

Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees

September 2019

CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS

- The Focus 2020 Task Group is coordinating the multi-phased “rebranding and outreach” project that won MET grant funding this past spring. Group members are Barry Ahrendt (chair), Manny Allen, Sherry Sample, Kim Hutchinson, Tom Nunnenkamp and Doug Swaim (staff). The project begins with a months-long process of “reconsidering” the name of the congregation. The Group has retained long-time UU leader Dr. Leon Spencer as an advisor for the name reconsideration process. The congregation is being invited to participate in interactive meetings on September 21 and 22 during which we will consider the criteria for an ideal name and also the audiences to which we want our name to “speak.” Other opportunities for engagement of the membership will follow. At this stage it is indeterminant whether we will change our name, or not. If strong sentiment for a change emerges from the process, then the preliminary plan is to put the proposed change to a vote in January 2020. Other phases of the Focus 2020 project include: refreshing our branding to reflect our current vision and mission (and new name if adopted), updating our exterior signage and embarking on a modest (and, one hopes, cost-effective) marketing campaign.

- The Worship Team recently reviewed the summer series of services offered under the theme “I am . . . ’ We are . . . ’ What’s in a Name?” The team expressed enthusiastic appreciation for all that was offered, acclaiming members’ willingness to offer services rich with personal sharing. In conjunction with a significant array of additional programming, this theme should prove a very helpful springboard for our Focus 2020 process. Our thanks to Board members Tawanna Wilson Allen, David Reynolds, and Sandy Wade for being among those offering services this summer.

- We are launching new Core Groups in the next few days. Kathleen Carpenter and Doug Swaim will be leading our Environmental Justice Core Group and Jay Leach and Melissa Vullo our Racial Justice Core Group. These groups will continue meeting until June 2020.

- On Sunday, September 7 we offered the kickoff of this year’s theme: “What We Hold Most Dear: Exploring and Integrating our Individual and Collective Spirituality.” A sizeable contingent gathered to begin our “Snapshots of Spirituality” series with Jay Leach in an exploration of William R. Murry’s humanist spirituality. Our offerings this year will include an ongoing focus on societal and environmental transformation while emphasizing especially our commitment to spiritual transformation.

- Please note the Membership Team report below as it responds to questions raised by Board members in your August meeting.

TEAM REPORTS

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

submitted by Martha Kniseley, Adult Programming Coordinator

This year's Adult Religious Education & Spiritual Development Team (ARESD) is represented by Sharon Baker, Tom Cole, Shelagh Gallagher, Shannon Maples, Melissa Vullo, and Sharon Walker.

This past summer proved engaging as our talented facilitators integrated the summer theme "'I am...' 'We are...' What's in a name?" into their class sessions for 186 participants.

Jay Leach: "I am from..."

Lauren Hood: *Uncover Your Authentic Self*

Beth Mussay: *When Ink and Water React*

Carol Hartley and Rebecca Jones: *What's in Your Name: Exploring Poetry*

Sharon Walker: *The Power of Names: a Ted Talk discussion*

Phyllis Bertke: *Exploring "I am..." with Cellphone Photography*

Lauren Hood: *I see you. You see me-A Cultural Exploration.*

Eve Stevens: *Somebody's Callin' My Name*

These leaders fulfilled the promise of small group, interactive experiences where members could explore the theme while making new and/or deeper connections with others. We received written feedback from a dozen participants who reported that the classes pushed them a little outside their comfort zone—a welcomed experience. Many expressed appreciation for limiting the size of the groups as we strive to build a sense of community; they enjoyed learning from and about different perspectives; they would like to explore more topics through the creative process.

The ARESD members have embraced their roles and have each stepped up to offer educational opportunities for the coming year. As we look at the arc of our year through the lens of Intersectionality, we are planning a variety of offerings such as viewing/discussing the PBS series *Reconstruction*, Eve's exploration of the *Seven Principles* as they relate to spirituality and intersectionality, the weekend workshop *Runaway Inequality*, and Jay's 4-part series of "Snapshots of Spirituality."

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

submitted by Doug Swaim, Director of Administration

The Building and Grounds Team advises the Coordinating Team on a broad range of facility- and property-related issues. Team members help directly with some projects and organize and take the lead on annual spring and fall congregation-wide work days. Team members for the 2019-20 congregational year are Roy Smith (chair), Judy Love, Jinny Sullivan, Tom Moore, Lee Martinec and Dick Kistler.

At our September meeting, the Team welcomed newest member Jinny Sullivan and made preparations for the upcoming congregational year. Together we walked the grounds to inspect recently-completed projects (uneven sidewalk grinding, playground fence repairs/gate additions, dumpster screening, solar installation) and note upcoming projects (irrigation system repairs, wall and signage on Hardwick). We reviewed our “wish list” of facility needs and discussed the potential for finding resources to address high-priority projects.

For Board members’ information, the highest-priority unfunded needs involve deferred maintenance of the sawtooth roof over Freeman Hall. We have identified three things that should be done within the next two years: replacement of sheet-metal “scuppers” that direct rainwater off the roof and away from the building, repairs to the rotten wood in the exposed beam ends that emerge from the building (and subsequent refinishing), and rebuilding/recaulking of “stops” that hold windows in place (triangular windows high on Freeman Hall walls). The total estimated cost of this work is \$10,000 - \$15,000.

In anticipation of replacing the sign at the corner of Hardwick and Sharon Amity (using already-awarded MET grant funds), the Team made a plan to engage with city zoning officers about the constraints we will have to work within. The team set November 23 as a fall work day without determining whether we would invite broad congregational participation.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

submitted by Belinda Parry, Director of Administration

The Communications Team provides graphics, design, writing, photography, web and social media services directly to UCC staff and teams for smaller-scale projects and works with contractors hired by the UCC on larger projects. There are four Team members: Joe Argent, Paul Nisely, Nancy Pierce, and Scott Smith.

The team continues advising on the UCC website refresh project, which is slated to be complete this fall. We have been invited by the Membership Team to collaborate on signage for their welcoming work. We are anticipating a need for our participation in the upcoming Focus 2020 work. And we are always evaluating the efficacy of current UCC communication platforms (website, Currents, Soundings, Facebook, etc.).

FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM

submitted by Eve Stevens, Minister

Our current Family Ministry Team members are Craig Harbold, Lynne Friedheim, Sam Visco, Melanie Greely, and youth members Ryan Feely, Lilly Hagen, and Alex Szanton. Karen Duvall has contributed so much to our team including going above and beyond in her contributions to our first ever Family Retreat in May. Unfortunately, Karen has recently relocated to Detroit and has stepped down from the team. As staff liaison of this team I work in partnership with our

Director of CYRE, Kathleen Carpenter who brings the perspective of children and youth programming and supports all Family Ministry efforts.

As a team we share in the work of nurturing loving community, inviting families to discover deeper spiritual meaning, experience emotional and spiritual support from our congregational community, and engage in our congregational efforts to inspire spiritual, societal and environmental transformation as a family.

For this first ever Family Ministry Team report, I'd like to give an overview of our efforts this past year and let you know what's on the horizon for this year.

In September of 2018 Kathleen and I invited parents and caregivers to join us in the sanctuary for a conversation about Family Ministry to learn more about their hopes and needs. Following that conversation we began to experiment with what Family Ministry programming might look like.

A few highlights of last congregational year include:

Age-range specific offerings – We offered four sessions intended for families with children of specific age-ranges to spend time together as a family unit to take part in guided conversation and activities designed to help them explore spiritual topics with intention and depth.

Wednesday Gatherings – We offered a midweek thirty-minute informal worship experience followed by a potluck dinner two Wednesdays a month. On occasion we shared a meal together and then parents spent time together playing board games while the children broke off or separate programming.

Family Retreat – In May of this year we held the first ever UUCU Family Retreat at Camp Canaan in Rock Hill, SC. Middle School and High School youth spent Friday night at the retreat site engaging in their own activities and evening worship. Saturday morning they helped welcome families to a full day of worship, programming, and play.

This year we have added:

Family Night – Wednesday Gatherings have evolved into Family Night – We begin with an opening circle, sing a few songs together led by musicians from our music program and share our highs and lows since we were together last. We then share in an activity that helps families get to know other families better.

Parent Discovery Circle – These monthly sessions follow the model of our Discovery Circles with content created specifically with parents in mind to explore and integrate their individual and collective spirituality as they reflect personally and make meaning of the intense experience of raising children.

Alternative Worship Experiences – These quarterly informal worship services will take place on Sunday evenings at 5 p.m. They are designed with children in mind and heavily incorporate music and ritual to engage people of all ages.

MEMBERSHIP

submitted by Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator

The Membership Team looks for ways to improve the welcoming and engagement of visitors, new members and existing members. Phyllis Bertke, Tara Anderson, Rich Greene, Rita Heath-Singer, Lincoln Baxter and Linn Martin are serving on the team this year. Kelly Greene is the staff liaison.

Membership

- From July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019 we removed 66 members. During the same period, we added 33 members. Of the 33 adults who joined, eight were involved in other UU congregations before joining us. They bring with them 16 school-aged children. Reasons for joining include seeing this as a place they can grow spiritually, wanting religious community for their family and feeling like we are doing more than talking about justice. Eighteen of the new members hold volunteer roles or are participating in small groups.
- Of the 66 members who were removed, eight of them moved and 10 died. Seven said they are now on a different spiritual path. Five mentioned they are not happy with the direction of the congregation. Fourteen were removed due to not making contributions of record. Nineteen did not give reasons for leaving.
- When it is noticed that a member is no longer attending, the Membership Team contacts the member to let them know they have been missed and to invite them back. The Membership Team has been discussing how to identify these people, when and how many times to contact them. When members are removed, if they have not already provided feedback, they are sent an exit survey asking about their experiences at the UUC. Feedback is shared with staff who lead the area mentioned. However, it is rare for a member who has been removed as a non-contributor to respond. These members normally have already disregarded multiple attempts to contact them.
- In an effort to help engage existing members and those who are new, the Membership Team started having a Volunteer Opportunities table in Freeman Hall on the second Sunday. Over the last two months, this has resulted in 14 volunteers being introduced to new ways to get involved.

Visitors

- From June through August, 14 visitors attended visitor session. That is up from six last summer. 32 visitors completed yellow cards.
- The Membership Team has been both watching how new people experience our congregation on Sunday mornings and actively welcoming those who they notice are new or just standing alone.

MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT TRUST

submitted by Doug Swaim, Director of Administration

Five Trustees appointed by the UUCB Board oversee the Memorial Endowment Trust, which was established in 1980 and constitutes a long-term financial resource for the congregation. Some sizeable gifts, along with gains in the stock market, have propelled the endowment past the \$800,000 mark. Current trustees are Laurie Reed, Mike Long, Patrick McNeely, Joy Bruce and Richard Pratt, who serves as chair.

The MET's grant program is now in its fifth year. The Trustees announced a \$33,000 grant to the multi-phased "Focus 2020" project at the Congregational Conversation in June and now that project is getting under way. The Trustees continue to work to publicize the endowment and invite planned giving to keep it a vital and growing resource for the congregation.

Attendance Data for July & August 2019

| Attendance Area | Jul-19 | Aug-19 | Aug-18 |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| ARESD Offerings | 173 | 133 | 258 |
| Community Building | 138 | 127 | 82 |
| Congregational Team Meetings | 62 | 115 | 93 |
| CYRE | 128 | 102 | 227 |
| Family Ministry | 59 | 26 | n/a |
| Music | 44 | 51 | 55 |
| Intersectional Justice | 0 | 18 | 21 |
| Visitors | 37 | 34 | 36 |
| Worship | 682 | 665 | 674 |
| | | | |
| Totals | 1323 | 1271 | 1446 |