Collins all had a great time as the teaching team for this fabulous group of kids. Rev. Claudia Jiménez, who is a trained OWL facilitator, stepped in and co-led two sessions. Parents were sent a list of resources and books when the class was suspended.

Childcare at UUCA

Our goal at UUCA is to provide quality, loving, professional childcare for all church services, gatherings, and meetings. This year was more challenging than most. We lost 2 of our long-time providers in the fall due to moves. We hired two more people to replace them. In early winter, we lost our two new folks, as well as another long-time provider, again due to moves or changes in life circumstances. We were able to hire another person who started in February, and another person who was due to begin working for us in March but was not able to start due to the COVID-19 emergency closure of our building. Throughout these challenges, we were still able to provide quality care, though on a smaller scale. Our nursery room was closed and combined with our Pre-K class for several months. We were blessed to have some volunteers help out, as well as RE staff when needed on Sunday mornings. Childcare was still available at The Wednesday Thing, as well as at some other regular meetings held on campus. Since the pandemic began, we have not had any childcare as all on campus events and meetings have been moved online.

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Much of our adult education in 2019-20 took place during The Wednesday Thing. Some of our regular offerings that happened each month included the Parents Supporting Parents group, as

well as Peacemakers, which has continued to meet online once the church building was closed in early March.

There were several one-off events including a presentation from MOMS Demand Action about gun violence, two different presentations from our Earth Community Circle, a Chalice Design Talk with **Jerry McLellan** and **Chris van Wandelen**, and a UU the Vote session with **Melissa Murphy**.

In the fall we offered a 4-session book discussion group on the book *Darkening the Doorways* by Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed. Multigenerational experiences including storytelling with local storyteller **David Novak**, dance with Lisa Zahiya, drumming with **Will Jernigan**, spiritual practices with **Nancy Bragg**, and fiber crafts hosted by the Fiber Friends group.

UUCA also offered several additional adult religious education opportunities outlined below.

Peace Education Program Sept 3 - Nov 5 - 10 sessions

The [Peace Education Program](#) helps participants explore the possibility of personal peace and discover their own inner resources - tools for living, such as inner strength, choice, appreciation, and hope. The curriculum uses 10 videos, each focusing on a particular theme: Peace, Appreciation, Inner Strength, Self-Awareness, Clarity, Understanding, Dignity, Choice, Hope, and Contentment. This class was initiated and facilitated by UUCA member **Maggie Scranton**.

UU Journeys Sept 19 - Oct 10 - 4 sessions

UU Journeys: A Small Group Experience in Four Sessions. No matter how long you've been here at UUCA, you know that one of the best ways to meet new people is to share experiences with them in small groups. This four-session series is designed to create that shared experience AND provide basic information about UUCA and Unitarian Universalism.

Facilitated by **Joy McConnell**, Venny Zachritz, Rev. Mark Ward, and Rev. Claudia Jiménez

UU History Online April 2 - June 18 - 12 sessions

The UU History class used the video series, *Long Strange Trip*, by Ron Cordes. The six videos were shown using Zoom over 12 weeks. After watching about 30 minutes of video each week, we discussed what surprised us, and we enjoyed making connections between our history and Unitarian Universalism today. Most importantly, we celebrated the men and women who sacrificed a lot in the cause of religious freedom.

Facilitated by Rev. Jeff Jones

Owning Your Religious Past (formerly The Haunting Church) Online – April 13 - May 4 – 4 sessions

This revised UUA curriculum renamed “Owning Your Religious Past” provides an opportunity to use art, journaling, and discussion to explore individual religious experiences. It challenges participants to reflect on what they value from their spiritual journey, what they can leave behind and what their current needs and practices are.

Facilitated by Rev. Claudia Jiménez.

Small Group Ministry

An important component of Adult Faith Development at UUCA is Small Group Ministry. The goal of Small Group Ministry at UUCA is foster connection and spiritual deepening in a small group setting. These groups include Covenant Groups, the Buddhist Fellowship, Peacemakers and CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans). All of these groups are led by UUCA members who maintain communication with our Minister of Faith Development. UUCA provides gathering space for spiritual deepening groups. Post COVID-19, these groups started meeting online. I am grateful for the leadership provided by those who lead these groups. Their names are on the reports that follow. One of our lay leaders, **Paula Massey**, is leaving us this summer. We are grateful for her leadership and commitment to Faith Development and Justice work at UUCA. She will be missed.

Covenant Groups

Submitted by Coordinators **Paula Massey** and **Iris Hardin**

There are different types of covenant groups at UUCA that meet with the intention of engaging with monthly worship themes and/or connecting with each other more deeply. As of May 2020, we have 10 groups that meet either once or twice monthly.

There is also a Men’s Breakfast Group with a long history at UUCA that is not formally under the umbrella of Small Group Ministry. However, it meets participants’ needs for connection and spiritual deepening. We often recommend men looking for small group connections to this Men’s Breakfast Group.

We continue to introduce covenant groups at new member classes and lunches and typically generate more interest than we can accommodate in our existing groups. This is the best kind of problem to have! This year, we started the River and Reflections Covenant Groups, which formed with the goal of gathering until the fall. By adding groups with an intention to meet and discuss our monthly worship themes for a calendar year, we hope we can provide opportunities for more of our members and friends to experience small groups. As always, when space

becomes available in UUCA's long-standing groups, those facilitators let us know so that we can fill them with people on the waiting list.

The surprising challenge of this year has been shifting from the natural intimacy of in-person meetings to the newfound-connection we are creating in Zoom gatherings. Facilitators report that their groups are getting the hang of this, with some of us embracing the technology more happily than others! We are still figuring this out, of course.

Future work will focus on attending to the health and well-being of our facilitators and groups as we continue to meet virtually, assessing our needs for additional groups, and training for facilitators.

CUUPS - Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, Blue Ridge Spirit Chapter

Spirit Council: **Nanette Manhart, Sherry Lundquist, Susan Foster, Randy Sullivan, Mary Ann Somervill.**

Submitted by **Mary Ann Somervill.**

Blue Ridge Spirit CUUPS continues to grow and prosper. Our seasonal rituals on the Wheel of the Year have been well-received. Attendance still varies with more popular rituals drawing up to 50 participants and smaller rituals attracting fewer than 20.

We added a new member to our Spirit Council in June. Randy Sullivan has been a part of our chapter nearly from its inception and has taken an active role in a number of our rituals. We held a small ritual with Spirit Council members to welcome him into this leadership role.

The Spirit Council meets monthly as we plan our rituals and consider other possible events. In August, we had a gathering we called "CUUPS and Cakes." Spirit Council members provided dessert and beverages. We invited participants to consider what they would like to see from CUUPS in addition to rituals. They thought more awareness from UUCA would be helpful. Other ideas included having rituals outdoors when possible and working with UUCA on environmental concerns.

In response to the suggestion of making the congregation more aware of us, we are tabling every Sunday during coffee hour, and we have a small piece of the Faith Development bulletin board in Sandburg Hall. Working on environmental issues was tabled.

We coordinated with Mother Grove to plan a Magical Yard Sale, a time to sell our gently-used ritual tools, books, garments, etc. It was designed as a service project with proceeds going to Helpmate, a nonprofit that provides domestic violence services. Unfortunately, the event was

scheduled just as the church was closed due to the coronavirus and had to be cancelled. Our planned Ostara ritual in March was also cancelled. During the period of sheltering in place, we created a Beltane ritual for Zoom. We were pleased with our first virtual ritual, and the 15 participants seemed to be as well.

In addition to rituals and other events, our continuing involvement with UUCA includes presentations for RE classes, leading occasional vespers services for the Wednesday Thing, and participating in Sunday services, as well as working with Mother Grove and the wider community.

Peacemakers

Submitted by **Bruce Larson** on behalf of the participants of Peacemakers.

Peacemakers meets the second Wednesday of every month “To explore peace and the way of peace so we might practice and promote peace in all of our relations.” Its members are those who gather. It usually meets in 21 Edwin Place from 7:00 to 8:15 pm. In 2020 it had its first ZOOM meeting in April due to the pandemic.

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 13, 2017.

Peacemakers is represented at monthly meetings of the Justice Ministry Council, which supports UUCA action groups. The Council provides spiritual grounding, education opportunities, and facilitates communication with the congregation.

On Wednesday, April 22, 2020, Peacemakers held its first virtual gathering of *Peacemaking at a Distance*. It will continue so long as UUCA is not open for in-person meetings, perhaps beyond. It provides an opportunity for more action-oriented discussions.

Information about Peacemakers is communicated through the UUCA *Weekly eNews*, inserts in the Order of Service, and a monthly email, “The Month Begins,” by distribution list; the list has 83 addresses and is maintained continuously.

During the twelve months covered by this report, Peacemakers met thirteen times. The thirteenth time was the inaugural *Peacemaking at a Distance*.

- Read and discussed “[Ten Veteran Organizers on the Key to Effective Activism.](#)” May.

- Discussed the summary of “What’s Next? for Peacemakers. June.
- Viewed and discussed the documentary “Inside Peace.” July.
- Viewed and discussed the 2019 “[Ware Lecture](#)” given by Richard Blanco. August.
- Viewed and discussed the documentary “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero.” September.
- Hosted representatives of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Sanctuary. October.
- Discussed “Electoral Justice: What is it? How does it relate to peace? November.
- Read stories from [A Peace of My Mind: American Stories](#). December.
- Viewed and discussed the 2019 [Nobel Peace Prize Lecture](#) by Abiy Ahmed. January.
- Read and discussed [An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States](#). February-April.
- Held the inaugural gathering of *Peacemaking at a Distance* exploring the sixth principle with Rev. Ward. April.

57 individuals participated in Peacemakers activities during the 12 months covered by this report, up from 33 in the prior year. Average attendance was 12, up from 8 in the prior year.

At the April 2019 meeting of Peacemakers to identify “What’s next?” there was a clearly expressed desire for more action during the upcoming year. Indeed, there was more action during the year, as well as some additional programming. The programming involved the presentation of a ten-week series on the Peace Education Program during fall 2019. **Maggie Scranton** brought the series to UUCA and coordinated its activities.

Much of the action of the year was undertaken under the leadership of **Martha Kiger**. She was a continuing presence at Helpmate’s Faith Action Committee meetings held at the Family Justice Center, and through it learned of the work of Buncombe County Prevention Task Force and its “Pathway to Prevention.” During May 2019, the UUCA Board of Trustees endorsed the efforts of the “Pathway” to build “a safe and caring community, free of abuse.”

Here are some additional action-oriented activities during the year:

- Community showing, with facilitated discussion by Helpmate and Our Voice, of the documentary “The Mask We Live In.” Sanctuary. April 2019.
- Presentation by Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Sanctuary. October.
- Community fundraiser for Helpmate and Our Voice by Webs Circus. Sanctuary. October.
- World Peace Day observance enabled by David Cutler with music by Richard Schulman. Sanctuary. November.
- Distribution of Helpmate Family Violence Survey. Online. March.

- Partnered with congregations in Asheville and Black Mountain to bring a four-day workshop, “Towards Right Relationship with Native Peoples,” in May 2020. Due to the pandemic, the event is being rescheduled.

Interested in peace making? Come gather with us during the upcoming year!

Buddhist Fellowship

Submitted by **Jim Steffe** and **Karen Waters**, Co-Leaders, UUCA Buddhist Fellowship

This group supports UUCA members and friends in the study, exploration, and practice of Buddhism. It provides practice sessions and a forum to consider how the Dharma may enrich Unitarian Universalism. The Fellowship embraces all forms of Buddhism (secular and traditional), as well as all lineages and practices such as Zen, Theravada, and Tibetan. The Fellowship gathers on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. Each meeting starts with a 30-minute meditation period followed by Dharma/UU sharing based on reading material distributed before the meeting.

This year we established a Google Group to facilitate better communication and message archiving. There are 48 people in the Fellowship and typically 12-15 show up when we gather.

With the appearance of COVID-19, we made a smooth transition from in-person to Zoom meetings. We also started meeting on the other Tuesdays (1st, 3rd and 5th) of the month for a brief check-in. Our thanks to **Virginia Bower** who has been leading that effort. Everyone actually seems to be doing pretty well so we are not sure how long these “extra” meetings will continue.

The Fellowship is now into its fifth year and we feel well supported by our ministers, staff and congregation.

STAFF/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Supporting staff in deepening their skills and knowledge in the area of faith development is crucial for the continual improvement of our programs. Ideally each staff person would have their own professional development budget. At UUCA, professional expenses for non-exempt staff are covered by a general staff development fund in the UUCA budget.

Both coordinators attended the Intercultural Development Inventory workshop in the fall along with other staff and board members, as well as the all staff child abuse awareness and prevention training.

Religious Education Coordinator

Submitted by Kim Collins

I was not able to attend a Renaissance Module in the spring, or General Assembly in June as I had planned. I am going to be taking the 5-week course on video and online ministry with other staff members beginning at the end of May, and I also hope to take the Philosophy of RE Renaissance Module online in July.

Religious Education Coordinator

Submitted by Jen Johnson

- ⇒ Soul Matters “Riding the Waves Together - COVID-19 Confab.” What does RE look like in these times of church closure? RE program shift discussion/ideas... May 2020
- ⇒ Webinar: Learn how to make UU Youth Safer at UU and UUA Events (UU Southern Region) - March 2020
- ⇒ Webinar: Leadership Development (UUA - Natalie Briscoe)
Nancy Combs-Morgan, UU Faith Development specialist, at our UUCA RE teacher training - August 2019
- ⇒ General Assembly: June 2019. My first GA, I attended to both enhance my professional understanding of the larger UU world and deepen my connection to the faith I represent and lead with our children and youth. I was inspired by the many sessions I attended daily, primarily choosing topics related to Faith Development for kids/youth, and conversations I had with presenters and attendees. Excited to both be exposed to wider UUA offerings as well as dig deeper into world of faith development/religious education.

Minister of Faith Development

- ⇒ RE Week (The Mountain), co-facilitated Multicultural Renaissance Module, July 8-12
- ⇒ LREDA Fall Conference, co-facilitated Multicultural Renaissance Module Nov 8-12
- ⇒ Finding Our Way Home Retreat, February 19-21 (online)
- ⇒ Courageous Faith Summit, March 9-18 (online)

- ⇒ Revolutionary Love Conference, April 24-26 (online)
- ⇒ Church-ology Book Club: met with Board President Ryan Williams and Director of Administration Linda Topp to discuss the book “*The Almost Church*” by Michael Durrall
- ⇒ *Courageous Conversations*, May 17-June 28 (online)
- ⇒ *Video Ministry Academy*, May 25-June 22 (online)
- ⇒ Minister monthly cluster meetings as time allows

JUSTICE MINISTRY

Justice Ministry Council: **Eleanor Lane** (racial justice), **Wink Zachritz** (environmental justice), **Joyce Birkenholz** (economic justice), **MaryAnn Somervill**, (LGBTQ+/gender justice), **Deb Holden** (denominational engagement), **Martha Kiger & Melissa Murphy** (faith development), **Linda Kookier** (Community Plate), **Nancy Bragg** (spiritual grounding), **Elizabeth Schell** (secretary, *Justice Ministry eNews*)

Visioning Team: **Nancy Bragg, Elizabeth Schell, Wink Zachritz**

Many of UUCA’s members are engaged in justice work on an individual basis. The goal of re-organizing and creating a council this year was an attempt to bring together justice seekers to explore opportunities for connection, communication, and partnership. I reviewed minutes and archives from before the Earth and Environmental Justice Team disbanded the previous year and invited those engaging in justice work to two organizational meetings to explore what a Justice Council at UUCA could be like. I also organized a Visioning Team to work with me to work behind the scenes to plan meetings, brainstorm activities, and provide spiritual grounding to the Council. This resulted in a Council representing the following justice areas: environmental, economic, gender/LGBTQ+ as well as faith development, Community Plate, denominational engagement, and spirituality. We meet monthly. Our goals are:

1. Facilitate connection and communication between the groups and the congregation.
2. Provide spiritual grounding and educational opportunities to inform and sustain the justice work of the congregation.
3. Create a vision for Justice Ministry aligned with the theme of “Sanctuary Everywhere.”

4. Facilitate budgeting and reporting process so there is accountability to the congregation.

One of my goals has been to cultivate emerging leadership in our group. After facilitating meetings during the first few months, I invited Council members to facilitate meetings (we develop the agenda collaboratively) and offer a brief educational program about their area of justice.

A few highlights of our work this year:

Partnered with Religious Education to promote participation in the 2020 MLK, Jr. March. The Yellow Shirt Brigade concept was launched. Congregants were invited to wear the yellow “Side with Love” t-shirt to show solidarity and witness for love. Tom Dessereau led the effort to purchase and sell t-shirts for the event. We had good congregational participation.

Joined the UUA #UUtheVote Campaign hosting the January 12 evening launch in the Sanctuary. It was followed by a justice-themed service, “From Concern to Action,” on January 19 inviting the congregation to join the campaign and fill out slips with their commitments to get out the vote. Our goal was 100 completed commitments. We had 70 commitments and 15 completions until the pandemic forced us to close our buildings in March. We were able to host two workshops: *Voting Essentials* on January 29, and *Engaging Voters* on February 11 facilitated by **Melissa Murphy**. Melissa curates an updated Google document linked to the Justice Ministry page with suggestions for advocacy that can be done safely from home. Thank you, Melissa!

The Justice Council was interested in pursuing a partnership with the UU Justice Ministry of North Carolina. They have dynamic new leadership. Nancy Bragg and I contacted them. As a result, we are participating in partnership with them and six other UU congregations in NC in the Reclaim our Vote Project. The project’s aim is to reach members of marginalized communities in various southern states who have been victims of voter suppression. Another justice-themed sermon, “The Great Transition,” was the vehicle for inviting congregational participation in this effort. Our original goal of 20 participants to mail 20 postcards each had to be increased to 50 for a total of 1000 postcards due to the high number of responses. **Amy Moore** has agreed to coordinate this effort. Thank you, Amy!

Although we still have work to do for justice and work around dismantling white supremacy culture at the personal and societal level, I am very pleased with the work of the Justice Council. We are building relationships among ourselves and exploring ways to support each other as well as engage the congregation. Post-COVID, we have been meeting online. We miss

two of our members, **Melissa Murphy** and **Elizabeth Schell**, whose work and family responsibilities shifted when we had to shelter-in-place. We are grateful for their work on the Council.

NOTE: Melissa continues to update the Google doc, but is unable to attend Zoom meetings.

Below is the compilation of reports from the various groups represented in the council.

Anti-Racism and Immigrant Justice Action Group

Submitted by Eleanor Lane

Members of Group: **Eleanor Lane, Carol Buffum, Elizabeth Schell, Mary Alm, Nancy Heath, Katie Winchell, Mary Ellen Brown, Joy McConnell, Michael Beech**

Dedicated to dismantling racism in ourselves, our community, and our country through education, supporting local and national efforts toward racial and immigrant equity and justice, and working toward systemic change in racist and xenophobic structures.

Activities in 2019-20:

- Prepared for BLUU Community Plate Collection in September with publicity, video, handouts, and materials for the social justice table and bulletin board in Sandburg Hall.
- Supported September 14 community symposium, “Closing the Opportunity Gap: Best Practices for Black Children Thriving in School,” through hosting at UUCA, volunteering, donation, and childcare. Symposium featured WNC African-American education scholars and had a broad impact in the community; more than 100 people attended. UUCA Coordinator and volunteer-extraordinaire was **Eleanor Lane**.
- Prepared program, procured and distributed books, and facilitated book discussions of Mark Morrison-Reed’s *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism* during The Wednesday Thing 10/2 and 16, 11/6 and 20.
- Organized UUCA tickets for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Annual Prayer Breakfast.
- Planned and presented Vespers based on year-long work on Layla Saad’s intensive exploration of *Me and White Supremacy*.
- Provided facilitation and support for Dismantling White Supremacy group meeting two Fridays each month.
- Provided Sunday service’s “Faith In Action” presentation by one member about being an ESL tutor for Literacy Council of Buncombe County; resulted in 30 UUs expressing interest in volunteering.

- Participated in report on Faith Communities Organizing for Sanctuary trip to Stewart Detention Center, SPLC, and El Refugio.
- Trip to Montgomery to visit National Memorial for Peace canceled due to the Coronavirus-19 pandemic.
- Members participated in community groups: Citizen Police Advisory Committee; Motherhead; Marvelous Math Club; Co-Thinkk; sanctuary and immigration support; Literacy Council of Buncombe County; Asheville City Schools Foundation Board; Homework Diner; Faith 4 Justice Asheville; and Remembrance Project, bringing monuments of local lynchings from the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL, to our community.

Community Plate

Submitted by Linda Kooiker

Team: Eleanor Lane, Rusty Bryant, Donna Robinson, Brenda Robinson, Nancy Miller Green, Laurel Jernigan, Carolyn Fitz, Linda Kooiker, chair; Rev. Claudia Jimenez staff liaison.

NOTE: Lori Vose was part of the team before she began a new full-time job. We thank her for her time with our team.

UUCA’s Community Plate program supports organizations that provide services, advocacy, or direct action that reflect our UU principles and values. This year we revised our guidelines for choosing recipients to clarify that our donations will support organizations whose leadership (administration, staff, and board members) includes members of the community being served. We felt this guideline reflected UUCA's equity focus.

For the church year 2019-20 our congregation distributed a total of \$19,845 to nine organizations:

Ministers' Discretionary Fund (UUCA)	\$1985
Green Opportunities	\$1410
Black Lives of UU	\$2583
Asheville Buncombe Land Trust	\$2960
Worthy Now Prison Ministry	\$2791
UNCA Food Equity Initiative	\$1449
Mel Hetland Scholarship	\$2718
Children First	\$2132
The Mountain Learning & Retreat Center	\$1818

Because this is an interactive program between our congregation and these organizations, Community Plate collections have been suspended since March and may not resume until we can meet in the Sanctuary and invite representatives of the organization to be present. When this report was written the committee was exploring alternative ways to meet and engage possible recipients during the social-distancing phase of COVID-19.

Earth Community Circle (ECC) Annual Report

Submitted by Walter (Wink) Zachritz (Chair)

This was another active year for the Earth Community Circle with the ongoing operation of the solar energy array on the roof of Sandburg Hall and installation of LED lighting in Sandburg Hall. The 32-kW, 105-solar panel system began generating power in April 2019 and has generated 37.5 MWh of power since July 1, 2019. The daily output averaged 115.39 kWh per day. This is the amount of power necessary to power 12,378 average (inefficient) American homes for an hour.

The ECC held monthly meetings throughout the year and more recently by Zoom during the ongoing pandemic. Because of the pandemic and subsequent closure of UUCA, several planned events were canceled including the Climate Action Fair and the workdays with GreenWorks at the Hill Crest apartment orchard site. The Climate Action Fair, organized by **Kate Jerome** and **Susan Steffe**, was to be held on our campus in March and had over 15 community participants committed to the fair. These events will be rescheduled as soon as conditions allow.

UUCA and ECC member **Dan Clere** accepted the Green Solar Congregation Award for UUCA on November 9, 2019 from the Sierra Club of North Carolina Western North Carolina (WENOCA) Group. Additional members who led that project include **Bob Roepnack**, **John McGrann**, and **John Bates**.

Wink Zachritz and **Grace Curry** successfully completed the application for Green Sanctuary Reaccreditation with the UUA. The submitted application was approved by the UUA in September 2019 for the first stage of the process. This initiative includes three focus areas: Environmental Justice, Sustainable Landscapes, and Alternative Transportation, all of which are underway and are projected to be completed in the next two years.

Sunita Patterson served as the ECC's liaison to the Creation Care Alliance as we continue to work to have a greater impact on the local community. A workshop offered to Alliance members was held in September 2019 for Cool Communities to promote healthy and livable communities by advocating urban heat island mitigation using sustainable cost-effective

strategies. Rev. Claudia Jiménez, **Sunita Patterson**, and **Sharon LeDuc** attended the Creation Care Regional Retreat February 7-8, 2020.

The September 2019 climate strikes, also known as the Global Week for Future, were a series of international strikes and protests to demand action be taken to address climate change, which took place from September 20 to 27. The strikes' key dates were September 20, which was three days before the United Nations Climate Summit, and September 27. The ECC lead a Vespers service on 9/18/19 calling people to take climate action. Many from ECC and the church attended the Climate Strike later that week on 9/20/19. These events were part of the worldwide strikes and action events. Members of the congregation and ECC participated in a local witness event to support science education.

The ECC and UUCA, notably **Ed Prestemon**, organized the UUCA Climate Forum to discuss the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act with presentations from the Citizen's Climate Lobby and the Sierra Club (WENOCA). Over 30 congregants attended via Zoom.

Ed Prestemon and **Joy McConnell** represented UUCA at "Extending Our Reach" Climate Justice Conference at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center (near Highlands, NC) August 4 – 9, 2019. The conference, offered in collaboration with the UU Ministry for Earth and the UU Green Sanctuary Program, provided information about the factors that have shaped human impacts on climate change, an analysis of how race and class intersect with climate change and environmental injustice, and how we can move forward together to address climate change and work for climate justice.

ECC members **Jodi Clere** and **Grace Curry** hosted The Wednesday Thing programs in October and January featuring the *Greta Thunberg* video in October, and *Green Sanctuary Focus Areas* in January.

Rev. Jeff Jones serves on the City of Asheville Transit Committee and is part of the ECC focus group on Alternative Transportation. The city successfully saw the roll-out of many transit improvements on January 5, 2020. It includes a couple of additional routes, improvements in on-time performance, and additional staffing for customer service and cleaning. Jeff also taught a class on public transportation at the Asheville College for Seniors.

Justice Ministry Film Night

Submitted by Charles Wussow and Iris Williams

Average monthly attendance for the year through February 2020 was approximately 40, similar to the prior year. Attendees were a mix of UUCA members and individuals from the community.

The public mailing list has grown to 300 households, somewhat larger than last year.

Public flyers are posted on community bulletin boards, however, fewer boards are appropriate, due to a growing quantity of large commercial posters, e.g. music venue schedules, etc.

Donations offset approximately 50% of screening license fees. License fees have increased somewhat compared with last year, but I am still able to negotiate discounts.

The following films were screened:

May 2019 (screened after last year's report submitted) - *The Sequel*

A look at a new thriving civilization, after the impact of climate change on the current global economy (this film was very popular!)

June - *I Am Evidence*

Tells the story of four survivors whose rape kits remained untested for years

July - *Rigged, The Voter Suppression Playbook*

September - *A Concerned Citizen*

Explores the negative impact on the environment from economic and political power

October - *Riverblue*

Explores the impact of the fashion industry manufacturing on the environment and the factory workers

November - *Right to Harm*

Explores animal factory farming impact on the environment and neighborhoods where they are located

December - *A Hard Straight*

Examines the difficulty of adapting to life "outside" after release from prison

February 2020 - *Suppressed, The Fight to Vote*

Examines voter suppression. A post-film discussion was led by the western NC representative of Democracy North Carolina

Until we begin on-site film streaming at UU, we are recommending past films of interest that may be viewed online

Room in the Inn

Submitted by Paula Massey

Coordinators are **Martha Shepard, Allison Jordon, and Paula Massey.**

Room In The Inn (RITI) is the Buncombe County interfaith homeless initiative that was organized over 15 years ago, with our own **Martha Shepard** attending the organizational meeting. UUCA, in partnership with Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, has been a founding member, and we have utilized the facilities at Grace Covenant. This past year we hosted up to 12 homeless women with at least fifty volunteers needed to provide food, transportation and overnight hosts. In November 2019 we had the challenge of extreme cold weather and were asked to take in 5 additional guests, which we did with the added help of volunteers! We hosted women this past February and are scheduled again in July but are not certain about the logistics of this occurring. Currently our women guests are staying, along with other homeless men and women, at a local hotel as of May 11, 2020. A special thanks to the many "regulars" who volunteer each time, including several of our families.

Summer Lunch Program

Submitted by Ann McLellan

Coordinators: **Ann McLellan, Judy Mattox**

UUCA has participated in this program for at least seven years, since 2013. The Summer Lunch Program, supported by Buncombe County Schools, provides free lunches to children Monday - Friday for eight weeks at low-income sites throughout the county. This year UUCA organized more than 30 volunteers to distribute lunches at four sites: Woodridge Apartments in Emma, Ridgeview trailer park in Swannanoa, Black Locust trailer park in Woodfin, and Hilltop trailer park in Candler.

This federally sponsored program helps fill the food gap for children who receive free or reduced-price lunches during the school year. The lunches are prepared at a school cafeteria

and delivered to the sites via school vans. The program provides folding tables and tents if needed for each site. Volunteers also brought children's books and sometimes play activities for the children.

Universal Rainbow Unity – URU

Submitted by Margaret McAllister

Accomplishments:

We participated in the annual Blue Ridge Pride Parade and Festival in September. Our procession grew from around 15 to around 50 as we were joined by the “Yellow Shirt (Siding with Love) Brigade” of all ages, almost all carrying wonderfully creative signs supporting gay rights. After the parade, committee members staffed a table laden with Pride buttons, stickers, UUCA brochures, and even Orders of Service for the following day, which we gave out all day. The next day, Rev. Mark led us in a Pride-themed service, describing where we as a congregation have been, where we are now, and where we need to be. We welcomed several festival attendees.

We conducted the worship portion of Wednesday Thing to honor *National Coming Out Day* in October with **Shawn Landreth** sharing his coming-out story.

We again participated in the Wednesday Thing in November to observe *Transgender Day of Remembrance*. **Shawn Landreth** and **Elizabeth Schell** led the worship focused on the intersectionality of Black Lives Matter and gay/trans rights. The service also included the reading of the names of trans people who were murdered in the last year.

We connected with the Justice Ministry Film Coordinator, **Charlie Wussow**, to run a montage of 3 short films about trans justice in March. Because of COVID-19, this has not yet happened. We met monthly with the goals of educating ourselves as well as our community ever-present. We watched educational films and shared meaningful discussions.

We faithfully staffed the Justice Ministry table when it was our turn and staffed our own URU section every Sunday, always making ourselves available to curious congregants and visitors.

Looking Ahead

We anticipate enjoying the trans-justice films at a Justice Ministry Film Night. We also look forward to presenting the Genderbread Person at a future Vespers. And we look forward to connecting and partnering with Youth OUTright as we continue to live our mission of finding ways to support our local community.

Heartfelt Gratitude...We are so grateful to our ministers, Rev. Mark Ward and Rev. Claudia Jiménez for their loving guidance and support; and to Linda Topp, Venny Zachritz, and Tish Murphy for their help and support of our activities.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

Submitted by Deb Holden

On September 22 we welcomed Rev. Mary Katherine Morn to lead our worship at UUCA. It was an excellent introduction to UUSC to members who did not know about this organization.

In November, Guest at Your Table was a success with over 30 contributors who also became Unitarian Universalist Service Committee members just by submitting any contribution. We raised over \$2,000 to help people in the US and all over the world using UUSC's grassroots partnerships to advance human rights. We hope to expand our reach to the congregation in 2020-2021.



Dr. Linda M. Topp

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 6 major areas of responsibilities: general administration, human resources, buildings & grounds, finance/accounting & fundraising, and communications. In addition, at the start of this church year I also became supervisor of the membership/

connections functions of the congregation, with 15 hours of support from our Connections Coordinator, Venny Zachritz.

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 AND COMMUNICATIONS

Much of the administrative work accomplished by your staff is done by Tish Murphy. She has responsibility for managing our database, Realm, which means she enters all giving information into the database and produces reports that are invaluable to the operations of the congregation. It's through her work that you and I know what your pledge for the year is, how much you've already paid on it and what other financial gifts you have given to the church. Tish also is the main point of contact for all telephone calls, visitors and rental inquiries. She is also responsible for producing many of the communications that you receive from UUCA, including the *Weekly* and *Worship eNews*, the orders of service and the multitude of inserts that get created over the year, and many of the "blast" emails we send out. Tish also produces a monthly print newsletter (1 page) that we send to the 20 or so remaining congregants who do not use email.

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!

Other communications responsibilities: Linda Topp usually edits the *Weekly eNews*, Venny Zachritz creates the weekly *This Loving Community*. Kim Collins is best at posting to UUCA's Facebook pages, Rev. Claudia is second-best, and Linda Topp comes in a poor third.

MEMBERSHIP

Submitted by Connections Coordinator Venetia Zachritz

Leaders: Janice May, Anna Ward, Sally Witkamp, Nancy Bragg, Paula Massey, Barbara Campbell, Bill Clontz, Meg Clontz, Gay Lambirth, Eleanor Lane, Larry Wheeler, Iris Hardin.

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.

This year a new program, outlined in our “The Path to Membership Guide,” was implemented to encourage potential new members to work on connecting with the congregation before becoming a member. Drop-in classes are offered once a month after both Sunday services and potential new members receive the “Path to Membership Guide,” have an opportunity to meet other potential new members and receive additional information on how to become connected within the congregation. Within the Guide is a checklist of suggestions on ways to participate and get connected.

At this point, potential new members can choose to have a New Member Connector (volunteer) work with them and help them get connected. Once a potential new member has completed some or all of the suggestions in the Path to Membership Guide, they are invited to attend a Membership Class, which is offered 3-4 times/year. During this event potential new members are given information on governance, leadership opportunities, faith development, and a chance to sample a small group experience.

In addition to the Path to Membership drop-in sessions and Membership Classes, the Sunday Welcome Team continues to be an integral part in welcoming newcomers. With the help of volunteer leaders, **Anna Ward**, **Janice May**, and **Sally Witkamp**, the Sunday Welcome Team is filled each week with additional volunteers that meet, greet and recognize newcomers and welcome them to service. All volunteers for this task are trained annually on how to positively connect with our newcomers.

Additional duties include organizing newcomer events; presenting one of the UU Journeys series; welcoming newcomers weekly via email; sending out the weekly *This Loving Community* (TLC) e-newsletter; annual updating of the Directory of Connections and Social Groups booklet; and alerting the Ministers about any member issues that come my way.

HUMAN RESOURCES

I don't want to say this out loud (gremlins in the universe may be paying attention), but there were no large staffing surprises in the past year. That's a first. We have a terrific staff so it's a very, very good thing when turnover is low. We did add Rev. Claudia Jiménez to our staff to function as our second minister in the place of Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper, and that transition went smoothly as all staff personalities meshed well. In order to help that process, the staff participated in an enneagram workshop near the beginning of the year. We all learned more about each others' work styles. And we finished the year with a “Start-Up Workshop” that

invited UUCA leaders to think about the roles of the ministers and the work that is expected of each one.

BUILDINGS AND 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 **Clyde Hardin, Dena Gettleman, Ian Fischer, Larry Holt, John McGrann, Tony Reed, Bob Roepnack** and **Glenn White** for applying their many skills and time to our buildings.

Each year there are substantial recurring charges to the Buildings and Grounds accounts. 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 alarm systems and fire extinguishers, monthly pest control, regular landscaping services, snow removal and gutter-cleaning which come to a total of approximately \$8,000.

Despite being afraid of bringing down the wrath of Fate, we are actually spending significantly less on the Operating Budget's Building account. Go figure. Here are the year's less-regular purchases/repairs over \$400:

Main building – 1 Edwin Place

- Foyer door repairs
- Electrical re-wiring from a short
- Sandburg Hall carpet cleaning

21 Edwin (wood)

- Flooding clean-up
- Flooding mitigation work at foundation

23 Edwin (brick)

- (none!)

The Grounds

Grounds work has been led (with a great deal of labor added) by **Nancy Herbert**, with help and support from **Bob Roepnack** and often **Ann McLellan**. With the "retirement" of Nancy Herbert, this area of the congregation's work is leaderless. Consequently, we will need to hire a contractor to do the weeding and leaf-raking and mulching that in the past has been done by volunteers. This cost is not in the budget that will be approved by the congregation at the annual meeting.

Approximately \$2,750 was spent on tree care across the campus, specifically ash trees (the ash borer has arrived).

Solar Panels and a New Roof

At last year's annual meeting the congregation voted to proceed with a plan to install solar panels on the roof of Sandburg Hall. But first we learned that we needed to replace the roof upon which the panels would be placed. (Because it was old—had nothing technically to do with the solar panels.) Well we did it!!! The 100+ panels began fully generating power in May, all paid for by the generosity of more than 100 donors. (The new roof was mostly paid for out of a surplus from last year's budget since we had a late resignation from our full-time Director of Religious Education and did not replace her in that church year.)

Memorial Garden

Submitted by Ruth Christie

Memorial Garden team: **Ruth Christie, Coordinator, Venny Zachritz, Ann Sanders Cargill, Shirley Boeheim, Phil Roudebush, Art Aaronson, and Richard Kark.**

The Memorial Garden Team planted ferns and hostas in the area between the interment bed and fence, added and maintained several large potted plants inside the Memorial Garden, fertilized and mulched the shrubs on the banks outside the fence, and watered the memorial garden and the flowered banks as needed. Newcomer **Billy Gray** has agreed to lead the team in 2019-2020.

Bob Roepnack managed a paid crew as they laid pavers for a walkway from the lower (RE) parking lot to the Memorial Garden entrance. We also purchased a new entrance sign (finally) that has our correct name (congregation instead of church—it's only been about 7 years). These projects were paid for by this year's Wish List donors.

FINANCE/ACCOUNTING & FUNDRAISING

Submitted by Wink Zachritz

Finance/Accounting

Finance Advisory Committee (FAC): **Wink Zachritz, Chair, Ann Cargill, Sammy Fong, Bob Lane, Ann Perry and Clyde Hardin.**

We have completed the conversion and update of our accounting system to a new chart of accounts. This has greatly simplified the booking of transactions.

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

We continue to use Do Good Books (owned by Christine Magnarella Ray) for bookkeeping services. The accounting system was completely converted during the year and the arrangement with Christine for accounts and audits has functioned very well.

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

The proposed budget for 2018-19 is included at the back of this report. As of this writing, the bottom line for 2018-19 looks to be well within the budget range. 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.

The Annual Budget Drive (ABD) – “Live Bravely, Give Generously”

Submitted by Wes Miller

Co-Chairs: **Will Jernigan** and **Wes Miller**. Committee members: **Iris Hardin, Clyde Hardin, Gina Phairas**, with tech help from **Dan Phairas**.

Our goal this year was to take a big shot to support our congregation at \$700,000, similar to last year’s numbers, to sustain our amazing community and work to advance the work in our own house and in the community at large. Eventually we settled on \$670,000 as a target, though our messaging rarely dwelled on that. We know people don’t make their charitable gift decisions that way.

The co-chairs and committee members had many philosophical discussions on how we could work to ground our sense of contribution not simply in terms of percentages and sound personal fiscal policy, but in the realities of how each person approaches their relationship to our amazing **COMMUNITY**.

Over and over people feel touched by their connection to this place, and how it allows them to find strength and restoration to do good in the world. Even when we were in the planning stages for this, there was so much uncertainty in the 2020 year—elections, transitioning to an interim minister, socioeconomic challenges in our greater community—that we settled on “Live Bravely, Give Generously” as our theme.

Receptions

The team was not able to replicate last year’s reception at Givens/Deerfield due to planning challenges (the common space at Givens Estates was under renovation) and logistics (requiring transportation to and from) and communication (the committee had trouble contacting right players in these two vibrant UU communities) and it was decided to plan for a reception with for Givens/Deerfield separately from our annual giving cycle. Everyone was contacted individually and wonderful feedback was received from our Givens and Deerfield members on what they would like to see in connecting to our greater community.

So, on we went to the leadership reception at St Mary's--many were invited, both high givers or time and/or money, but the turnout was not as robust as previous years. However, like previous years, the mixing of different folks who share their time, talent, and treasure was enjoyed by all.

Will & Wesley put on a great show, with **Judy Harper** and **Iris Hardin** planning and executing the reception with help from members who will remain anonymous and our COA youth. There was music from Steve Lapointe on the keys, and The Sandburgers (our dedicated house band) joined us for other rousing music. Wesley Miller generously shared his story of how his family discovered that their budget did not reflect the values they espoused and how was now joyfully doubling his pledge in the next giving cycle. Rev. Mark Ward provided a brief "state of the congregation" review.

A rousing rendition of Iris's trivia game, "How well do you know Mark Ward?" was stiffly competitive.

Kickoff Sunday

The ABD team wheedled several folks to share their journey with UUCA. It was all about celebrating the work we do within the community. **Melanie Struzzi** shared such heartfelt words of her challenging journey and how the congregation supported and uplifted her. **Ryan Williams**, our Board President, bravely spoke of how UUCA transitioned in his mind from, "How UUCA supported me" to "How we are going to support it." Wesley was kind enough to revisit how his family budget and spirit of generosity were able to intersect, thanks in part to the assistance of a conservative Christian radio host.

And so much music was shared, including participation from our choir with "A Million Dreams" from *The Greatest Showman*.

There was also some question of costuming as Will Jernigan "suited up" for his final words, inviting everyone to understand our theme of "Live Bravely, Give Generously", perhaps hinting at things to come.

Celebration Sunday

March 8th, 2020. This day was about joy and celebration. Humor, and musicality. Celebrating our work together. To hear Rev. Mark Ward stand up and tell us how we have succeeded as a congregation in being a bright light to one another and the world outside in what have felt like dark times. And Will, Wes, and of course the man, the myth, the legend, **Dan Phairas** put on a joyful show with musical accompaniment from the Sandburgers and the UUCA choir. Their work and care shined through.

A Strange End

Our initial giving numbers were incredibly generous. And then, as you know, we've been virtual since that time, which have left this chair feeling bittersweet and with a sense that we haven't

quite finished our role of making sure our community is cared for financially. But I suppose that's a job for all of us together. And what a time to feel called to Live Bravely and Give Generously.

Statistics

And while commitments have continued to trickle in over April and May, here is where we stand: As of June 15, we have \$654,000 in commitments for 2020-21, some of which are rolled over commitments from people who have steadily paid their 19-20 pledge but have not submitted one for 20-21 despite multiple attempts at electronic communications and unreturned phone calls to some. The budget is written for \$670,000, but since everything is up in the air right now, missing by 2.5% is not worth worrying about right now.

Of 357 commitments, 145 donors contributed more than the previous year (helping to keep cost-of-living increases for our staff possible), 144 donors gave the same as last year, and 64 donors felt a need to decrease their giving (that includes people who have moved or died). The difference between the increases and the decreases was thankfully positive so our annual budget drive resulted in an increase from last year of \$28,460.

Expectations are that as the COVID-19 crisis continues payments on commitments will falter. We simply have no idea at this time. In fact, some congregations are actually seeing a rise in donations. So, we'll see as the year progresses.

Legacy Circle Committee

Submitted by Mike Horak

The Legacy Circle Committee includes **Mara Sprain, Myrtle Staples, Gene Lambirth, and Mike Horak. Beverly Cutter** served on the committee until December 2019 and now helps as a consultant.

The UUCA Legacy Circle Committee spent the last year educating and stewarding members of the congregation who have named or who have an interest in naming the church and other Unitarian Universalist entities in their estate plans. They met one-on-one with members of the congregation during the year to provide them guidance on making outright bequests, directing a percentage of a retirement plan to the church, as well as using trusts, annuities, and other strategies for estate planning. The Legacy Circle, those who have documented a planned gift, now includes 92 individual members representing 62 households. The committee maintains an updated honor scroll of those members above the fireplace in Sandburg Hall.

UUCA has now received three of four installments of the Wake Now Our Vision Collaborative Campaign Legacy Challenge. This money was offered by the Shelter Rock Congregation to members of UUCA as an incentive to document new Legacy gifts in 2018 and 2019. That match raised \$138,516.77 for UUCA. The UUCA Board of Trustees directed those funds to be used to

pay off the existing mortgage on the church with the remaining proceeds to be used to establish the Rev. Clark Olsen/Rev. Mark Ward Justice Fund.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee's bi-annual reception honoring Legacy Circle members scheduled for April 26 was cancelled. The committee will work with the Board of Trustees and church staff to reschedule the reception when it is safe to proceed.

UUCA Auction – “The Best Party in Asheville,” November 9, 2019. 5-9 PM, A-B Tech Conference Center

Submitted by Tory Schmitz

Leaders: **Tory Schmitz** and **Margaret McAlister**

Team: **Ann McLellan, Judy Galloway, Judith Kaufman, Steve Carter, Ann Cargill, Karen Morris, Robin Loew, Deb Holden, Jim Gamble, Christine Van Wandelen, Sally Witkamp, Ann Perry, Marta Reese**

The Auction Team continued our goals of hosting a gala evening event, encouraging creative offerings of activities, dinners, concerts, and parties, and providing opportunities for connection for congregants throughout the year. This year the gala was at a new venue, at A-B Tech, which was very satisfactory, with a larger space and much better kitchen facilities. Unfortunately, college regulations prevented us from using the Coming of Age youth to help out. Also, we experienced an unexpected challenge when the city declared a “boil water alert” that afternoon, and we had to purchase drinking water!

Our new venue was less expensive, and our income greater, which yielded a record-breaking net profit of over \$35,000 to support UUCA.

This year we had a seated dinner with over 200 in attendance. Ticket prices for the gala remained at \$20, with a “pay as able” option. Over 190 items were listed in the catalog for the silent and live auctions. We again used a professional auctioneer, and auction items were limited to experiences, parties, dinners, services, and gift cards. Early bidding was available in Sandburg Hall during coffee hours the two Sundays before the gala, which generated interest and allowed participation by members unable to attend the gala. Again, this year, we had live music by the UUCA “house band,” The Sandburgers, and a DJ after dinner for dancing. Free childcare was provided at UUCA, with pizza, snacks, and a magician!

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 Holiday Craft Fair leader, **Sammy Fong**, and Equal Exchange seller/organizer, **Phil Roudebush**, for adding money to our Operating Fund. Each of them have shared a great deal of

their time and talents this year to improve our bottom line—and provide great offerings to our congregants.

Acoustic Journeys had a change in leadership as Don Baker moved out to Colorado. Before leaving, he invited Clint Bernard, not a UUCA member, to act as booking agent, and **Richard Kark** to act as UUCA liaison/coordinator. During the year we held five concerts before things shut down. After paying the NC admission tax, we split the “gate” 70/30, with the artist getting the larger share. These concerts raised \$1,003.86 for UUCA.

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 \$17,000 to our income, or about 2% of our total income. Our single largest rental is the ½-time cooperative preschool that uses 21 Edwin (wood) 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 (or nearly free) include Democracy NC, Guardian ad Litem, Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare, CIMA, Narcotics Anonymous, WNC Workers Center, Beth Israel, and area UU ministers. We also provide very steep discounts for the WENOCA Chapter of Sierra club, WomanSong (rehearsing at UUCA for more than 25 years), Buncombe County Elections, Buncombe County Dept. of Human and Health Services, and Buncombe County Educator’s Association.

**PROJECTED CURRENT YEAR (19-20) AND
PROPOSED (20-21) BUDGET SUMMARIES**

INCOME		ACTUAL FINAL 2018-19	PROJECTED FINAL 2019-20	PROPOSED 2020-21
1	Fiscal & Administration Income			
2	Sustaining Support - financial commitments	589,760	620,000	670,000
3	Reserve for uncollectible pledges (6%)			(40,200)
4	New pledges, post paid pledges	28,450	30,450	21,380
5	Other Contributions	57,300	62,000	55,000
6	Distributions from both endowments (5%)	15,900	17,900	14,000
7	Other Income - Rentals, Fundraising, Short-term investment earnings, \$20K in Community Plate	102,000	100,300	93,500
8	Board-approved transfer for mortgage	9,200	12,600	-
9	Capital Development Fund (for mortgage)	4,000	-	-
	FISCAL & ADMINISTRATION TOTAL INCOME	806,610	843,250	813,680
10	EXPENSES			
11	Worship and Music			
12	Outside speakers	2,670	1,950	2,700
13	Service supplies, Worship Associates	1,230	1,000	1,400
14	Music Program	9,120	9,400	10,000
15	WORSHIP & MUSIC EXPENSE TOTAL	13,020	12,350	14,100
16				
17	Faith Development Expenses			
18	FD supplies and equipment	3,160	2,400	3,000
19	FD special programs (CoA, YRUU, adults)	1,650	1,300	3,600
20	FD volunteer vetting, training, appreciation	3,820	2,100	5,400
21	FAITH DEVELOPMENT EXPENSE TOTAL	8,630	5,800	12,000
22				
23	Congregational Care & Connections Expenses			
24	Pastoral Visitors, supplies	140	40	200
25	Membership development	1,240	2,000	2,000
26	Congregational events	7,700	2,390	6,200
27	Wednesday Thing	1,400	2,660	2,400
28	CONG. CARE & CONNECTIONS EXPENSE TOTAL	10,480	7,090	10,800
29				
30	Outreach Expenses			
31	Earth & Social Justice Ministry incl. Community Plate distributions	28,360	26,000	28,580
32	GIFT Program (4% of income)	30,800	32,139	31,750
33	UU Relations	-	1,000	1,000
34	Advertising	1,050	1,050	1,500
35	OUTREACH EXPENSE TOTAL	60,210	60,189	62,830
36				
37	Governance and Congregational Support			
38	All administrative costs, including computers and software, office-kitchen- hospitality supplies, copier leases and more!	64,080	59,731	66,970
39	Insurance (liability & workmen's comp)	10,220	9,100	12,700
40	Facilities & Equipment (includes cleaning service)	72,880	53,001	80,210
41	Mortgage Payment	13,200	9,950	-
42	Staff and Volunteer Development incl. Leadership Development Comm	27,670	15,700	24,410
43	Board Support	1,910	1,500	2,000
44	Bank/Credit Card fees for processing donations	3,420	4,280	4,200
45	Annual budget drive, Legacy Circle, non-ABD fundraising expenses	19,040	21,000	21,650
46	Transfer to Sabbatical Fund	-	-	-
47	Transfer to Capital Fund (maint. & repair above \$1,000)	15,000	30,000	10,000
48	GOVERNANCE & CONG. SUPPORT EXPENSE TOTAL	227,420	204,262	222,140
	TOTAL PROGRAM AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$ 319,760	\$ 289,691	\$ 321,870
	TOTAL PERSONNEL EXPENSES	448,600	459,600	490,950
	TOTAL EXPENSES	768,360	749,291	812,820