

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville



Annual Report 2020-2021

2020-21 Annual Report

June 2020

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Board of Trustees

Ryan Williams, President; Clyde Hardin, Vice President; Laurel Amabile, Clerk; Louise Anderson, Michael Beech, Cecil Bennett, Karen Dill, Judy Harper, Julie Stoffels

Submitted by Ryan Williams

I am going to go out on a limb and use a rarely uttered adjective to describe the work of the Board over the course of the last year....unprecedented! Just kidding. I truly apologize if that word conjures up PTSD-like sensations born from this past year's reality but honestly that is exactly what it was...unprecedented. Fortunately, just like so many of the members and groups and committees in this congregation, the Board figured out how to adapt and get things done and I am really grateful for all of the time and thought and effort that Board members put into this crazy past year!

Detailed minutes of every monthly Board meeting are available on the UUCA website. The following is a general overview of some of the key work we accomplished during this past year.

We canceled our brief June 2020 board meeting normally held after the in-person congregational Annual Meeting due to lack of quorum and the necessary shift to virtually conducting the voting and matters of business. Moving on to July, one of our first points of discussion was around the continued closure of the church and the projections around future reopening. It was clear that the church would need to stay closed and would not open until the following Summer based on UUA recommendations. A discussion regarding finances for the coming year was held and a motion was proposed and approved to leave any surplus money over 15% of the operating fund in Contingency so it could cover operating costs if and when needed. Withdrawals from that fund could be made without prior board approval until the fund dropped back down to 15% of the Operating Budget and the Board would be notified of any withdrawals in monthly reports. If the Contingency Fund was still well above 15% of the Operating budget at the time of church reopening, those monies will then be transferred to the Capital Maintenance and Repair fund. In addition, **Susan Andrews**, having been left off the ballot for LDC membership, was appointed by the Board.

In August, a conversation began concerning the protests around racial injustice and how as a congregation we might respond. These conversations included how we might make a statement in support of racial justice and how we might begin to address white supremacy structures within our own walls.

In October, **Michael Beech** shared the work of the Safety Team and noted the process for developing the draft Safety Manual and volunteered to take up leading the work of updating the manual. (Way to go Michael!!!! This has been a big job!!!) Discussion continued around the topic of addressing racial justice.

In November, Mark asked the Board to approve the process of the Administrator transferring \$50,000 funds from First Bank to our account with Mountain BizWorks. We then moved to officially create a Racial Justice Advisory Council (RJAC) to lead the work of evaluating and guiding congregational discussion and transformation with the goal of dismantling white supremacy. Five members of our congregation were appointed to this council: **Eleanor Lane, Melissa Murphy, Missy Reed, Ed Prestemon** and **Noah Hall**. It was also decided that though Rev. Claudia Jiménez would not be an official member of this Council, she would instead collaborate and help coordinate the work as part of her existing role leading social justice work at UUCA. (Thank you to Rev. Claudia and the RJAC Team for successfully tackling this crazy big job!)

In December, the Board voted to confirm **Nancy Heath** for membership to LDC to fill in for **Bob Wilson's** term which ends in June of 2021. We then proceeded to begin discussion around formulating the Board vision for the interim minister that would be hired for a 2-year period following Rev. Mark Ward's retirement.

This conversation continued in January with the participation of Rev. Keith Kron from the UUA Transitions Office. Rev. Claudia, members of the Racial Justice Advisory Council, and Linda Topp attended and participated in this discussion as well. Following Keith's discussion, the RJAC team presented an introduction and updated proposal for the work ahead of them (and us). This updated proposal included the hiring of an Accountability Partner to help support the work of the RJAC team and the UUCA congregation.

In February, the Board formally voted on RJAC's updated proposal. We then approved the official Interim Search Committee members: **Iris Hardin, Tory Schmitz, Charlie Marks,** and **Ryan Williams**, Chair and Board President before continuing a discussion facilitated by **Laurel Amabile** regarding Board vision for the Interim. Believe it or not, that conversation continued on into March as we began the discussion of establishing a Transition Committee to support the interim transition.

In April, **Clyde Hardin** presented a proposal of a [Leadership Coverage Plan](#) regarding who would serve as acting executive once Rev. Mark was retired as well as during the planned absence of Rev. Claudia for a few weeks in July. (Another big job!!! Thanks Clyde!!!). Following this discussion, Linda Topp then presented the projected budget. After some discussion about the proposed budget, the proposed budget was approved so that it could now move through the next steps in the budget process. Next, **John Bates** (Another Big Job Hero!!) presented the UUCA CAPITAL PLAN regarding the maintenance and upkeep of UUCA buildings and campus. The Board went on to adopt this Capital Facilities Assessment for summary presentation as part of the Budget Hearing and include it on the agenda for the Annual Meeting for discussion. We also went on to acknowledge that Campus Development funds will be used by the Executive to develop a UUCA "Strategic Plan for Facilities" with the help of a creative, professional consultant to help prioritize spending. This work will wait until things settle down a little after reopening, probably starting in January.

In May, we adopted the official plan described in the "UUCA Board of Trustees Action on Executive Role During Lead Minister Absence" document designating Dr. Linda Topp, UUCA's current Director of Administration as Acting Executive during the Period Without Executive for an approximately one-month period between Reverend Mark Ward's departure at the end of June and the arrival at the beginning of August of the Interim Minister. We then discussed and approved a motion to authorize the Director of Administration to spend up to \$40,000 for the purchase of audio/visual equipment needed to record and

broadcast from the UUCA Sanctuary. Finally, we finished up by reviewing last year's Annual Meeting plan and discussing issues that would be on the ballot for the 2021 vote. These issues included "Allowing Prospective New Members to Vote at the Annual Meeting" as well as approving the budget and electing leadership positions for the Board of Trustees and Leadership Development Council.

Finally, in June, the year wrapped up by.....MEETING IN PERSON AT THE CHURCH FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE LAST SPRING!!!! We ate pizza and laughed and may or may not have enjoyed a glass of wine or beer! It was fantastic! During this meeting it was officially announced that Rev. Dr. Cathy Harrington would serve as our new Interim Minister. Michael shared updated information on the work of the Safety Team. Cecil Bennett shared plans for the Retirement Party and activities that he had helped plan along with **Judy Galloway, Beverly Cutter, Jerry and Ann McLellan**, and Phil **Roudebush. Laurel, Clyde, and Ryan** then facilitated a review of the work of the year and thoughts and goals for the coming year and coming Board. We thanked **Louise Anderson, Cecil Bennett, and Judy Harper** for their dedicated service and commitment to the Board and the Church for the last three years. In addition, we all took time to acknowledge this as Rev. Mark Ward's last UUCA Board meeting and shared our gratitude for his ministry.

Of course, that's not ALL we did, but I hope it covers some highlights of our attention and action during this past year. As I stated in the beginning, detailed notes (thanks to **Laurel Amabile!!**) are available on our UUCA website and questions and concerns are always welcome at the Board email address, board@uuasheville.org. I again want to thank the Board members themselves for all of their hard work during such an incredibly disorienting and stressful and...unprecedented time! I also want to say thanks to Rev. Mark Ward, Rev. Claudia Jiménez, Dr. Linda Topp, and the members of the Racial Justice Advisory Council for all their work alongside the Board. I especially want to thank Tish Murphy for her often unseen hard work helping keep this boat stay afloat! Last but not least, thank you all for being the ship that sails on still!



James Cassara, Chair, Susan Andrew, Bill Kleiber, Natale Polinko, and Nancy Heath
Submitted by James Cassara

While it was certainly a year of continuing in uncharted territory and discovering new ways to operate, I am genuinely proud of the accomplishments of the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) and the hard work and flexibility of all involved. Since last June we have undergone substantial changes, weathered a pandemic and two of our members having to cut short their tenure, and yet we have persevered.

The LDC meets from September to June. We continued our pivot to online work and to work towards the goals we had set. As it became apparent that this new reality was not going to be short-lived, we began to plan in earnest for a year like no other. Over the winter we hosted a pair of virtual events: An article study

group (which met once) and a book club that met three times over a six-week period. Both averaged about 20 participants and were well received. Mostly they helped keep the LDC visible to the congregation and increased our presence in a time when connections were both challenging and essential.

Due to health reasons Bill Kleiber had to leave the LDC and was capably replaced by Nancy Heath, who graciously agreed to finish his term. I cannot adequately thank them both for their willingness to serve. As we moved into spring the most essential work we did came to the forefront: That of identifying the right people to join our Board of Trustees. I am hoping the membership of our congregation is as pleased with our choices as the committee is.

Our present membership consists of myself, Susan Andrew, and Natale Polinko. Joining us for the upcoming year will be Corey Gibson and Tory Schmitz. I am certain both will be excellent additions to our group. Linda Topp remains our staff liaison; I cannot overstate how helpful she has been in moving the LDC forward. I remain as chair for two more years and look to continue and grow our presence at UUCA. As we move out of the pandemic and into a new phase of an interim minister and the changes that lie ahead, I feel confident the Leadership Development Committee will continue to play an often quiet but essential role in shaping our Beloved Community.



Iris Hardin, Charlie Marks, Tory Schmitz, and Ryan Williams

Submitted by Tory Schmitz

The Interim Minister Search Committee began work in January 2021, after a start in January 2020 that was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Rev. Mark Ward's gracious and generous decision to delay his retirement. The members of this small but mighty team were Ryan Williams, Iris Hardin, Charlie Marks, and Tory Schmitz. Our work included writing a comprehensive packet describing our congregation and our community. Seven ministers expressed interest in being considered for our two-year interim minister position. We held interviews over Zoom with five of these, then narrowed our selection to our top three. We had the luxury of having three excellent candidates, each with many strong skills and qualities, who could guide us through the interim period and prepare us to be in the best position to call our next settled minister. After a structured ranking and matching process, we were pleased to welcome Rev. Dr. Cathy Harrington as our interim minister!



Rev. Mark P. Ward

Ministry Overview

So, where to begin? We have just about run out of metaphors to describe the impact of this year of the COVID pandemic in our congregation. But the best way I can think to begin this report is by borrowing a phrase from US Sen. Elizabeth Warren: We Persisted!

In a year when every system was disrupted, every staff member and volunteer leader pushed to the limit, our congregants separated from each other's company, we at UUCA not only gutted it out, we actually thrived.

Weekly Sunday worship continued and, while we struggled, analytics from our Web site show that on average the number of viewers to our online worship roughly approximately the numbers of people who attended in-person worship before the pandemic. Mid-week Vespers shifted to the Zoom format and carried on. So, did adult programming, justice ministry, covenant and spirituality groups: even religious education.

As we plan hopefully for reopening in the fall, it's worth taking a moment to look back with a little pride at what we actually accomplished and acknowledge that it gives us cause for hope in the future.

Sunday Worship

You'll read summaries of different ministries from the folks leading that work. For myself, let me begin with worship. Resigning ourselves to the reality that for the next year the main event of our congregational life – weekly Sunday worship – would be shifted from our beautiful Sanctuary to online, we got to work. **Minister of Faith Development Claudia Jiménez, Music Director Les Downs** and I worked at figuring out how to prepare and present worship in a video format. **Director of Administration Linda Topp** recruited our sound techs **Jason Smith** and **Steven Reines** to shift their work from sound production to video editing and presentation, and we recruited **Jen Bennett**, a local expert on special software that works with Zoom, to help us navigate the many mysteries of live Zoom presentations.

We experimented with both recorded and live Zoom worship, and after gaining our sea legs a bit, we settled on a combination of both recorded services and live Zoom. I tended to favor the recorded services, which gave us time to prepare and to hone what we would present in advance of Sunday. Rev. Claudia, meanwhile, enjoyed the immediacy of Zoom services.

Unlike in past years when we tended to bring in guests to provide some break for worship staff, there was no slowing down of worship over the summer. Topics for summer worship included:

- “The Meaning of Life,” from me on recently published work from psychologist Viktor Frankl
- “Spiritual, Religious, Neither?,” a Zoom service from Rev. Claudia and members of an adult class using the “Haunting Church” curriculum
- Streamed Sunday worship from a virtual UUA General Assembly to help us connect with our larger denomination.
- “What’s Democracy For?” from UUCA member Rev. Sally Beth Shore
- “Living in Storyland,” which was a partnership between me and UUCA member and storyteller David Novak.
- “We Remember” from me on the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima
- “It Takes Practice,” a Zoom service from UU musician Matt Meyer
- “The New Normal” by guest minister and former UUCA Associate Minister Lisa Bovee-Kemper, on the adaptive challenges of new technology
- “Creative Circles” by worship associate Jane Bramham, celebrating our creative spirit
- A Zoom Multigenerational Water Service led by Rev. Claudia
- And “Fear Itself,” from me, inviting us to take fear out of the driver’s seat.

By September it was plain that the rapid growth of the pandemic would prevent us from meeting in-person any time soon. So, we declared that we would commit ourselves to virtual worship for the remainder of the 2020-21 worship year. Here were topics from our fall season:

We kicked off the fall season with a Zoom ingathering service that I led, entitled, “We Are,” that used a recording of Ysaye Barnwell’s song sung by the 2020 UUA General Assembly choir, inviting us to reflect on who we were in these challenging times. UUCA members participating in the service were invited to respond to the questions: Who are you & What do you need from the congregation? Speakers included: **Billy Gray, Ariel Shoemaker-Hammond, Ben Fleming, Nick Phairas, Louise Anderson, Mara Sprain, Sophia Williams, and Michael Beech.**

Other topics for the fall season included:

- “Here for You” from me, our annual service on forgiveness
- “Mutual Liberation” from the Rev. Scott Neely, minister of the UU Church of Spartanburg, S.C., on the ultimate goal of racial reconciliation.
- “Here and Gone” from me, on how we come to terms with the fact of impermanence.
- “On Second Thought” from me on uncertainty as one of the unavoidable shoals of life.
- “I Hear You” from me on how we respond to the toxic politics of our time.
- “The Call to Revolutionary Love,” a Zoom service led by Rev. Claudia, centered on the work of Valerie Kaur.
- “Rising From Our Grief” a Zoom service from me, about how we recover a sense of the common good as we anticipate a divisive election.
- “What’s Next” a Zoom service from me, inviting us to look to a hopeful future where love wins.
- “What is an Anti-Racist Congregation?” a Zoom service from Rev. Claudia inviting us to consider what it means to be fully committed to anti-racism.

- “Moving Toward Gratitude” from me on how gratitude is the balm for weary souls.
- “Gaia, Mother Earth and the Oneness of Everything,” a service of song and celebration from UU musician Jim Scott.
- “The Meaning of Hope” from me that raised up the work of our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.
- “What’s Water” from me, using a graduation address from the writer David Foster Wallace that invites us to attend to the present moment.
- “At Peace with Mystery” from me, which invited us to embrace the dark and mystery on the longest night of the year

In place of our traditional practice of dual Christmas Eve services at 4 and 9pm we substituted a single Zoom Christmas Eve service that included Christmas stories from the lives of our members, including **Adam Griffith, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Michelle** and **Steven Reines, Susan Andrew, Dan Phairas, and Charlie Marks**. I told a story from my brother Scott and Rev. Claudia told the story of “The Night Before Christmas” in a mixture of Spanish and English. Plus, **Music Director Les Downs** arranged a special recorded performance of Christmas carols, including his own playing and work by guest musicians fiddler Finn Magill, harpist Sue Richards, and singer Olanna Goudeau.

We closed the year with a Zoom service on “Rumi: A Poet for Our Times” from a guest minister, the Rev. Mellen Kennedy.

During the remainder of the church year, which was the first part of the calendar year 2021, I invited us to consider how progressive religion flourishes through a series of six services centered on chapters of the book, *A House for Hope*, by the Rev. Rebecca Parker, one-time president of Starr King School for the Ministry, and the Rev. John Buehrens, one-time UUA president. The book offered the metaphor of a house to represent the different dimensions of theology confronting us, moving from The Garden to The Sheltering Walls, The Roof, the Foundation, The Welcoming Rooms and The Threshold.

Other service topics included:

- “Imagine” from me on how we meet the challenges of the new year
- “Creating Beloved Community” a Zoom service from Rev. Claudia on the changes demanded of us to move to the ideal of Beloved Community.
- “Were Art Meets Science” from me, where we considered how poetry gives us a unique perspective on the teachings of science. The service included personal reflections on poems about science from four UUCA members: **Charlie Marks, Susan Andrew, Dan Phairas, and Sharon Van Dyke**.
- “Interrogating History: Who Was Rosa Parks?” a Zoom service from Rev. Claudia, on how this icon’s life informs our activism today.
- Two services from me on the Black theologian Howard Thurman, intitled “Encountering Howard Thurman” and “Encountering Thurman’s Jesus.”
- “Public Theology: The Writings of Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz,” a Zoom service by Rev. Claudia on this historic Mexican theologian
- “This Little Light of Mine,” from me, on the wide influence of this historical Civil Rights hymn.

- “i thank you god” from me on this powerful poem from ee cummings, that has had a big influence on my family.
- “Earth Day,” a live Zoom celebration from Rev. Claudia, with reflections from **Kate Jerome and Dan Clere**.
- “A Tree Telling of Orpheus” from me, performing this Denise Levertov poem and holding up Orpheus as a classical figure of transformation.
- “Savoring and Serving Life” A Framework for Healing & Wholeness” from guest minister the Rev. Mariela Perez Simon
- “A Faith Development Celebration” from Rev. Claudia
- “Replacing Me with We” from guest minister the Rev. Neal Jones

As usual, we plan to close the year with a Music Sunday, but this time one that will be recorded. Following it up will be my final service with UUCA on June 13.

For 17 years, the worship life of this congregation has been at the center of my ministry with you, and it has been an extraordinary privilege to have been charged to lead it. More than anything, I think, it was the opportunity to lead worship that drew me to ministry. I have loved the discipline of creating this unique weekly event in the life of this congregation, week after week, year after year – blending words, music, ritual, and ceremony into an experience that invites each of us to explore the elusive truths that speak to the center of meaning and worth in our lives. Because ours is not a finished gospel to be preached but a journey we each navigate, our focus ranges far, sometimes to challenging territory, but the covenant we affirm points us to the grace that we find in community: the awakening, the consolation, the joy that we experience in each other’s company.

And so, it’s important for me to acknowledge that while I have been charged to lead our worship, it is not and never has been a one-person show. I am grateful to have worked with so many wise and creative people to make worship happen.

I think particularly of my colleagues in ministry here who, while also charged with other work in our congregation, were partners in creating worship: **The Rev. Sarah York, The Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper**, and now **The Rev. Claudia Jimenez**. Each brought their own gifts to this work, but their contributions strongly shaped our worship life. I especially want to thank Rev. Claudia for her creativity in worship this past year, pushing us to take the lemons of technological change and turn them into the lemonade of vital and engaging ministry.

Also, music has been central to our worship life, touching our hearts and lifting our spirits. When worship works best it is a synergy of words and music that carries us to another place, that awakens and changes us in the deepest ways. In my 17 years here, this congregation has been blessed with accomplished musical professionals serving as Music Director, who it has been a joy to work with: **Lenora Thom, Milt Crotts, Melody McGarrahan** and **Les Downs**. I particularly want to thank Les for his creativity, flexibility and professionalism in a year that took a burgeoning and successful music program at UUCA and turned it upside down. Suddenly deprived of a choir, no longer able to support congregational singing, and needing to wrangle a technology that wasn’t especially friendly to congregational music, Les experimented to find the right combination of

broadcast equipment to deliver the best sound and recruited both local and distant musicians to fill in both as hymn singers and soloists. The result was an innovative and truly inspired music program.

Worship Associates

Back in 2008 I created our Worship Associate program as a way to recruit help in producing worship but also to add diverse voices to widen the circle of our worship experience. Honestly, I count that move as one of the best things I did in my time at UUCA. I set up the program so that Worship Associates would serve not just as liturgists to help make worship happen but real participants who brought their own thoughts and perspectives, their own stories to our gathered life together. How rich those contributions have been! It has been such a joy to work with them all.

This past year the Worship Associate crew has included **Susan Andrew, Jane Bramham, James Cassara, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Adam Griffith, Laurel Jernigan, Charlie Marks, Dan Phairas, Michelle Reines, and Carol Taylor.**

And since this is my last year, I want to take the prerogative of listing all UUCAers who have served as Worship Associate since the program started. I hope this list gives you a sense of the amazing diversity of folks who have taken part, including both adult Worship Associates and youth Worship Associates.

Additional adult Worship Associates include: **Juli Altschul, Louise Anderson, Juliana Austin, Linda Bair, Mary Boudreau, Karin Eckert, Lisa Forehand, Jennifer Gorman, Monika Gross, Nancy Heath, Melissa Himelein, Ron Marable, Pat Morell, Stan Nachman, T.S. Pennington, Arthur Poultney, Joy Christi Przeworski, Virginia Ramig, DiAnna Ritola, Elizabeth Schell, John Stoffels, Frank Valenti, Sharon Van Dyke, and Bob Wilson.**

Youth Worship Associates have included: **Morgan Cobb, Boheme Dessereau, Ronan Geoffrey, Isabel Horak, Destin Newfont, Olivia Patterson, Isabel Steinke, Olivia Steinke and Bill Williamson.**

In general, it needs to be said how well our staff and volunteer leaders stayed in the game and kept everything running. That isn't to say that we all didn't get testy at times or that we're not a little fried at the end of this exhausting year. But, hey, we stuck it through.

Staff and Volunteers

I especially want to thank **Director of Administration Linda Topp**, who held down the fort on many levels. She led efforts to help us reformat worship online while also leading the congregation's response to COVID, doing everything from ordering hand sanitizer to drawing up gathering guidelines. Along the way she applied for and secured a PPP loan for some \$90,000 to support the congregation. Now she finds herself leading plans to refit our Sanctuary to make it possible to livestream worship when we return to in-person worship and to upgrade our HVAC system to assure our space is safe. Thank you, Linda, for your amazing service to this congregation.

I'm also grateful to the many volunteer lay leaders who have stuck with us through this trying year, including our diligent Board of Trustees. But I want to take a moment to call out **Board President Ryan Williams**. Not only has he had to help the congregation navigate this rocky pandemic while also leading a search committee to bring in our Interim Minister, but he has also negotiated the crazy demands of an elementary school

teacher. I am truly in awe of how he has juggled all of this while staying engaged and committed. Ryan, I know that this has been a struggle at times, but you stuck it out, and I am so grateful. We are lucky to have had your leadership at this challenging time.

Pastoral Care Ministry

I want to close with a mention of our Pastoral Care Ministry. At a time of turmoil and loss, it is important that we stay in touch and attend to each other. I am grateful for the compassionate and skillful dedication of those who have served as Pastoral Visitors for at least some part of this last year: **Karin Eckert, Jill Preyer, Myrtle Staples, Carol Taylor, Christine Van Wandelen, and Dale Wachowiak**. But when there is so much hurt and disruption, the work of care and concern is spread widely. Early in this past year when it became clear how significant the disruption would be, **Connections Coordinator Venny Zachritz** recruited dozens of UUCAers to call fellow members just to check in and find out if we could help. Volunteers passed on contacts for people who asked for follow-ups. I am so grateful for all of you who took part in that generous gesture. Amid the atomizing that comes from a pandemic like this, you have helped us stay connected. For those of us who received calls, even if we didn't need help, it felt good to get the call to know that someone cared. Thank you!

Rites of Passage

In 17 years of ministry, I've had the privilege and pleasure to watch families form and grow. I've had the unique opportunity to officiate at weddings, dedications and memorial services in this community, watching the webs of love that we weave deepen and grow.

Among the members with us now, I was grateful to have officiated at the marriages of **Shirley Tenney and Paul Merriken; Renate Schuchardt and Russ Lee; Michele and Greg Gregory; Brenda Robinson and Larry Rodgers; Ralph Jones and Susan Pike; Barbara Brownsmith and Dennis Campbell; Bonnie Hable and Maurice Stone; Ryan Williams and Will Smith; Bob Wilson and Beth Gage; Carol Taylor and Betty Mack; Laura Palermo and David Maida; Hannah Epperson and Michael Schuman**.

But perhaps my favorite ceremony has been the dedication of children in our church community. It is amazing now to look at these names and see among them young women or men who are graduating high school and heading out into the world. Among those whose dedications I have performed in chronological order are: **Thayer Allen Dykas, Derek Michael Edwards, Athena Polinko Murray and Bergen Polinko Muray; Liam Donald Orr; Harry & Thomas Smith; Zachary Stanley; Trinity Lane Wedell; Ella and Elijah Doe; Otis McNett Walton Thach; Max Carlo Maida; Eliot, Miles and Edison Kimmel; Natalie and Madeline Wright; Henry Hitchcock; Samuel Fleming; Arthur Lain Schell; Jordan David Novak; Max and Thomas Masson; Sofia Athena Williams; Maia Elaine Mazurek; Milana Carpenter; Elizabeth Kent Mason; Eliot Rainier Smith-Williams; Brent, Nicole, Riley and Trenton Miller; Lucille Sophia Martin; Solaris May Clere and Banyan River Clere; Garek Scott Carpenter and Zander James Carpenter; Bix Archer Pennington and Kit Tamsin Pennington; Isaiah Hansen; Orion Burem Demuth; Lya Eleanor Carpenter; Luca Philip Hill and Vivian Marie Hill; Simon Alexander Griffith and Mia Vivian Griffith**.

We celebrate the cycle of life here, grateful for the love that unites two people in a pledge of the covenant of marriage and ready to pledge ourselves to the flourishing of children brought to our community. And we take

time to mourn and remember our dead, those who for a time were part of this community who remain vivid in our memories even if no longer with us.

For this year now past, we remember **Donna Burton, Elizabeth DuMez, Jan Knees, Ann Lewis, Gerry McNabb, Margaret Moodie, Eunice Nichols, Don Pfister, and Ray Strickland.**

Memorials are one of the most important rituals we conduct, providing space to celebrate the life and mourn the death of those who have been part of our community. In my time here, I have officiated at the memorials of the following people, listed in chronological order: **Christopher Job Parrish, Francis Scovill, Randall Thompson, Murray Asch, Robert W. Habel, Cecilia Pastenak, William Chalveras, Nancy Rupper, Eunice Cox, Ann Ringler, Bill Nichols, Alice Kahn, Rev. William Hammond, Agnes Sanborn, Bruno Reinicke, Jack Deviney, Hiram Cody, Katherine Hooks Manouzi, Melissa McClure Lindholm, Jack Hooks, Pat McGuire, Carla Schoop Walker, Harry Williamson, Lin Shumanski, Ann Rutledge, Charlotte Reed Upton, Roger Eskine, Doug Cotts, Bob Totty, Marion Elmslie, Marin Butler, Eva Jane Richter, Nancy Hanover, Cleve Mathews, Bob Potter, George Simpson, George Love, Virginia Love, Barbara Oerke, Nancy Lesko, Emily Muller, Joe Major, Joe Hahn, Grace Clarke, Jan Boyce, Elinor Artman, Cy Schelly, Marilyn Takaro, Misha Lazer, Marylee Davis, Bailey Mundy, Emmet Hayes, Taylor Hunt, Marilyn Morris, Ann MacPherson, Karl Quisenberry, Richard Harger, Marion Mathews, Louise Seidl, Jan Bretz, Don Galloway, Susan Weinerman, Jane Stearns, Clark Olsen, Pat Godbold, Eunice Nichols, Don Pfister.**

What a rich time it has been! A generation ago, a ministry of 17 years would have been only a start, maybe the halfway point for someone who had left seminary in his mid 20s. But for me, having arrived in Asheville at the age of 50, it is a good time for retirement. It means that for me this time in Asheville is my whole life in ministry in one neat package. You will have been the only church I ever served. And from my perspective I could hardly have done better.

So, I close my last report to you simply by saying thank you. Thank you for taking a chance on this middle-aged ex-journalist right out of seminary lo these many years ago. Thanks for forgiving my stumbles and mishaps, the puzzlements I had to work my way through. From where I stand now, all that matters is that I tell you that I love you and I'm proud of what we've managed to accomplish over the years, while knowing there is much growing before you still. That's as it should be. I wish you well on wherever time will take you.

Music Director

Dr. Leslie Downs

Most summers 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 summer there was no conference because of COVID-19. Instead of planning music for our choir to sing, since singing in groups had been proven to be so risky, I had to come up with a new plan to make music happen for our services. This included producing videos as well as audio recordings to be paired with slideshows. We were lucky to have music provided by some of our in-house musicians, including **Brett Johnson, Paul Moore, Will Jernigan, Sandra Goodson, Karen Mason, Michelle Reines, Steve Reines, Nick Phairas** and **Mia Phairas**. We also were very lucky to have guest artists both from our area and from far away, including Hillary Trumpler, Tabitha Judy, Chris Rosser, Finn Magill, Olanna Goudeau, Ashley Watkins, Tyrone Chambers, and Cory Schantz. Thankfully, vaccinations made it possible for us to have a quartet from the UUCA Choir sing together and make a video for our Music Sunday service.

This has indeed been a year of a different kind of collaborative worship. In addition to coordinating with our ministers, Rev. Mark Ward and Rev. Claudia Jiménez, I have also worked closely with our Director of Administration, Linda Topp, our A/V tech crew, Jason Smith, Steve Reines and Steve Carter, and our Zoom specialist, Jennifer Bennett. These collaborations have resulted in the production of excellent weekly video services and occasional Zoom services.

Minister of Faith Development

Rev. Claudia Jiménez, CRE

Major Portfolios: Faith Development, Justice Ministry

Ministry Summary

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

This has been a year of grace and gratitude. We have done a lot of experimenting and learning during this full year of online church. Old-fashioned technology like phone calls and snail mail have been important in keeping our UU community connected. Updates on social media platforms have also been important despite the ethics of using Facebook and the weariness of being so dependent on technology. This has also been a year of setting better boundaries between work and personal life and learning that creativity and compassion flourish when time is made for reflection, delight, and play. It has also been a joy to partner with congregants to craft Sunday worship services and to be a listening presence when pastoral care is needed. Many of you may have noticed that Zoom is my online platform of choice. Seeing your faces in the gallery during worship each month was a blessing!

My Committee on the Ministry has been an invaluable support this year. In July they will submit my final evaluation to the UUA Ministerial Fellowshiping Committee which should lead to full fellowship for me. That means I will be a fully “vetted” minister who has undergone a three- year evaluation process to identify my strengths, areas of growth, and theological anchors as a parish minister. I recognize that learning and self-reflection will be on-going even after this committee disbands. I am deeply grateful for the three -year commitment they made to support my ministry at UUCA. Thank you, **Barbara, Ben, Lisa, Jim, and Tobias** for sharing your time, care and insights during this process.

Overall, this third year of ministry has deepened my appreciation for the many members and friends who give of their time and talents to our UUCA family. All the committees I liaise with continued to meet online and explore how to continue their work. We may have been Zoomed out, but we got a lot of work done! My report is almost 30 pages long (yikes!) because there is so much to share about what has been happening in Faith Development and Justice Ministry at UUCA.

Our **Religious Education Coordinators, Jen Johnson** and **Kim Collins**, have done an outstanding job of connecting with families and our youngest UUs online as well as creating space for masked gatherings for

those who felt comfortable gathering. I am grateful for their attention to access and inclusion in their planning.

The Religious Education Council was nimble in shifting to support the staff's online endeavors and organize masked gatherings such as the Halloween Food Truck Event and the May Day Celebration. Each event was well attended and allowed our community to gather despite masks and physical distancing to keep each other safe. The Council also focused on teacher appreciation and monthly anti-racism conversations during our monthly Zoom meetings.

The Justice Ministry Council embraced the effort to "UU the Vote" under the leadership of **Amy Moore** and partnered with Forward Together UU NC Justice Ministry (UUNCJM) to write postcards and phone bank for the November 2020 elections. This partnership re-energized our justice efforts and brought congregants and friends together to work for justice. Amy has agreed to serve another year as liaison to the NC Justice Ministry. Thank you, Amy! It is my hope that UUCA will value this partnership and continue engaging with UUNCJM in working on issues including racial, economic, immigrant, environmental, and electoral justice.

Despite the pandemic, two new committees were formed; the Racial Justice Advisory Council to support the Board's goal of striving to become an anti-racist congregation and the Wednesday Thing Planning Team transitioned into the Adult Faith Development Planning Team (I know, such long names!) to oversee the totality of adult programs at UUCA. I am grateful for all the people who said "yes" to being a part of these committees. It is a delight to get to know so many of you through our work together. Ultimately, it is the relationships we cultivate that provide the proximity that deepens our commitment to each other as part of the UUCA family and to spiritual grounding that supports our collective commitment to social justice so that all may flourish in our community and our nation. Below are the reports submitted for all the areas I oversee, the majority submitted by chairs of committees and action groups

Children and Youth Faith Development/Religious Education

Staff: **Kim Collins** and **Jen Johnson**, **Religious Education Coordinators**

Religious Education (RE) Council Members: **Kay Aler-Maida**, **April DeLac**, **Jennifer Gorman**, **Amy Moore**, **Margaret McAlister**

Does UUCA still have children and families? YES!

Are they being served in our virtual church world? YES!

UUCA's core values of Connection, Inspiration, Compassion, and Justice drive our programming and yes, although not our preferred in-person weekly church gatherings, we did enjoy our time learning and growing together in Religious Education this year!

This year was especially challenging for Religious Education, but we worked hard to put together a program that would serve families who wanted to be involved online, as well as maintain a connection with families who couldn't commit to more time online with so much of school and work happening that way already.

In addition to our virtual RE, we offered other opportunities as well:

- “Church in a box” for at-home fun and faith development
- Socially distant youth group “masked meet-ups”
- Parent/caregiver groups and adult UU and social justice offerings online
- Time for All Ages during worship, family-led Vespers, and multigenerational services

Why does this matter again?

- Relationships! (Connection) We’re bonding peers and multigenerational connections in a supportive UU community.
- We still have UU values to learn, to embrace, to live. (Inspiration)
- We need to harness this moment to gather, to learn, to strive to be bolder, to act, individually and collectively, for justice in our city, country and our world. (Justice)
- People still need our love – within our own UUCA community and reaching far beyond our walls. Kids and youth need to both receive and give love and support. (Compassion)
- Nurturing the spirits of our kids, teens, and their parents. (Inspiration)
- Playful and calming spiritual engagement with ritual elements. (Inspiration)
- A sacred place your kids can call home now and throughout their whole lives. (Connection)

We are grateful for the volunteers who directly supported our RE families this year! Thanks especially to our leaders and assistants: **Laurel Stolte, Jennifer Oversmith, Anna Martin, Kay Aler Maida, Wendy Fletcher, Gina Phairas, Jon Miles, Nancy Perna, Jennifer Gorman, Iris Hardin, Brett Johnson, Langdon Martin, and Kimberly Mason.** And to the awesome RE Council: **April DeLac, Jennifer Gorman, Margaret McAllister, Kay Aler Maida, and Amy Moore.**

The Numbers:

We had 78 families register for Religious Education in 2020-21 with a total of 108 individual registrants.

It is important to note that we asked families to register even if they were not planning to participate in online RE. We wanted to make sure that families would stay connected by receiving emails about our online offerings, as well as our occasional outdoor, in-person gatherings for different age groups. Registration also served as our guide for sending out Church in a Box deliveries.

Our average attendance for online RE was 22 people, including children/youth and adults (volunteers and parents). The breakdown of that is 16 children/youth and 6 adults/parents.

On most Sundays, only 2 of our 4 groups met. Each group met approximately 2 times per month.

Childcare

Submitted by Kim Collins

Childcare was not offered at UUCA in 2020-21 due to the pandemic. We plan to resume childcare in September 2021 with two providers for every service on Sundays. We will determine the need for expanded childcare once more groups are meeting in person at UUCA.

PreK-3rd Grade group: Spirit Play

Submitted by Jen Johnson

Our youngest RE group this year included PreK-3rd graders. Even though our preschool children are normally under the care of the childcare staff, we decided it was important to serve these families with the young elementary age group so they, too, had access to UU programming and connections. We welcomed that full age range regularly most Sundays. For this younger age group, that included some parents as well, who attended alongside their kids or on the sidelines.

Our “menu” for Spirit Play included a full course meal! We set the table each week with an opening circle, shared an appetizer with our joys and sorrows candle ritual, then moved into the entree: a story, conversation, art, or whatever the "main course" of the day was, based on the season’s harvest (the monthly congregational theme). We also enjoyed sides and dessert, which may have included movement, art, mindfulness, games, music, or other nourishment to support the entree. For cleanup and dishes, (usually) staff sent home a backpack of goodies (a family email) to recap the lesson and support a fully stocked cupboard for full-week faith.

It was a joy to gather to feed our spirits as we shared our rituals, moved, created art, and heard stories to ground us in our liberal religion! We explored grief, identity, gratitude, inclusivity, emotions, human hurts and repair work, mindfulness, and more. This year we more intentionally incorporated a racial justice lens to our lessons as well. We learned about how books and art can be windows and mirrors - allowing us to (mirror) see ourselves represented-or not- or (window) get a view into someone else’s world and then to (mirror again) reflect on both how we are affected by what we see in the window or mirror and how we affect that view and experience. We also imagined a better world together using Legos! You can read more in the *Anti-racism Integration in RE* section of this report.



Spirit Play is traditionally a story-based program, framing the session around a foundational and engaging tale. While we used some of those and other stories in our PreK-3rd grade group this year, we did not follow that model strictly. (Also, solo meaningful work/free play doesn’t translate well on Zoom.) Nor did we lean on a UUA curriculum like we did for our 9:15 “all ages” group last year. Instead, we utilized the Soul Matters theme packets as inspiration for our sessions. Having no set curriculum allowed for creativity and flexibility; it was fulfilling to “meet the moment” and align with the monthly congregational theme for a more cohesive

churchwide message. The ideas and resources from our Soul Matters theme packets were very helpful. However, in part because of the misaligned age range (ours being different from their packet age groups), this also created a need to curate a plan for each session. Staff did the majority of the lesson curation/planning, with great collaboration from our volunteer leaders. Some quality sessions were developed and executed with chances for participants to share and create as well. One final gathering was IN PERSON (the only one for this

age group); we had a celebration and optional family picnic at nearby Grove Park in May. Note: we buried a time capsule in our playground for future UUCA children to find! I wonder when that will be discovered...

Deep gratitude goes to creative, kind, and engaging volunteer leaders **Laurel Stolte** and **Jennifer Oversmith**, as well as assistants **Jennifer Gorman** and **Nancy Perna**.

In Spirit Play, we are growing compassionate, thoughtful, equity-minded UUs — and they inspire us! They are a sweet group who like to share what is in their hearts and minds! In a recent session we asked the children what they enjoyed this year: "Happy seeing all of your faces" (that comment was from a 2nd grader!), "Building a better world with blocks," and "Church in a Box" were some of the comments.

Bonus this year: because many parents were "in the room where it (RE) happens," the whole family grew their UU faith together! Many parents listened in on these Zoom sessions providing a better opportunity for "taking it home" -- good for the whole family and full-week faith development! And sometimes parents appreciated their children having quality UU "plugged in" time while they enjoyed a Sunday morning moment on their own. :)

Possibly because virtual school was typical for many children this year, I was encouraged by the participation and engagement in Zoom RE. We had consistent attendance much of the year with an average 15+ kids - and more including the parents sitting alongside their children.

Challenge: Because of the wider range of ages and developmental stages, the lessons and activities sometimes "hit" for younger audiences more than older - or vice versa. Although this wasn't ideal, families appreciated the opportunity for their children to grow their UU faith and keep connected to the UUCA community.

I was a "boots on the ground" teacher of the group this year, too. Greater staff involvement helps foster a solid grounding for welcoming and knowing younger families in our congregation which, in turn, helps nurture their faith life at UUCA. While we love and depend on our strong and dedicated volunteers to have a vibrant religious education program, the consistent presence that staff provides, not unlike a minister, builds a more immediate and far-reaching impact, especially with our younger children and their families.

Upper Elementary (Grades 4-6)

Submitted by Kim Collins

The upper elementary group met 1-2 times per month on Zoom for sessions that explored the monthly themes using the Soul Matters materials. We kept many of the rituals that we use together in person, including a chalice lighting, check in, and Joys and Sorrows. We did a lot of learning together, using videos, readings, poems, and discussion to explore topics like the true story of the origins of thanksgiving celebrations in America and lesser known activists of the Civil Rights Movement. We also enjoyed the time together being silly and laughing and playing games like "Would you rather?" We used a lot of videos including song videos and guided meditations and they were well received. It's actually easier to do this via Zoom than it is in the classroom because of screen sharing vs. making sure all technology is working and has appropriate cords, etc. One fun activity we did was a "show and tell" of the new things that kids had learned during the pandemic.

Kids shared everything from learning a new language or learning a new instrument to the art of making miniatures.

Attendance was fairly consistent, including one participant logging on from Florida, and another from Morganton, NC who was only able to make it to RE only occasionally when it was in person. We had a fun outdoor meetup in the fall where we ate lunch together and played pandemic-safe Pictionary. We had a great time playing mini-golf at our spring in-person gathering. Parents were also welcomed to both in-person gatherings. I was the lead facilitator for the group, creating and leading most sessions. **Wendy Fletcher** and **Kay Aler-Maida** each led one session and assisted at others. **Amy Moore** also assisted with online sessions.

Junior Youth Group (Grades 7-9)

Submitted by Kim Collins

Our 7th-9th grade youth gathered 1-2 times a month on Zoom to create sacred space together. Much like the younger 4th-6th grade group, we examined social justice issues and the monthly theme. We also made sure that we had time for checking in, venting about pandemic life, and sharing our Joys and Sorrows. We learned new mindfulness strategies like deep listening and meditation to help combat the stress and isolation many of our youth were feeling during the challenges of the pandemic. We took time to discuss big issues, like the election in the fall and our relationships with friends and family. We spent one session imagining what life would be like when the pandemic is over and had a good time taking a little break from reality. We especially enjoyed contemplative time in this group, taking time to draw or write based on a prompt while listening to music.

Several members of the group and parents met up socially distanced hike in the fall. In the spring, we together for mini-golf and had a great time. The in-person events were a nice way for the youth who not participate online to catch up with their peers stay connected. Most sessions were planned and led Kim Collins. **Gina Phairas** led a session while Kim traveling as well as assisting in other sessions along **Anna Martin** and **Jon Miles**.



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YRUU (Grades 10-12)

Submitted by Jen Johnson

Our **Young Religious Unitarian Universalist** 10th-12th graders connected both through “Masked Meet-ups” and virtual hangouts (via Zoom) this year. “Always a chalice, always a check in” and some meaningful conversation and activities supported the blossoming youth group in this unique time in their lives. The approach this pandemic year was to focus mainly on connection and fun, with some spiritual support and 10% vegetables (as the advisor team lovingly called it). Following youth preferences, there was bonding and action built into many of the gatherings, as well as some staple rituals important to UU life.



Living out UUCA's core values, our teens joined Asheville Greenworks and Buncombe County Parks and Rec for two litter cleanups this year. Also, two UUCA high schoolers shared with the group about the work they were doing during election season, acting for justice at the local, state, and national level. The youth group had conversations and activities about identity, current events, and stress; they hiked, played, and competed in a friendly "UU Olympics;" and they explored congregational themes small-group ministry style. An outdoor movie night sparked a discussion about inclusivity, identity, stereotypes; a virtual snack scramble challenge was delicious, silly and energizing; and a TED talk inspired writing their own 6-word

memoirs. They wrestled with autonomy, had fun together, and also got down to business to plan and lead the annual YRUU worship service in February.

Comments from a few of the youth:

- "...The connections and friendships we have made in YRUU are perhaps more valuable than ever before....We've had zoom meetings where we've learned more about each other and have further kindled friendships through discussion, reflection, and of course, games. But we've also had the opportunity to be together in person through safe and socially distanced meet ups such as movies, hikes, Olympic Games, and community clean ups....One in-person meeting we had was a cleanup in partnership with Asheville Greenworks on Halloween day. This event consisted of picking up trash, Halloween costumes, jokes, music, and candy. Our group was able to grow closer to one another while cleaning up trash on and around Haywood Road. The experience was tons of fun and was a great example of how our group has had fun and stayed connected this year."
- "This year...YRUU has been a great way to connect with my UUCA peers. The coronavirus has seriously impacted the way we go about our days and church has given me a sense of normalcy. I'm so grateful to have gotten this opportunity to see people and make memories in person, not just online. We've been able to do things such as going a hike, have a bonfire, and watch a movie. It's been a super-fun experience!"
- "What I loved about YRUU was the person-to-person activities like the fun activities we did on the field or watching that movie and eating pizza. I liked the Zoom meeting too, but not as much as in person."

Some **new traditions** were initiated this year:

- The veteran YRUUers welcomed the newest 7 members at the beginning of the year with a special home delivery. Some of the 11th graders wrote notes and delivered those with some doughnuts (and toilet paper as a special nod to COVID) at the homes of the 10th graders on the first morning of RE in September. Especially because these grades have "lived apart" for the last 2 years in their Coming of Age cohorts, this induction to YRUU is a way to bridge them back together and institute some leadership and an encouraging welcome to the ever-evolving youth group

- In November, they baked and made care packages to send to UUCA college students. The hope is that they do it to support their former YRUU mates (who have now graduated and moved on to young adulthood...where current YRUUers will soon be) and then they'll receive those gifts in the future from their younger UU pals, remembering their formative years at UUCA with fondness.

Although they weren't physically together to do these particular traditions this year, we hope these were meaningful seeds to strengthen the connections within and beyond the high school group. We'll carry these new traditions forward into future years and look forward to developing some more.

Planning the YRUU-led worship service at the end of February required weekly sessions in January and February. Advisors shepherded the process to give a framework and support the teens more wholly this year after hearing that last year's planning was challenging for the teens and thus posed a personal barrier to participation this year. Initially just a couple of youth consistently attended these planning sessions but gradually more and more youth showed up with encouragement. Some youth wrote original reflections to share in the service, the group brainstormed and selected different parts to lead in the service, and it happened! Although some youth chose not to participate in the YRUU service this year, three positives occurred: 1) a youth thoughtfully shared concerns to enlighten staff as to where there was conflict; 2) we navigated a way to include the youth in the weekly group even if they didn't stay to work on the service and 3) we think a better structure was established this year to support youth involvement in manageable and meaningful ways. We have hopes that it will promote even more participation next year and be a positive, enriching and learning experience for all. It's not always unicorns and rainbows but being in covenant means working through the challenges to live in community together.

Planting seeds to foster **youth leadership** was a this year for YRUU. The YRUU worship service; youth to share about their activist work; asking write personal reflections for worship or the blog; the new traditions; and asking for help coordinating a cleanup were all ways of that soil. Youth leadership has numerous gains too many to list, and you're smart enough to them out. ;) It has been a thrill to see a couple growing from those seeds. We hope they eventually become like weeds - growing, multiplying, and thriving without much direct



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Perennial seeds propagate and new plants can grow into that if they choose. Whether or not they do, the garden is beautiful with many types of flowers! An overall goal of YRUU is to develop mature, developmentally appropriate, and voluntary youth involvement and leadership opportunities through fun and meaningful traditions and collaboration.

Encouraged to see greater participation this year overall, attendance was highest at the in person meet-ups. Numbers varied: between 5-10 youth + 2-3 adults/session were typical but fluctuated from 13 youth the first

session to 0 during spring break. One older youth re-engaged with YRUU after a couple year hiatus. He and four other youth “bridged” (to young adult UU life) at the end of this year.

While it’s heartening that attendance has been better than in past years (and even in a pandemic year with majority Zoom hangouts!), there are some general **challenges** with YRUU every year.

- Though the Coming of Age groups typically form a pretty solid bond in their 9th (or 10th) grade year, transitioning to a larger YRUU group can take time and effort to bring them all together in YRUU. Only 2 meetings/month this year - and many of those via Zoom - really slowed connection this year, especially blending the grades.
- They strongly preferred to be in person; some never attended a Zoom. We usually aimed for one in person meet-up and one virtual session each month but took a hiatus on masked meet-ups because of the holidays and COVID infection spike, turning to virtual-only sessions for 3-4 months.
- Academics, extracurriculars, and employment - nothing new. But more demands for higher commitment to school and select interests or jobs always compete with church and thus calls for something equally appealing. The youth may actually have engaged more highly with the youth group due to the fact that it was something happening this year!
- Communication with teens. As they gain independence, teens are allowed and accept more responsibility while parents are more likely to “check out” of communications, enlisting their maturing teens to take greater responsibility for their school and extracurricular activities. That is good news - developmental progress for youth and parents alike! However, there is a mismatch in how (or if) teens and adults prefer to communicate. A complicating factor is that best safety practices veer away from sharing youth information (to other parents or adults, and even to their peers unless they do so voluntarily). We used a Remind app but will consider whether an alternative (social media, group text?) fits our safety, trackability, and staff time standards. Something to be worked out in tandem with the group early next year.
- Higher degree of kids’ autonomy - parents don’t necessarily require kids to come (like at younger ages when they all come to church together). Social connections and “fun” are a big draw to youth group.

Our amazing advisor team included **Iris Hardin, Brett Johnson, Langdon Martin, and Kimberly Mason**. Huge props to them for their flexibility, compassion, attention, fun spirits. They deftly supported and nudged when needed and were game to roll with anything thrown their way.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Submitted by Kim Collins

OWL programs for children and youth were suspended in 2020-21 due to the pandemic. Due to the nature of the program, we were unable to offer them online. We were, however, able to offer an OWL-adjacent program called Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators. The program is described by the UUA as:

Ten sessions that invite parents and caregivers to explore their role as the primary sexuality educators of their elementary through teenage children. The 90-minute sessions use a small group ministry format to engage adults in topics including Gender Identity, Relationships, Social Media, and Consent. The information and attitudes that adults share with their children—intentionally or by default—carry extraordinary power. It is a power that many adults struggle to wield effectively and confidently. Often, their own experiences, perspectives, and worries get in the way. These sessions invite parents and caregivers to find support and courage with one another.

We had a small but mighty group of parents that met 1-2 times per month to take on this important and tough work. The group worked together to explore our own attitudes and experiences and to come up with actual strategies for talking to kids and being an askable parent. I am a trained OWL facilitator and facilitated this group.

Coming of Age Program

Submitted by Jen Johnson

Due to the special rituals and events (ceremonies, retreats, etc.) and mentorship that traditionally happen in this program, we decided to suspend this class until we could host in-person gatherings more consistently.

Family Ministry

Submitted by Kim Collins

It was important to the Faith Development staff to try and meet families where they were and offer options that didn't require additional screen time. Thus, we expanded our focus on Family Ministry in 2020-21 and tried to offer several different options for doing Faith Development at home.

Church in a Box

Faith development at home! Jen and Kim worked along with several volunteers to provide this essential offering for families. We sent out boxes in the fall, winter, and spring with different themes: UU at Home, Holiday Spirit, and Activism. We provided enriching activities and materials to support families to live their UU values throughout the week (not just on Sunday)!

This program was labor-intensive, but it paid off in a big way. We had a lot of positive feedback from families about this program. The first box was used as part of the first day of programming for the youngest group - and many of them had theirs to "show and tell." We even heard back that our middle and high schoolers also enjoyed the boxes. The boxes provided an outlet for "faith at home" - for both those who were currently engaged at UUCA and those who weren't. It was another way to nurture their faith development, no matter their attendance.



Boxes included things like materials to set up an altar and chalice at home, UU activity books, bookmarks, temporary tattoos, stickers, bubbles, activity kits, multicultural crayons, colored pencils, sidewalk chalk, and coloring pages, as well as guides for families on how to use the materials. We were able to still serve the spiritual needs of our families and create ways to keep them connected to our UU faith. Kim and Jen worked together to create the concepts and supply lists and gather the supplies. We had invaluable help from several parents and other congregational volunteers putting the boxes together and delivering them all over Buncombe County and surrounding areas. We also mailed boxes to participants who lived a little further away (including out of state!)

UUCA's Church in a Box delivery this spring had a theme of justice and included activities, comic book, art materials, resources and ways families can look for the opportunities to

choose justice in their daily lives. We curated the items in the box, but also provided a list of ways that families could seek out diversity in their daily lives, even during that pandemic.

Halloween!

RE staff and the RE Council hosted an in person, Halloween event including a taco truck and a parade. Kids picked up goody bags with candy and treats and families spread out to eat picnic-style on campus. About 80 people (and a few dogs) attended.



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Ministry Blog

Before this time of mostly digital engagement, we had a good sense of how to use the Family Ministry blog we had requested be a part of our website redesign the previous year. Once we knew how important it was to provide families guidance on “how to do” faith development at home, it was natural to use this space to share with all congregants ways to connect with the monthly theme and explore our faith at home. Kim used the materials in the Soulful Home packet from Soul Matters to talk a little about the monthly theme and share curated activities like discussion questions and neighborhood scavenger hunts. The blog is an easy “bite size” way for parents and other adults to incorporate the monthly theme at home.

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Family Emails

In addition to the regular emails sent to each of our groups of families, we also sent out occasional emails to all registered families with information about what we were up to in RE, as well as events happening outside of our program that we thought our families might benefit from.

Social media

Kim worked to make sure that we are communicating as much information as possible by sharing about RE and other congregational events on our Facebook page as well as in our closed Facebook group. We also shared different resources related to the pandemic and spiritual life online.

Pastoral Care

RE staff spent more time than usual this year intentionally checking in with parents and other volunteers via phone and email to make sure folks were doing okay and linking them up with ministers and pastoral care team members whenever possible. One of the ways that we normally find out what is going on with our families is casual, in-person conversations at church. Since we couldn't do that this year, it was important for us to be intentional about checking on our families.

Resources

We made sure to share our resources, both the ones that permanently live on our website and new ones that were specific to the pandemic and other current events, with our families.

In addition to everything else listed above, we also continued to have Time for All Ages (TFAA) as a part of every service whether live or recorded, including a once-a-month TFAA from one of our Religious Education

Coordinators (Kim and Jen), as well as regular multigenerational live Zoom services designed for the whole family.

UUCA Gathering at the Mountain

Submitted by Rev. Claudia

This gathering was cancelled due to COVID. The next gathering will be October 15-17, 2021. It will be a celebratory occasion to be together in person!

Anti-Racism Integration

Submitted by Rev. Claudia

It was a purposeful goal to more intentionally integrate racial justice work into our programming this year. As our faith and our congregation work towards becoming anti-racist, we are heeding the call to do the work with our youngest members and parents so they can be prepared to continue the work both within and outside of our denomination.

Racial justice themes were integrated into our RE groups for children and youth consistently this year. Some examples of these efforts included:

- A “Bio Bags” identity exercise with a racial, gender, ability, cultural, and more justice lens to the lesson (an idea from an Equity Literacy Institute training).
- Movie night sparked conversation about identity, stereotypes, and justice.
- Building a Better World Legos activity.
- Birthday party for the late John Lewis (to frame the lesson on racial justice).
- Short film (“Ian”) and lesson crafted around his true story. A film about inclusion framed with a disability lens, we widened that to talk about gender, immigration, and racial justice that we pay attention to, care about, and work toward as UUs.
- *All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color (Bilingual Spanish)* and supporting identity exercise and conversation led by a Spirit Play parent.
- We learned about territorial acknowledgment near the Thanksgiving holiday. Territory acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism.
- Learning about lesser-known activists from the civil rights movement of the 60’s, including Georgia Gilmore who raised money for the movement by selling her home-cooked food during the 381-day Montgomery bus boycott.
- More examples are included in the group sections of this report.
- Family emails to recap the day’s lesson supports deeper exploration of the topic at home AND offers families who missed attending that day the chance to nurture faith development and grow justice work even when they couldn’t be with us. Full week faith!

Anti-racist parenting

Submitted by Kim Collins

We offered an anti-racist book study group for parents and caregivers in the summer of 2020 (6 meetings June-August), reading and discussing *Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey, and utilizing other resources and activities as well. UUCA contracted with Bianca Gregg to act as a consultant and accountability partner to the

group. She also led some body and emotional work in a couple of the sessions. There were 14 participants. **Melissa Murphy** and Rev. Mark Ward co-facilitated.

The group decided to resume this work together after the book study concluded. Monthly meetings were held and initially open to all. People were eager to continue anti-racist parenting work in community; some returned from the book study group and some new folks also joined the conversation, including some new to or non-UUCA parents. This monthly offering moved to a “closed group” in February, allowing a deeper dive and more intimate vulnerability with one another. This is real commitment from parents who already have a lot to juggle. Range of ages and stages represented includes parents of newborns to parents with young adult college students! This lens has also drawn in new-to-UUCA folks specifically interested in anti-racist parent work, thus introducing our liberal UU faith working toward justice in community.

We want to continue to offer “on ramps” to this work, so plan to begin a new drop-in group for 2021-22.

Worship Service: Celebrating Religious Education at UUCA

RE staff in partnership with Rev. Claudia coordinated this multigenerational service. Preschoolers to high schoolers (and ages in between) to parents and whole families shared their presence and words with the congregation. A time to thank this year’s RE teachers and the traditional bridging ceremony for high school seniors were also incorporated into this service.

In general, during this online church year we had many family contributions of chalice lightings, songs, readings and reflections making all of our online services truly multigenerational. Thank you to all our many contributors!

Teacher Training

Every August RE staff hosts RE teacher training, inviting 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.

We have talked for years about trying to make our teacher/volunteer training more accessible to everyone by introducing an online component so that more people could participate, and we could offer the training to folks who signed up later in the year. Well, this was the year that we made that happen! We offered a two-part program; Jen and Kim recorded videos on different topics for folks to watch ahead of time, and then we met live on Zoom to connect with each other. We discussed the topics, answered questions, and then had time for folks to break out into teams to discuss scheduling, etc. We plan to continue to offer an online training component in the future, in addition to an in-person gathering.

[Membership slides and video](#) were also created by Jen and Kim for our website and a new online membership class.

Professional Development

Kim Collins

Taking advantage of being able to attend UUA Renaissance Module Trainings online, Kim participated in and received credit for the Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module in May/June of 2020. She also

participated in several webinars offered by the UUA and other organizations on subjects like multiculturalism in the classroom and ways to continue to use online meetings and groups to be inclusive as we move towards meeting together in person again. We were able to include people who might have felt left out in the past this year, and we want to make sure that we consider what we've learned about that as we plan for the future. Kim also participated in the Video Ministry Academy in summer 2020.

Jen Johnson

Thinking "beyond the box" as I newly took on YRUU leadership this year, I benefited from some **youth ministry workshops and webinars**. Of particular note was a two-part youth ministry "studio" (Zoom webinar) early last fall with a couple of fun and thoughtful youth group leaders from the UU universe, who helped us see some COVID rainbows. That helped shape virtual hangouts to keep it fresh and appealing to youth who are already (like everyone) largely living through their devices these days. I also attended UUA-hosted community building workshops to help navigate relations and connections in (especially) youth groups; youth programming in the time of COVID from the Southern Region; and youth-related workshops at the New Day Rising conference.

Other workshops/trainings I participated in:

- New Day Rising UUA conference Feb 2021: changing white supremacy culture in your congregation. Videos, workshops, caucusing, and worship to ground and grow in the next steps in the quest for racial equity.
- Racial Justice trainings June-ongoing: Several webinars addressing a variety of racial justice topics relevant to parents and educators. The New Day Rising conference, listed above. The *Embrace Race* organization frequently hosts thought provoking and topical webinars on raising brave, informed and thoughtful children about race; I've attended four in the past year. I attended two month-long series for educators from the Equity Literacy Institute. Additionally, I participate in UUCA's anti-racist parent group.
- Child abuse training
- Peter Bowden's Video Ministry Academy (several modules last summer)

Adult Faith Development

Adult Faith Development Planning Team (AFDPT): John Bloomer, Linda Topp, Jim Steffe, Kelly Weddell, Rev. Claudia Jiménez

NOTE: Much gratitude to **Joyce Hooley-Gingrich** our notetaker and Vespers coordinator during the last year who left the committee in April.

- **The Wednesday Thing: Vespers and Programming**

Throughout this pandemic time, we have had a core group of volunteers facilitating and attending Faith Development programs. The planning team maintained its focus on Wednesday Vespers and coordinating Zoom Vespers which continued through the summer of 2020 until May of 2021 to maintain the community of 17-20 regular attendees. We offered only one program after Vespers with a different focus every Wednesday:

First Wednesday: Theme Talk. Rev. Claudia facilitated conversations using resources from the Soul Matters subscription or offering a special program such as *The Climate Crisis* hosted by Earth Community Circle (Thank you, **Ed Prestemon** and **Wink Zachritz**); UUA Small Group Discussion *Beyond*

the Partisan Divide (Thank you, Bob Gingrich!); and *Human Rights Conversation* hosted by the Denominational Affairs Action Group (Thank you **Deb Holden!**)

- Second Wednesdays: Anti-Racism Focus. We used the UUA curriculum *Building the World We Dream About* and midway switched to Anti-Racism Conversations facilitated by volunteers: **Carol Buffum, Mary Alm, Joyce Hooley Gingrich, Anna Martin, Ed Prestemon, Kay Aler-Maida.**
- Third Wednesdays: Spiritual Practices. In the fall, **Nancy Bragg** coordinated a series inviting speakers to share their spiritual practices. In the spring CUUPS offered a session on paganism, and **Jim Steffe** and Rev. Claudia facilitated a series on *Aging as a Spiritual Practice* by Lewis Richmond.
- Fourth Wednesdays: Theology Series. Rev. Claudia launched the series with the session “What is theology?” followed by sessions on Channing Theology, **Rev. Terry Davis**; Creation Theology, **Joyce Hooley Gingrich**; Religious Naturalism, Rev. Mark Ward and Mujerista Theology, Rev. Claudia.

Non-Wednesday adult offerings included a book study on *Welcoming the Unwelcome* by Pema Chodron facilitated by **Rebecca Bringle** and **Susan Steffe**. **Rev. Jeff Jones** facilitated two programs: UU History and Compassion Consciousness and Practice.

Spiritual Deepening Groups

Supporting and promoting adult faith development at UUCA is an important aspect of my ministry. It is not only children who are developing UU identity, constructing meaning, and building relationships. Adults, whether life-long UUs or new to our faith, are continually growing and questioning as they journey from young adulthood to elderhood. Our programs strive to accompany and support them on this journey. Below are reports from the various groups that gather to share spiritual practices of deep listening and community building that deepen spiritual connection.

Covenant Groups

Submitted by Coordinator Iris Hardin

There are eight Covenant Groups at UUCA that meet once or twice a month, with the intention of engaging with monthly worship themes and/or connecting with each other more deeply. This year, our groups met exclusively in Zoom space until just recently, when groups began reporting excitement over their first outdoor gatherings in over a year! This fall, we started three new Covenant Groups, with the purpose of meeting through the summer. By adding groups with an intention to meet and discuss our monthly worship themes for the course of a congregational year, we hope we can provide opportunities for more of our members to experience small groups. Several of the people who joined groups this year were new to our congregation and Asheville; being part of a small group was very helpful in forming early connections during the pandemic.

As we re-enter physical spaces together again, we are imagining how we might use our newfound comfort and skill level with Zoom to make participating in a Covenant Group easier for members and facilitators.

Buddhist Fellowship/UU Sangha

Submitted by Jim Steffe, Leader

After more than five years of activity, including 123 meetings and two weekend retreats, the Buddhist Fellowship no longer exists. Fortunately, there is an alternative group called UU Sangha which is a covenantal-

style faith development group created for those “interested in developing and strengthening their UU-Buddhism connection in the context of everyday life.”

The new group represents a shift from a discussion-oriented group to a Buddhist practice-oriented group, and from an open group to a restricted group. To join, one must accept the covenant and be a UUCA member. Members of the UU Congregation of the Swannanoa Valley have also been invited to participate. Initial plans are to meet in the evenings of the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month.

Blue Ridge Spirit Chapter of Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPS)

Submitted by MaryAnn Somervill

It has been a slow year for us, as it has been for many. We had planned a Magical Yard Sale in Sandburg Hall in cooperation with Mother Grove Goddess Temple for March 14, 2020. That was our first cancellation, and it went on from there.

Since we could not meet for rituals together, we attempted two seasonal rituals on Zoom. Creating those rituals took as much time and energy as creating in-person rituals, and the response was very poor. We determined that we would not do any additional Zoom rituals. The Spirit Council, our chapter officers, did meet together, masked and distanced, for rituals honoring the seasonal holidays on the Wheel of the Year. We met in the yards of our members. That was very rewarding. Our last ritual was Beltaine, and we gathered in a back yard in West Asheville for a ritual which included dancing a Maypole made by one of our members.

Since our inception, we have sent out a seasonal email to announce our plans for each holiday. Those emails continued, even though there were no rituals to announce. We began to add to those seasonal emails suggestions for solitary rituals and general information about each holiday. We also updated our Facebook page and communicated with other pagans in that way.

Sherry Lundquist and MaryAnn Somervill offered the vespers service on January 20, followed by the program, Spiritual Practices of Pagans. We were pleased to create a fun Beltaine ritual on May 1 with MaryAnn and Sherry and Randy Sullivan on Mayday this year for UUCA, as part of one of our outdoor gatherings. It was well attended, and the ritual seemed to be enjoyed by all who attended.

We look forward to a full schedule of seasonal rituals open to the public, as we have done in the past. We also look forward to increased involvement with our home congregation, UUCA.

Peacemakers

Below is Bruce Larson’s summary of the work of Peacemakers during his tenure 2007-2020. Martha Kiger who worked closely with him moved and there was no one to take the lead. We are grateful for Bruce’s leadership and commitment to peace.

In June 2006, the UUA General Assembly adopted “Peacemaking” as a Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI). Through a lengthy process of study, discussion, reflection, writing, and voting, it resulted in the [Creating Peace 2010 Statement of Conscience](#).

The engagement of the present UU Congregation of Asheville with the CSAI began with a forum on January 7, 2007. Two fora followed—one more in January and one in February—and the Peacemaking Potluck began in March 2007. In September 2017, the group was renamed Peacemakers, when The Wednesday Thing began, and has continued to meet monthly with few exceptions. Its final monthly gathering took place on Wednesday, November 11th of 2020.

Fourteen years of monthly engagement with peacemaking have taken place. With the exception of the period from April 2008-April 2011, careful attendance was taken throughout. During the 14 years, more than 236 individuals participated in the Peacemaking Potluck and Peacemakers (PP&P); during the last 10 years, average monthly attendance was 9.4. Clearly there has been sustained interest in peacemaking at UUCA.

Over the years, PP&P has had an educational focus, drawing upon books, papers, videos, guest speakers, and topical discussions. But that changed to a more active and community-involved orientation because of its April 2019 gathering. That led to the following activities during 2019-2020:

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

The activities of Peacemakers were affected by the pandemic. It was the last group to meet face-to-face before online gatherings began. During the 14 years just concluding—January 2007-December 2020—I have convened PP&P. That seems like enough, so I am retiring from that role. I would like to thank the 236+ participants in PP&P for their involvement and the others who thought about peacemaking over the years. You have taught me much.

Will Peacemakers, more generally peacemaking, continue on? That remains to be seen. Certainly, peace has not broken out across the world, so the possibilities are endless. My retirement is intended to create a *tabula rasa* going forward. Perhaps you are the one to begin writing upon it. I hope so. (Contact Rev. Claudia if you are interested in answering this call.)

Justice Ministry

Submitted by Rev. Claudia Jiménez

Justice Ministry Council (JMC): **Eleanor Lane** (racial justice), **Wink Zachritz** (environmental justice), **MaryAnn Somervill**, (LGBTQ+/gender justice), **Deb Holden** (denominational engagement), **Linda Kookier** (Community Plate), **Nancy Bragg** (spiritual grounding)

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

NOTE: A special thank you to outgoing members **Martha Kiger**, **Melissa Murphy**, **Elizabeth Schell**, **Joyce Birkenholz** and **Langdon Martin** who stepped in for **Melissa Murphy** for the remainder of her term.

The JMC continued to meet online this year. Engagement with UU the Vote and partnering with Forward Together UU Justice Ministry of NC were one of the highlights of our year. We also worked together to create criteria and job descriptions for community liaisons. One of our challenges has been shifting from making philanthropic donations to justice-oriented organizations to exploring meaningful ways to engage with the organizations we donate to.

For example, the Room at the Inn programming serving women living in homeless was discontinued during COVID and will not resume post-COVID. A better service delivery method was developed during the pandemic. That means we no longer have 50+ volunteers supporting that program. Our yearly donation will be removed from the JMC budget and a recommendation was made that the Community Plate, which is the philanthropy arm of UUCA, consider them as a candidate. Our focus is exploring ways to engage and build relationship with communities that are pushed to the margins and together determine what our allyship looks like.

As the Justice Ministry lead, I also participated and spoke at various justice events such as the “Count Every Vote Rally” and the Elders Vigil at the Vance Monument.

Racial Justice Advisory Council (RJAC)

I serve as the liaison for the **Racial Justice Advisory Council** tasked by the Board to assess and make recommendations for their proposed goal of UUCA becoming an anti-racist congregation. The Board funded this initiative providing the opportunity for us to work with an accountability partner, Tracey Washington, and bring workshops to UUCA as needed.

In their November 20, 2020 email to the congregation, the UUCA Board of Trustees invited all of UUCA to join together in a congregation-wide effort to further the cause of racial justice. They asked us to put our values of justice, compassion, inspiration, and connection into action by working to become an anti-racist congregation. To that end, the Board previously passed a resolution at its October meeting creating the Racial Justice Advisory Council (RJAC). I would provide support and internal accountability to the RJAC. At the November 10^t Board meeting **Noah Hall, Eleanor Lane, Melissa Murphy, Ed Prestemon** and **Missy Reed** were invited to serve on the RJAC. This amazing, committed group has been meeting twice a month since its inception. Their passion and commitment give me so much hope and delight despite the challenges of the work we are doing. Thank you, team, for saying yes to serving on the RJAC!

As part of our initial efforts, we created a glossary and adapted an assessment tool to understand current anti-racism work at UUCA. The RJAC’s ultimate goal is to create a report with our findings and recommendations that will be shared with the congregation, and finally the Board for implementation. It is important to consider what UUCA’s goal is: To become a predominantly white anti-racist congregation or to become a multi-racial anti-racist congregation? Or something else? There is no one way of doing this work. What is realistic for UUCA?

Community Plate

Submitted by Linda Kooiker

As did many of our UUCA activities, we took a hiatus for most of 2020. We began meeting by Zoom in the fall to plan for 2021. The Community Plate team consists of **Linda Kooiker**, chair, with members **Brenda Robinson, Rusty Bryant, Eleanor Lane, Nancy Miller Green, and Donna Robinson**. Rev. Claudia Jiménez is our staff liaison.

We have had a steep learning curve as we helped the recipient organizations navigate the world of recorded statements, joining after-service conversations, and more. We have updated the nomination form that appears on the UUCA website. We decided to assign Community Plate recipient organizations a two-month donation period. We had no idea how donations would roll in during the pandemic times.

UUCA is the only funder of the Mel Hetland Scholarship that is administered by the Asheville City Schools Foundation. We assigned it the months of January and February. Amazingly, donations totaled over \$5,000. Working with the foundation, we donated \$2500 to a new recipient and \$2500 to our last year's recipient to help her continue her studies.

The organization for March and April was YTL (Youth Transformed for Life). We chose them for the work they do with school-age children during this stressful time. Donations for this organization totaled over \$1000.

We continued with Institute for Preventive Healthcare and Advocacy for May and June. This organization was chosen for the work they do with marginalized people in Asheville.

We will focus on small/grassroots organizations that provide needed services in the Asheville area. As the pandemic seems to be winding down, we hope to meet in person as a committee and wish for in person services in the fall.

UU the Vote/Forward Together UU Justice Ministry of NC

Submitted by Amy Moore, Congregational Captain

[Forward Together UU Justice Ministry of NC](#) served as UUCA's state liaison to the national [UUtheVote](#) effort through the summer and fall of 2020. Over 100 UUCA members and friends participated in two [UUtheVote](#) post-carding campaigns and wrote a total of 3,000 postcards to voters in Georgia and North Carolina, providing encouragement and logistical details for ensuring access to exercising the right to vote at the polls in November 2020.

[Forward Together](#) (with partners [NC NAACP](#) and [Reclaim Our Vote](#)) hosted weekly state-wide get-out-the-vote (GOTV) phone banks to NC communities on ZOOM throughout the summer and fall, often attended by UUCA members. UUCA served as a co-host for the final Thursday night phone bank in late October.

In September, UUCA organized and hosted an online screening of the [Brave New Films' "Suppressed 2020: the Fight to Vote"](#) and was joined by guest moderator, Edward Peters, a WNC representative from [UUtheVote](#) justice partner, [Democracy NC](#). This event was open to the public and was attended by 47 participants.

UUCA recommended to Forward Together and was honored to present a \$1,000 UUtheVote grant to [Indivisible Asheville](#) in support of the organization's equity-based get-out-the-vote efforts in Western North Carolina communities.

During the summer and fall of 2020, UUCA UUtheVote leaders promoted opportunities for GOTV work with the congregation through regular email communications, newsletter blurbs, and worship announcements. Many UUCA members served as volunteers through national phone banks and letter-writing campaigns, as ballot preparers with the Board of Elections, and as poll workers and Vote Protectors with a number of justice partners throughout election season.

Several UUCA members attended sessions of the ["Summer Organizing School"](#) workshop series facilitated by national UUtheVote leaders, including Forward Together executive director, Rev. Lisa Garcia-Sampson.

UUCA UUtheVote leaders maintained a [bit.ly page](#) with up-to-date information on upcoming GOTV events, volunteering needs from our partners, policy advocacy opportunities, and general education related to the election in North Carolina. This link was regularly promoted through the UUCA newsletter, email communications with volunteers, and on UUCA Facebook pages.

Anti-Racism and Immigration Justice Annual Report

Submitted by Eleanor Lane

Special Appreciation

We express special appreciation for the vibrant and committed leadership of Rev. Claudia Jiménez, who actively reached out to our action group for inclusion in many anti-racism and immigration justice opportunities and activities within the congregation, including worship. We were greatly enriched by the resources she brought, her thought-provoking questions and perspectives and focus to our efforts.

The Anti-Racism and Immigration Justice Action Group (A-RIJAG) was active this year, fully engaging in Zoom meetings and educational activities focused on our congregation. Our members worked under Rev. Claudia Jiménez' leadership to bring anti-racism discussions and information in varied formats (Vespers, After-Vespers Conversations, Social Justice Sunday service), led and organized small groups (Dismantling White Supremacy Support Group and Me and White Supremacy Reflection Groups) and a workshop (Story Medicine for Racial Healing with Meta Commerce), brought issues (UU adoption of 8th Principle) and ideas (joining CoThinkk) to the Justice Ministry Council. Members provided recommendations of BIPOC-led organizations to Community Plate and delivered Faith-in-Action testimonials during Sunday Service (Literacy Council of Buncombe County). Members also participated in numerous other UUCA committees bringing an equity lens, and in many anti-racist and immigration justice community organizations. Four of our members serve the congregation as official UUCA community organization liaisons.

Activities

Story Medicine for Racial Healing Workshop April 2021

- Sponsored workshop, offered at no cost for congregants, presented by Meta Commerce, organizer, and two (2) additional facilitators

- 22 attendees, capacity of workshop
- Evaluations very positive.

Social Justice Sunday with Rev. Claudia Jiménez

- Participated in planning and delivering Social Justice Sunday Service on Nov. 15, 2020.

Vespers with Rev. Claudia Jiménez

- Participated in planning meetings
- July 2020 Topic: Beauty: Graffiti Art and George Floyd/Police Violence Protests
 - 28 people attended-much larger audience than previous anti-racism events;
 - Great feedback
- February 2021: Lift Every Voice and Sing/Beloved Community
- April 2021: Becoming Wise: Story and Verse.

After-Vespers Conversations: Building the World We Dream About and Anti-Racism Conversations with Rev. Claudia Jiménez

- Participated in planning for “Building A World We Dream About”
- Facilitated four (4) conversations from the above UUA curriculum
- Facilitated three (3) anti-racism conversations.

Faith-in-Action Testimonial During Sunday Service

- Focus on involvement with Literacy Council of Buncombe County
- 30 UUCA congregants signed up to be volunteers.

Dismantling White Supremacy Group

- Twice monthly meetings to support people working on dismantling white supremacy in the congregation and in the community.
- More recently, one meeting a month is unstructured with topics emerging and the second meeting adapts the Soul Matters monthly themes to anti-racism work.

Me and White Supremacy Reflection Groups

- Sponsored and participated in two (2) Me and White Supremacy Reflection Groups
- Developed an orientation for new groups.

Community Plate

- Provide recommendations for Community Plate recipients that are led by BIPOC.

Actions Brought to Justice Ministry Council (JMC)

- CoThinkk
 - Brought to Justice Ministry Council, UUCA becoming institutional member of CoThinkk
- UU 8th Principle
 - A-RIJAG endorsed the 8th Principle and brought to Justice Ministry Council for further action
- Spotlight presentation on “Anti-Blackness.”

Newcomers Meet and Greet

- Attended numerous meetings to introduce newcomers to anti-racism and immigration justice activities at UUCA.

Service to Other UUCA Committees Bringing an Equity Lens

- Justice Ministry Council
- Community Plate
- Racial Justice Advisory Council, serving as members and provided input on Racial Justice Glossary
- Earth Community Circle.

Justice Ministry Community Liaison Annual Reports

Faith Communities Organizing for Sanctuary Liaison: Katie Winchell

Faith Communities Organizing for Sanctuary (FCOS) has been meeting sporadically during the pandemic. Previously, they have hosted community meetings on immigration issues and on the Stewart Detention Center. There is currently an effort by individual congregations to support Maria & Esteban, who were hard hit by the pandemic. As there is clarity on the new administration's approach to immigration and the pandemic response improves, FCOS will probably become more active.

Faith 4 Justice Asheville Liaison: Carol Buffum

Carol Buffum, Eleanor Lane (A-RIJAG) and Rev. Claudia Jiménez are regular attendees and identify themselves as from UUCA. Rev. Mark Ward has participated in some of the actions in the past. It meets the second Thursday of the month from 9:30-11:30am. The monthly meeting is an opportunity for relationship building with other faith leaders and majority-white congregations. Also, it is an important place for faith leaders, especially clergy, to get support and sustenance in their anti-racist work (from each other and God).

There have been opportunities outside of the monthly meetings to participate in advocacy and action. Rev. Tami Forte Logan regularly “asks” participants to disseminate information about various anti-racist actions, for congregations/clergy to sign on to letters and advocate for various causes, and for some feet-on-the-ground actions (often they are asks from the Racial Justice Coalition and other networked organizations). Specific events or actions have been conveyed to Carol and Rev. Claudia throughout the month via e-mail and they have been disseminated to interested UUCA congregants in various ways.

Buncombe Community Remembrance Project Liaison: Mary Alm

Led by Dr. Joseph Fox and Oralene Simmons, the Project was launched to bring home to Buncombe County the steel monument created by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) of Montgomery, AL, memorializing three individuals who were victims of racial terror lynching in the county.

The Project’s newsletter is now produced by Ron Katz and informs subscribers of many opportunities for learning and activism related to racial justice in Asheville/Buncombe County. Ongoing education of the public is one of EJI’s expectations for a community requesting their monument.

Local historical research has been conducted to learn as much as possible about “our” three lynchings.

Asheville City and Buncombe County schools conducted the EJI Racial Justice Essay Contest for high school students this spring. Contest winners will share \$6000 in scholarship funds and read their essays during Asheville’s Juneteenth celebration.

With no public meetings, subscribing to the newsletter is the best way to stay informed and get involved; access ron@wncsocialjustice.guide and request being added to the email list.

CoThinkk Liaison: Sharon LeDuc

My year serving as UUCA/CoThinkk Liaison started in January and I attended their Winter Retreat 12:00-4:00 on January 23. CoThinkk members will read and discuss *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* edited by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor this year. I picked up and read the book in February and continue rereading assigned sections for meetings,

Starting in February I have attended 4 monthly Member Meetings, which occur 1:00-3:00 on Saturday afternoons. At the first one we discussed a column from *The New Yorker*, July 20, 2020, “Until Black Women are Free, None of Us Will Be Free” by Taylor. I also attended the Online Orientation March 13.

On March 25 I presented CoThinkk to the congregation in the Social Justice Moment (actually 3 minutes) in the worship service, announcing my role as UUCA liaison with CoThinkk to be responsible for keeping the congregation informed of ways they can support CoThinkk. CoThinkk is a social change philanthropy organization led by BIPOC, African American, and Latinx leaders that brings together change agents who care about the economic and social well-being of communities of color in Asheville and western NC. Opportunities include: personal membership; voting for community leaders, allies, and youth leaders; attend celebration of the grantees and community leaders. The website is cothinkk.org. A video (min 39) is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5gITiNcdKA

The “Calling In” event for CoThinkk was held May 19. We were encouraged to raise the awareness with BIPOC, African American & Latinx leaders for Sharing, Building, and Transferring Power Together. The event was intended to provide inclusion for all People of Color, and transparency in response to City of Asheville announcement [April 13] that CoThinkk will receive a donation of \$475,592.56. By involving the entire local community of color CoThinkk wants to anchor transparency, accountability, and collective decision-making. The “first in” model of CoThinkk allows the community to drive decision-making in a way that enables individuals and groups that are funded to amplify the collective power of our time, talent, and treasure and to serve as community wealth builders, investors, and social change philanthropists that are creating and implementing systems change. CoThinkk members, as a collective network, are one organization of a groundswell of community-led initiatives, investing in a robust ecosystem of change in our community. CoThinkk does not take community trust for granted and is explicit about commitment to collaboration and not competition. CoThinkk will continue to support organizations, groups, and leaders that are doing the heavy lifting in our neighborhoods and communities both collectively and collaboratively and centered in racial equity.”

The CoThinkk summer retreat will be July 10 and there will be a survey to collect information on member comfort level to meet in person.

UUCA is well represented at CoThinkk with a total of four (4) members, plus others who financially support the organization.

Justice Ministry Film Night

Submitted by Charles Wussow and Iris Williams

Film Night was restarted in February 2021 on Zoom after being shut down since February 2020.

Average monthly attendance for the restart was approximately 40, similar to the prior year. Attendees were a mix of UUCA members and individuals from the community. The public mailing list is still approximately 300 households, no significant change. No public flyers were posted. License fees this year have been between \$100 and \$150, unchanged compared with 2019-2020.

Donations are minimal although we always mention that attendees can go to the UU website if they wished to donate.

The following films were screened:

John Lewis: Get in the Way

2040

No Time to Waste

Far East Deep South

The films and Zoom format have been enthusiastically received. We recommend continuing this process for the balance of the year. I do not recommend meeting live at this time, even though CDC guidance has changed. There is still considerable confusion and concern about the new guidelines.

Universal Rainbow Unity

Submitted by MaryAnn Somervill

This has been a year in which our usual avenues of service have been temporarily eliminated. There was no Gay Pride Day, so we were unable to reach out to the Asheville community. UUCA has been having services online rather than on site, so we've been unable to be available during coffee hour to members and friends of our congregation to provide information and support. Our Zoom meetings are always open to the congregation and announced in the *Weekly eNews*, however face-to-face communication is preferred, particularly on potentially sensitive issues.

We celebrated Transgender Day of Remembrance in November by creating a vespers service. In that service we honored the lives of the 47 transgender or non-conforming people who died by violent means in the US

between October 1, 2019, and September 30, 2020. Most of those individuals were Black and Latinx transgender women.

Throughout most of the year, URU has met monthly. We did have a three-month hiatus, since we had no business to conduct. The focus of our meetings during this time has been mutual support. We each gave a check in of how and what we were doing. Our goal was to be there for each other however we were needed. Our most recent meeting was an outdoor gathering on the patio at UUCA, since we had all been vaccinated and there were only six of us. It was a joy to see one another in person and not on a computer screen. That meeting was a celebration.

We have talked about what we can be doing since our regular activities have been on hold due to the pandemic. We looked at particular needs within the LGBTQ community, and have identified transgender needs as primary. We will lead a vespers service in the fall focused on transgender issues, and possibly follow it with a related program. Since a major goal of the congregation is becoming an antiracist group, we will carry that into our work and explore and share issues of black and other non-white transgender individuals.

We just got word that Gay Pride Day will be happening in September as it has in past years. We certainly look forward to participating in that and making it a Yellow Shirt Day for UUCA!

Denominational Affairs/Fair-Trade Coffee

Submitted by Deb Holden

The end of November was the UUCA kickoff for Guest at Your Table. As with all things, this was done virtually. Announcements were made during three Sundays in November and December. UUSC supplied a sermon and a Story for all Ages. RE was very helpful in providing a means to give out a two-week calendar with Stories of Hope and a template for a Guest at Your Table Box. A total of 21 families participated collecting \$1618. This is in addition to regular donations made by congregants during the year.

I attended a meeting of a new UUSC group, the Congregational Engagement Advisory Group. We will be meeting quarterly to discuss ways to more fully engage congregations in the work of UUSC. Discussions include finding ways to “bridge” various connections to UUSC and UU College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) in congregations through follow-up to UUCSJ journeys, workshops, coaching sessions, worship services, and presentations. I am also a member of UUSC Liasons which meets as a larger group via Zoom to discuss UUSC initiatives.

Phil Roudebush has sold or donated much of the Fair-Trade inventory as most products were due to expire. Twenty-five pounds of coffee were donated to AHOPE and were much appreciated. Joann and Phil Roudebush funded a sale of \$1,154.50 worth of Fair Trade items to First Congregational Church to be used for their outreach ministry.

I am currently looking for a person to be a liaison for the UUA. Hopefully we can find someone who will raise awareness of UUA and its many ways it supports our congregation and UUism in the wider world.

Earth Community Circle (ECC) Annual Report

Submitted by Walter (Wink) Zachritz (Chair)

This was a low-key year for the Earth Community Circle with the ongoing pandemic shutting down many activities. Despite the pandemic ECC held monthly meetings throughout the year by Zoom.

The UUCA 32 kW, 105-solar-panel system located on the roof of Sandburg Hall continued generating power throughout 2020-21. The table below summarizes the following information for the system since the beginning of operation through January 21, 2021, approximately 22 months:

- Total electricity produced
- Estimated carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions prevented as compared to an equivalent fossil fuel system
- Estimated equivalent trees planted based on the typical CO₂ absorption level for new trees

Total electricity produced	Estimated emissions prevented	Estimated equivalent trees planted
74,000 kilowatt-hours	114,000 pounds of CO ₂	865

The Earth Community Circle will continue to provide occasional updates on the performance of the UUCA solar system. If you have questions about our system or solar systems in general, please contact **Bob Roepnack** (bobroepnack@roepnack.com) or **Dan Clere** (danielclere@gmail.com).

Wink Zachritz, Ed Prestemon and **Linda Topp** attended and completed the five-day virtual training for the Climate Reality Leadership Corps in July of 2020. This group has strong focus on building worldwide and local networks of activists and leaders committed to addressing the issues of the climate crisis. The Climate Reality Project started by former Vice President Al Gore is committed to building a more just and equitable world, one where all voices are heard and respected regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or physical ability. Over 31,000 leaders have been trained worldwide.

The Green Sanctuary Reaccreditation projects in the four focus areas—Environmental Justice, Promoting Netzero Energy, Sustainable Landscapes, and Alternative Transportation are continuing at slower rate due to the pandemic. All are underway and are projected to be completed in the next two years.

Grace Curry has been submitting the Green Tips to be included in the *Weekly eNews* throughout the year. And **Kate Jerome, Grace Curry,** and **Venny Zachritz** planted some great additions to the UUCA front landscape in March of 2021.

Ed Prestemon and **Wink Zachritz** participated in the *Me and White Supremacy* (by Layla Saad) book group to provide an ECC perspective, especially on Environmental Justice issues. The group met for over 8 sessions and continues to meet on an occasional basis.

The ECC voted to continue supporting the Creation Care Alliance with several members attending events and workshops. **Sharon LeDuc's** participation in Creation Care Alliance Workshops included Climate and Faith, Environmental Justice, Seeds of Action, and Sacred Lands.

We also will now support the UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE). The UUMFE has been instrumental in the passage of several denominational social witness statements, including the landmark 2006 Statement of Conscience on the [threat of climate change](#) and the 2015 Action of Immediate Witness on [acting for a livable climate](#). Every year, UUMFE has a strong presence at General Assembly, the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). UUMFE is the central leader of the UUA Green Sanctuary Program.

Rev. Jeff Jones serves on the City of Asheville Transit Committee as part of the ECC focus group on Alternative Transportation. **Grace Curry** attends the City of Asheville Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure Task Force. This part of our ongoing efforts are under the Green Sanctuary Reaccreditation focus area of Alternative Transportation.



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*, and the *Vespers Reminder*, and many of the “blast” emails we send out. Tish also produces a monthly print newsletter (1 page) that we send to the 12 or so remaining congregants who do not use email.

The website is our key communications outlet. The Director of Administration is responsible for keeping the website up to date, with help from Tish Murphy and Rev. Claudia Jiménez.

The website is updated nearly daily and has become the repository of a great deal of information about this congregation. Whenever you have a question about operations, policies, procedures, programs or just about anything else, please check the website. We’ve done our best to make the information as user-friendly as possible.

Tish Murphy handles the weekly changes about worship services, and posts sermons and the UUCA Blog. Rev. Claudia updates the home page boxes for Family Ministry, the Wednesday Thing, Faith Development, and Justice Ministry. Linda Topp manages changes or additions of pages, slides, widgets, menus and more, with help as needed from our website designer, Denise Wilson.

Other communications responsibilities: Linda Topp usually edits the *Weekly eNews*, and creates and sends the Sunday emails with the worship service links, Venny Zachritz creates the weekly *This Loving Community*. Linda Topp creates most graphic materials, including posters and brochures. She also took on video-editing responsibilities when worship moved online in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Eventually this task was delegated to our A/V techs. 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 Connection Coordinator Venetia Zachritz

Leaders include: **Janice May, Sally Witkamp, Anna Ward, John Bloomer, Nancy Bragg, 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.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of the UUCA campus in mid-March 2020, the membership program shifted focus from *recruitment* of new members to *connecting with* all members. A request for volunteers in April 2020 to call and write cards to all congregants was put out and met with 45 member-volunteers performing this duty. All congregants were contacted at least three times by phone over a 4-month period to assess any needs.

In addition to continuing member connections during our shut-down, I developed a monthly Newcomer Meet and Greet Zoom class to take the place of our monthly drop-in class. Newcomers that completed an on-line contact form were identified as Virtual Visitors and informed of upcoming zoom events. During these events newcomers are encouraged to connect with UUCA by joining one of our social groups or a covenant group.

Sunday Welcome Team volunteer leaders **Janice May** and **Sally Witkamp** join these monthly zoom meetings and share their impressions of UUCA.

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

Thankfully, it was another year of staff stability with no staff member choosing to leave in the past year. Additionally, Rev. Mark Ward chose not to retire in June 2020 as it seemed that it would place a large burden on an incoming interim minister and would likely be more difficult for the congregation as well. His retirement date is June 30, 2021.

Risk Management/Sexual Abuse

The highest risk of extremely damaging lawsuits for churches comes from charges of sexual abuse. Insurers have done a lot of work on this issue and have requirements in place to reduce the risks. We are subject to and comply with the following:

- Specific policies in place for staff and congregants regarding actions and activities, including recommended working in our Healthy Congregation policy, Childcare policy and various RE guidelines.
- We run background checks every 3 years on all adults who interact with children and youth in church-sponsored activities.
- RE teachers are trained annually on sexual abuse policies of the congregation.
- Staff are trained annually on sexual abuse policies of the congregation, signs to watch for in adult/child interactions, and reporting requirements.

Buildings & Grounds, including Building Safety

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, Bob Roepnack, and Glenn White** for applying their many skills and time to our buildings. A special shout out to **Glenn White** who faithfully walked the entire campus every month looking for trouble spots and handled most of them! Thank you, Glenn!

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 \$10,000.

We've had another good year regarding the Operating Budget's Building account. We have only spent about \$5,000 of the \$16,500 that we budgeted for "Buildings." However, that is partially due to the fact that repairs, replacement and maintenance items that cost more than \$1,000 are paid through the Capital Maintenance and Repair Fund (which is why I am always whining about not having enough money there). Here are the year's less-regular purchases/repairs/upgrades over \$1,000:

Main building – 1 Edwin Place

- New dimmable LED lighting in Sandburg Hall
- New flooring in the Contemplation Room in RE
- Electrical work in what will be a new electronic equipment storage closet in Sandburg Hall
- The last payment for the new Sandburg Hall roof that was complete in the very early part of this fiscal year
- Concrete repair of parking lot entry and front patio near Charlotte Street

21 Edwin (wood)

- Exterior paint/repair touch-up (not full painting)
- Repair and staining of playground shelter

23 Edwin (brick)

- Flooding clean-up

I should also note that we had a break-in during this fiscal year, resulting in a loss of the insurance deductible of \$1,000.

Preparations for Reopening following the Pandemic Closure

In the hopes of meeting in-person starting in September, a variety of projects are underway to increase our video-recording capability and address safety concerns. A Reopening Task Force is convening this summer to develop guidelines. Task Force members are **Kay Aler-Maida, Michael Beech, John Bloomer, Amy Moore, and Gina Phairas**.

We have contracted with a local audio-visual company to upgrade all of the A/V equipment in the Sanctuary so that we can livestream and record worship services and other events. The cost for that will be around \$40,000. Thanks to advisors **Jason Smith, Steven Reines, and Dan Phairas** for helping with that contract.

We are currently soliciting bids for work to improve air quality in all three of our buildings by using fans 24/7, adding UV-C light air purifiers to all HVAC systems, purchasing portable UV-C light air filters for some offices and meeting rooms, and adding fresh air ducts and dampers where needed. Total capital cost for this project will be around \$20,000 with an additional \$5,000 added to the operating budget to keep all this equipment maintained and operating. **Marta Reese** has been instrumental in researching and lining up mechanical engineering and installation bids.

The Grounds

Continuing with work related to reopening, to enable more use of our outdoor spaces, we have hired our landscape architect from the Welcome Project, Hutch Kerns, to provide designs for a shade system for the front gathering area of the main building. Although no design has been developed, this project could easily run to \$40,000 or more. (We're hoping for \$30K but that may be just a dream.) With that in mind, we have decided to try something a little less expensive because we really don't know if people will regularly use the front patio, even if it's shaded. By September we hope to have several large umbrellas shading the area. Chief researcher for this project is **Jerry McLellan**.

Finally, we are also in the process of selecting a bidder to regrade and "landscape" the backyard area of 1 Edwin, between the building, Memorial Garden, and the parking lots so that area, too, will be more useable.

Designers/researchers for this project are **Kate Jerome** and **Venny Zachritz** (acting as a volunteer on this project).

The campus is presently “groomed” by a contractor (a local Black-owned business) to do the mowing, weeding, leaf-blowing, and mulching. In addition, we have “grounds gremlins” who continue to show up and perform targeted weeding and other maintenance. Thanks to **Nancy Herbert, Ed Stoll, Venny Zachritz, Kate Jerome,** and **Ann McLellan** as well as others I haven’t caught in the act.

Solar Panels

We still have them; they still work beautifully. Check in with **Dan Clere** if you want to learn more.

Memorial Garden

Submitted by Ruth Christie.

Memorial Garden Team 2020-21: **Ann Sanders Cargill, Kate Jerome, Richard Kark, Will Lundquist, Phil Roudebush, Jody Watts, Venny Zachritz,** and leader **Ruth Christie**

The pandemic prevented new interments at the UUCA Memorial Garden but the team members continued to volunteer once a month to maintain the memorial garden and surrounding beds.

The Japanese maple that grew up from the interment bed died despite all efforts to restore it. The team decided not to replace that tree. Instead, the team recommended placing a metal sculpture in the Memorial Garden. Venny and Kate worked with metal artist Gail Hyde to design and place the sculpture “Perennial,” which Gail donated to UUCA.

Voting Site

Several years ago, UUCA acted as a voting site when the precinct’s then-site had a major remodeling project in progress. The layout and accessibility of UUCA got such rave reviews that Buncombe County has used Sandburg Hall as a voting site ever since. This past election cycle, the County added pre- and post-disinfecting to their checklist.

Risk Management-Safety Committee

Michael Beech, chair; **Ryan Smith-Williams; Gregory Lyman; Ben Fleming; Walter Zachritz; Tom Dessereau; Kim and Ian Stewart;** Venny Zachritz, staff liaison; ad hoc members, Linda Topp - specific to administrative issues, Kim Collins and Jen Johnson - specific to RE

Because it is a complicated undertaking that requires buy-in from the congregation, the Board appointed a special task force to develop a safety plan to specifically address responses to a fire on campus, or an armed intruder scenario.

The UUCA Safety Committee is chaired by Board Member **Michael Beech**. The acting staff liaison to this group is Venny Zachritz, since Sunday Welcome Team leaders and volunteers will be heavily involved in implementing any new safety guidelines. When implementation begins, Venny will also help with training of the volunteers.

The Safety Committee has met occasionally during the COVID year and has come to several conclusions. A complete report will probably be completed before January. One recommendation from the committee, the purchase of an automated defibrillator, has been approved by the Board and should be purchased in time for the return of in-person services. Due to many complicating factors, the committee will not recommend locking the main doors of 1 Edwin on Sunday mornings as a possible preventive measure to “discourage” an armed intruder. Before finalizing the report, several questions remain to be resolved including communications between the buildings during an emergency and a “rallying point” in case of the need to evacuate the building. The committee will be recruiting several members to serve as a Safety Team during services to support the members of the Welcome Team in the case of emergency.

Finance/Accounting & Fundraising

Finance/Accounting

Submitted by Wink Zachritz

Finance Advisory Committee (FAC): **Wink Zachritz**, Chair, **Sammy Fong**, **Clyde Hardin**, **Marta Reese** and **Michael Stevens**. We wouldn't mind having one more member. Email Linda Topp if interested.

The congregation has done a terrific job of donating money for the operations of the church during the pandemic. Some of our donors were unable to meet their pledges while others were able to donate beyond their pledges. (By the way, that's the way it's supposed to work—we are stronger together, right?) Nearly normal donations coupled with lower-than-normal spending will result in a surplus for the 20-21 fiscal year. The surplus will be transferred to the Capital Maintenance & Repair Fund since the Contingency Fund is currently at its recommended limit of 15% of annual income per the Board's Governance Document.

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.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, **Bob Lane**, **Clyde Hardin**, and **Wink Zachritz** drafted a policy and procedures for a new Justice Fund to be implemented using startup funds UUCA earned from the UUA's Legacy Challenge program. Three-quarters of the money were used to pay off the remaining Welcome Project loan. The final quarter was to be used to start this new Justice Fund. A second idea came from Rev. Mark Ward who suggested that perhaps we could use the entire fund as a “reparations” donation to a group in Asheville. The pandemic disrupted this discernment process and following the recommendation of the Executive, we will await new ministerial leadership before deciding exactly what to do with the money.

This year we added to our investment in Mountain Bizworks as a socially responsible community investment. As of April 30, 2021, we have \$81,212 at Mountain Bizworks. Also related to Mountain Bizworks, the forgivable loan from the federal Payroll Protection Program of \$90,138.00 that we got through Mountain Bizworks has been forgiven. This money is used to make payroll expenses, but a similar amount will fund

capital needs we will incur with changes in the way we do things following the pandemic (think full video recording, HVAC upgrades, and improved outdoor spaces).

The proposed budget for 2021-22 is included at the back of this report. As of this writing, the Projected bottom line for 2020-21 (this current church year) looks to have a surprising surplus of about \$52,000. 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.

Capital Budget

UUCA Capital Assets Task Force, **John Bates**, Chair, **Jerry McLellan**, **Bob Roepnack**, **Clyde Hardin**

For the first time ever, UUCA has a capital budget which provides a rough forecast of what equipment and building areas are expected to need be replaced over the next 10 years. This report shows that upkeep of the existing campus buildings, including our two 100-year-old houses, will cost about \$670,000 over 10 years. It also leads to the question of whether that is a good use of funds. How long do we expect these buildings to last? Should we be upgrading them for the next 2 year, 5 years, 10 year, 25 years?

Consequently, the Task Force has recommended to that existing Campus Development funds be used to develop a “Strategic Plan for Facilities” with the help of a creative, professional consultant to prioritize spending. The plan would 1) identify key criteria for facilities uses based on existing plans and needs after post-COVID changes, 2) develop facilities options including pursuing a building expansion, or the potential sale and/or moving to a campus that better meets UUCA needs and provide order of magnitude costs for the options considered, 3) provide recommendations for repair, maintenance, upgrades, or new construction as appropriate.

The Annual Budget Drive (ABD) – “We Are Stronger Together”

Co-Chairs: **Will Jernigan**, **Wes Miller**

Everything we did this year was done remotely/electronically, just like everything else this church year. At the start of the year, we thought that convening Zoom “cottage meetings” would be a terrific way to connect with all of our members AND conduct and present our case for asking for commitments. However, by the time of the actual budget drive planning, which we did much later than normal, well, because nothing was normal, we realized that although Zoom was fun and novel in the spring, it was definitely NOT fun and novel by February.

So, this year’s annual budget drive included a few emails, with testimonials from a few members, eNews announcements and reminders, a robocall, and a silly-but-heartfelt video by Jarrod Geoffrey.

This is the general theme we pursued:

THIS IS WHAT WE COMMIT OUR TIME, TALENT, AND MONEY TO

Together, WE are the church

Our buildings may be where we once gathered, but the work of supporting each other on our spiritual journeys and working for a more just world happens whether we are physically together or not.

We are stronger together

UUCA continues to spread love and to work for justice in our community and in our world.

We are more resilient together

We have learned to lean in when we can and out when we must but always while being held in the support of the UUCA community.

We are doing more, together

We continue to raise UUs with loving hearts and helping hands, deepen our own understandings, and reach out to positively affect the world we live in.

We are more creative together

Virtual services, socially distanced meetups, donut and care package deliveries to youth doorsteps, church-in-a-box deliveries to families, check-in phone calls to all--we have found creative ways to stay connected.

Pooling our generous commitments together keeps us healthy, strong, and able to support the lives of our congregants who in turn help those in the greater community.

Our hope was that we would not lose ground for the 21-22 year, aiming for \$670K for commitment income, as shown at the proposed budget shown in the table at the end of this document. We now know that we did not quite meet that goal, but our spending behavior and our healthy Contingency Fund mean that we are not in any precarious financial position at this time.

Legacy Circle Committee

Submitted by Mike Horak

Mike Horak, Chair; members **Myrtle Bennett**, **Gene Lambirth**, and **Mara Sprain**

The Legacy Circle Committee is focused on providing members and friends of UUCA with information about how they can establish planned gifts to support and expand the congregation's mission into the future. The committee provides information ranging from how to name UUCA as a beneficiary in a will or retirement plan to attorneys in the area that can provide guidance on estate planning. It also works to steward and thank those members who have already documented a planned gift.

Currently, there are 87 individuals, in 58 households, who have indicated that they have named UUCA in their estate plans. Those names are listed on the Legacy Circle Honor Scroll above the fireplace in Sandburg Hall; the UUCA website has a newer version, updated in January 2021. Over the years, funds from more than 40 members and friends have been received for use by the church. Over the years, that funding has allowed UUCA to hire an experienced Director of Lifespan Religious Education and the congregation's first full-time second minister. It has paid for renovations to our religious education space and playground upgrades. It allowed for the early retirement of a mortgage taken out to pay for a nearly million-dollar project to improve handicap accessibility and entry flow into the Sanctuary and Sandburg Hall. During the 2020-2021 church year, one unrestricted Legacy bequest was received, with 25 percent being directed into the Contingency Fund and 75 percent to the Fund for the Future, as per church guidelines.

During this past church year, the committee reached out to all UUCA members and friends with a Valentine's Day card thanking Legacy Circle members and directing anyone interested in planned giving to the updated section of the UUCA website. Under the "Give" tab, Legacy Giving is highlighted, which includes information on how members can make a planned gift to the congregation and additional resources.

The Legacy Circle Committee continued to meet throughout the church year, but its work was curtailed significantly by COVID safety requirements. A planned seminar with Elder Law Expert Caroline Knox was postponed, and will now take place on Saturday, November 13, 2021, in Sandburg Hall. A postponed reception, honoring members of the Legacy Circle, will occur in spring 2022, and planning has already begun.

UUCA Auction – Online!

Submitted by Tory Schmitz

Tory Schmitz and Margaret McAlister, co-leaders, with **Ann McLellan, Judy Galloway, Deb Holden, Sally Witkamp, Ann Perry, Marta Reese, Fredda Mangel, Sherry Lundquist, Connie Silver**

We started our planning in February 2020, but, of course by March the world had changed due to a global pandemic. We pivoted from planning an in-person gala and auction to a fully online event. Our creativity was stimulated as we learned what other congregations were doing with their auctions, and we adapted many ideas to create our own safe, fun, and unique event. We were able to meet our goals of having an enjoyable event, providing opportunities for connection throughout the year, and supporting the congregation financially.

Online silent auction – We used our software vendor, ReadySetAuction, to hold an online silent auction. We included crafts and handmade items for the first time in years. And we had many of the popular parties, dinners, and events donated by the members of the congregation that we all enjoy. The in-person events that were offered were limited to a small number of attendees to allow for safe social-distancing.

Live auction and gala – This, too, was transformed into an online event.

- Entertainment – We recruited adult and youth talent from the congregation, and compiled videos to add to the evening's online gala.
- Auctioneer – Allen Brasington donated his services. A small group of "spotters" and recorders joined Allen in Sandburg Hall (masked and distanced) for the very successful live auction.
- Food – We arranged discounts on special wines and a signature drink at Metro Wines, and also sold orders for food from Maria's food truck, which folks could pick up at UUCA on the evening of the online gala.

Financials

- The congregation showed tremendous generosity and support! The auction took in \$29,599.60, and spent \$3,113.96, for a **net income of \$26,445.64**.
- For comparison, in 2019 our income was \$44,379.48, our expenses were \$8,677.86, and our net income was \$35,701.62.
- Since we didn't know what to expect, this was a **great** outcome.

Lessons learned

- The online silent auction was easy and successful. We plan to continue an online component even when we return to an in-person gala and dinner.

- We are a flexible and dynamic team and can do what seemed impossible.

Holiday Craft Fair, Equal Exchange Coffee Sales and Acoustic Journeys

These fundraisers did not occur this year due to the COVID lockdown. We hope they will resume in the coming year.

Coffee Sales manager **Phil Roudebush**, in a great collaboration with his wife who is a member of First Congregational Church downtown, sold our entire inventory of coffee to First Congregational Church for their use in a justice ministry.

Building Rentals

Our buildings normally 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. During this shutdown year, we did not rent our buildings at all, except for the cooperative preschool that uses 21 Edwin. They met throughout the year, holding most classes outside. That's a bunch of tough preschoolers. Instead of our approximate \$17,000 in rental income, we will earn about \$2,400.

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

INCOME	ACTUAL FINAL 2019-20	PROJECTED 2020-21	PROPOSED 2021-22
Fiscal & Administration Income			
Sustaining Support - financial commitments	596,950	650,000	670,000
Reserve for uncollectible pledges (6%)			(40,200)
New pledges, post paid pledges	37,800	17,100	30,400
Other Contributions	64,150	27,000	40,000
Distributions from both endowments (5%)	17,900	20,000	18,000
Other Income - Rentals, Fundraising, Short-term investment earnings,	99,000	45,800	95,600
Board-approved transfer from savings to balance budget	12,600	-	9,450
FISCAL & ADMINISTRATION TOTAL INCOME	828,400	759,900	823,250
EXPENSES			
Worship and Music			
Outside speakers	1,650	3,400	3,550
Service supplies, Worship Associates	1,000	150	1,400
Technical Support for Live Zoom Services	-	1,950	5,450
Music Program	8,150	8,000	10,400
WORSHIP & MUSIC EXPENSE TOTAL	10,800	13,500	20,800
Faith Development Expenses			
FD supplies and equipment	2,300	2,800	3,000
FD special programs (CoA, YRUU, adults)	1,250	600	4,800
FD volunteer vetting, training, appreciation	2,250	3,000	8,550
FAITH DEVELOPMENT EXPENSE TOTAL	5,800	6,400	16,350
Congregational Care & Connections Expenses			
Pastoral Visitors, supplies	50	-	2,700
Membership development	1,900	400	1,700
Congregational events	2,400	3,000	3,400
Wednesday Thing	2,650	-	1,400
CONG. CARE & CONNECTIONS EXPENSE TOTAL	7,000	3,400	9,200
Outreach Expenses			
Earth & Social Justice Ministry incl. Community Plate distributions	26,100	16,500	32,100
GIFT Program (4% of income)	32,150	31,750	31,600
UU Relations	-	-	-
Advertising	-	300	1,500
OUTREACH EXPENSE TOTAL	58,250	48,550	65,200
Governance and Congregational Support			
All administrative costs, including computers and software, office-kitchen-	62,800	59,600	64,650
Insurance (liability & workmen's comp)	9,350	11,300	11,300
Facilities & Equipment (includes cleaning service)	50,750	32,150	71,200
Mortgage Payment	10,150	-	-
Staff and Volunteer Development incl. Leadership Development Comm	18,850	17,350	26,550
Board Support	1,550	2,150	5,250
Bank/Credit Card fees for processing donations	4,550	3,950	4,200
Annual budget drive, Legacy Circle, non-ABD fundraising expenses	21,000	2,750	24,250
Transfer to Sabbatical Fund	-	-	-
Transfer to Capital Fund (maint. & repair above \$1,000)	30,000	10,000	10,000
GOVERNANCE & CONG. SUPPORT EXPENSE TOTAL	209,000	139,250	217,400
TOTAL PROGRAM AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$ 290,850	\$ 211,100	\$ 328,950
TOTAL PERSONNEL EXPENSES	460,300	466,950	494,300
TOTAL EXPENSES	751,150	678,050	823,250