



Annual Report 2022-2023



Unitarian**Universalist**
Congregation of Asheville

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from the Board of Trustees

Clyde Hardin, President, Board of Trustees (from 11/2/2021, term ends 6/2026), Adam Griffith, Vice President (from 1/4/2022, term ends 6/2024); Julie Stoffels, Clerk (through 06/30/2023, term ends 6/2023), Mary Alm (term ends 6/2024), Laurel Amabile (term ends 6/2023), Karen Dill (Term ends 6/2023), Cliff Hall (term ends 2025), Margaret McAlister (term ends 6/2024), Rev. Dr. Cathy Harrington (ex-officio)

Trustees typically serve a three-year term

The Role of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees “sets governance policies that reflect the mission of the congregation and delegates the work of implementing the policies to the Executive.” The Executive in our policy governance is our Lead Minister, and by extension, the Lead Minister’s staff. The Board defines the Executive’s goals – or “Ends” in policy governance and directs the Executive to achieve those Ends.

The bylaws refer to our Governance Document, which contains the bulk of the Board’s responsibilities and authority.

Our Monthly Meeting Routine

Board work is driven by what happens at our meetings. This year, the Board held regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, typically lasting for about two hours. Our agendas contain certain standing items that don’t vary meeting to meeting. These items include opening and closing readings with a chalice lighting and extinguishing, short member personal check-ins, approval of the previous meeting’s minutes, and a Process Observer’s report at the end of our meetings.

We also receive the Lead Minister’s *What’s Happening* report (Rev. Cathy continues Rev. Mark’s tradition), and Rev. Claudia’s analogous *Q’ Pasa?* Report, with RE input from Kim Collins and Jen Johnson. Both of these reports let the Board know what’s going on in each minister’s areas of responsibility. The Board thanks Rev. Cathy, Rev. Claudia, Kim, and Jen for providing us with those reports, keeping the Board informed of the many, many things happening in our church community that we might not otherwise know about.

We also receive one or more scheduled “Executive Limitation” reports, compiled by our Administrator, Wendy Motch-Ellis. Rather than explain the policy governance term “limitation,” I’ll just say that these reports allow the Board to understand and monitor what the Executive side (Lead Minister and Staff) is doing, in many diverse areas, to support and achieve our mission. A big thanks to Wendy for providing these very useful and educational insights.

The remainder of this report – the meat of it, so to speak – highlights the things that are *not* part of the Board’s standard monthly routine. They are organized as activities sharing a core theme, typically spanning months, or even years.

The Pandemic and the Ministerial Transition

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly isn’t a Board activity, but it certainly affected pretty much everything the Board did this year (not to mention the two previous years). It’s hard to assess what its effect on us was – and perhaps still is – both as individuals and as a church community. Perhaps a little easier to understand is the effect of our ministerial transition. Even though ministerial transitions most often turn out to be periods followed by growth and renewal, there is still a sense loss and uncertainty for a while. The pandemic clearly caused a disengagement of many in our community. And a ministerial transition almost always causes a certain disengagement in most church communities. So, it won’t surprise you that our Board has been concerned about this disengagement for a couple of years. And so many of our efforts this year had a common theme of trying to foster re-engagement, re-awakening, and renewal at UU Asheville.

Fiscal Sustainability Efforts

This church year began knowing that we had a deficit budget. At the close of the previous year, the Board, and later the Congregation, opted for a *moral* and forward-looking budget for this year – supporting our fantastic staff and core programs – believing we could somehow get around a fairly big deficit. We successfully addressed that problem with our *Meet the Moment* “second ask” campaign. It turns out, however, that this year’s deficit was not the whole story, as we discovered we had more systemic issues requiring a longer-term solution. But, we believe we are addressing those issues as well. Read on for specifics.

“Meet the Moment” Campaign

At the Budget Hearing in 2022, we presented the deficit budget for ‘22-’23 that was later approved by the Board and the Congregation. Several congregants attending that hearing suggested having a “second ask” to try to put a dent in that deficit. The Board took on that task, with Will Jernigan, Clyde Hardin, and Rev. Cathy taking the lead in our *Meet the Moment* campaign, held in October. We asked for congregants to give 20% of their current pledge to this one-time ask – an amount that would eliminate the deficit if attained. We made the initial “ask,” messaged through email and mail, and arranged for congregant testimonials. The entire Board made phone calls to encourage participation; and at the end of the campaign the Board wrote thank-you notes to all who gave. Although just over half of our current givers made pledges, many gave much more than 20%, and we actually *exceeded* our goal, eliminating the deficit problem, at least for this year.

“Four Pillars” Strategy

Coming off the success of the *Meet the Moment* campaign, some of us naively thought that we had addressed most of our budget woes. In December, our Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) chair, Marta Reese, and our newly-hired Administrator, Wendy Motch-Ellis, examined our budget needs for fiscal '23-'24. They found that our costs were going up significantly, while our pledging membership was decreasing. They prepared a presentation showing the cost drivers and also showing the effect of the observed reduction in members and pledging households. (Ah, that pandemic and that transition at work again!) In short, we had more budget issues to address – our current path was not sustainable.

Wendy and Marta’s presentation also suggested ways of addressing the fiscal sustainability issues in the longer run. The solution contained some basic elements, all of which could be put in the category of “increasing engagement.” Elements of the solution were (1) connecting with disengaged members and bringing in new members, (2) holding theologically meaningful Annual Giving Drives, (3) assessing and planning for long-term capital needs, and (4) securing our longer-term future with legacy gifts. The Board discussed these suggestions, and convened a Board/Staff subgroup (Wendy, Will, and Laurel Amabile) that developed these into what we are now calling our “Four Pillars” strategy for fiscal sustainability. This year’s Annual Giving Drive pledge packet and messaging presented that strategy to the congregation. We believe that with both action and continual improvement of this strategy, we can truly blossom as a church community.

Vision for Fiscal Sustainability: 4 Pillars



The Four Pillars strategy is currently composed of four working committees. The Board is grateful for the lay leaders who stepped up to chair and/or work on the committees that are currently implementing the Four Pillars strategy:

Committee / Team	Chair	Liaisons
Care Connect	Tory Schmitz	Margaret McAlister (Board), Venny Zachritz (Staff)
Annual Giving Drive	Will Jernigan	Clyde Hardin (Board), Wendy Motch-Ellis (Staff), Rev. Cathy Harrington (Ministerial)
Long-Range Planning	John Bates	Adam Griffith (Board), Wendy Motch-Ellis (Staff), Wink Zachritz (FAC)
Legacy Circle	Gene Lambirth	Mary Alm (Board), Wendy Motch-Ellis (Staff)

The Care Connect team has contacted many folks that we haven't seen in a while, to try to understand reasons for their disengagement and provide paths to re-engagement, if desired. As a standing committee, they will continue to nurture our connections. Further down the road, this team will be augmented with staff and members who will reach out into the larger Asheville community in an effort to grow and broaden our membership. The Long-Range Planning Committee was first instantiated as the Capital Assets Task Team, formed after John Bates proactively researched and presented to the Board some immediate needs concerning stormwater remediation and potential issues related to our properties at 21 and 23 Edwin. That work continues, but will later be augmented by longer-range capital asset planning. And finally, the Legacy Circle team continues their good works, reaching out to educate our membership about options for estate-planning gifts to UU Asheville.

We expect that this strategy will evolve over the years to come as we grow out of the pandemic and transition and into our new ministry.

Roots and Wings (Annual Giving Drive)

Although the *Roots and Wings* Annual Giving Drive (AGD) is a part of our Four Pillars strategy, it is only this year's instantiation of the AGD. We expect that next year's AGD will be different. This year, the Board – with the chair and liaisons in the table above leading the way – did the heavy lifting for the entire affair. We also had the able assistance of Wes Miller, Tish Murphy, and several congregants giving moving testimonials. Will, Wendy, and Clyde created most of the messaging. The Board (plus Wes) reached out to congregants by phone. Will and Wendy created and (with the Board's and Wes's assistance) executed both the kickoff and closing celebrations. As of this writing, we are not sure exactly how much in the pledges we will collect, but we do know that it is *much* more than in the past

several years, due to both increased pledging from previously-pledging households and new pledging households.

Ideally, AGDs should not be a Board-run effort. That is not the Board's charge. I believe that there should be a standing committee that manages the AGD, and that AGDs should be less of a "March and April only" event and more of a year-long process. More importantly, I believe that the central goal of our AGDs over time should be to have congregants develop a personal theology of money that allows their generous gifts to bring them as much meaning and joy as possible.

Other Board Efforts

I hope it's reassuring to know that not *all* of the Board's efforts were focused on fiscal sustainability! We actually did do some things that don't belong in that category. Several are listed below.

Racial Justice

The Board continued to support the pursuit of our congregation's racial justice efforts. Some brief history: Following the George Floyd event in 2020, the Board, believing that UU Asheville's participation in racial justice efforts should be more broad and should include many more of us than it did at the time, formed the *Racial Justice Advisory Council* or RJAC. The RJAC was led by Rev. Claudia and included congregants who were deeply involved in supporting racial justice. That committee worked for the better part of two years to do an assessment of our congregation's "readiness" to engage in these efforts, and also to recommend exactly what we should do to start this long process of becoming a truly anti-racist, liberatory congregation. The RJAC efforts culminated in a set of 18 detailed recommendations, meticulously documented in their interim and final reports.

After that, the Board formed the Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF), led by Mary Alm and including Laurel Amabile, Karen Dill, and Adam Griffith. The RJTF first action was to lead the Board in approving the implementation of all 18 of the RJAC recommendations. Since then, the RJTF has been leading the charge in getting all the church entities (committees, staff, and other groups) named in the RJAC recommendations to assess their current state and then implement these recommendations. It's a long process, which I won't try to detail here. We are making progress, though, and the efforts are already having some effect, if only to either point out real or potential issues, or reveal that we're not doing so badly after all. We hope that with our new minister, who brings much racial justice experience, our efforts will be further refined, expanded, and front-and-center.

Ministerial Transition

This year, the Board's involvement in our ministerial transition was not as heavy as last year, when we were first welcoming Rev. Cathy, forming a Transition Team, and then later in that year forming the Ministerial Search Committee. As of last year's Annual Report, although we are deep in the process, we have not yet determined the final MSC composition. So, to be complete, I'll mention something you

already know – we were able to recruit an absolutely fantastic MSC, consisting of Gina Phairas (chair), Ruth Christie, Joanne Fox, Shawn Gibson, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Charlie Marks, and Dale Wachowiak.

This year, the Board's involvement in the search was more of a support role. When the MSC needed something the Board could provide, we did. For example, UUA recommendations are that a Negotiation Team be created (to include two Board members, along with one MSC member); and that this team draw up a draft contract (before contacting any candidates) and then produce a final contract for the final candidate. This team consisted of Joanne Fox (MSC) along with Margaret McAlister and Clyde Hardin from the Board. Throughout the year, Gina gave the Board regular updates on the MSC's activities and progress. And of course, the final joy was that after a very exciting Candidating Week, supported by the MSC, Transition Team, and Board, we held a Special Congregational Meeting to call Rev. Audette Fulbright Fulson to our pulpit! In my six years at UU Asheville, I've never seen the congregation so unified and joyous. Good stuff lies ahead!

Congregational Meetings

One of the bylaw-mandated jobs of the Board is to hold congregational meetings. The previous paragraph mentions a Special Congregational Meeting, but there are also the regularly-scheduled Annual Meetings that are the Board's responsibility. After last year's Annual Report was written, we held an in-person Annual Meeting – after two-years of pandemic-induced "by email" meetings. In addition to the usual business – approving a budget and electing Board and LDC members – we passed a bylaw amendment changing the majority needed to call a minister from two-thirds to 90%, a UUA recommendation. (Rev. Audette easily eclipsed this with a 99.6% majority!) At the upcoming Annual Meeting, in addition to the elections, the usual business will include the presentation of another deficit budget. But as you know, we have a plan! Also, on that agenda is the approval of the 8th Principle.

Internal Board Activities

There are several Board activities that I'll classify as internal. These include things the Board does to improve its intended function. That's a pretty broad category, but I'll only mention two items. The first is the Board Orientation, explicitly called out in our Governance Document (GD). This year, our Orientation was the entire content of our August meeting, during which I gave an overview of our Policy Governance structure and a brief tutorial on Google Drive (mandated by the GD as our record-keeping technology). Because our governance is not widely understood, at least at the level a Board member should understand it, I felt like this was valuable. I'm sure, however it could be improved.

The second item I'll mention is our Board Retreat (also mandated by the GD). In late September, Nancy Combs-Morgan and Rev. Tyler Coles, from the Southern Region of the UUA, facilitated our retreat via Zoom, for 2.5 hours. The mutually agreed-upon agenda included topics of great interest to us – core values, interim work, visionary work, and stewardship. However, in my view, the time allotted did not allow our able facilitators to lead us deeply enough into any of these topics to give the Board the charge to action which I believe is the main function of such a retreat. I'm looking forward to trying a different approach this coming year.

Thanks

Board work done right requires both time and talent. It also requires the internal motivation to do something good for our community. The best Boards also have a team spirit that brings them together and allows them to both applaud successes and forgive shortcomings and failures. I want to thank this Board for being that Board. We did plenty of things in ways we might want to correct, but did plenty of things marvelously well. So, thanks to this Board, and thanks to the interdependent web of our community which supported these volunteers throughout this year.

Submitted by Clyde Hardin, President, Board of Trustees

Leadership Development Committee

This past year for the Leadership Development Committee has been one of fits and starts, great intentions that didn't always come to fruition, and surprising successes. In a time of uncertainty and change, one constant has been the members of the LDC, and for that, I am incredibly grateful. Returning members Susan Andrew and Natale Polinko (both of which will be cycling off the LDC next month) and newcomers Tory Schmitz and Connie Silvers have done remarkable work, and I remain ever grateful for their presence.

The retirement of Dr. Linda Topp and the short tenure of her immediate successor certainly derailed some ideas, as the staff liaison is critical to the work of the LDC. But with Wendy Motch-Ellis coming on board I already see steady progress and a bright future.

It seems we always sweat it out, and it's never without some degree of frustration, but we've once again assembled a strong trio of folks to join our Board of Trustees. Philip Hammond, Monica Youngman, and Mara Sprain will all bring guidance, vision, and commitment to our board. We also welcome Holly DeMuth, Cecil Bennett, and Nancy Bragg to the LDC. Two members who have served our congregation in various capacities and one who has been eager to serve and decided the time was right. Welcome aboard!

In mid-May the LDC participated in the Hood Huggers Tour, a valuable and informative endeavor. It's the sort of Leadership Development I hope we do more of.

We had great plans to introduce the Harvest The Power Leadership Module to our congregation but, with the advent of a new called minister and other demands, decided to postpone that until the fall. Even though I am leaving the Chair of the LDC I hope to participate in HTP when we are able to roll it out.

I've served on the LDC for six years, and due to the pandemic, extended my tenure as Chair for an extra year. It's been a time of personal reflection and growth and while I look forward to taking a break I am eager to see what unfolds for our beloved congregation.

Interim Ministerial Search Committee

Gina Phairas, Chair, Ruth Christie, Joanne Fox, Shawn Gibson, Charlie Marks, Joyce Hooley, Dale Wachowiak

Preparation

Members of the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) were introduced to the congregation in June and given an overview of the ministerial search process at a one-day workshop led by the UUA Transitions Office.

The MSC members began to prepare for their work on August 20, 2022, by attending the “Beyond Categorical Thinking” workshop led by UU Transitions Director, Keith Kron. Along with the 45 congregants and board members who attended the workshop, the MSC was challenged to consider their biases and how those biases might affect the committee’s work in choosing a ministerial candidate. After discussing and reflecting about what was learned at the workshop, several committee members went on to read the book Centering, edited by Rev. Mitra Rahnema.

The MSC officially kicked off its work on September 3rd with a weekend retreat led by UUA Transitions Program Manager, Christine Purcell. During the retreat, Christine walked the committee through the four stages of the search process, answered questions about the UUA Settlement Handbook, assisted the committee in electing their chair and determining committee member roles, and prepared the committee for the sometimes-difficult process of coming to consensus.

Communications

In addition to selecting a ministerial candidate, the MSC was also tasked with keeping the congregation informed about the search process. To remain as transparent as possible while adhering to the UUA Settlement Handbook guidelines, the MSC set up a communication process for delivering information about the search process to the congregation that included the following:

- Updates to the Ministerial Search page on the UU Asheville website
- Monitoring a dedicated MSC email to answer individual’s questions about the process
- Writing blogs and E-News announcements in each phase of the search process
- Periodic pulpit updates and announcements
- Monthly reports to the board
- Special emails leading up to Candidating Week

The Search Process

Stage 1: Reflection

The MSC started the search process in September by encouraging the congregation to reflect on who we are as a congregation and about our shared vision for the future. Through the congregational survey

and cottage meetings, the committee asked for input about what congregants love about UU Asheville, who we want to be as a community, the work we want to engage in together, why we worship, our hopes for a new minister, and how we would measure success with a new minister.

In late September and October, the committee prepared and administered the Congregational Survey to all congregants and 132 congregants responded, roughly 30% of the congregation. Nearly 72 % of survey respondents were over the age of 60 and only 4.6% were under the age of 40.

The MSC sought to gain input from a more diverse group of congregants, so from October 23rd - November 1st the committee conducted 15 congregational cottages meetings with 3 cottage meetings specifically for our children, youth, and families. Cottage meetings were attended by 161 congregants, roughly 40% of the congregation and by congregants of all ages.

The MSC also held focus groups with the Leadership Development Team, the Pastoral Care Team, the Environmental Action Committee, CUUPS, the choir, staff, and the Board of Trustees.

In November, the results of the survey, cottage meetings and focus groups were analyzed and used to create our Congregational Record. The 56-page report included our congregation's history, finances, and expectations for our new minister and our hopes for our work together. The record was made available to prospective ministers on December 1st and then posted to the Ministerial Search page of the UU Asheville website.

Through various conversations with congregants, it was made clear UU Asheville longs to be an engaged, vibrant, and welcoming community. We said together we are ready to make change and to be changed.

Stage 2: Sharing

We then moved to the sharing phase of the search process and the committee reflected back to the congregation their hopes and vision for UU Asheville with a pulpit presentation and a weekly blog post which was also posted on the Ministerial Search page of the website. In short, the congregation said we want to be connected, inspired, and challenged to live our values and that our lead minister should be collaborative, have good listening skills, and a kind heart.

Stage 3: Researching and Evaluating

Then came the confidential work of researching and evaluating ministerial candidates. In January and February, the committee reviewed over 200 pages of information about ministers, visited many websites and, if we're being honest, watched more UU sermons than some of us usually see in a year. We then conducted initial phone interviews and reference checks and after deliberations, narrowed our list of potential candidates to three.

In March, the committee spent three separate weekends with each of our final 3 candidates conducting multi-day interviews and observing the candidates in pulpits at UU Congregations around the area. By the end of March, the committee completed initial negotiations and background checks for our final candidate.

With great pleasure and excitement, the committee announced our final candidate, the Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson to the congregation on April 2nd. Reverend Audette comes to us from All Souls NYC, but she has served this congregation before. In 1998, she came to UU Asheville as an intern planning to go into community ministry. It was her work with this congregation that convinced her parish ministry was where she should be. Rev. Audette says returning to UU Asheville as lead minister, “feels like coming home.”

Stage 4: Candidating

In April, the MSC teamed up with staff and the Transitions Team to plan several “Get To Know” Rev. Audette events. With the goal of providing all congregants an opportunity to meet and interact with Rev. Audette, the MSC, Wendy and Venny planned, and the Transitions Team coordinated, seven congregational events for Candidating Week from April 23rd-30th including:

- 2 Sunday lunch receptions
- A Zoom-only Q&A event
- Leaning into Social Justice Night
- Dinner and Games Night
- A reception for Givens Estates, Givens Gerber Park, and Deerfield members
- RE Family Night

All the events were well attended and helped to prepare the congregation for the Congregational Vote.

During Candidating Week, Rev. Audette also met with staff, the board, past board presidents, the FAC, the pastoral care team, the worship associates, the choir, Wendy, and Rev. Claudia.

Candidating Week culminated in a Special Congregational Meeting and Vote on Sunday, April 30th. With 237 votes, 99.6% voting “yes”, UU Asheville successfully called The Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson to the position of lead minister, and on May 1st submitted a Notice of Called Minister to the UUA.

Thank You’s

It would be impossible to thank everyone who helped make the search process a success as it was truly a community effort. Still, the MSC would especially like to thank:

Rev. Cathy Harrington and the UUA’s Christine Purcell for their guidance

The board for their continued support throughout the process, and Clyde Hardin for his leadership

The staff for their enduring patience and optimism

The Transitions Team for their amazing event planning during Candidating Week

And Wendy for her help with communications, negotiations and everything else that was needed.

The members of the MSC are honored to have served the congregation during this successful search and we look forward to seeing the future we will build together.

from the Lead Minister

Our second year of transitional ministry began with the sudden and tragic death of Rev. Mark Ward, your beloved minister. Mark served UU Asheville faithfully and lovingly for 17 years and was looking forward to re-engaging with the congregation as Minister Emeritus after the new settled minister was established in the church. Over time and with the initial help from the UU Trauma Response Ministry, the heartbreaking grief and sadness around this deep loss gradually eased into a deep appreciation and celebration of who Mark was and into wonderful memories of his loving pastoral care, his well-crafted and meaningful sermons, and those delightful moments when he burst out in song from the pulpit. Mark's legacy lives on through those who knew and loved him and through his contagious love of our Unitarian Universalist faith. His long tenure provided strong evidence to those seeking to follow Mark's ministry at UU Asheville that this congregation knows how to love a minister. This fact was affirmed by the number of UU ministers interested in serving as your next settled minister. The Ministerial Search Committee had a tremendous task in selecting a final candidate but also the good fortune to be able to choose from a long list of talented, innovative, and experienced ministers who have the stamina and the passion to stay the course and help guide you into the healthy post-pandemic future. Reverend Audette Fulbright Fulson has all these things plus the spirit for creating multigenerational church community that will serve you well. Well done!

During the second year of transition, part of my job is consulting with Ministerial Search Committee and being available when questions and concerns arose. When the Congregational Record was published, I received many requests for conversations from some of the interested ministers, and we met via Zoom. Once the three precandidates were chosen, all three requested a second meeting for deeper discernment. The MSC worked together well and selected the candidate they felt would best serve the congregation. The entire congregation was involved in selecting the MSC, and they devoted long hours listening to discern the wants and wishes of the congregation before choosing the precandidates. The pre-candidating process involves getting to know the ministers, hearing them preach in a neutral pulpit, showing them around Asheville, and hours of additional interview time. These folks deserve deep gratitude and a round of applause!

I am extremely grateful to the board for their hard work and shared ministry on multiple levels. At my request, they joined me in both search processes for the new Director of Administration when Linda announced her retirement. When Brittany announced her resignation at the end of July, it was disappointing and discouraging, but Margaret McAlister and Clyde Hardin joined me once again in the search for her replacement, this time casting a wider net with the help of resources such as Indeed, and several candidates emerged. We narrowed it down to two "perfect" candidates, making for a tough decision. We felt it was important to include Rev. Claudia in both interview processes, and Wendy's broad range of experience as well as her background in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion education tipped

the scale and helped to finalize the decision. Her creativity, talent, and expertise have been a tremendous gift.

They worked very hard this year to close the deficit with the Meet the Moment Campaign creatively and successfully. Special thanks to Will Jernigan, Wes Miller, Clyde Hardin, and Wendy. The board also began working on a strategic visioning process, mapping out a plan for a strong, sustainable future for UU Asheville.

I have been supported for the past two years by a devoted Transition Team that included John Bates, Nancy Bragg, Jenson Gelfond, Julie Ransom, and Buck Schall. They met with me monthly giving me insights and wise counsel while keeping their ears and eyes open to help me discern the deepest needs and hopes and dreams of this congregation. The TT also participated in calling members to find nominees for the MSC. I am extremely grateful to them for all they have contributed to making this a successful and harmonious time of transition. Please thank them when you see them. Their work was mostly invisible but invaluable.

Wendy hired our new Communications and Tech Specialist staff person, Simon Jacobs using an inclusive process by inviting the entire staff to participate in the interviewing of candidates. The Tech position was added because of the need to continue making worship accessible and available to those who cannot make it to church in person. Covid's silver lining might be that churches have learned new technological skills that make them accessible to more people.

When Brittany resigned suddenly, Marta Reese graciously and skillfully served you as the interim Director of Admin, helped train our new Dir of Admin, and continues to contribute to the health and well-being of UU Asheville. I am deeply grateful to her faithful service to this church.

Your talented staff has been a joy to work with, and I am delighted that your leadership agreed to increase the salaries of the Religious Exploration staff and offer equal benefits to the qualifying staff. Senior staff meet weekly and all staff gather now twice a month for staff meetings with the second meeting being dedicated to education and creative brainstorming. We had a staff retreat August 16 and 17 at the Montreat Retreat Center in Black Mountain to kick off our second year of transition, and last month we embarked on an eight-session Right Relations workshop to hone our staff communication skills as well as improving our relationships and modeling covenant skills within the congregation. This will conclude in the fall with Rev. Audette at the helm.

The Worship Associates and I have worship planned through summer to allow Rev. Audette and her family time to get moved and settled in to church life. Linda Topp found the wonderful house I have lived in for the past two years, and Rev. Audette and family will be moving into the same house in the middle of July! How perfect is that?

It has been a privilege to serve as your interim lead minister for the past two years, and I will miss you deeply. I have fallen in love with you in so many ways; I LOVE the wonderful music provided by Les Downs and the choir, there is a contagious and joyful energy coming from the Religious Exploration Program and the wonderful families with children who participate. Yea Kim for introducing the family friendly area in the sanctuary. I will miss the Sandburgers SO much, and all of you who have made me feel welcome and have shared the hard work of this transition time. I will miss you but will hold you in my heart always with deep affection.

In faith and love,
Rev. Dr. Cathy Harrington, Interim Lead Minister

Significant events over the past church year:

July 13th Candlelight Vigil for Rev. Mark Ward

UUA Trauma Response Ministry: ZOOM meetings with staff, board, and members of the congregation

Mark Ward Memorial Service led by Rev. Claudia and Mark's sister, Rev. Lisa Ward

A Staff Retreat at Montreat helped us build a stronger team in spite of the disappointment and sadness of Brittany's resignation. UU Asheville member, Connie Silver made our time at Montreat possible by offering an affordable discount. Thank you, Connie!

August 20th, Rev. Keith Kron, Director of the Ministerial Transitions Office, led a Beyond Categorical Thinking a full weekend of education and inspiring worship. It was a three-hour workshop that asks the congregation to consider what biases it has (both conscious and unconscious) around identities that their potential minister may hold. Following the workshop, Keith met with the Ministerial Search Committee to give them guidance and answer their questions.

1st Wednesday Soup & Bread dinner/Peace Vespers began on September 7 and concluded in May until fall.

A Board retreat on September 24th was facilitated by UUA regional staff members, Nancy Combs-Morgan and Rev. Tyler Coles.

The Meet the Moment Campaign kicked off on October 2 and concluded on November 6

The Annual Mountain Retreat Gathering Oct 14-16 was so darn much fun!

The fun and fabulous Auction Gala November 19

Venny's Newcomer Potluck December 4

Christmas Eve 2 services

Holiday Brunch Christmas Day

Rev Claudia and I co-led a bi-monthly **Embracing Discomfort Book** Study group with the hope that the participants can have a deeper understanding of systemic racism and the resulting layers of harm and pain.

The Annual Giving Drive concluded with an all-church picnic celebration that was memorable! This congregation knows how to celebrate and have fun.

Sunday Worship

July 31: The Impossible Will Take a While (Cathy)

August 8 Claudia "Meeting the Moment" (theme from General Assembly)

August 14: Cathy "Letting Go"

August 20 Keith Kron presented a well-attended Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop

August 21 Keith Kron preached "The future of Religion and Unitarian Universalism"

August 28: Water Ceremony (Cathy and Claudia)

September 4: "Gather the Spirit" Rev. Cathy

September 11: Power of Community Rev. Claudia

September 18: Serving with Grace Rev. Cathy

September 25: Pride Service by Rev. Cathy and URU

October 2: Loaves and Fishes (New Member Welcome Ceremony) Cathy

October 9: Hispanic Heritage Month guest speaker Dr. Edwin Murillo (food and celebration)

October 16: Jeff Jones "Immigration Experiences" (Mountain Retreat weekend)

October 23: "Courageous Resistance" Claudia

October 30: "Buddhism" Sequoyah & Buddhist group

November 6: "Meeting the Moment" (Second Ask) Rev. Cathy, Will Jernigan, and Clyde Hardin

November 15: "Living on the Threshold" by Rev. Claudia

November 20: "The Healing Power of Gratitude" by Rev. Cathy

November 29: "Making Meaning from Old Traditions by Kim Collins

December 4: Welcoming Winter & Looking Forward by Cathy with Gina Phairas (MSC chair)

December 11: From Bah Humbug to Wonder by Rev. Cathy

December 18: Solstice by Rev. Claudia and Mary Ann Sommerville

December 24: Two Christmas Eve Services: 4 pm (family) Rev. Claudia 8 pm Rev. Cathy

December 25: The Christmas Spirit Waffle Brunch Cathy with generous and joyful help from Venny and Wink Zachritz

January 1: "Into the New Year" by Rev. Cathy

January 8: "The Power of Quiet; the art of being an introvert in a noisy world" by Rev. Cathy

January 15: MLK service by Rev. Claudia and Kim Collins

January 22: "Prayer; Finding Our Center" by Rev. Claudia

January 29: "Embracing Change" (Susan Frederick Gray) Rev. Cathy

February 5: "What Every Minister Wishes You Knew" by Rev. Cathy

February 12: "Taking the War Out of Our Words" by Rev. Cathy

February 19: "Theology of Love" by Rev. Claudia

February 26: "The Joy of Giving" by Jake Morrill (Stewardship Kickoff)

March 5: YRUU service

March 12: "Forgiveness an Exploration" by Rev. Cathy

March 19: "Oops, Ouch" by Rev. Claudia

March 26: "Celebration Sunday" and Welcome New Members by Rev. Cathy, Will Jernigan, and Annabelle Jernigan

April 2: "Spirited Sunday; Faithfully Becoming" by Rev. Claudia and Kim and Mary Alm

April 9: (Easter) "After Jesus, Before Christianity" by Rev. Cathy

April 16: Earth Day Sunday by Rev. Cathy with Kate, Wink, and Sunita

April 23: Candidating Week!!! Rev. Audette "God of Space and Time"

April 30: "All that Rises" by Rev Audette

May 7 Faith Development service by Rev. Claudia and RE Staff

May 14: Mother's Day by Kim Collins

May 21: "The Road to Character" by Rev. Cathy

May 28: Cathy's Greatest Hit (a surprise)

June 5: All Music Sunday Les Downs (Annual meeting after service)

June 11: 100th Anniversary of the Flower Communion (Cathy's last Sunday)

June 18: Centering Gifts by Rev. Claudia

June 25: Service by the Buddhist Sangha

Pastoral Care Team

Iris Hardin, Coordinator, Duane Bigelow, Jill Preyer, Sequoyah Rich, Tory Schmitz, Myrtle Staples, Glenn White

The Pastoral Care Team (formerly the Pastoral Visitors) meets monthly with the lead minister, currently the Rev. Dr. Cathy Harrington. Our monthly meetings focus on issues of individual members and friends in the congregation we are supporting currently, new concerns we have for individuals who might benefit from pastoral outreach, and ways that we might attend to the larger pastoral concerns of the community (e.g., through religious exploration, worship services).

This year, we welcomed three additional members to the Pastoral Care Team. In March, we went through a half-day training together, led by Team Coordinator and trained Chaplain, Iris Hardin. Rev. Harrington also participated in this training.

Our regular duties include keeping in touch with those in need by telephone calls, notes, and visits. During the month, we check in with people we are supporting and report back to the minister with an update. The main requirements for being a member of the Pastoral Care Team are the abilities to listen without judgment and to keep confidential what is discussed.

The PCT led “When the Holidays Hurt” again this December – a quiet worship service created to acknowledge that the winter holiday season can be especially difficult for people who are not feeling merry and bright. Once again, Clyde Hardin supported the service by providing the music.

This year, our team moved its monthly meeting from a Tuesday afternoon to a Sunday after the service, to make serving on the team accessible to a broader demographic. We changed our name from Pastoral Visitors to Pastoral Care Team to reflect that it is the listening and care at the heart of these connections, not the visits.

During candidating week, every member of the PCT attended a two-hour meeting with Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson. We shared our mutual commitment to offering pastoral support for our members and friends, our desire to increase the exposure and reach of our team within the congregation, and ideas for religious exploration programs that would interest our team and the broader community.

The team’s hopes/plans for next year include bringing in outside experts for topical trainings, attending to the recommendations of the Racial Justice Action Committee, offering end-of-life planning to the congregation (as we did prior to COVID disruptions), starting a network of volunteers willing to provide rides to Sunday services, and generally increasing our visibility and outreach in our congregation.

Respectfully Submitted by Iris Hardin, Coordinator, Pastoral Care Team

from the Music Director

The Spring of 2022 marked the renewal of our music program. We have been able to have live music in our services since that time. We still had to continue observing some Covid protocols, but fortunately, we were able to resume congregational singing with masks on. More recently we have opted for a mask-optional policy and a good many people seem to be comfortable singing without masks.

In the past year (since last July) we have been fortunate to have music provided by our in-house musicians, Brett Johnson, Paul Moore, Will Jernigan, Sandra Goodson, Josef Butts, and Marty Friedman (The Sandburgers), as well as Wesley Miller and Steve Lapointe. We have also been very lucky to have guest artists from the Asheville area as well as from other places, including Lea Morris, Emma's Revolution, Chris Rosser, Friction Farm, Hillary Trumpler, Tabitha Judy, Sue Richards and Finn Magill.

Our choir was able to sing last Spring for a short period. After a summer break we were able to resume choir rehearsals in August. Until recently the choir wore masks for singing. Our rehearsals have gone well and the singing in services has been excellent.

In the past year I have also worked closely with our ministers, Cathy Harrington and Claudia Jiménez, and our AV tech crew, Will Lundquist, Simon Jacobs, Jason Smith, Jess Fox and Steve Carter. These collaborations have resulted in producing our weekly hybrid (in-person and livestream) services.

UU Asheville Choir Members, 2022-23

Soprano	Alto
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mary Cornielsen• Alexis Croswell• Colleen Finegan• Melody Goldberg• Michele Gregory• Barbara McDonald• Myrtle Staples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gail Ashburn• Judy Clouse• Diana Forrest• Beth Gage• Joyce Hooley-Gingrich• Eliza Martin• Kris Stewart• Debbie Ward• Diane Zolnaski
Tenor	Bass
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dennis Campbell• Charles Forrest• Bob Gingrich	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marty Friedman• Richard Kark• Langdon Martin• Richard Maybin

Submitted by Dr. Leslie Downs, Music Director

from the Minister of Faith Development

State of the Ministries: Faith Development & Justice

Ministry Overview

We gathered in the fall with joy, anticipation, and greater enthusiasm for in-person worship and programs. We missed being together! The concern for endemic COVID remained but access to vaccines and masking expectations helped calm the anxiety of contagion. I was encouraged to know we had enough volunteers to teach our Religious Exploration classes and to participate in the various Justice Ministry action groups and committees. This re-engagement in the co-creation of our faith by teaching our children and youth, and re-committing to living out our values by engaging through justice projects was exciting to witness.

Our religious exploration program for children and youth grew this year. We started the year with 66 families and 105 registered children. As I write this report in May, we have 90 families and 141 registered children. Our volunteers and RE staff have done outstanding work! Our programs have provided diverse, age-appropriate opportunities for deepening UU identity, exploring spirituality, and building community. We offered two junior high Our Whole Lives (OWL) classes this year because of increased demand. OWL is always such a critically important curriculum for youth in transition to adulthood, and even more so now as we experience the erosion of reproductive rights and attacks on LGBTQ and trans siblings. I wonder if OWL might become an outreach ministry for our congregation. Our biggest challenge this year in RE has been recruiting childcare providers. We asked the congregation to help, and they responded. Thank you!

This year I have been intentional about denominational and community engagement precisely because so much is happening in my areas of ministry. I have chosen to engage in projects that support the work I do at UU Asheville. At the denominational level I served on the board of UU Justice Ministry NC, co-facilitated the UU Theology Renaissance Module, and participated in the annual Finding Our Way Home Retreat for religious professionals of the Global Majority, offering the child dedication at our final worship service together. In the community, I was invited (and accepted) to be a member of the Steering Committee for Creation Care, a local faith-based environmental advocacy group. I participated regularly in the Faith4Justice meeting with local and lay leaders working for collective liberation and joined the local Racial Equity Institute caucus facilitator team.

As I reflect on this past year, I recognize there was a lot of anxiety in the system due to staff turnover and the challenges of being in a liminal space preparing for new ministerial leadership. Fortunately, we had a strong Ministerial Search Committee that was diligent and communicative, instilling trust in the process and presenting a candidate, Rev. Audette Fulbright. The congregation voted overwhelmingly to call her as our new lead minister. We are beginning an exciting, re-energizing chapter in our congregational journey!

Family Faith Development

Family Ministry

Whole church

We've made progress integrating children and youth into worship and congregational life. In addition to the typical ways youth have offered service to our congregation traditionally -- Soup Sundays and Big Event dinner and entertainment; behind the scenes serving/greeting at the annual auction and leadership reception; and the annual YRUU worship service -- we have elevated the call for involving youth in more significant, meaningful ways that appeal to them. Examples this year included: youth worship associate Eliza Martin; a multigenerational cast of



children, youth, and adults (including church elders) participating in "skits" during worship on three occasions; a youth sharing a heartfelt reflection and activity during the AGD leadership reception; engaging children/families (especially in the Wee Worship area) particularly during the wisdom story; more ownership and leadership at youth trip Big Event fundraiser; a few of our youth sharing leadership at candidating week events (chalice lighting/reading during worship, emcee/co-host, leading games, etc.); and a sweet mom/kiddo pair offering the wisdom story and worship associate duties on several occasions. We'll continue to encourage our worship team, small groups, and committees to offer ways younger congregants can participate meaningfully and in ways that interest them.

We also have been more direct in connecting youth to church activities beyond RE, and the needle is moving. Some of our youth participated in a Friday evening UU Justice NC event at church last Fall. Also, with a targeted (and free to youth!) invitation to a Pride Fest UU auction item party, several youth gathered with fellow UU Ashevilleians at the downtown residence. Especially when a youth is in a leadership position, we see the other teens show up to support their peers; this happened at a few worship services and recently at the candidating week trivia night. This is good to see -- and it takes specific, genuine invitations to be fruitful.

Additionally, Kim and Jen have been spending more time leading in worship. Kim led worship at Thanksgiving and will also be offering the Mother's Day service this year. At the time of this writing, are finalizing the Faith Development service with Rev. Claudia. Combined, Kim and Jen have also provided monthly wisdom stories, including some skits or interactive all ages time together. In addition to those, they've stepped in to assist on Annual Giving Drive worship and other special services.

All Ages RE

Several times this year, we offered activities for ALL ages - from young children to church elders - to engage in religious exploration together at 9:30. It kicked off in October with a UU



the Vote themed morning. We had supplies for postcard writing to disenfranchised voters, a story and child friendly letters/drawings to elected reps, and a chalice lighting and inspiration. We had a fair number of adults (no kiddos) who came and participated. Young to old showed up to decorate for the winter holidays, and we did have some good multi-age participation the day we made posters for the MLK Jr. Day march and rally (people mostly did that *after* the worship service). Attendance was extremely light or even zero at some of the other offerings.



We decided if we offer this again, having activities closer to the start of service and/or after worship would likely be more effective.

Child Care

Child care was suspended during the pandemic and the early days of reopening the church, but we wanted to resume it in fall 2022 in order to be more welcoming to families with young children. We had a great team to get us started from September to December with two former employees coming back on the team. Unfortunately, we lost both of them when they changed primary jobs and no longer needed to work more than one job. It has been extremely difficult to hire folks in our current environment. Because we are only able to offer 8-10 consistent hours every month, it has been difficult to even get folks to apply. We were able to hire a wonderful UU young adult in March 2023 and have depended on volunteers from the congregation to offer child care prior to her arrival, and continually to assist her and meet our 2 adult requirements. We are hoping to continue to provide volunteer support as well as hire at least one more person before the fall.

Pastoral Care

Our families (like so many in this country) continue to battle some big, sometimes life threatening concerns. UU youth and children are not immune to the emotional challenges that plague too many adolescents and teens. They do, however, have a loving faith community to hold them in love and offer various kinds of support. RE staff has been much more integrally involved in the pastoral care needs of our families this year, including hospital visits, care packages, calls, cards and some collaboration with the care team. Perhaps this is an area to develop...seek out a child/family specialist on our pastoral care team (if we don't already have one).

Children & Youth Faith Exploration

Staff: Kim Collins, Jen Johnson, Religious Educators



Summer Sundays and more

Religious Educator Kim Collins offered a fun summer program with the help of wonderful volunteers. We used a new Soul Matters curriculum, Magic Summer, that included project oriented lesson plans for everything from learning about fair trade chocolate (and sharing a taste with the congregation!) to creating hygiene kits for people experiencing homelessness.

We got messy together making seed balls and homemade pet treats and spent lots of time on the playground. The Smith-Williams family hosted a bowling night for an all ages group in August and fun was had by all!

Youth group - new in 2022- offered a few summer opportunities for our youth to get together. There were a few meetups to welcome the newest (rising) high schoolers to their expanded peer group, connecting them with our older teens (including the recent high school grads, one of whom helped plan a park get-together) and to build stronger relationships amongst these UU teens. We also had targeted trip-related meetups before and after their summer youth trip. Having meetups was new this year, in part to prepare youth to share the experience with the congregation.

RE Volunteer Training

In late August, Jen and Kim hosted our first in person RE volunteer training since 2019! We incorporated the watch ahead videos that we created during the pandemic and were able to offer training that covered all the basics, as well as inclusivity, multicultural, LGBTQ+, and identity awareness.

Youth trip 2022

Youth trip success! From July 9-16, 2022, chaperone/advisors Will Smith and Rev. Terry Davis competently and compassionately guided many of our Coming of Age grads on a week-long Central East Region Summer Institute (CERSI) adventure. CERSI is a multigenerational summer camp-like experience where they had morning worship; youth programming and theme speaker/musician (with whom they wrote a song); afternoon multigenerational activities; "work shifts" (helping younger with an activity); touch base groups with other CERSI youth; dedicated "Asheville circle" time each evening; night youth vespers and/or youth or multigenerational programming; and more...then sleep, wake and

repeat. Our group drove 450 miles each way (road trip bonding and fun!) to the Penn West University campus, stopping at a UU in Charleston, WV for an overnight stay along the way. There were good times and fun activities. UU Asheville relationships were made and strengthened. Wider UU connections were formed, especially with other teens at CERSI. Bottom line: this new trip met many goals of our UU youth trip and was a fun and positive experience for youth and chaperones alike - many of whom want to go back again. Hopefully you heard a little about their experience during the YRUU-led worship service. If not, read the YRUU section and see the [link!](#)



Preparing our program, spaces and materials - moving furniture, cleaning out unneeded or worn out supplies, restocking supplies, generally tending to the functional and aesthetic in our RE Commons and classrooms. We were using some RE spaces in 2021-22, but many of our classrooms and other spaces needed to be cleaned out and organized after being empty for nearly two years. Kim and Jen along with a few volunteers did a big clean out and prepped classrooms for our full slate of RE programs in 2022-23. Unlike most years, we were still making decisions about what

programming to offer late in the summer. Due to a lack of RE volunteers, we had to combine two of our planned classes and be flexible with planning. The pandemic certainly had many challenges, but it has also helped us to be more creative and flexible when planning.

K-8 Religious Exploration



While we ended up having to combine our K-1st and 2nd-3rd classes this year, we were blessed with a fabulous volunteer team for our large group of early elementary kids. We used the Tapestry of Faith curriculum Love Will Guide Us. We frequently had 20 plus kids in RE Commons learning and playing together. As we increasingly see neurodiversity among our children, youth, and adults, we encouraged the use of parallel play

strategies. We know that for some kids, it's easier for them to pay attention and engage if their hands are busy with coloring or manipulatives. We also encouraged allowing kids to work quietly on the activity of their choice instead of forcing them to all be doing the same thing all the time. This helps with behavior challenges as



well as making kids feel like church is a safe place where they can themselves, instead of just another version of school.

We offered the Sing to the Power curriculum for our 4th-5th group this year, which provided our kids a chance to examine power structures, the kinds of power that they hold, and how to use that power for good. Our wonderful teaching team held space for kids not participating in in 4th-5th OWL by planning sessions focused on our UU rituals and game play.

We used a new curriculum from Soul Matters this year for our 6th-8th grade group called Crossing



Paths. It is a world religions class, similar to Neighboring Faiths which we have used in the past. Crossing Paths begins with learning about Unitarian Universalism which gives youth a grounding in our own faith, as well as a lens to use for comparing other religions. We had a truly exceptional volunteer team for this group who were able to coordinate and execute 8 visits to other places of worship for our youth and their families. We had many new families begin attending this year and it was wonderful to be able to offer a welcoming, vibrant program to people who were seeking a progressive, loving

religious environment for their families.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Comprehensive sexuality education is more important than ever - we are at a time in our country when reproductive rights, trans rights, and LGBTQ+ rights are under attack. In order to get OWL to as many children and youth as possible this year, we offered 4 different OWL classes. Since we were unable to offer OWL digitally while we were closed, there was a big demand for it, especially for the middle school class which is 25 sessions long. Because of the demand, we decided to offer two middle school classes, one for 7th/8th graders and one for 8th/9th graders. Each class had a dedicated team of 3 facilitators with assistance from an OWL "sub" and RE staff. We also offered once a month OWL sessions for our high school YRUU group as well as a 4th/5th OWL class in winter 2023. Overall, we were able to offer OWL for 40 children and youth this year.

Coming of Age

We initially planned to offer this program to our 9th graders this year but after polling and talking with families throughout the summer, we heard more significant interest in those teens first getting the important year-long OWL program they had missed during the 2 year+ COVID disruption (unable to offer OWL virtually). Due to a low number of youth/families prioritizing the intensive CoA program, we suspended it and will have a larger 9th-10th grade CoA class next year.

We did take the opportunity to more deeply evaluate what our CoA program has been over the past number of years and consider the goals, events and activities, and overarching framework of this intensive RE class. A visioning team convened on a few occasions to work with staff on this and will continue to guide the process and evolution as we move to rebuild Coming of Age to meet the era, issues, and collective work we hope to do with our maturing adolescents, their families, and the many adults (facilitators and mentors) involved in this program. Even with the strong program we have, we anticipate making some changes as we evolve toward a more intentional ARAOMC lens and continue to improve the mindful and significant spiritual support to youth, families, and all participants in this big program. This is a large, ongoing project and important work to do; there is a lot of enthusiasm about the possibilities.

YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) High School Youth Group

Food, theme exploration, PrideFest poster making, bowling, OWL, church membership session, creating care packages for YRUU alum, attending worship together, creating the [annual YRUU service](#) with 2 months of planning plus a “late night” fun, dinner, and rehearsal, conversation, and play...it’s all a part of YRUU. An especially lively recent activity was making a video greeting to candidate Rev. Audette’s high school kiddo, Mars. Participation in whole church activities too (see that section)! With the strong dedication of our marvelous youth advisors - Langdon Martin, Margaret McAlister, and Gordon Clark (and previously also with Andrea Hale) - we are growing and nurturing youth to be the amazing and unique individuals they are while maintaining a connection with the group. We have seen a boost in confidence and cohesion for particular youth as well as the group collectively. There have been some keen examples of community building, covenant, and supporting one another in this group. We also offer leadership opportunities as their maturity calls for it. The goal is to nurture more youth involvement and leadership and less adult “intervention” (but never zero) as they grow and can take on more responsibility and decision-making.



A consistent challenge with older youth is their competing interests/demands/activities. Inconsistent attendance can be an issue, especially for a high school youth group, often leading to less cohesion. That said, there is a solid core group who enjoy being together and show up with more regularity than we’ve seen in past years. Despite schedule conflicts during the year and summer, these youth are remaining connected when they can, coming together on Sundays, and participating (and help leading) in wider congregation activities. Our advisors have a solid understanding of that and are there to support the youth whenever they are present. Some advisor comments: “They need each other more

than us or a curriculum.” “An unstructured group is ok in their overscheduled lives.” “We can get out of the way.” We’ll continue to listen, brainstorm, and create ways to meet their needs and availability.

A youth trip was being planned to Birmingham and Montgomery, AL to deepen the learning around our racial justice history and present - and where our UU faith is in the struggle and celebration. Unfortunately, just as we are creating the annual report, it has been decided to postpone this trip until a different year. Because of those competing interests of rising juniors and seniors (Governor’s school, dream jobs, internships, challenges, and other), many youth are unable to attend the summer trip to Alabama as planned. While we are disappointed to release this trip for this summer, we are considering how to pivot and listening to the youth in the process. Given one suggestion to travel closer to home and have a shorter trip to include more of our youth, perhaps we will take a trip within NC over a long weekend. We’ll still factor in the goals of a UU trip experience.

Fundraising for the trip happened all year long. We were happy to bring back Soup-er Sundays and the Big Event dinner and entertainment night; families provided many opportunities for fellowship and nourishment in several ways! In addition to the camaraderie that it brings the group and the helpful fundraising \$\$, this tradition is a gift to our UU community. It provides opportunity for all ages to come together at one joyful event and be nourished in several ways. It gives our youth a chance to shine in ways they choose. It fosters relationships among the planners and the attendees. All of these events are a service to our church, provide funds to reduce trip cost for families, and typically (this year a big yes) brings these families closer together. It is important work they do together to make it happen, and the support from the congregation is greatly appreciated.



We have youth joining UUA virtual groups and drop-in meetups too! Jen periodically sends our youth and young adults info about these wider UU opportunities and recently learned that one of our high schoolers requested joining a group. They are joined by youth from all over the country, from CA to CO, Iowa to Texas, New York to Idaho, Oregon to PA - and several more states in between. It is exciting that our teens are looking for more UUism in their lives. Jen has sent YUUP, Uplift (groups for LGBTQ+ children, youth and young adults), YARN, and more UU offerings to those youth registered for RE this year, those who have dropped away from UU Asheville in recent years, and many who have graduated in the past 7-8 years. Even though we never fully know how these opportunities will land, we are planting seeds for our younger generation that may germinate and grow now or in the future.

Junior Youth Group (JYG)

We are intentionally trying to make more opportunities for this peer group to build stronger bonds as these middle grade years offer various Sunday class options and thus potentially divides this peer set for 2-3 years before Coming of Age. This is a particularly vulnerable age and developmental stage of life as young adolescents start to find and feel their place in the sometimes very challenging world. Nationally and locally, we have seen the data and stories of the big mental health struggles our young people are grappling with. We know that church can be one of those stronger, safer, braver places in their lives. So in addition to Sunday RE groups, we've offered 3 "outside of Sunday morning" opportunities so far with another 2 in planning stages, including an Earth Day road cleanup with Asheville Greenworks. We would love to see JYG happenings grow in frequency and need some help from parents and other congregants to see this flourish.

Emerging/Young Adults

A growth area for UU Asheville. From our RE program, we reach primarily to our "homegrown" young adults through periodic mailings and communications to encourage participation in wider UU groups, happenings (virtual and in person), and resources. For those who have drifted away from religious life, we hope to spark their UU light again. We also invite them to stay engaged with us in various ways, and we continue to work to offer leadership opportunities by building a bridge between them and their younger (high school aged) UU Asheville peers. Recent success: one recent high school grad is an active member on our Coming of Age visioning team, zooming in from college to participate in our meetings and offering her keen young adult insight; she'll also help lead a family meeting and games for our rising Coming of Age cohort.

Other

Based on the recommendations from the RJAC, the board requested information from RE staff about how we incorporate an ARAOMC lens into RE. Based on questions from the Board, Kim and Jen worked on and submitted a 7 page report on how we began examining biases in ourselves and our program about 5 years ago and have been intentional about incorporating our learning from this, and many other resources over the years into the program. You can read the entire report here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GZWky4arDAVR_qtdallX7MLJHngengqX_S2maee-4hoo/edit

We were tasked by the Ministerial Search Committee to pull together data, stories, videos, and more to share in our church portfolio. Kim and Jen worked together to create a package to be included in the portfolio. We also worked with the MSC to arrange cottage meetings with our children, youth, and families in the fall. RE staff has also been involved in candidating week and have facilitated ways for children, youth, and families to be involved in sharing time with Rev. Audette, including recruiting young leaders to enact and/or participate in some activities at events (trivia co-host, family fun night game leader, chalice lighter, attending worship together). Direct publicity to encourage family and youth participation through email and social media. Jen worked with YRUU to trade personal video greetings w/ Rev. Audette's high schooler for them to get to know each other and to welcome them to UU Asheville.

Jen also provided Annual Giving Drive support, including participation in the worship service.

Numbers

For 2022-2023 we had 90 families and 141 individual children and youth registered. Our average Sunday morning attendance was about 60 children and youth and 15 adult volunteers.

Professional Development

- *Stewards of Children* sexual abuse training - Jen, Kim, and all staff
- Jen attended the LREDA Fall Conference (LREDA = Liberal Religious Educators Association) in Birmingham, AL. Very valuable, with a focus on ARAOMC and 8th Principle. As a first-timer to this conference, it was also very beneficial to meet other UU RE leaders and learn about their programming, resources, etc.
- Kim completed the 3 month UU Theology Renaissance Module and presented her final project, which is a lesson plan for 1st-5th grade exploring (and planning and executing) a "Theological Garden" based on Rebecca Parker's Theological House. You can view it here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D_N74l59B-_jR_THPZheddvi2Qc-PKEcB4jzuRb5l-o/edit?usp=sharing
- Resource sharing:
 - Jen shared a lesson plan about disability justice (and more) that she created and led in virtual RE for young children in 2021 on the LREDA Member Resources Site, a new resource "directory" that launched this year.
 - Jen curated and shared UU Asheville's YRUU-led worship service from February 2022 with the wider UU community. The original script, skit, and service video link - all created, acted, and produced by our very own youth group - was shared w/ the LREDA (Liberal Religious Educator Association) member portal and UUA's Worship Web library. Both of these sites are rich with chalice words, RE lessons, meditations, music, and more to provide meaningful, inspiring resources for Unitarian Universalist (UU) worship services, Religious Education, family ministry, and personal spiritual practice.
- RE Credentialing webinar - Jen
- Jen completed the *DRE Facilitated Youth Ministry Volunteer Orientation*, offered through the UU Institute. Good learning for me as professional staff and will also be used to train RE volunteers, especially those working with youth.
- Jen participating in a 5 month long Renaissance Module Youth Ministry Practicum February-June
- For the first time, a budget request for professional development for Kim and Jen was submitted to cover the cost of training and attending professional development opportunities like the General Assembly and LREDA Fall Con.
- All staff is currently participating in Right Relationship Team Building through the UU Institute over the next 6 months.

- Kim will be attending General Assembly in Pittsburgh in June and is looking forward to spending time learning and being in collegial spaces with other religious professionals.

Adult Faith Exploration

Adult Faith Development Planning Team: Sherry Lundquist, Kelly Wedell, Jim Steffe, Rev. Claudia Jiménez(Staff liaison)

The team met monthly via Zoom focusing on Wednesday Vespers and Program planning. Our theme for 2022-2023 was Widening the Circle with the following focus each week:

- 1st Wed. Dinner & Peace Vigil
- 2nd Wed. Justice & Liberation Conversations
- 3rd Wed. Café, Cultura y Conversación
(exploring Latiné culture through conversation- in Spanish)
- 4th Wed. Theology & Spiritual Practices

Unfortunately, the attendance decline that started before COVID continued, and the weekly Vespers & Program were discontinued. It was replaced with “1st Wednesday Dinner & Vespers” launched in November. Attendance has been consistent, and we will continue the program next year. The team also sponsored an Article II Wellspring series for General Assembly delegates and interested congregants to discuss the Article II proposal that will be voted on at GA.



Spiritual Deepening Groups

Small Group Ministry at UU Asheville consists of groups that provide spiritual deepening through small group gatherings that use Soul Matters material or that are rooted in a spiritual tradition. Each year a facilitator training open to all Spiritual Deepening group leaders is coordinated by our Soul Matters Group coordinators. Reports for each group are included separately. This year, the Buddhist Sangha relaunched. I am grateful to co-chairs: Sequoyah Rich, Stef Garvin, and Duane Bigelow for their vision and leadership for this group. They have also been involved in Vespers and Sunday Worship to share Buddhist practice and history with the congregation. This year UU Asheville acquired a canvas labyrinth and our CUUPS group has organized opportunities for labyrinth walks.

Soul Matters Groups

Coordinators: Venny Zachritz, Ann Perry, Rev. Claudia Jiménez (Staff liaison)

Facilitators: Iris Hardin, Nancy Perna, EJ Haack, James Cassara, Kathy Holmes, Ellen Welles, Rev. Claudia Jiménez

Seven Soul Matters Groups were formed this year. Most groups met in person. One group met via Zoom and disbanded because of difficulties using the Zoom platform. Groups met October 2023-June 2024. All groups disband at the end of the congregational year, and new groups are reformed in the fall. This allows participants to meet diverse individuals and welcome new members. This year one of those groups was a pilot, the UU Writers Group, which explored the monthly theme through writing. The Creativity Matters piloted last year which explores the theme through art projects was also offered this year.

Besides the Soul Matters Groups, there are three "Legacy" small groups that meet regularly and are spiritual deepening groups. They were meeting before the Soul Matters Groups were formed and were called Covenant Groups. They do not disband each year, may or may not use Soul Matters Materials and welcome new members as needed. New participants are encouraged to be part of a Soul Matters Group before they join one of the existing Legacy groups.

Facilitators: Nancy Bragg, Gay Lambirth, Marta Reese

Blue Ridge Spirit CUUPS (Covenant of UU Pagans)

Steering Committee: Sherry Lundquist, Maryann Somervill, Susan Foster, Nanette Manhart and Randy Sullivan

This year has been interesting and fulfilling for Blue Ridge Spirit CUUPS, as we transitioned back to in person gatherings. We held our 8 yearly rituals celebrating the turning of the wheel, both in our beautiful sanctuary space and outdoors at Grove park. Our gatherings have been well attended by congregation members and the public, with an average of 15 to 20 participants at many holidays. In addition to our rituals, a member of our group also participated as a Worship Associate during a Sunday service. We hope to continue to participate in Sunday worship services as active congregation members.

Also this year, in conjunction with the congregation, we purchased a hand painted canvas labyrinth and have held several labyrinth walks. They have been meditative and healing and we look forward to holding more labyrinth walks in the future.

In the Fall of 2022, on 3 evenings in Sandburg Hall, we showed the trilogy of Donna Read films, followed by small group conversations and discussions. The movies are: Goddess Remembered, Burning Times, and Full Circles. The movies were excellent, and we had some rich and stimulating conversations.



Another event we co-sponsored with the Mother Grove community was a ritual items yard sale, held in the summer of 2022. All profits from CUUPS sales was donated to the UUCA, while Mother Grove donated a percentage of sales to the congregation.

In planning for the coming year, 2023-24, one area which we would like to continue to focus on is education about the Pagan path, perhaps with a speaker series or a movie. We would like to host a social gathering for our group members to encourage participation and active involvement in our group. Another area of interest to us is hosting or co-hosting monthly drum circles.

As part of our service to our community, we would like to support a member's involvement with collecting books for incarcerated individuals. We will encourage participants at our rituals to donate paperback books and we will pass them along.

We are grateful to UU Asheville for their support and cooperation as we move forward with new and exciting plans for celebrating the earth based holidays and being a part of the UU worship services. We welcome all to our circle.

UU Sangha

Co-chairs: Sequoyah Rich, Stef Garvin and Duane Bigelow

Following the disbanding of the UU Asheville Sangha last year, a newly configured Sangha was launched June 2022. The Sangha has been meeting in person in the Sanctuary on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month from 7:30 PM- 9:00PM. The new Sangha is covenantal in nature and is open to both UUAC and non- UUAC members. The Sangha facilitates becoming acquainted with fundamental Buddhist teachings and precepts, cultivating meditation, and sharing personal insights. Field trips related to Buddhism have been pursued. For example, the Buddhist Sangha went on a field trip on October 23, 2022 to the Mountain Light Sanctuary, located in Barnardsville, NC. While visiting this location the group practiced individual meditation, group meditation and participated in a Wisdom Circle facilitated by the owner of the retreat center.

The Mountain – Annual Congregational Gathering

Planning Committee: Co-Chairs Anna Martin & Sandra Goodson

Members: Adam Griffith, Cecil Bennett, Myrtle Staples, Kristi Miller, Larry Wheeler, Nancy Heath, Monica Youngman, Joanne Fox, Connie Silver, Steven Reines, Rev. Claudia Jiménez (staff liaison)

About 90 folks gathered at the Mountain in October of 2022 to enjoy a weekend of workshops, good food, lovely weather and social interaction. The highlight of the weekend was the pumpkin carving led by The Ransoms, which were set alight for all to enjoy as the sun set on Saturday evening. We had scary stories, fairy houses, dance, soul collage and more! The Sandburgers delighted us with their music and Paul Moore, as always, gave us some wonderful piano

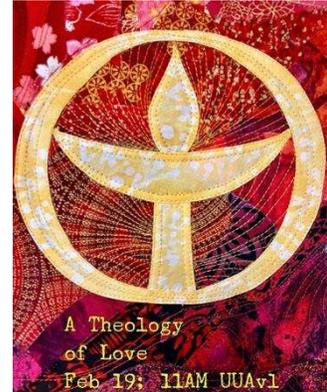


music for showtunes. Revs Claudia and Kathy gave us some wonderful inspiration.
Submitted by Anna Martin and Sandra Goodson

Worship

This year I continued crafting Sunday Worship once a month. Most of those services were created collaboratively incorporating diverse liturgical readings and stories including congregational perspectives and voices. A few highlights:

Reproductive Justice Sunday: Trust & Intersectionality (theological grounding for UU support of abortion healthcare); Courageous Resistance (8th Principle focus; collaboration with 8th Principle Team); Solstice Service (collaboration with CUUPS); Christmas Eve “Unwrapping” Service (collaboration with RE staff); A Theology of Love (Article II focus); Spirited Sunday: Faithfully Becoming (collaborated with 2022 GA attendees to generate excitement about attending GA and being a delegate; coordinated spiritual practices opportunities after service: sing along; labyrinth walk and Zentangle art)



I also offered Vespers services 1-2x a month crafted using the monthly Soul Matters themes.

Justice Ministry

Justice Ministry Council

Members: Nancy Bragg (spiritual grounding); Bernise Lynch/Joe Penno (LGBTQ+/Gender Justice); Ed Prestemon (Environmental Justice); Carol Buffum (Anti-racism/Immigration Justice); Linda Kooiker (Community Plate); Amy Moore/Joanne Fox (UU the Vote); Anita Feldman (Economic Justice/BeLoved); Jeff Jones (Animal Ministry); Rev. Claudia Jiménez(staff liaison)

The Justice Ministry Council met monthly via Zoom. We partnered with UU the Vote and UU Justice Ministry NC to get out the vote. Rev. Lisa Garcia Sampson, Executive Director of UU Justice Ministry, came to Asheville to launch our UU the Vote Program. Youth and adults were in attendance and the congregation mailed 2,000 postcards to encourage voter participation.

Jeff Jones launched the UU Animal Ministry and started tabling on Sundays to create awareness and promote respect for all beings that is reflected in how we live our lives. Iris Williams took on the leadership role when Jeff and his partner Carol Buffum moved to GA. Carol left her leadership role in A-RIJAG, and they have decided to rotate their leadership. Fredda Mangel will be the point person for the group for JMC meetings.

Racial Justice Advisory Council (RJAC) Recommendations

The council worked on fulfilling the pertinent RJAC Recommendations approved by the board.

#1 Prepare the congregation to vote for the 8th Principle (see 8th Principle Team summary below)

#5 Accountability mechanism to ensure recommendations are fulfilled.

The JMC proposed the formation of a Transformation Team. This recommendation is on hold until the new lead minister arrives.

#6 Recommendation for use of Social Justice Funds.

Conversation is ongoing. The Council intends to submit a proposal Fall 2024.

#8 Provide educational programs in partnership with Adult Faith Exploration (AFE) and the Anti-Racism Immigration Justice Action Group (A-RIJAG). The following were offered this year:

- Dismantling White Supremacy (A-RIJAG)
- Book Study: My Grandmother's Hands (A-RIJAG)
- Embracing Discomfort Book Study (Rev. Cathy and Rev. Claudia)

#14 Develop on-line and print booklet explaining UU Asheville's anti-racism/liberation work.

Completed by A-RIJAG Taskforce: Ed Prestemon, Jensen Gelfond, Fredda Mangel and approved by the board.

#15 Offer workshops on engaging in difficult conversations.

The council explored a series on Non-Violent Communication. It was tabled for consideration Fall 2024.

#17: Strengthen congregational involvement with community partners.

The two groups with which 50+ members of UUA VI have been involved in are BeLoved and UU Justice Ministry NC (UU the Vote and Zoom Action Hour). All other organizations such as the Racial Justice Coalition, Faith4Justice and CoThinkk have received Community Plate donations but there are only a handful of members who are engaged with these groups. The Council will continue to explore how to increase congregational community engagement with guidance from our new lead minister.

8th Principle Team

Nancy Bragg, Carol Buffum, Nancy Clark, Jensen Gelfond, Jeff Jones, Ed Prestemon, Mary Alm (Board Liaison), Rev. Claudia Jiménez (Staff Liaison)

This group started meeting in September 2022 and will disband June 4, 2023 when the congregation votes to adopt the 8th Principle. They developed a workshop to explore the 8th principle which was piloted at The Mountain gathering October 2022. The workshop was facilitated by team members and offered monthly Jan- May, in person and via Zoom to prepare for the congregational vote to adopt the 8th Principle in June. The 8th principle was also the theme of numerous worship services. One of them included a skit about the 8th Principle written by Jeff Jones and performed by Bella Murphy and Anna Olsen. In May, the team provided the board language for the motion to vote on adopting the 8th Principle at the congregational meeting. Once the vote occurs, the group disbands. It is their hope that the Transformation Team will hold the board and congregation accountable to making sure it was not a performative vote.



Action Groups

New Ministry: Animal Ministry

After getting approval from Rev. Claudia, Jeff Jones used the month of September 2022 to see if UU Asheville members were interested in an Animal Ministry at UUA, similar to the national UU animal ministry. About 30 people signed up. About 7-10 attended an organizational meeting in October where we decided to hold monthly events.

In November, they staffed a table with displays of animal-friendly foods for the holidays. In December, members were encouraged to visit an animal shelter of their choice. In January, Jeff led a program on animals and spirituality. Participation at events was between 2 and 5.

With Jeff's decision in February to move back to the Atlanta area, Iris Williams expressed interest in leading the group. She met with Rev. Claudia and will co-lead the group.

Submitted by Jeff Jones

Anti-Racism Immigration Justice

Highlights of our work this year:

- ◆ Dismantling White Supremacy Group studied the book "My Grandmother's Hands."
- ◆ Board voted to accept all recommendations from RJAC. Major action for ARIJAG focused on educating the congregation including in support of passing of 8th Principle at the June 2023 annual meeting.
- ◆ Partnership with URU: Good UU presence at Pride Parade. URU Chair, Bernise Lynch, educated group on "Living the Promise"
- ◆ Group discussed how to demonstrate to the congregation how all justice issues are intersectional.
- ◆ Several people from our group and the congregation work with the Welcome Circle to help settle an Afghan refugee family in Asheville (separate report provided).
- ◆ Group agrees 3 components for new ideas should incorporate – Education/Action/Reflection.
- ◆ Ed Prestemon, Jensen Gelfond and Fredda Mangel worked on a brochure that could be handed out to highlight our "mutual liberation work" as a congregation and individuals. Brochure was sent to Rev. Claudia for review and accepted by the board.
- ◆ Group supports UU the Vote with several members volunteering.
- ◆ Jensen Gelfond leading a group reading/processing the book "My Grandmother's Hands".
- ◆ Keeping congregation informed about our work with consistent presence tabling in Sandburg Hall.
- ◆ Group has discussed what a new sign could look like outside the UUCA. Bernise Lynch will research options.

◆ Members in group volunteer/serve on many different groups in the area. Some include: CoThinkk, Asheville Prison Books, Blue Note Junction, Story Medicine for Racial Healing, Faith 4 Justice, Racial Justice Coalition, Dismantling White Supremacy Support Group.

Submitted by Fredda Mangel and Ed Prestemon

Circle of Welcome for Afghan Refugees

In January 2022, Katie Winchell and Sharon LeDuc of UU Asheville, in conjunction with Lutheran Services Carolinas, formed a Circle of Welcome for an Afghan Refugee family. Over 33 members and friends of UUCA have participated in our Circle of Welcome. We have supported the family financially, culturally, linguistically and with transportation (shopping, with furniture, clothing, etc.).

In January 2023, Lutheran Services Carolinas ended the official affiliation of the Circles of Welcome for the Afghan families but acknowledged that the refugees continue to have acculturation needs and challenges that these groups can continue to fulfill. Katie has kept the group informed with sometimes daily email summaries of progress and needs (tapering off to “as needed”).

The family we’ve been helping, Faisal, Marina, and their two children (6 & 3 years old), have accomplished much. Faisal has maintained employment since May of 2022, sometimes working two jobs to support his family. Marina has acquired quite a talent for jewelry making, which has added to the family income. She is also enthusiastically studying English with the help of a team of tutors, headed by our own Judith Kaufmann, despite being illiterate in her own language and knowing almost no English when she arrived. The eldest daughter is now in kindergarten and learning English very quickly, doing very well in school. The youngest daughter is picking up phrases from her family, and now attending library story hours with her mother and Judith. Marina has also been attending a twice monthly gathering of Afghan women living in Asheville - a wonderful social support for the ladies-in-exile.

Despite an initial challenge with a poor choice in cars, the family now has a functioning car & Faisal has a NC driver’s license, making the family much more independent in fulfilling their needs such as shopping and visiting friends. With much help from UU Asheville members, they have also transitioned from initially living in a hotel, to a rental house, to an apartment downtown, and now to a more affordable apartment near the Minnie Jones Clinic, where they receive their healthcare. They are now able to access that healthcare and dental care without much help from us. They have also, until recently, received food assistance from SNAP, which helped them quite a bit financially.

Last Summer and Fall, the family completed the initial phase of the process of applying for asylum, with the help of the pro bono services of Pisgah Legal Services. A lengthy application was filled out and the family traveled to Washington, DC, for the interview phase in October. An initial estimate of 5 months for receiving a decision has now been delayed due to the large number of applications being processed. Pisgah Legal will be following-up on that soon. Pisgah Legal also helped them file their income taxes for the first time this year - definitely a new experience for them.

Although the family has made what sometimes feels like stunning progress in less than a year and a half in Asheville, there are many challenges ahead. Our Circle of Welcome is continuing involvement with them to address those needs.

Submitted by Katie Winchell

Community Plate

Team members: Cheryl Perry, Ed Prestemon, Linda Kooiker(chair), Marianne Newman, Kay Aler-Maida, Nancy Miller-Green and Rusty Bryant. Rev. Claudia Jiménez (staff liaison).

Community Plate functions as part of UUCA's social justice work. Congregational members can nominate an organization. The CP team evaluates these applications and decides which organizations will be recipient of CP funds.

This year we wanted to create longer lasting connections with our recipient organizations. From August to November, BeLoved the organization we funded. This organization has far reaching connections in our community. Each month a different aspect of the program was featured. The congregation learned about their Street Medic program, Tiny House Village, outreach to the Latino community and more. The Women's Connection group has participated in several activities with BeLoved. UUCA sponsors one of the Beloved Street Pantries. Our congregation donated \$5,550 to BeLoved. The Holiday Fund which benefits members of our congregation helped during the holidays with an amount of \$1526.

We continue to fund the Mel Hetland scholarship. We decided to change the name to UUAVL-Hetland scholarship. We are the only funders of this scholarship. We wanted to continue to honor Mel Hetland, but help the congregation understand the connection to UU Asheville. Generous donors gave \$4463. We took a few dollars from our reserves at the Asheville City schools Foundation to round up the amount to \$5,000. Upon recommendation from the foundation, we created a larger scholarship for one student this year, because costs of an education are so high.

After the Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade, the committee felt that women's reproductive rights was an area we wanted to support and educate the congregation about. We chose 3 different organizations to fund. Planned Parenthood, Carolina Abortion Fund and Pro-Choice NC we each funded for a month in the spring.

Total collected as of April 30th is \$15,848.

Submitted by Linda Kooiker

Economic Justice (BeLoved Projects)

◆ Charlotte Street Pantry

The Pantry continues to be supported by over 60 UU members and friends with sustainers who donate at least once a month and adopters who, on a particular day of each month, commit to gathering the donations and filling the pantry. We find that the pantry is emptied every day, and the people we meet who use the pantry are very appreciative.

This year, upon the suggestion of Religious Educator Jen Johnson, we held a Pantry Christmas Drive. We helped brighten the dark days of winter for our neighbors in need by inviting the full congregation to make donations, wrap them and bring the gifts to the pantry between Christmas and the New Year. This year we also found a more successful way to store donations at the congregation, buying and setting up outdoor cabinets that are locked. Not only are they more secure, they are also much kinder on our backs! The combination for them is 1961, the year that the Unitarian Association and Universalist Church merged. A special thanks goes to Mary Alm and her husband for buying the cabinets that I chose and putting them together, to James Gamble for helping in so many ways to keep the project going, and all of the generous volunteers for their donations of time and supplies, as well as their great ideas.

Submitted by Anita Feldman

◆ Raise Another Home Auction

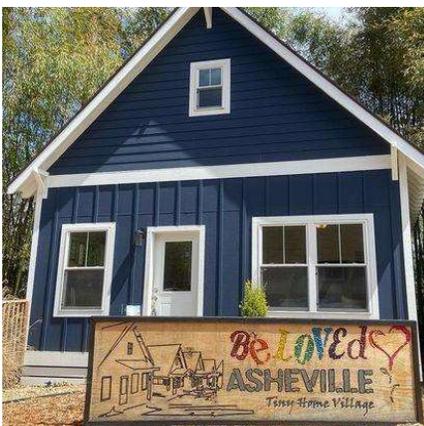
As you are reading this report, the 2nd annual Raise Another Home Auction benefitting BeLoved Asheville will be in the books! Our goal, as you might infer from the name of the auction, is to fund the building of a home in the BeLoved Village <https://belovedasheville.com/projects/belovedvillage/> as we successfully did in 2022, surpassing the goal of \$95,000 and raising approximately \$120,000!

Nancy Gamble and I proudly and gratefully represent UU Asheville on this auction's planning committee along with 7 other women in the Asheville community; together we represent five faith organizations: St. Matthias Episcopal Church, The Cathedral of All Souls, Land of the Sky United Church of Christ, Congregation Beth Israel, & the UU Congregation. It is rich and rewarding work. Please contact [me](#) if you would like to join our efforts!



Submitted by Margaret McAlister

◆ BeLoved Village



Much progress has been made at BeLoved Village over the past year. Adult volunteers from UUCAvI have participated regularly, helping other volunteers and BeLoved staff with site work and construction of the homes. Early in the year, we had a day for UUCAvI youth to help clean up around the model home and assist with other site preparation. To date, we have framed and roofed three houses that will soon be fully enclosed and ready for interior work. At that point, we will have additional opportunities for our youth to participate in hands-on work at the houses, helping with things like painting, decor and exterior landscaping. In the meantime, we have completed the foundations and begun framing two more homes in the Village, and site work is complete for a third home. These three additional homes are expected to be framed, roofed, and enclosed by the end of the summer, which will provide another

opportunity for youth to be involved. By fall, we expect site work to be completed for another four, and possibly a fifth, home in the Village and, hopefully, foundations will be poured before cold weather arrives. This will allow framing to continue through the winter months as weather permits. When completed the Village will have 12 deeply affordable homes available to those in our community who otherwise cannot afford Asheville's "affordable housing" (people earning 30% or less of area median income).

Submitted by Jim Gamble

Environmental Action Committee (EAC)

The EAC had a busy year. Below are highlights:

- ◆ Educational signs were made to describe the environmentally beneficial plants in our gardens.
- ◆ Resource lists were prepared with things we can do now to fight climate change and climate tools for kids.
- ◆ A Climate Action Fair was organized that included:
 - Distribution of educational materials
 - Discussions with representatives from local environmental groups including Energy Savers Network, Blue Horizons Project and Citizens Climate Lobby
 - Electric bicycles and cars with their owners to talk about their vehicles and their experiences
 - Mobile bicycle tune-up station
- ◆ We financially supported the Creation Care Alliance and plan to have a closer relationship with them now that Rev. Claudia is on their Board.
- ◆ Wink Zachritz prepared a new brochure about the EAC.
- ◆ Members of the EAC helped plan and participated in the Earth Day service.
- ◆ Kate Jerome is preparing a monthly environmental action newsletter that will focus on one environmental issue a month. There is a link to the newsletter in the weekly e-news.
- ◆ Sunita Patterson is leading a study group May-July for the book *The Green Boat: Reviving Ourselves in Our Capsized Culture*.

Submitted by Ed Prestemon

Justice Ministry Film Night

Film Night continued on Zoom from August 2022 through April 2023, likely to continue on Zoom only thru June. No films will be shown in July and August. We hoped to screen in Sandburg Hall and on Zoom this year, but I still have some Covid concern.

Average monthly attendance was approximately 30, mostly UU members.

The public mailing list is approximately 300 households, no significant change. The list includes UU members. I can tell by the timing of requests for the Zoom link that people are seeing film notices on the weekly e-letter, my mailing list, and the UUA website. No public flyers were posted. When we start back up in person, we will need to determine what public bulletin boards are available.

License fees per film this year have been \$150, with one exception, unchanged compared with last year. Donations are unknown. Attendees were instructed to go on the UU website if they wished to donate.

We will assist other UUA groups with the selection of documentary screenings as requested.

The following films were screened this fiscal year:

The Most Dangerous Year

Can You Hear Us Now

Border South

Tribal Justice

Reflection

Arc of Justice, Streets of Dreams, Reparations (3 shorts)

Truth Tellers

8 Billion Angels

May and June 2023 films not yet selected.

Submitted by Charles Wussow and Iris Williams

Universalist Rainbow Unity

It has been a transitional year for the Universal Rainbow Unity Committee. Our long-time leader Bernise Lynch chose to pass the torch to a newcomer. Joe Penno took over facilitating the group in January 2023.

As part of the '22/'23 fiscal year the URU would like to share some of the following successes. First was the overwhelming support and participation at 2022 Blue Ridge Pride. UUCA was represented by dozens of members marching in the Pride Promenade. As the LGBTQIA+ Community is again being targeted by those of the extreme right, it is more critical than ever that we show our support. UUCA, through the encouragement of URU, stood up to be counted among those that recognize the need to support and the rights of our LGBTQIA+ Brothers and Sisters.

Another feather in our cap was the creation of a presentation by two of our members, Marielle and August Boudreaux. This presentation speaks to the long history of and the science behind the gender spectrum. It is a presentation that can be shared far and wide to help educate our congregation and the public at large. The information describes the solid science of gender diversity and gives logical and factual evidence why we need to recognize our transgendered siblings as real and legitimate.

We have begun to plan our work and then work out plan. We have identified several activities, events, and initiatives to concentrate our efforts on in the coming year. We are going to narrow our focus to several items and once accomplished we will then move on to the next project. This will help us to develop a system of action and demonstrate visible, tangible, or recordable objectives. Our hope is that this effort will also assist in growing our number of members for our committee.

Lastly, we want to speak to and include our younger members. No effort can survive if it isn't intergenerational, and we are no different. We want to ask our young folks to join us as we continue to share the history of work and protest that has led to the rights secured for the LGBTQIA+ Community so that they can have a clear understanding as we watch a significant backslide and are prepared to take the mantle of protest and speaking out from those of us who are growing older and may be unable to do what we once did.

Submitted by Joe Penno

from the Director of Administration

Wendy B. Motch-Ellis, Director of Administration

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 5 major areas of responsibilities: general administration, human resources, buildings & grounds, finance/accounting & fundraising, and communications. In addition, I am the supervisor of the membership/ connections functions of the congregation, with 15 hours of support from our Connections Coordinator, Venny Zachritz. The A/V Techs report to me and manage all aspects of our video and sound systems in both the Sanctuary and Sandburg Hall. A new half-time Lead AV Tech, Will Lundquist, was hired at the start of the fiscal year. Mid-way through 2022-2023 the lead position became vacant and we re-design the lead position to be our Communications and Technical Specialist. This role has been filled by Simon Jacobs. We are still evaluating the roles and responsibilities for the portfolio of this position, set at 20 hours per week.

The day-to-day work involved in providing administrative and operational support for the activities of the congregation is broad in breadth and scope. 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

Administrative work accomplished by the staff is done by Tish Murphy, our office manager, and the Director of Administration. The office manager has responsibility for managing our database, Realm (our database for all giving information), and produces reports that are invaluable to the operations of the congregation. It’s through this 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. This position also is the main point of contact for all telephone calls, visitors, and rental inquiries. In addition, this position is responsible for producing many of the communications that you receive from UU Asheville, including the *Weekly eNews*. *The Director of Administration, Wendy Motch-Ellis, was responsible for editing the enews and creating/sending special content.* Tish does not create the content and Wendy Motch-Ellis has editing responsibilities, which include shortening submittals or jazzing them up to make them more enticing for participation.

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 the UU Asheville Blog. She also updates the Justice Ministry posts. Rev. Claudia updates the home page boxes for Family Ministry and Faith Development. Wendy Motch-Ellis manages changes or additions of pages, slides, widgets, menus, and more, with help as needed from our website designer, Denise Wilson.

Other communications responsibilities: Venny Zachritz creates the weekly *This Loving Community*, which is part of the weekly *eNews*. Wendy Motch-Ellis creates most graphic materials, including posters and brochures. Intentional focus was placed on re-engaging our donors for the annual giving drive. Wendy Motch-Ellis designed an extensive Annual Giving Drive theme and brochure which was mailed to every member and communicated our State of the UU and Strategic Plan for Fiscal Sustainability. Kim Collins is the primary admin for our social media and handles most posting to UU Asheville's Facebook pages. Rev. Claudia also has admin access and we will add Wendy Motch-Ellis and Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson in the coming year. The announcement slide deck that we instituted this year for worship services is created by Simon Jacobs.

A/V Technicians

We started the year with the addition of a new half-time, 20-hr per week lead AV/Tech position which was identified as a need the previous year. Will Lindquist was the first person hired into this role, left mid-year, and Simon Jacob joined us as the new Communications and Technical Specialist to our team. UU Asheville Members Jason Smith, Steve Carter, and non-UU Jess Fox continued in their role as rotating subs. Our crew handles all the sound, manages two cameras, video and slide presentations, livestreams to YouTube, and manages the YouTube channel. The staff transitions required new team members to navigate mostly on their own to learn how to use our systems, including our cameras, video files, editing videos, working with Zoom, learning how to use video streaming software, and setting up hardware and sound systems to be able to live stream our services to Sandburg Hall. We do not have an operation manual for operating all of our systems, however, Simon has started this project and we hope to have a solid operational manual finalized in the coming year.

Even with hiring a position at 20 hours per week, we do not have coverage for every event that needs to have A/V techs. It continues to remain difficult to find schedule availability amongst our subs and we are actively recruiting more AV/Techs to learn how to use our system. We hope to onboard at least two near AV Subs in the coming year, as Jason Smith plans to step down due to increased demands at his full-time job.

Membership

The Connections Coordinator's main job is to assist newcomers and new members as they get connected with 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 resources 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.

In August 2022, Venny worked with Faith Development to help populate our small group ministry, Soul Matters. Soul Matters, Creativity Matters and UU Writers are available to our newcomers/members as a way to explore their spirituality. Soul Matters is particularly important for new members as a way to learn about UU'ism and connect with UU Asheville.

September brought the beginning of our new church year and a celebration of our volunteers who work to support all we do within the congregation. As the connections coordinator, Venny helps organize the event and supplied the list of volunteers which were recognized during the service.

New Member Sunday was celebrated twice this year, October and March. During this celebration newcomers that have joined are invited to be recognized and celebrated. Venny's job is to work with the newcomers to help them get connected understand what it means to be a member with the congregation prior to joining. New member Sunday celebrates their decision to join us as members and invites them into covenant with the congregation.

In January the Care and Connect committee was developed and tasked with the mission to personally reach out to members that were considered active (had a pledge) but not showing up to service or other events. The committee consists of a board liaison, a member of the congregation and the Connections Coordinator as the staff liaison. Out-reach to identified members was performed through a direct call and conversation and, if needed, a personal meetup. The results of the outreach were very positive with several members responding that they were grateful to hear from UU Asheville and many have since returned to service or have become active in a group. In addition to the personal outreach, Care and Connect will organize a group of Connector volunteers that will be paired with newcomers to help them get comfortable with our congregation. The Care and Connect committee will meet 4x/year to determine if there are other members to contact.

April saw the week-long events of Candidating Week as we called our new minister, Rev. Audette Fulbright Fulson. Volunteers were needed to help staff these events and as Connections Coordinator, Venny helped recruit and fill these needs. We had over 40 UU Asheville members volunteer during this one week.

Additional duties include organizing newcomer events; welcoming newcomers weekly via email; sending out the weekly *This Loving Community* (TLC) section of the e-newsletter; annual updating of the Directory of Connections and Social Groups booklet; responding to member emails and requests; managing the Sunday morning Welcome Team and Coffee Crew; covering office duties when needed; populating the Soul Matters groups; and alerting the Ministers about any member issues that come my way.

submitted by Venetia Zachritz, Connections Coordinator

Human Resources

This past year was a year of change and challenge for the staff. We entered into our second year with an Interim Lead Minister. Our policy governance model delegates executive functions to the Lead Minister. The scope and size of our congregation provided challenges for an interim minister to lead both the executive side and ministerial duties, along with guiding the Ministerial Search Committee. In addition, the congregation and staff all experienced a huge loss at the sudden passing of Rev. Mark Ward, in June of 2022, who had just retired the previous year as Lead Minister/Executive after 17 years. The beginning of this past year was heavy for the staff, as they mourned, reflected, celebrated his life, and tried to look to the future.

The staff team struggled and there were personnel issues where staff were not in covenant with one another at various times throughout the year. The staff started Right Relations training and is still a work in progress. As the year progressed, the staff were eagerly anticipating the selection of a new settled Lead Minister/Executive who could handle the big picture issues our congregation is facing along with providing strong leadership and executive management to the staff. From a human resources perspective, it may be beneficial to note that if the Lead Minister/Executive role is ever vacant in the future, one person may not be able to effectively handle all the needs, and the Board of Trustees may wish to consider appointing a board member or strong volunteer to focus on some of the roles of the Executive to support an Interim Lead Minister/Executive.

Linda Topp, the former long-time Director of Administration, retired the previous year in May 2022 and Brittany Crawford immediately transitioned into the role as the new Director of Administration. Brittany left after only 3 months in August of 2022. Marta Reese, Finance Advisory Committee Chair, filled in as the interim Administrator until Wendy Motch-Ellis was hired in October 2022. Linda Topp continued to consult throughout the year and was instrumental in fully onboarding Wendy. As mentioned above, Will Lundquist, the new half-time Lead AV/Tech left after a few months in November 2022 and Simon Jacob was hired in March 2023 as the new Communications and Technical Specialist.

The nursery was opened on Sunday mornings. Finding qualified childcare staff was incredibly difficult due to the limited hours. We adjust pay to stay on par with Asheville's living wage.

Salary adjustments went into effect reflecting the UUA salary guidelines. Clarification was provided to staff on independent contractor vs employee and all compensated individuals were adjusted accordingly per IRS guidelines. Several staff working for us as independent contractors migrated over as part-time employees paid by the congregation and were no longer eligible to receive payments directly from third parties. The exception remains for Ministerial and Musical Professional Services, which are allowable under IRS guidelines.

We have updated our staff travel policy and implemented per diems for meals rather than individual meal receipts. Per Diems are based on government-established rates and vary depending on the travel destination.

Risk Management & Safety

Sexual Abuse Prevention

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 the 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.

Insurance

A thorough review of our property, general liability, and worker's compensation insurance policies was conducted in November 2022. Our policies protect our assets and liabilities and we have increased coverage to include cybercrimes. A risk assessment was also conducted as part of our renewal. We continue to use the same insurance broker and, per the recommendation of our broker, we changed our worker's comp insurance provider to a new provider that offers the same coverage at a lower premium.

Data Management & Protection

A significant amount of work was done this past year to ensure we are managing and protecting our electronic data. We have fully migrated into a Google Plus Workspace and created shared drives that allow the congregation to own and back up all work conducted by both staff and volunteers. We implemented two-factor authentication and set up proper business plus management of Apple devices similar to how we manage PC systems. Throughout the pandemic, data was saved in various locations, including the server, cloud, and personal devices. We are slowly migrating all our data from the various locations to the cloud for accessibility and backup.

In the coming year, we need to review and update or establish our records management policy, determine what items should be converted to electronic files, how long items should be maintained, and process for destruction. Off-site records storage may become necessary, as we have outgrown storage spaces within 1 Edwin and the basements of 21 and 23 are not suitable environments for maintaining sensitive documents for extended periods of time.

Buildings & Grounds, Including Building Safety

Building Safety

Throughout COVID, many things, including our building safety plans, were put on hold. We had an active Building & Emergency Safety Team, led primarily by Michael Beech, that stalled. The Director of Administration, Wendy Motch-Ellis, has met several times with Michael, has received a full status update on the progress of the former safety team, and will reconstitute a new safety team. Michael Beech has agreed to serve as a consultant as we form our new team and continue building our safety and emergency protocols. Safety will be top priority in the coming year.

Fire Panel Monitoring

Our 5-year fire alarm inspection agreement was renewed and continue our 24/7 monitoring with Johnson Controls.

IMPORTANT NOTE! While we have purchased defibrillators for both the main building and 23 Edwin they still have not been deployed because we have no volunteers to manage these. They require someone to have the defibrillators' statuses on a phone app and require occasional checking of batteries. If one is used, a rather substantial follow-up is required to get it back in service.

Impacts of the Pandemic

We have returned to full normal operations. Masks are optional and still provided at the welcome desk on Sunday mornings. We strongly encourage folks to wear masks during the winter months to support a welcoming and healthy community for all our members, but masks remain optional. In the spring we removed all our COVID-related signage, though we continue to monitor Buncombe County Alerts for COVID impacts in our region.

Building Managers

I could not do the rest of my job without the time donated by our Building Managers. Deepest thanks to **Glenn White**, who was our primary building manager throughout the year. Glenn was supported with assistance from **Clyde Hardin, John Bates, and Wink Zachritz**. **John Roeth**, joined the group, however, due to staff transitions and schedules, he was not fully onboarded or involved this past year. We hope that changes in the coming year. I am incredibly grateful for their many skills and time they have devoted to our buildings.

Building Coordinators

We currently have two Building Coordinators, **Steve Carter** and **Natalie Polinko**. Our Building Coordinators are scheduled to be on-site for rentals, and special events, and assist with unique building needs such as laying snowmelt in preparation for cold & wet nights. They are instrumental in ensuring our spaces are used well, are trained to respond to building and medical emergencies and ensure the building is secure after these events.

Rentals

Rentals have started to return to pre-COVID levels. We had numerous memorial services and one-time special events. Our long-standing rental groups include:

- Buncombe County Board of Elections (Poll Place)
- Friends of Mine Preschool
- Asheville Music School
- Asheville Chamber Music Series
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Sierra Club
- Women's Song

Building Maintenance

Each year there are substantial recurring charges to the "Buildings" account. These include bi-annual check-ups/maintenance of all our heating and cooling units, annual checks of our smoke alarm systems (Main and 21 Edwin) and fire extinguishers, annual checks of our flat roof, monthly pest control, and gutter-cleaning which come to a total of approximately \$10,000.

This year we budgeted just \$10,000 for "Buildings" (we charge items that cost more than \$1,000 to the Capital Maintenance and Repair Fund, which is why I am always whining about not having enough money there) and will be going over that amount this year. Here are the year's less-regular purchases/repairs/upgrades over \$1,000:

Main building – 1 Edwin Place

- Roof Leak in Sanctuary and repair to woodpecker holes in cedar siding and continued roof leaks and roof drain issues in foyer, kitchen, and SH – \$2,243
- HVAC Annual Preventative Maintenance - \$2781
- Fire Panel Monitoring and Service - \$981

21 Edwin (wood)

- Fire Panel Repairs and Service - \$2,111
- Restoration Services – Basement Mold - \$2080

23 Edwin (brick)

- Restoration Services – Flooding Basement & Garage - \$4,414

Solar Panels

We still have them; We started discussing possibly having a group assess the ROI on panels now that we have over 5 years of data by comparing previous years' utility bills prior to and after installation. This has been discussed as a possible project for the EAC.

Long-Range Capital Planning

Capital Assets Task Team: John Bates (chair), Adam Griffith (Board Representative), Wink Zachritz, and Wendy Motch-Ellis (staff liaison)

This task team formed under the UU Asheville Executive in November 2022 to provide input to the Lead Minister/Executive regarding 1) recommending any needed inspections or repairs to properties in coordination with the City of Asheville stormwater plans and activities including the Edwin/Celia Pl. project (<https://www.ashevillenc.gov/projects/edwin-place-celia-place-canterbury-road-stormwater-improvement-project/>), 2) update and prioritize the Capital Assets inventory, and 3) examine options for financing needed upkeep and improvement of Capital Assets.

The team met and performed a walk-through of all UU Asheville facilities in early December 2022, as an initial assessment. That walk-through revealed several items that need to be addressed to ensure the long-term continued use of 21 and 23 Edwin Pl. We contracted with a residential home inspector to perform independent due diligence inspections of those properties. The Task Team reviewed those inspection reports, conducted a risk assessment of each area identified from the inspections, and identified several priority areas that have the potential to cause life/safety concerns. Work is now ongoing to get bids and review work for 21 and 23 Edwin.

As that work was happening, the UUCA Board of Trustees in January 2023 proposed the Task Team expand its work as part of the Congregation's broader engagement effort focused on fiscal sustainability. The Board proposed:

Long-Range Planning Committee (new): John Bates (chair), Adam Griffith (board liaison), Wendy Motch-Ellis (staff liaison), Wink Zacharitz,)- initial list, plan to add a representative from the Finance Advisory Committee and more members will be appointed in the coming year.

Charge: Identify and prioritize capital and infrastructure needs for our properties based on lifespan, cost, and necessity. Explore potential special asks of donors to fund specific current and future needs.

The Capital Assets Task Team agreed to expand into this new Committee, however, we felt it important to phase in this new work with the ongoing more urgent work. Thus, we developed a three-step plan to

accomplish the work needed. Ultimately, this work needs to be part of a larger Congregational discussion that involves a long-range plan developed in collaboration with the entire Congregation and our new Lead Minister over the next few years. This approach will allow us to work as needed with professionals to perform work on 21 and 23 Edwin Pl over the next months.

The plans for the Long-Range Planning Committee are now:

Phase 1 – Spring 2023—Spring 2024: Get job quotes, and negotiate needed repairs (hoping summer 2023 for 21 Edwin, first priority). Repeat for each of 3-5 high-risk areas for each property.

Phase 2 – Spring 2024-Spring 2026: Apply continuing maintenance and address medium risk categories as needed, and start long-range planning including “Sacred Places” conversation.

Phase 3 – Spring 2025-Spring 2026: Congregational meetings on a long-term plan with the goal of adoption at Congregational Meeting.

The focus this spring is on addressing specific capital repairs and maintenance of 21 and 23 Edwin. As we move into the new year, the full team will begin meeting to strategically begin thinking about our capital assets and needs.

BOT \$50K allocation towards additional repairs

The Board of Trustees approved an initial \$50,000 allocation towards immediate necessary repairs. The Finance Advisory Committee recommended and the BOT approved this allocation to be funded through \$16,000 in the capital improvement fund and another \$34,000 from the Contingency Fund.

In the spring and early summer of 2023, the team oversaw the following projects thus far:

1 Edwin

Electrical Repairs - Identified an electrical surge occurred in the Sanctuary AV electrical panel – parts have been ordered but repair is to take place next fiscal year – estimated to exceed \$3,000 in FY 23-24

21 Edwin

Home Inspection - \$500

Electrical Inspection - \$175

Electrical Repairs - \$3,843

HVAC/Plumbing Repairs

23 Edwin

Home Inspection - \$623

Electrical Inspection - \$200

Electrical Repairs - \$6,650

HVAC/Plumbing

Grounds

The campus is presently “groomed” by a contractor (a local Black-owned business) to do the mowing, weeding, leaf-blowing, and mulching. Our landscape committee continues to show up and perform targeted weeding and other maintenance.

We did not do too many ground improvements this past year aside from some minimal replanting. Next year will be a larger focused year of mulching, tree trimming, tree planting, removal of stumps, and new gravel/grading of the gravel lots. We did lose a Spruce tree planted in memory of a long-time childcare attendant, Lillian Lindsey. We are exploring options to relocate the plaque.

Landscape Committee

The Landscape Committee (a division of the Environmental Action Committee) has been actively working to improve the physical campus of the congregation.

We are working to eradicate invasive species and incorporate pollinators, native plants, and food plants as suggested by the Green Sanctuary certification program. Our goal is to turn the campus from an intensively managed landscape into a sustainable landscape with low input. Our intention is to not only beautify our campus but to become a resource to educate the congregation and community. We have begun posting some informational signs.

The volunteer landscape crew has been working tirelessly to plant, transplant, and generally keep the grounds in a healthy state. Our main project last fall and this spring was the development of a Pride in Diversity garden with the backing of the UURU group on campus. RE youngsters helped plant bulbs last fall to get the project started.

Submitted by Kate Jerome

Memorial Garden

Memorial Garden Team 2022-23: Duane Bigelow, Ann Sanders Cargill, Ruth Christie, Nancy Gouin, Kate Jerome, Richard Kark, Jamileh Mikati, LaDonna Pfaff, Jody Watts, Venny Zachritz.

This past year we had four new interments at the UU Asheville Memorial Garden. Team members continued to maintain the memorial garden and surrounding beds. In 21-22 new steps from the upper parking lot to the memorial garden we installed. We have identified a need to install a handrail in FY 23-24. The team has identified soil condition issues due to the internments and looking at options to beautify the garden in the coming year with hardscape and sculpture art, as the soil condition do not support plant growth.

Submitted by Jody Watts

Finance/Accounting & Fundraising

Finance Advisory Committee

Marta Reese, Chair, Sammy Fong, Andrea Hale, Clyde Hardin, Monica Youngman and Wink Zachritz. Ex-Officio members: Wendy Motch-Ellis, Director of Administration and Christine Magnarella Ray, Bookkeeper

The FAC decided to increase their frequency of meetings this past year. The chair, Marta Reese, was also serving as the interim Director of Admin for all things financial-related in late summer and most of the fall during staff transitions. The FAC met 9 times (monthly this past year - except for July, December, and June). Per policy, the FAC must meet quarterly and review drafts of all financial reports.

At the August meeting, the FAC discussed the deficit of \$21,783 for Fiscal Year 21/22 (ended June 30, 2022). The **budgeted** loss for this period of time was \$7,257 so the additional **unbudgeted** loss was \$14,506. The major reason for the additional loss was coming in under budget from pledge commitments. A transfer was made from the Contingency Fund in the amount of \$21,783. Given the pledge deficit for 21/22, we discussed whether the amount budgeted for pledges for 22/23 (\$645,000) was realistic.

Priority Focus of the Year

In addition to reviewing financial statements, two topics were at the top of the list at all of our meetings.

Meet the Moment (Second Ask)

First, Is the budgeted loss of \$80,000 for FY 22/23 realistic, or will it be bigger? We estimated that the loss would be closer to \$120,000. The Board decided to carry out a second ask (Meet the Moment). At the end of the fiscal year, contributions from Meet the Moment were \$137,994! This is incredibly important because the Second Ask demonstrated our congregation's ability to stretch their giving.

Next Fiscal Year's Budget for 23/24

Secondly, What will the 23/24 budget look like? In preparing for next year's annual budget, the FAC is charged with reviewing the annual budget developed by the Administrator and recommend it to the Executive for presentation to the Board, which presents it to the Congregation for a final vote at the Annual Meeting.

- Reviewing the annual budget was the most challenging task the FAC encountered this year. The FAC has been working with Wendy Motch-Ellis, Director of Administration, over the last several months.
- Wendy Motch-Ellis and Marta Reese made a presentation to the Board in December 2022
 - They showed that pledge commitments for 23/24 would have to be around \$800,000 in order to attain a balanced budget, and presented the trends related to pledging units and membership.
 - At the December Board meeting, Wendy also presented a call to action and offered a pathway to begin addressing our need for fiscal sustainability by starting with a focus on four areas:
 - Care Connect Team
 - Revitalized Giving/Sustaining Campaign Team
 - Stewardship Team
 - Legacy Team

- At the FAC meeting on April 24, 2023, Wendy presented a budget with a \$175,000 deficit. This was not a surprise to the FAC since we had been closely following the Annual Giving Drive. After going over the budget in detail, the FAC asked Wendy to trim \$20,000 from non-personnel expenses. The FAC agreed that it would not be appropriate to suggest reducing or eliminating any personnel positions at this time given that the church is still in the process of coming back from the pandemic AND that a new minister was about to be called.
- The FAC met again on May 17, 2023, and reviewed a budget showing a deficit of \$146,225. After a lengthy discussion, the FAC unanimously voted to recommend this deficit budget to the Executive. Further, the FAC unanimously voted to use the Contingency Fund to cover the projected deficit. We are fortunate to have a Contingency Fund that can cover this projected deficit, so the consensus was that it was important to continue to invest in our staff as we overcome all the unknowns created by the pandemic and prepare for a new minister. Note: At the special May board meeting after the Budget Town Hall, the board voted to increase our Annual Program Fund Contribution to the UUA from 4.5% to 5% (the UUA Ask is 6.5%), which adjusted our final budget to an anticipated \$149,557.

However, the FAC is very concerned about using the Contingency Fund to balance the operating budget in future years because the projected balance in this fund after covering the projected loss of \$146,225 will be only approximately \$66,000, which is significantly below the recommended 15% of budgeted expenses (approximately \$140,000). The FAC believes that there is a possibility that some difficult decisions may have to be made this coming year.

In addition, UU Asheville has deferred capital maintenance that is critical to sustain the campus and we will need significant investment in the near term or accept the risk of large, unplanned expenses, both of which will require increased funding in the future.

Additional Work of the FAC

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. One mini-review was conducted by Monica Youngman and Andrea Hale on October 18, 2022, for the period January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022, and a second mini-review for the period of July 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022, will be conducted forthcoming.

During these mini-reviews, as well as throughout the year, fiscal reports are reviewed to ensure any monies spent from restricted funds meet the criteria of the restrictions. One item that arose this past year was related to restricted funds that may have a balance from a specific purpose, but that purpose no longer exists or is unable to be met.

The FAC also reviews annually, usually in July or August, our existing and proposed financial policies and procedures. There were no changes to financial policies this past year. In the coming year, the FAC may look at policies related to how to handle funds that were collected for a specific purpose, have a remaining balance that cannot be used for said specific restricted purpose, and whether those funds

can partially or fully be spent down for another similar purpose. This may also tie in with how we should or shouldn't deplete restricted funds where a balance forward may be necessary or prudent.

We continue to use Do Good Books (owned by Christine Magnarella Ray) for bookkeeping services.

We continued our investment in Mountain Bizworks as a socially responsible community investment. As of the end of the fiscal year, we have \$83,473 at Mountain Bizworks. Due to our budget deficit, we are withdrawing the interest earned on our investment semi-annually.

THANK YOU'S

- To Wendy Motch-Ellis for her outstanding business acumen and leadership.
- To Christine Magnarella Ray for her outstanding bookkeeping and fund of knowledge about the history of the church.

submitted by Marta Reese, FAC Chair

Annual Giving Drive (AGD)

Theme: "Roots & Wings"

Co-Chairs: Will Jernigan, Wes Miller, Team: Clyde Hardin, Wendy Motch-Ellis, Rev. Cathy Harrington

Recap prior to the launch of the Spring 2023 Giving Drive

The Annual Giving Drive goal over the past few years was higher than what had been realized – primarily due to a decline in pledging units. We realized this past year that we had lost 40 members who passed away throughout the pandemic years and another 7 during this fiscal year. These may not have been COVID-related deaths, but it was significantly higher than our average loss of members. We have also experienced the loss of members due to the pandemic, social distancing, and the impacts of losing our beloved minister of 17 years, Rev. Mark Ward, who retired at the end of 2021 and suddenly passed away in 2022.

In planning for the current fiscal year, we knew that we had an AGD goal the previous year (21-22 for 22-23) of \$670,000, a budget goal of \$645,000, and the reality of falling short of our goal the past few years and an anticipated \$80,000 deficit for the year. We moved forward with the board-approved plan in the spring of '22 to do a second ask early in the fall to help reduce the size of the projected deficit. The Second Ask was incredibly successful. We exceeded our goal of \$120,000 by an additional \$17,994.

Spring 2023 Annual Giving Drive for FY 23-24

The Annual Giving Drive team was very strategic in how we approached this year's Annual Giving Drive. For the past several years, the AGD was conducted as an auto-renewal. This year we intentionally moved away from an auto-renewal process and re-engaged our members and friends with a full brochure, a new strategic vision for fiscal sustainability, and a clear message to our congregation on the state of our financial health. Our Director of Administration designed a professional, creative, and extensive 4-page color AGD Brochure, which was mailed to everyone all members and friends of our congregation. The board adopted a four-pillar plan for fiscal sustainability that was woven into the brochure. Our theme, Roots & Wings, was messaged throughout the campaign, with the brochure,

Leader's Reception, messaging, and Celebration Sunday. We continued to promote the AGD via blast emails, follow-up letters asking folks to stretch their gifts, announcements from the pulpit, video testimonials, robocalls, and continuing "blurbs" in various eNews editions.

We decided to continue the campaign longer than usual, to push us past Candidating Week (where we overwhelmingly voted with nearly 100% confidence to call The Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson) and a final push before the Budget Town Hall on May 21st. We intentionally set a realistic and attainable AGD budget goal of \$640,000. Just after the Budget Town Hall, we had received \$617,458 in pledges and at the time of writing this report, we have received \$640,517 in pledges to date for the 23-24 fiscal year. We believe the Second Ask of Meet the Moment, along with the excitement of calling The Rev. Dr. Audette Fulbright Fulson, not only increased giving this current fiscal year but also resulted in stretched pledging going into the upcoming new fiscal year. This, by the way, is higher than any pledge amount received since 2017-18 (if only expenses were still the same as back in 2017-18)!

Close of Fiscal Year

On a positive note, though we fell short as anticipated in our regular annual giving drive commitments paid by current and new contributors, the second ask was incredibly successful. With the success of the Second Ask, along with increases in other donations, a final Economic Impact Payment from the federal government, and one-time gifts, we ended this year with a surplus of \$97,993. While we still have a planned deficit for the coming year, the 2nd Ask (Meet the Moment) stretched our giving and will allow us to allocate Contingency funds to cover the anticipated deficit

The congregation did an amazing job with our Second Ask, which created a surplus for the fiscal year. The surplus will be transferred to the Contingency Fund per policy, and then if the Contingency Balance is at its recommended limit of 15% of budgeted expenses for the upcoming fiscal year, the additional amount will then be transferred to the Capital Maintenance and Repair Fund. In addition, the FAC will need to propose a resolution in the upcoming fiscal year to fund the planned deficit in the 23-24 operating budget.

The proposed budget for 2023-24 is included at the back of this report. As of this writing, the projected bottom line for 2022-23 (this current fiscal year) looks to have a surplus of about \$97,993.

Building Rentals

Our buildings normally provide three benefits for UU Asheville: they are home to our own programs and activities; they are a source of funds; they are resources we offer to the community. During the part of the year we were shut-down, 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. Rentals are beginning to resume now. Consequently, instead of our approximate \$15,000 in rental income we budgeted, we will earn about \$9,100

Significant Operating Expenses >\$1k

Administrative Operational Expenses >\$1k

- Administrative Office additional file cabinets - \$1,184
- Background Checks for the year - \$1,461
- Computers, monitors, dock stations – Apple \$2,949; Dell \$6,255
- Do Good Books – Bookkeeping Service - \$28,708

- ETS Computer Network Mgt, Wi-Fi Repair, Network Switch- \$4,234
- IS Technology Copiers - \$16,084
- QuickBooks Payroll Processing Fees - \$1,157
- QuickBooks Payroll Salaries - \$354,352
- NCDOR Payroll & Sales Tax - \$12,169
- UUA Program Fund - \$33,320
- UUA Transitions Office - \$3,500
- UUA Insurance Plans - \$56,783
- UUA Retirement Benefits - \$56,559
- Realm – ACS Technologies Software - \$4,488
- Realm- Vanco Bank Processing Fees - \$4,184
- Wilson Web Design & Maintenance - \$1,414
- The Mountain Retreats and Scholarships- \$2,375

Grounds & Building (Operating) >\$1K

- Landscaping and Grounds Upkeep - \$7,555
- Charter- Spectrum Internet & Voice - \$3,770
- Compost Now - \$1,560
- Custodial Services - \$31,296
- Insurance – Building/Commercial Liability/Worker’s Comp - \$11,803
- Utilities

1 Edwin

- City of Asheville Sewer/Water - \$2,871
- Duke Energy - \$4,533
- Dominion Energy - \$926

21 Edwin

- City of Asheville Sewer/Water - \$1,120
- Duke Energy - \$915
- Dominion Energy - \$1,190

23 Edwin

- City of Asheville Sewer/Water - \$609
- Duke Energy - \$2,022
- Dominion Energy - \$242

UU Asheville Auction – “Anything Goes Prom”

November 12, 2022, online and in-person

Leaders: Margaret McAlister and Marta Reese

Team: Sally Witkamp, Ann McLellan, Tory Schmitz, Deb Holden, Fredda Mangel, Sherry Lindquist, Anna Martin, Ann Cargill

Our intrepid team forged ahead with planning for an in-person gala, knowing that we could pivot to an all-online event if necessary.

We had an enjoyable gala event, provided members of the congregation with opportunities for connection throughout the year, and supported the work of UU Asheville financially.

Auction 2022 consisted of

- an online silent auction, which ran from the Wednesday before the gala until the Wednesday after the gala.
- a gala at the AB Tech Conference Center, with a live auction, dinner, and dancing
- a select number (29) of silent auction items that were bid on in person at the gala.

Attendance was approximately 110 (compared to approximately 200 in 2019, our last in-person gala before the pandemic).

Financials

- Income \$38,641.90
- Expenses \$7,902.96
- Net Income \$30,738.94

This compares with 2021 net income \$29,085.97, 2020 net income \$26,455.64, and 2019 – our pre-pandemic auction – net income \$35,701.62

Lessons learned

- In November 2022, people were still hesitant to join a large in-person indoor gathering.
- People enjoyed dressing up! Attire included a kilt, a high school prom dress, Goth attire, and many sequins and sparkles.
- The congregation remains very generous.

Holiday Craft Fair, Equal Exchange Coffee Sales, and Acoustic Journeys

The UU Asheville Holiday Craft Fair was held in Sandburg Hall on November 20 after the Sunday Service, with 15 artists, craftspeople, writers, and musicians displaying and selling their work. Thanks to all who came out to support our talented and creative UU Asheville members and friends, as well as UU Asheville itself. In lieu of an entry fee, there was a commission of 20% of sales charged to each participant, with total commissions of \$713.00 going to the UUCA. A special thanks goes to Judy Graves, who donated 100% of her sales. We'll hopefully see you again in the Fall of 2023!

Equal Exchange Coffee Sales and Acoustic Journeys never rebounded from COVID. The staff are discussing a new Live Performance and Events Fundraising Series for the upcoming year.

Legacy Circle Committee

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

The purpose of the Legacy Circle Committee is to encourage members of the UU Asheville community to include the congregation in their estate planning, to provide estate planning information, and to give recognition to the members of the Legacy Circle. As with many activities in the Congregation, the Committee's activities in the last two years were hampered by the COVID-19 epidemic. Consequently, no new members were recruited in this church year. In addition, no new gifts were received other than

the second installment of a previous gift.

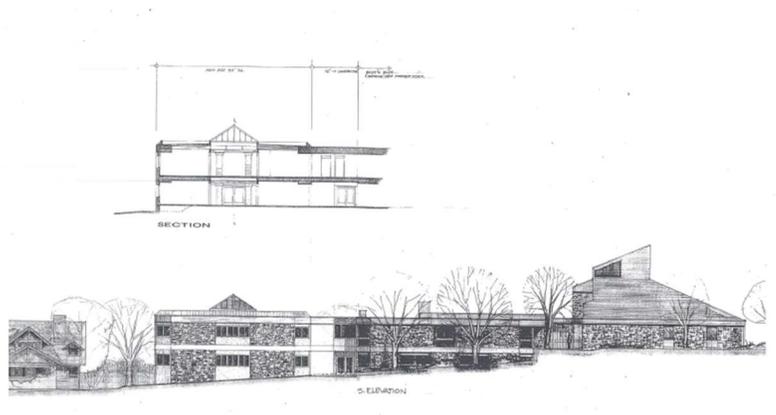
Every other year the Committee hosts a recognition event for Legacy Circle members. In October of 2022, the Committee hosted a reception in Sandburg Hall with over 30 members of the Legacy Circle attending.

Our thanks go out to our three retiring Committee members; Mike Horak, Myrtle Staples, and Mara Sprain for their long and productive service on the Committee and we welcome two new members; James Cassara and Judy Harper as well as our new Board Liaison, Mary Alm

submitted by Gene Lambirth

A special note on the passing of Legacy Member **William O. Moore**

William (Bill) O. Moore was a generous contributor to UU Asheville. He leaves all of UU Asheville a special legacy - our award-winning sanctuary. Bill served as architect of not only our sanctuary, but he created several architectural drawings of our entire building, including as Jerry McLellan, says "a perfect addition he designed many years ago that would suit us well today." Below are some renderings of Bill's architectural drawings he so generously donated to our congregation.



Submitted by Jerry McLellan

Projected Current Year (22-23) and Proposed Operating Budget

INCOME	Actual 2021-22	Budget 2022-23	Projected 2022-23	Proposed 2023-24
Sustaining Support				
Current Financial Commitments	571,061	645,000	548,250	640,000
New Member/Friend Commitments	7,368	20,000	6,534	10,000
Less Reserve (6.0%)		(38,700)		(38,400)
Post Paid Financial Commitments	17,398	9,675	5,168	9,600
Other Donations				
Non-Pledge Contributions (Legacy, Gifts, Other)	21,066	30,000	64,938	50,000
Meet the Moment			137,000	
Earned Revenues				
Interest & Other Short-Term Investment Earnings	753	2,000	6,573	4,500
Endowment Distribution	22,561	22,000	23,287	23,500
Rental Income	11,781	10,000	18,221	18,000
Fundraisers - Auction, Craft Fair, Cookbooks, etc	34,166	40,000	40,676	45,000
Registration Fees		500	600	500
Total Sustaining Support, Donations and Revenue	686,154	740,475	851,247	762,700
Community Plate				
Community Plate Community Support Disb.	14,962	15,000	19,041	20,000
FISCAL & ADMINISTRATIVE TOTAL INCOME	701,116	755,475	870,288	782,700
EXPENSE				
Worship and Music				
Worship Guest Speakers - Fees	1,175	3,550	3,550	2,250
Guest Speakers - Travel				750
Worship Associates	89	200	100	200
Worship Supplies - All Services	1,114	1,200	2,025	1,500
AV Tech Supplies & Support (in personnel & building exp)	4,937			
Music Presenters	5,616	10,400	10,400	11,600
Music Supplies	-	-	-	2,525
WORSHIP & MUSIC EXPENSE TOTAL	12,931	15,350	16,075	18,825
Care & Connect				
Pastoral Care	581	200	1,300	750
Membership/Connections	962	2,200	1,500	1,750
Wednesday Vespers	-			-
Congregational Events	8,505	3,900	4,583	4,000
Kitchen & Coffee Hour/Hospitality				750
Community Outreach Events & Ads	840	-	-	1,750
CONG. CARE & CONNECT EXPENSE TOTAL	10,888	6,300	7,383	9,000
Justice Ministry Outreach				
Justice Ministry - General	4,205	8,850	8,850	3,000
Environmental Action Committee				750
Universal Rainbow Unity				1,300
Anti-Racism Immigration & Justice Action Groups				2,100
Economic Justice				600
Social Justice Film Series				1,800
Community Plate Community Support Disb.	14,962	15,000	19,041	20,000
JUSTICE MINISTRY OUTREACH EXPENSE TOTAL	19,167	23,850	27,891	29,550

(continued on Next Page)

	Actual 2021-22	Budget 2022-23	Projected 2022-23	Proposed 2023-24
UUA Connections				
UUA Annual Program Fund (UUA/Southern Region)	31,592	33,321	33,321	33,318
UU Relations	-	480	480	500
UUA CONNECTIONS OUTREACH EXPENSE TOTAL	31,592	33,801	33,801	33,818
Faith Development				
FD Supplies and Equipment	1,365	2,500	2,500	2,500
FD Background Checks - Volunteers	714	900	900	1,100
FD Hospitality (food & gifts)	685	1,900	1,900	1,900
FD Leadership/Teacher Training	1,024	2,500	2,500	1,500
FD Coming of Age	2,289	2,300	2,300	3,000
FD Youth Activities	501	500	500	500
FD Adult Faith Development	2,149	5,000	5,000	3,800
Family Ministry	2,252	3,300	3,300	2,000
FAITH DEVELOPMENT EXPENSE TOTAL	10,979	18,900	18,900	16,300
Governance & Mission Support				
Administrative costs, including computers, software	66,469	72,400	76,752	79,375
Insurance (liability & worker's comp)	12,230	12,100	12,553	12,583
Facilities & Equipment (building, grounds, cleaning)	43,631	75,375	66,317	81,969
Staff Development	1,129	1,500	1,500	3,000
Board of Trustees Support	3,906	1,000	1,000	1,000
Leadership Development Committee	-	550	550	600
Annual Giving Drive	-	1,500	3,628	3,200
Legacy Circle	209	3,500	1,863	700
Fundraising Expenses	3,051	5,000	8,585	10,100
Transfer to Campus Improvement Prjs	-	-	-	-
Transfer to Financial Audit/Review Fund	-	-	-	-
Transfer to Sabbatical Fund	-	-	-	-
Transfer to Capital	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
GOVERNANCE & MISSION SUPPORT EXPENSE TOTAL	140,625	182,925	182,749	202,527
TOTAL PERSONNEL EXPENSES	496,722	554,718	530,210	622,237
TOTAL PROGRAM & MISSION SUPPORT EXPENSES	226,182	281,126	286,799	310,019
TOTAL EXPENSES	722,904	835,844	817,009	928,925
Cash-flow Net Surplus (Deficit)	(21,788)	(80,369)	53,279	(149,557)
Fund Transfers to Balance Operating Budget				
Transfer (to)/from Contingency Fund	21,788	80,369	(53,279)	149,557
FISCAL CLOSE	0	0	0	0

*Without Meet the Moment 83,721