

2015–2016 ANNUAL REPORT

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING

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June 2016

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SENIOR MINISTER'S REPORT

Senior Minister's Annual Report 2015–2016

Surely the presentation of the **Dream Builder's Plan** to the congregation and the ensuing **Capital Campaign** are two of the highlights of this year –and any year at UUCSS. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the plan, which is big and ambitious and necessarily requires a multi-phase approach. Many people gave very generously towards the plan, which included not only renovations and new construction, but also property acquisition and financial restructuring intended to leave us in good shape for many years to come. Ultimately we raised over \$2.1 million, which is both a tremendous sum that will allow us to make a material difference in the life and property of this church – and not enough to allow us to do phase 1 of our original plan. The Board and Dream Builders have been hard at work since the conclusion of the campaign to discern what next steps will allow us to realize as much of the plan – and meet as many of the pressing needs we have – as possible. They have heard and respected many perspectives and suggestions, including some who had reservations about the plan and the capital campaign. The church's leadership is working hard and carefully– this discernment will definitely take us into next year, and I believe the time will be well spent, getting us to the best and most effective outcome possible. I particularly want to thank Erik Leaver who did just an extraordinary job as our chair of the Capital Campaign, together with co-chair Jim Paoletti.

Worship and Music continue strong at UUCSS. Worship attendance remains high (though we are seeing, as always, our usual late-spring dip). Attendance across the two services is skewing more strongly towards the early service now and we may need to look at what we can do to keep them more balanced, which helps make sure class size and space, parking and worship are well-served at both services. We have a lot of visitors and get a lot of good feedback from both visitors and members about the quality and range of services. The worship team is getting training to refine their skills as liturgists for services where they assist in leading. Music continues to be strong and broad in worship and at special programs and concerts, with original compositions and our many musical groups contributing to the rich breadth of sound and song at UUCSS. We used our own Bob Hirshon's original song "Answer the Call" as the theme for our capital campaign this year—a testament to the presence music has in our community and our faith at UUCSS. It was a pleasure collaborating recently with Michael Holmes on a song "Kindle a Spark" that came out with the most beautiful melody—thank you Michael! We're still working on finding the right path that will allow us to have a more regular children's choir, and will be working toward that vision with more communication about this coming next fall. I have also been working with Sarah Gonzalez on integrating the Story Sunday stories more tightly into the worship service; both she and I feel this is going well, and we are enjoying our collaboration and continuing to refine our approach in terms of timing our work together.

Our **A/V team** is low on members, and we are working on redeveloping the vision and relationships of this team. We want providing audio and video for church services and programs to be as fulfilling for all those who make it happen, as it is necessary for all those who receive those efforts.

Membership has submitted their own report—I will just note that Ashley Burczak has resigned her position as membership coordinator effective in June, with a reduction in hours over the last couple of months—I miss her already in many way and am glad we will be gaining her as a member. Patti Poss is taking over as Membership Committee chair, and has put great creativity and care into rethinking how Membership can best function, build on its strengths and work on some growing edges moving forward. We are working on restarting membership growth with a focus on helping visitors and new members better integrate into our congregation. I'm really enjoying working with Patti, and very grateful for Jim Paoletti's years of enthusiastic leadership that give Patti a great launching point.

Sunday Support – I've begun monthly meetings with Deb Weiner, the wonderful Sunday Support chair this year, and we've been working on team-building and team-training activities, along with clarifying tasks, resources, and goals for the team. Most recently Deb completed a map for the sanctuary space that gives us a default set-up for Sunday mornings that will help us ensure that the space looks as it generally should after

special events. There's been a lot of good work done, a lot of effort made, and it shows. People are noticing the improved look of the sanctuary and better organization—the staff really felt the difference especially at our Christmas Eve services this year. It's been a really good and growing year with Sunday Support and I'm very grateful for all their great work, responsiveness and commitment to this essential part of Sunday morning.

Operations Council is another area where I am building more connections. Rob Dahlstrom and I have agreed it's good for us to be in regular touch, and we've just started monthly meetings as well, in the last few months. I'm very grateful for Rob making this time to connect. This is already helping us be better coordinated and aware of some things we need to know about together—I think it will help a lot as Ops Council continues to grow into itself as a separate entity from the Program Council.

Diversity Team supported our David Smith weekend, as usual, along with a number of racial justice efforts and a major effort in the fall hosting the weekend of film, discussion and worship with Miguel De La Torre that started UUCSS down a path of greater involvement in issues of immigrant justice. Members of the team attended trainings, including a UU intercultural competency training led by Rob Keithan, and the Leading Edge Revolutionary Love conference at Middle Collegiate Church in NYC in April. The group also viewed, and then hosted a viewing and discussion of the movie “20 Feet from Stardom” in the winter of this year. We are beginning to look at adding some members (back) into our group, and will be working on group building and goal-setting for the coming year. We have a number of UUCSS'ers signed up to support a joint trip of UUCSS and Cedar Lane UU next October to Arizona and Mexico to learn more about what's happening to undocumented immigrants there; some folks will be going on the trip, others will be participating in the reading and discussion group which is open both to those making the trip and those who simply wish to learn more.

UU-Muslim Women's Book Club is another group that is continuing strong. Tazeen Ahmad and I co-preached this spring, which led to renewed awareness in UUCSS of this enterprise, and a number of additional UU women joined the group. It's been another very rich and rewarding year in this group which is beginning to talk about working together on justice initiatives beyond (and in addition to) our regular book meetings. This relationship also led to UUCSS hosting Ahmadi religion scholar Amer Safir for a well-attended talk about the true nature of Islam and faithful responses to ISIS. Clearly our relationship to our Muslim neighbors and friends is an important part of our UUCSS community and faith. I am very excited to have been invited to attend the Ahmadi world conference near London this coming August as an invited guest along with board president Barbara Eyman.

There are a lot of good things happening at UUCSS, and there have been some very tough losses in our community of beloved members; these have been the cause of much grief over the year. I could go on, but as always, I draw the line when I start to go over two pages, single-spaced. Please be in touch if you have any questions, concerns. or enthusiasms you wish to share.

Respectfully Submitted,
the Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay

ASSOCIATE MINISTER'S REPORT

Associate Minister's Annual Report 2015-2016

"The truth matters exquisitely."

—Debbie Cole, Chaplain
Christiana Hospital in Newark, Delaware

Last week, I had the great pleasure of meeting with Laura Ellis. We met over dinner at Franklins in Hyattsville. I live nearby (almost next door in fact), so Franklins has become quite dear to me. Usually, I huddle up in the corner table upstairs for an hour or so, running scales on the guitar and trying not to annoy anyone. It's really good alone time. I decompress. I watch meaningless sporting events on TV as I practice. It's actually kinda of wonderful.

Last week, however, was different. I met with Laura Ellis. We talked about how the year was going, how life was going and the like. We talked about church a bit and then she made a suggestion (I hope that she doesn't mind my sharing this). She said that we should show more films at church and then create discussions about them. I would love to take her up on that. She suggested showing "The Matrix" and I was very much in favor of that. A better idea, though, would be to show "JFK" by Oliver Stone. It would be timely to show "JFK" because it came out in 1991. Although this year is its 25th anniversary, that's not why I would want to show it. I would want to show this film because of the great quotations...like the one that occurs at time marker 3:09:02. Kevin Costner playing Jim Garrison, the District Attorney of New Orleans, shares this.

Jim Garrison: "Treason doth never prosper," wrote an English poet, "What's the reason? For if it prosper, none dare call it treason."

...quoting Sir John Harington who died way back in 1612.
Or like the quote that occurs at time marker 3:14:43.

Jim Garrison: The truth is the most important value we have because if the truth does not endure, if the government murders truth, if we cannot respect the hearts of these people, then this is not the country in which I was born and this is certainly not the country I want to die in. Tennyson wrote "Authority forgets a dying king." And this was never more true than for John F. Kennedy whose murder was probably one the most terrible moment in the history of our country.

...quoting Alfred Lord Tennyson who died back in 1892.
Or like the quote that occurs at time marker 3:15:16

Jim Garrison: You, the people...represent the hope of humanity against government power. In discharging your duty, in bringing the first conviction in this house of cards..., "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Do not forget your dying king.

...quoting President John F. Kennedy who was assassinated in Dallas on November 22nd in 1963.

President Kennedy's words were not always his own. As we learned in our worship service of November 29th, 2015, Kennedy's words were often those of his Unitarian speechwriter—Ted Sorenson of Lincoln, Nebraska. I would ask Laura Ellis to help me to make sure that that the truth endures. I would ask her to do this for the simple reason that the truth matters exquisitely.

In my Annual Report of 2015, I commented on structure, on the architecture of my contract with the church. Inadvertently, a problem was built into the language of the contract. We made the appropriate changes and we moved on. The structure of my contract is simple compared to the structure of our spiritual lives. Developing spiritual practices to tone and to further strengthen the structure of congregational life has been a central accomplishment of this year. **Good Grief: Grace Happens**, the six-week Adult Programs class on grief with Sara Tarr was successful in bringing together those of us who are deeply grieving. From that experience and a concomitant series of personal interviews and individual meetings over the course of the winter, a strategy for strengthening the pastoral arm of the church was slowly becoming clear. These efforts have met their challenges. Several interested participants in this process are no longer regularly attending UUCSS. Another has withdrawn entirely. There were administrative challenges as well. Despite these challenges, however, a Healing Circle is in formation. We had our first meeting in February.

Healing Circle was a public pastoral effort that began last year. It was an effort to widen the net, to cast more broadly a culture of concern and to encourage greater openness about that which threatens medical, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing. The format is simple. The timing was relatively short. It is not intended to be an exhaustive process but, rather, a means by which congregants can express the fears and sorrow more intimately and at greater length than is possible in the context of Sunday worship services. Responses to Healing Circle activities have varied greatly but are consistently high. Feedback has been very positive.

Healing Circles happen on designated Sundays throughout the year. They take place in the Sanctuary after the 9:30 and the 11:30 services. They are already scheduled for the 2016-2017 calendar so that a poster of publicity can be made, amplified by the placement of seat cards the week before and the day of Healing Circle sessions. Members of the nascent and reforming pastoral care team are not required but are highly encouraged to attend the Healing Circle. The public nature of this event is intended to encourage *a culture of concern* that will push back against the loneliness and isolation that often goes unnamed in our environment.

The Healing Circle is paired with the **Drumming Circle** at Catoctin. While there is no formal connection between the two that we are used to recognizing, the choice of healthy food and nourishing spiritual practices is presenting itself clearly. We made homemade applesauce this year out apples grown right there in the mountains. We drummed and prayed around the applesauce, without actually worshipping it (which would have been my preference actually [smile]). In short, we entered into an actual practice, a lived theology of health and healing.

We gave away the fresh, unsweetened applesauce at the worship service. It was a rather beautiful moment.

The Good Grief: **Grace Happens** class that ran in the fall was balanced in the spring by **12 Steps to a Compassionate Life**, another six-week Adult Programs class. This one was lead with the powerful and excellent gifts of Meghan Mulvenna. Together, she and I put together a great experience that interwove music, poetry, soup, silence, prayer, meditation, conversation and the group reading of *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life* by Karen Armstrong. This was, by far, the strongest event that I have witnessed in my four years at UUCSS. It was inspired



the year before it happened by the passions of our own Bob McGaughy. He really wanted the class to happen. He was the inspiration. Adult Programs, under the able leadership of David Miley, took up the charge.

As the first class was set to begin, preparations were made for all 16 congregants who were pre-registered. A brazen tribe of 31 made-up minds gathered on the first day of class, expanding our circle to twice the size and almost ruining (in the most beautiful of ways) the lesson plan that Meghan and I had devised. It was fabulous and funny. The first five classes were amazingly successful. There were tears and great, deep breathes of transformation. There were tears and tender promises to ourselves. There were confessions and commitments and covenants of compassion as we journeyed through the process—each time with a changing group of 30+ in attendance. We would eat and talk and rejoice. It was truly spectacular.

The last class had to be cancelled to make room for the referendum on the capital campaign which took place on what was to have been our last day—3/30. We still intend, somehow, to bring that great experience to a formal close.

Quiet Day was lovely, as it has always been. My understanding is that attendance was as good this year as it was last year. Last year had been particularly impressive. The gains that we made were sustained over time.

The Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival collaboration was a brand new success. Adult Programs hosted the showing of “120 Days.” The film festival’s mission and vision are as follows: The Immigration Film Fest through the power of film seeks to attract, inform and inspire adults and youth of Greater Washington to seek justice for immigrants and refugees. The USA has a moral and ethical responsibility to treat immigrants and refugees fairly. As citizens of the world’s leading democracy, we must strive to build communities that serve all our newcomers.



On Sunday, October 25th at 7:00 PM, UUCSS hosted Director Ted Roach for a viewing of the film and Q&A. “120 Days” was part of the Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival. IMBD describes “120 Days” like this:

“120 Days” captures an intimate look at the lives of one family of undocumented immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States illegally for twelve years. Father and husband, Miguel Cortes, could be forced to leave the country in four months as a result of his immigration status. In exchange for Miguel agreeing to leave the country voluntarily, and paying a \$5000 bond, the judge offers him 120 days to get his affairs in order before leaving his wife and two daughters in the U.S. to continue their education. Miguel has 120 days to work hard, save money, and weigh his options about returning to Mexico alone, or changing his name and disappearing back into another U.S. city illegally with his family.

The showing of this film prepared UUCSS for its trip with the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice to the Mexican border in the fall. It aligns our energies and suggests a coordinated structure of ethical community over that already serves us well, even though those coordinated structures and alignment strategies that are readily available but do not yet exist.

Worship life has been rich. I have deeply enjoyed preaching this year. My first service after the beginning of the summer service schedule did not take place on site...or in the state...or even on this time zone, for that matter. Reverends Lynn Gardner, Wendy Bartle and myself lead the opening worship services at General Assembly in Portland, Oregon in late June. It was a singular honor to have been selected. Open services took place weeks after the terrible shooting that took place in Charleston, South Carolina. A gunman named Dylann Roof killed nine, devout worshippers at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. We met that challenge with grace and gratitude. Our church was represented well on the national stage. For the video, please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrVZJnIIAK8>



Sermons

7/5/15	Oh. Beautiful
7/26/15	Heal Thy Heart—Reflections on the Art of Healing
8/30/15	Patience Flowers, Joy Abides
9/20/15	Soul Revolution—Climate Rally Revisited (Leadership Retreat)
11/1/15	Draw Them Close, Draw Them Near—A Samhain Service at UUCSS
11/29/15	A Strategy of Peace - Covenant, John F. Kennedy and his Unitarian Speechwriter
1/3/16	A Theology of Healing—Part 1
1/17/16	Waking Up and Staying Awake
1/31/16	A Theology of Privilege
2/7/16	The Right Way
2/21/16	The Story of Beauty
3/6/16	Poems, Prayers and Presidents (with Pratima Dharm)
4/3/16	Freedom, Reason and Tolerance
5/8/16	Flowers of Thy Heart: A Mother's Day Service

With Poems, Prayers and Presidents, we magnified the power and the integrity of our word. Pratima Dharm was introduced to the congregation as a means of revealing how different tradition of faith value the integrity of the word. She spoke about this in the context of Sanskrit and Hinduism.

On a technical level, there isn't room enough in Santa Claus's Christmas bag for the praises that are due to Bailey Whiteman and Daniel Clark, Laura Nelson and Bobbi Pohl, Eric Leaver and John Robinette for their work and wisdom in the fashioning of a new website. They have been working diligently for months to piece together a coherent communications strategy for which the website would become the most outward expression. Their depth of consideration and thoroughness of thought is a gift to the church. What a blessing.

The challenges before us lay in the level of rigor that we choose in the building of this church into the future. The health of our spiritual community depends on the integrity of our relational structures, the maturity of our concept of justice and our powers to forgive...all to the increase of compassion.

Truly, the truth matters exquisitely...and so, too, do all of us...each to our best and all at once. Everyone. No exceptions.

May it be so. Blessed be and amen.

Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley

DIRECTOR of RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Director of Religious Education Annual Report 2015–2016
(includes the RE Children & Youth Committee)

For the UUCSS Religious Education Program during the 2015-2016 church year there have been many highlights, challenges, and opportunities. In addition to those listed below, I became certified as an official mentor for other religious educators participating in the Unitarian Universalist Association Religious Educator Credentialing program at the Associate Level and Credentialed Level.

Highlights:

- We offered 4th-5th grade OWL for the first time in UUCSS history for a class of thirteen children.
- We continued to send out the Weekly RE Nuus, a weekly newsletter with important information about the RE program.
- We held a successful Children and Youth RE Visioning Retreat on 5/14/16, attended by members of the Children/Youth RE Committee where we created a draft mission statement for the RE program.
- We held a wonderful RE Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast on May 1st to the enjoyment of all who attended!
- We provided an excellent RE Program for preschool through middle school at the 9:30 service and for all ages at the 11:30 service. We also offered nursery care during both services.
- We increased our offering of a Story for All Ages in our worship services from once to twice per month.
- We offered the Coming of Age program for five 9th graders.
- We offered 7th-9th grade OWL for eleven participants.
- We offered three workshops in the spring on American Sign Language, racial justice, and games.
- Fifteen youth will be traveling to Boston for a heritage trip June 18th-22nd.
- We successfully implemented the RE vaccination policy voted on last spring.
- We moved to online registration for RE classes and spring workshops.
- We began more deeply engaging with the monthly ministry themes by offering children's worship exploring these themes each month.
- Miranda Bradley has been an excellent Children/Youth RE Committee chair over the course of her two year term.

Challenges:

- The RE Assistant position has been open since January. It has been challenging to maintain the program with 20% fewer staff hours.
- The YRUU program is in need of more staff attention than I have available.
- Unbalanced attendance between the two services has led to overcrowded classrooms during the 9:30 service and poorly attended classes at the 11:30 service.

Opportunities:

- I have submitted and the Board has approved an alternative configuration for the RE assistant position that allows for greater programmatic focus on the YRUU program.
- Michelle Rossman will be returning as our Summer RE coordinator this summer.
- Gregg Harry will be coming on as the next chair of the Children/Youth RE Committee when Miranda Bradley finishes her term on July 1st.

Respectfully submitted, Sarah Gonzalez, Credentialed Religious Educator

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Music Director Annual Report 2015–2016

2015-2016 provided some new opportunities and new challenges, some which are reflected in the music committee report. A new Montgomery County outreach opportunity landed on our doorstep. The CEO of Strathmore performing arts center had some special meetings with me and the music committee to discuss our involvement in their East County Initiative, where the music directors of several local churches near the Rt. 29 corridor leading all the way up to Howard County are getting together to share ideas, their audiences, and their venues for a very ambitious community development effort. We hope that this will become long-term, fruitful, and will result in greater visibility for UUCSS. The restored music operating budget was a welcome relief for those on the committee. We continue to obtain revenue from the all-church music events, though the committee has been concerned about a decrease in attendance at our concerts and at the Suite Treat annual fundraiser. The music committee is interested in investigating the reasons for this. The level of performance of the UUCSS musicians remains rich and varied. There was an influx of new instrumentalists, but not new choir members, as we saw last year. Top priority for me in the fall will be to head an aggressive choir recruitment campaign.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Holmes, Music Director

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Membership Coordinator Annual Report 2015–2016

2015-2016 has been a year of some important gains and also continuing challenges in terms of membership. UUCSS faces some challenges in building its membership, and it's important to be honest about these challenges in order to effectively face them. However, we also have great strengths. Below are some large areas of Membership work, gains and ongoing challenges. (The Membership team is already working on plans to address some of these challenges in the coming year.)

Our membership committee has been revitalized with several new members. Patti Poss and Jim Paoletti have facilitated a beautifully smooth transition in committee leadership. Glenn Wagner, our capital campaign consultant is also a former pastor with impressive experience in building church membership. He offered some ideas the committee welcomed to help us improve our membership intake and integration at UUCSS. Glenn recommended that we build programming; this would include easily accessible small group ministry and adult programs, as well as a cultural shift in the congregation to move toward a more welcoming attitude to newer folks. We've taken some action toward making coffee hour more welcoming by including activities to help create low-pressure opportunities for connections, and Sunday Support has worked cooperatively with membership to welcome visitors, which I believe has improved the Sunday morning integration of visitors. At Glenn's suggestion, we've also begun offering "UUCSS 101" and "UUCSS 202" programs to help visitors learn more about the church. We hope that this will allow opportunities for visitors to learn about church programs that may serve them.

Coordination with Sunday Support and Membership has been excellent in recent months, allowing visitors to have a more seamless experience. New programming for visitors is allowing them to learn significantly more about us before joining. Finally, I've seen increased commitment to improving our welcome from a variety of committees and individuals, and I think this represents a move toward exactly the shift in culture that we need. I believe that we can expect to see 20 or more new members in 2016-2017, and the number could be much higher within a few years.

Retention rate: Our retention rate improved this year, and is better than average. We lost 7 members, which is significantly lower than the 10% rate most churches expect. Overall, we saw a gain of one member, leaving us with 284 members total. Last year, with an aggressive cleaning of our membership rolls to remove members who had drifted away without notifying the church of a change, we removed 46 members. To continue the trend of high retention, it is important that we continue to build programs that increase members' connection to the congregation, including adult programs, small group ministry, and coordination of lay ministry and practical care for members when illness, new babies, and other life challenges draw them away from the community on Sundays.

Returning Visitors and New Members: Eight new members joined the church this year, and two others may choose to join before the year ends. We've had 18 known return visitors (that is, visitors who filled out visitor cards at least twice) this church year, which would lead to a new member join rate of 15 in an optimally functioning congregation (that is, a congregation capturing every visitor who was seriously seeking a local church home at the time of their visit). Several visitors and new members who left soon after joining reported that the factor that pushed them away from our church was their difficulty becoming socially integrated with existing members.

It's likely that Rev. Liz's sabbatical reduced the number of people ready to join when the church year started, not because visitors didn't enjoy Rev. Leon's sermons and their experience here, but because many of them were understandably interested in holding off on membership until they could also get to know the senior minister and have a full sense of the church leadership. This is a common issue in churches when a minister goes on sabbatical, and I believe we did everything possible to handle it gracefully.

In addition to this factor, capital campaigns tend to have a dampening effect on new membership. Many visitors noted that the campaign created some anxiety around how much financial contribution would be expected of them as members. Our capital campaign was executed with tremendous skill and care, but some difficulty was likely inevitable.

Unitarian Universalism nationwide has faced some difficulty in building its congregations this year, and UUCSS is no exception. It's also worth noting that with one exception, we only saw a slowdown in the later part of the church year. Every other local UU church with a membership professional on staff to track such numbers saw a decline in new membership this year, most by a significant amount. I believe that our church has many special qualities that will give us the ability to continue to grow and thrive, but we will be challenged to reach out to those who would find our message resonant, and to warmly welcome them into our community.

First Time Visitors: Our first-time visitor rate was somewhat lower than optimal. A 4-5% rate, relative to attendance, is ideal for a growing congregation. For us, that would mean 100 additional first-time visitors during the church year--a 40% increase. This sounds like a lot, but it would only require about two additional visitors each week to reach that goal. I believe this is very possible for us. As in past years, I recommend that the church find ways to communicate its message (and parking lot location) to the community. In addition to an updated website and increased community outreach and advertising, this could include low-cost efforts like creative use of social media, which the outreach committee is currently discussing.

As most of you know, I will be moving out of my role as membership coordinator at the end of this church year. It has been an amazing opportunity to serve UUCSS in this way, and I look forward to continuing to serve this special community in my new role of volunteer and member.

Submitted by Ashley Burczak, Membership Coordinator

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Annual Report from the President 2015-2016

After years of discussion and laying of groundwork, this church year saw the launch and execution of an ambitious capital campaign—Answer the Call—to secure the future of our buildings and grounds. The result—over \$2 million pledged to a collective vision not only of bricks and mortar but of a vibrant spiritual community—is surely an outcome we can be proud of. But I would also like to lift up and reflect on what the *process* around the capital campaign revealed about us.

We as a community answered the call not only financially, digging deep and giving generously, but also with our time and energy. I can't even begin to count the number of people who helped make the campaign happen, in ways large and small, and I am thankful for each and every one of you. When I think about the innumerable hours that Erik Leaver devoted to planning, leading and executing this massive effort I am awed and humbled by the faith and commitment that gift represents. And the countless conversations and connections made among us as we met with our stewards, around kitchen tables, in living rooms and coffee shops, deepened our ties and fed our souls in ways well beyond the tallying of dollars and cents.

Since the official campaign ended, we have again come together to discern a path forward that will marry our resources with our priorities and our values. Quite honestly, this process of sizing our dreams to the reality of our purse is a process that has the potential to divide us, but I don't see that happening. Instead, I see us bringing our best selves to the challenge, drawing on our diverse individual gifts, talents and experience to help chart a path forward; sharing our ideas, hopes and worries honestly, openly and respectfully; having patience with each other, listening to each other, trusting in each other and our shared commitment. I think we will be strengthened as a community as we work our way through this. And I am excited to see what we build together, physically and spiritually.

While the campaign certainly dominated much of the Board of Trustees' time and attention over the course of the year, it was not our sole focus. At the beginning of the year, we spent time formulating goals for ourselves, which included overseeing a successful capital campaign and developing a bridge plan from capital campaign to construction. But we also made progress on other goals including continuing to improve the systems and processes for church management. We are in the midst of overhauling our woefully out-of-date church policies, having updated several significant sections this spring. We are working to enhance our fiscal stewardship, with longer range financial planning. We have established a board liaison to the Operations Council—one of our at-large members, Beverly Schnetzler—to ensure good and appropriate two-way communication on ongoing church management. And we are trying to improve transparency of our board activities and decisions, with improved communications, better member access to minutes and other important documents, and creating meaningful opportunities for feedback and discussion. While we have accomplished a lot, we also decided to defer work on a new strategic plan in light of the attention and resources that have been and are being devoted to the capital campaign and its aftermath. As a result, we will extend the current strategic plan through 2018 and prepare to work on an update the year after next.

As a church community, there is so much that is exciting and inspiring going on within our walls and beyond, much but not all of which is captured elsewhere in this report. An ever-widening circle of UUCSS members continues to advocate at the local, state and national levels on issues of social justice, particularly those we have agreed to work on together, including support of the Black Lives Matter movement, environmental justice and stewardship, and Death with Dignity. But there is much still to do. We continue to deepen our ties in ever more meaningful ways with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and both Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay and I have been honored with an invitation to attend and, in Rev. Liz's case, speak at the Jalsa Salana, or annual convention, in England in August. We have welcomed Dr. Miguel de la Torre in a screening of his film "Trails of Hope and Fear," hosted a performance of the inspiring "Missa Gaia/Earth Mass" with Jim Scott, rejoiced in the return of David Smith to lead us in a weekend of celebration and song. And so much more.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members—Carol Hamilton, Janne Harrelson, Michelle Lévesque, Chris Lindsley, John Robinette, Beverly Schnetzler, Sharon Snyder, and Doug Weisberger—for their contributions and commitment this year. I would also like to express gratitude for the service of Alisha Dixon, who resigned her at-large position late last summer, and whose presence continues to be missed. Michelle, Chris and John will be rotating off the Board this year, so I would especially like to honor their significant contributions to the life and well being of our church. Thank you to all.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Eyman
President, Board of Trustees

CORPORATE VICE-PRESIDENT

Planning Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

Purpose

The board's planning committee is made up of the at-large board members and the corporate vice-president. Its role is three-fold: plan the annual leadership retreat; keep the church's policies up to date, and monitor the church's progress on its strategic plan. Our focus once again this year was on the first two items.

Leadership Retreat

The annual leadership retreat was held September 19-20, 2015. Participants included the congregation's board, committee chairs, and staff, as well as the Dream Builders team. We met in the UUCSS sanctuary and at Montgomery College, rather than an overnight retreat center, to limit our expenses.

The retreat focused on a number of key issues. These included a reflection on how the church's work is addressing the main goals of the church's current strategic plan:

Deepening our roots; spreading our branches; reaching toward justice.

1. Cultivate a rich spiritual life and build community connections
2. Become a large, richly diverse congregation
3. Create attractive spaces that work for our worship, program and staff needs
4. Put our faith into action
5. Be environmental stewards

The leadership also spent time in a deep dialogue about where the church is in its work on racial justice issues. Each leadership group (program council, operations council, and board) had time to do planning for the church year.

Changes for the 2016-2017 leadership retreat: Planning the leadership retreat at the beginning of the church year in September is challenging. In addition, in 2016 the date for the Catocin weekend is now the weekend that we have traditionally held the leadership retreat. With this in mind, the board decided to shift the leadership retreat to the middle of the church year. Each leadership group is also encouraged to plan their own retreat during the year for focused planning.

Updating Policies

The board continued the extensive review of the church's policies and procedures that was begun in the 2014-2015 church year, as well as other documents and documentation that serve to support the work of the church. Our goal has been to streamline the policy document, build in as much flexibility as possible while improving clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. The board must approve all policy statements.

When we are done, our goal is to include only what is truly a policy statement, stripping out any procedural statements. Committees and staff will then be empowered to adjust procedures to meet the current realities and needs of the congregation.

The board approved a major revision of the first six sections of the policies in April 2016. A copy of the current church policies is available for any church member by accessing the Dropbox link that was shared with the congregation; it contains documents regarding the capital campaign and ongoing planning.

Strategic Plan

The church's current strategic plan: "Deepening Our Roots; Spreading Our Branches; Reaching Toward Justice," originally spanned from July 2012-June 2017. Because of the deep engagement the church community has had with the Dream Builders and Capital Campaign work over the last several years, the board decided to extend the timeframe of the current strategic plan to June 2018. We will begin preparing to launch a new strategic planning process in the 2016-2017 church year.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Hamilton, Corporate Vice-President

FINANCE VICE-PRESIDENT

Finance Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

As I complete my term on the Board of Trustees I'm pleased at the progress we have made in the area of financial stewardship. The board has instituted a quarterly detailed review of the financial position of the church. New board members receive an orientation to the budget and financial reporting package. With the capital campaign activities consuming a lot of time and focus in the early part of the fiscal year, it also consumed cash in advance of capital campaign pledge collections. The entire board was actively monitoring financial results and in particular, cash flow. A few trustees stepped up and paid their Annual Budget Drive (ABD) pledges sooner than they originally anticipated in order to ensure we had a healthy level of cash in the bank and no disruption in any church activities. For that we should be all very grateful.

Completed Activities:

- We have finalized the transition to the accrual method of accounting that is the generally accepted accounting principle for companies, including non-profits. It is not the same as what is used for governments for those who are familiar with that system.
- We have augmented the financial data that is provided to the board, program council, operations council and capital campaign committees. We are still trying to get the data out more timely, but the accuracy and content has improved.
- Hired outside accounting firm to take over accounting and reporting functions previously done by VP Finance. We are still working out some of the details on where the lines of duty stop and start, but overall the move to the outside accountant has provided additional volunteer time to focus on other aspects of church finance.
- Transitioned the roles for both the collector and treasurer to new members. Much of our historical success in the area of finance was due to the fact that we have had two consistent members of the finance committee tirelessly managing the day-to-day activities of collecting funds and paying bills. A huge thank you should be given to both Lynn Edmiston and Lisa Schumaker for the work they did for over 10 years each. And a huge thank you to Teresa Meeks and John Wright who have stepped up to be our new collector and treasurer, respectively.

Work-in-Process:

- Transition payroll processing to outside accountant. Currently we have a separate service provider and the VP Finance acts as paymaster, completing both time reporting and pay details in the system. This is not sustainable, but until we have all of the other accounting and reporting sorted out with the outside accountant we have chosen not to add to the work he must do.
- Review, update and/or create policies and procedures related to finance and accounting at the church.
- Develop a cash flow statement to be included in the monthly financial package.
- Review and submit application to obtain our own 501c3 status.

Financial Highlights:

- **Endowment Fund:** There were no special contributions to the Endowment Fund this year but we have still collected \$460 from a regular contributor who would like to remain anonymous.
- **The Art Fund:** We added \$81 to the fund. These are proceeds from the craft fair held in early December. The fund now has a total of \$3,328 in it.
- **Charlie Schnetzler Building Fund:** In accordance with the fund documentation we have transferred \$20,000 from this fund towards the capital campaign. This leaves \$11,476 in the fund. The current budget anticipates the use of \$5,000 from the fund. This transfer will be made in June once the board is certain it is needed for use with our property. Currently we are running under budget in the area of property and this fund can only be used for property.
- **Sammy Schnetzler Fund:** For a number of years, the church has had \$1,100 in a restricted fund classified as something for worship. Beverly Schnetzler reached out to Sammy's children and they have agreed to redirect these funds from worship to the landscaping. They pointed out that Sammy loved azaleas and asked that be kept in mind when using the funds for our grounds if possible.
- **Capital Campaign Fund:** We have spent \$127,633 of funds related to the capital campaign and Dream Builders activities. These expenses will be covered by proceeds from the capital campaign and are thus held in a separate fund from the operating fund. We have already collected just over \$332,000 in funds as of March 2016. See also the separate report on the Capital Campaign in the "Board Committees" section of the Annual Report.

There are other funds we track such as Music, Book & Chalice, Families LUUV, and Women's Retreat, but those funds are much more active and still a moving target for this year. As such I have chosen not to highlight the activity which will not likely be accurate by the time this report is published. A full accounting is available in the monthly financial package as mentioned above.

The Annual Budget Drive

The campaign has concluded with the following results. Total pledges amount to \$505,526 coming from 185 pledging units. Both the pledge units and amounts are down from last year. This will form the basis of our budget for next year. Of the 185 who pledged, 71 increased their pledges from this year (2015–2016), 88 maintained their pledge levels, 23 decreased, and we have 4 new pledge units. We have 19 pledge units outstanding as of this writing, and 11 pledging units have chosen to not pledge this year. Sadly, one of our pledgers has passed away.

2015–2016 Financial Results and 2016-2017 Operating Budget

The year-to-date financial statements and the proposed budget for next year are in the process of being finalized. The Board anticipates that these documents will be circulated via all-church e-mail in advance of the annual meeting scheduled for June 5, 2016. Hard copies will also be available at the annual meeting.

Submitted by

Michelle Lévesque, Vice-President for Finance (finance@uucss.org)

PERSONNEL VICE-PRESIDENT

Personnel Annual Report 2015-2016

UUCSS has seen a number of changes in the staff this year. In September, we hired Annalisa Yoder as our new RE administrative assistant. Annalisa was well liked by the staff, the RE committee, and the UUCSS students. However, due to other commitments, she stepped down in mid-December. Sarah Gonzalez reported that Annalisa had done excellent work in the short time that she was at the church and she will be missed. In light of the open position, Sarah proposed changes in the responsibilities of the RE administrative assistant position that would make it more valuable to her and to the congregation. She recommended that the position be part RE assistant and part youth coordinator. This position will support high school youth programming and will spend every Sunday with YRUU. The assistant will also support our YRUU volunteer facilitators. The new position will be 8 hours per week. The board agreed that this change in position would be exciting, and invigorate the YRUU program, and moved to adopt the change in the position. We hope to fill the position in time for our fall education season.

Our membership coordinator Ashley Burczak indicated in March that she was ready to step down from her position. At that time, Ashley began to transition out of her position but continued to complete certain key duties. She began working 8 hours per week starting March 27, and changed her duties to strictly administrative functions. The Membership Committee, under the leadership of Patti Poss, started to handle some of the responsibilities that Ashley previously had undertaken. The Board, in consultation with Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay and Patti Poss, will include in the responsibilities of the new RE administrative assistant, two hours that will be devoted to membership activities, including updating the database. The new RE administrative assistant will, therefore, be hired for a total of 10 hours per week. For the time being, due to budget constraints, the Board decided that we would not hire a separate membership coordinator.

Melinda Yalom, our dedicated office administrator, has indicated that she needs to reduce her hours from 40 hours per week to 30 hours per week. The board has agreed to this reduction, even though Melinda's full-time attention to her responsibilities has been vital to the church's smooth operation. Given the improvements this year in the church's database, Melinda believes that she will be able to perform most of her responsibilities in a 30-hour week. Melinda will begin her usual summer schedule of 30 hours per week in June and will continue that schedule in the fall.

We are happy to report that we will be able to give Sarah Gonzalez, our dynamic RE director, an equity increase in salary to bring her within the UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines. The board also approved a sabbatical proposal from Sarah. Sarah will be taking one month per year in a sabbatical beginning in January 2017. The board values Sarah's excellent contributions to UUCSS religious education and wants her to have time for study and reflection each year. Sarah decided, and the board concurred, that taking one month during the year would give her some time away from her duties and at the same time not would disrupt the RE program.

We are also happy to report that the board will be able to provide the staff with a 1% cost-of-living increase. We continue this year to provide the staff with annual compensation and budget statements begun by Kathy Lorr. These statements include an explanation to each staff member of his/her individual compensation and benefits.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Snyder, Vice-President of Personnel

PROGRAM VICE-PRESIDENT

Annual Report of the Program Council 2015-2016

Highlights:

1. Held first Program Council retreat in February, where we spent 6 hours talking about issues central to the Program Council, and to UUCSS: collaborative programming, new member involvement and communications. We have continued to make these topics a priority.
2. Added a communications committee, led by Daniel Clark and Bailey Whiteman. This committee is meeting with different people/groups central to our church communication, and is also working on key issues, such as the new church website.
3. Have brought social action more into the Program Council fold, as we now regularly have representatives from Green Sanctuary and the Racial Justice Task Force at our meetings.
4. Planned the church calendar for 2016-2017, and have identified people to lead our major church events for the coming year.
5. Held many successful programs/events throughout the year, and expanded the number and range of events as a way to get more people involved.

Challenges:

1. How to be more welcoming to new and prospective church members? Some learning from new members is that they want to feel seen, acknowledged and welcomed, and they also wished more people had spoken to them during coffee hour. We discussed some strategies to try to help here.
2. Create a culture where it is easy for people to learn about and join church committees, ideally as an extension of their interest in or passion for that area.
3. Ensure that people needing deaf access services and childcare feel welcome to attend any events they choose.

Opportunities:

1. Increase members' understanding of how to plan events. There is little consistency in this area, which has led to problems. We've updated this information in the Program Council Handbook, but need to share it with everyone so event planners have a guide to use to help make their events as successful, and inclusive, as possible.
2. Increase collaborative programming. We've talked a lot about committees developing programming around our ministry themes for the year and major church interests, such as social action activities. We feel there is a lot of potential value in having programming coordinated, using different mechanisms for addressing similar themes for people of all ages.

Submitted by

Chris Lindsley, Vice-President/Programs

BOARD COMMITTEES

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Capital Campaign Annual Report 2015–2016

A year after the congregation asked our fearless team of "Dream Builders" to take on the hard work of translating the dreams of our congregation into building plans, a month-long review of the plans, and after studying the results of the campaign assessment, the congregation voted overwhelmingly last fall to proceed with a capital campaign to fund a major renovation of our buildings and grounds. The vote represented a culmination of at least eight years of anticipation, dating back to our first strategic plan adopted in 2007.

UUCSS stood strongly behind the vote to “Answer the Call”, our campaign theme based off of our own member Bob Hirshon’s song of the same name. The campaign secured pledges totaling \$2,068,472 from 152 households/donors. The leadership, dedication and sacrificial giving of each member of UUCSS inspired this level of commitment. Thank you.

The capital campaign has demonstrated that inspirational and sacrificial stewardship doesn’t just “happen” any more than any other ministry just happens. It must be planned, deliberate and consistent. Over the next five years, we will continue the hard work of the capital campaign. There will be a continuing team to provide updates, review existing gifts, and engage future support to continue our vibrant work to answer the call in order to make our campus more functional and inviting.

Some relevant links:

<http://bit.ly/UUCSSPlans>

<http://bit.ly/UUCSSAssessment>

Submitted by

Erik Leaver, Capital Campaign co-chair

DREAM BUILDERS

Dream Builders Annual Report 2015–2016

Members: John Robinette, chair; Phyllis Ryder, chair (July 2015–2016); Marty Atias, Melanie Berkemeyer, Patty Bryan-Taff, Rob Dahlstrom, and Laura Ellis

During the summer of 2015, the Dream Builders worked with Studio Twenty Seven, the architectural firm selected the prior year, to develop a Campus Master Plan for UUCSS that would realize our dreams and provide the necessary space to support our staff, programs, and worship needs into the future.

During the early fall, the Dream Builders held various informational sharing sessions with members of the congregation, in conjunction with the Capital Campaign team, to share the Campus Master Plan and a phased strategy for realizing the plan. On September 27, 2015 a congregational meeting was held to vote on whether or not to move forward with a capital campaign to support the phased implementation of the Campus Master Plan. The congregation voted to move forward with a capital campaign.

Since the completion of the capital campaign, the Dream Builders team has continued to support the Capital Campaign team, the Finance Committee, and the Board to develop a viable strategy to move forward with the first phase, Phase 1a, of the Master Plan.

At the end of 2015, Phyllis Ryder, our amazing and wonderful committee chair, stepped down from her chair role, her talent and skills needed elsewhere, and continues to serve as a member of the committee. John Robinette agreed to do his best to metaphorically fill Phyllis's shoes until a new chair can be identified.

The Dream Builders team remains passionately committed to serving our faith community, representing the broad desires and needs we each have and all share, and to work with dedicated individuals and professionals within and outside our membership to realize our dreams for the future through our Campus Master Plan. We remain interested in hearing from those of you with an interest in joining our committee to serve our community in this truly once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Submitted by
John Robinette, Dream Builders chair

OPERATIONS COUNCIL

Operations Council Annual Report 2015-2016

Purpose:

The Operations Council coordinates the activities of its five member committees.

Members:

- Rob Dahlstrom, acting convener, Administrative Operations Committee; co-chair, Audio Visual Technology Committee
- Marty Atias, co-chair, Audio Visual Technology Committee
- Brian Beard, chair, Property Committee
- Nancy Dougherty, chair, Information Technology Committee
- Mark Ferrenz, chair, Capital Improvements and Accessibility Committee

Highlights:

The Operations Council (Ops Council) has been established by the Board of Trustees in its recently adopted policies with a chair appointed by the board, currently vacant, and an at-large board member serving as board liaison, now Beverly Schnetzler. The council consists of representatives of the Administrative Operations, Audio Visual Technology, Information Technology, Property, and Capital Improvements and Accessibility committees. It has been effective in coordinating the work of its member committees.

The Ops Council has identified deficiencies in all our buildings, grounds, and equipment, and is coordinating with the Dream Builders team and the board in planning for their restoration or replacement as decisions are made as to how to proceed with our building program.

Challenges:

Improving the maintenance and repair of our buildings and grounds and the computer and audio-visual services provided by our member committees. Our buildings have been a primary focus as they are not in good condition after having their maintenance underfunded for many years.

When proposing the creation of the Ops Council, we requested that a board member act as convener for the new council and liaison to the board. We suggested that this position be a vice-president, functioning much like the VP/Programs does for the Program Council. Instead, the board has proposed that their members attend on a rotating basis. This arrangement has not worked and the board continued to have little knowledge of what we were doing and what the issues are with the buildings, grounds, and equipment for nearly all of the year. As a result, the needs of these areas have continued to be given little or no priority. Now that a liaison has been designated and our council chair position has been added in the church policies, we are hopeful that things will improve.

Opportunities:

Though it could be better, we continue to find the new council structure helpful in coordinating and improving the operations functions of our church.

Rob Dahlstrom
Acting Convener, Operations Council

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Administrative Operations Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

Purpose:

Support the ministers, staff, and church leadership in performing the administrative functions of the church.

Members and primary responsibilities:

- Rob Dahlstrom, chair - membership and auction databases, Microsoft computing
- Nancy Dougherty - database, office procedures
- Mark Ferrenz - telephones
- Ken Iobst - corporate office services, logical email addresses, electronic file system, web calendar, UNIX computing, computer security
- Lisa Schumaker - office organization, finance-related issues
- Melinda Yalom, church administrator

Highlights:

The new Operations Council structure has enabled us to focus more on the transition to the new membership database and ways to keep more accurate member records because the new Information Technology and Audio Visual Technology Committees have relieved us of their tasks.

We have completed the transition to the new online membership database system, IconCMO. It is available to those who need access to our membership data, and some leaders are beginning to use it. We are no longer using the old FileMaker-based system although it is available for access to the historical member data that it contains.

Challenges:

We need clear, up-to-date policies on building rentals. Since rentals are administered by the church administrator, issues with rentals become a topic of conversation for this committee. However, the rental procedures and policies have been the responsibility of Finance, and when functioning, the Rentals Committee under Finance. The Property Committee has been working on these policies and rental rates with coordination from the Ops Council.

We continue to be involved in building issues, particularly failures of the old HVAC and alarm systems. Improved procedures for responding to these failures should help us keep these systems functioning until they can be replaced and minimize the cost of repairs.

Opportunities:

The archive closet is full and doesn't have room to safely store building drawings and other large items. We are beginning the process of cleaning out what we don't need and digitizing what can be stored on our church server.

Now that we have completed the conversion to the new online database, we can explore the new features and capabilities that it provides. Giving church leaders online access to membership information should help simplify the maintenance of our membership data and improve the accuracy of its data. We have converted our mailing lists and are discovering better ways to do our reporting. We continue to study the Web Services features of the new database, such as an online directory, to see if and how they might be implemented.

Rob Dahlstrom
Chair, Administrative Operations Committee

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Information Technology Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

The Information Technology Committee is a subcommittee of the Operations Council.

Purpose: Oversee and assist with the maintenance and replacement of computers and related networking hardware as well as software acquisition and updates.

Members:

- Nancy Dougherty, chair
- Rob Dahlstrom

Highlights:

- Migrating our membership database to a new server and software application.
- Upgrading to Windows 10 (ongoing).

Challenges:

- Creating secure and consistent ways to share files and other data with remote users.

Submitted by Nancy Dougherty, chair

PROPERTY COMMITTEE REPORT

Property Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

During the last half of 2015, the Property Committee continued to operate with four co-chairs: Marty Atias, Brian Beard, Rob Dahlstrom and Mark Ferrenz. In early 2016, Brian Beard became the chair of the Property Committee. The Capital Improvements and Accessibility (CIA) Committee includes the four Property members listed above, and also Larry McAneny. The Property and CIA committees work together. Property handles near-term maintenance needs, while the CIA is concerned with planning for longer-term maintenance needs, as well as research and preparation for the potential purchase of an adjacent property. The following is a bullet list of Property/CIA Committee activities during the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Landscaping/Grounds

- Organized Blue Jean Saturday church cleanup events for November 2015 and May 2016.
- Continued to remove invasive vines and add more plantings near NH Ave, and cut back overgrowth near Nature Trail—in addition to lots of other weeding.
- Moved gravel to fill in bare spots in parking lot.
- Leveled dirt and re-laid slate and brick around mailbox.
- Mowed grass several times, when needed.

Buildings

- Fire marshal did inspection in September 2015 and listed several issues, most of which were addressed/ fixed by Property and the church administrator, Melinda Yalom. (New control boards are being ordered to resolve remaining issue.)
- Fire alarm company repaired or replaced several components of fire alarm system.
- Ongoing repairs by contractor to aging HVAC systems in all three buildings.
- Recommended a carpet cleaning company to Melinda Yalom, and worked with staff to sort and move chairs to be cleaned.

- Ongoing: Property has begun to remove wax stains from sanctuary carpet (with iron and towel).
- Preliminary research on floor covering options for community hall—awaiting decisions by the board.
- Photocopied the last 3 years of utility bills to be used, in conjunction with the Green Sanctuary Committee, to track our energy use—to explore possible upgrades to our buildings to save energy, and to ensure that our rental rates are keeping up with rising utility costs.

Rentals

- Worked with Melinda Yalom to address issue of PBMS putting up extra sheds in violation of their lease.
- Did market research on similar venues, and submitted a recommendation to the Board for raising rental rates for the sanctuary.
- Created a Rental Attendant Duties document and submitted to Board for review.

Capital Improvements and Accessibility (CIA)

- Submitted to Board a recommended list of steps for preparing UUCSS to be ready to buy an adjacent property, once something comes available.
- In August 2015, identified a nearby property (1604 Overlook) that went on the market. With no direct access to UUCSS between the properties, it was decided not to pursue it.
- Researched local realtors and created a list of potential candidates to represent UUCSS in the search for an adjacent property.

Pending projects for remainder of fiscal year

- Begin repair, caulking and painting of ground floor window frames and doors of community hall to make the building more airtight and energy efficient (during church cleanup day and continuing).
- Rent front-end loader from Home Depot to move gravel and level parking lot, and also to create proper building site for new shed.
- Purchase shed kit from Costco and begin construction of secure shed for proper storage of equipment.
- Attend energy efficiency financing meeting organized by board member Doug Weisberger.
- Attend meeting with Green Building Council organized by our Green Sanctuary Committee, to learn how we can use our utility bill data to track energy use over time, monitor the effect of our upgrades, etc.
- Train sextant in equipment maintenance (mower, gas storage, etc.) and carpet maintenance (wax removal, spot cleaning).

Ongoing Concerns

- We are in the process of addressing the equipment storage problem with the purchase of a new shed.
- Water management continues to be a major problem. Excessive water runoff from the buildings causes large amounts of gravel to be washed into the storm drain, requiring an annual \$1700 cost for cleaning it out to avoid fines. The south side of the sanctuary needs significant landscaping/retaining wall work, or it will just get worse and could cause damage to the building. The lawn area used by PBMS gets too much drainage and often cannot be used by the children (or it gets torn up). It is essential that storm water management be included in the repairs to be done to the sanctuary.
- Heating system in the community hall is old and unreliable, with only one unit still working.
- Phone system is old and more expensive to maintain than a newer system (such as VOIP based). Need to continue cost-benefit analysis to determine whether it is worth purchasing newer equipment.
- Heat does not work in sanctuary foyer, and entire sanctuary level HVAC system is several years past its life expectancy.
- The sexton position is underfunded and not able to fulfill all the typical duties that we need the sexton to do.

Submitted by Brian Beard, Property Committee chair

PROGRAM COUNCIL

ADULT PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Adult Programs Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

Members: David Miley, chair; Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley, staff representative; Liz Davenport, Meghan Mulvenna, and Susan Westenbarger

Accomplishments:

- A summer meditation series was held before Sunday services from July through August.
- For the first time UUCSS was a host site for a film showing of the Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival that brought the film's director for a meaningful night of education and dialogue.
- Thirty-nine people, our largest showing to date, participated in the fifth annual Quiet Day, a morning of learning, meditation, and relaxation. Responses from participants were highly positive. The congregation has come to expect and love this event.
- A series based on *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life*, Karen Armstrong's book of the same name, was delivered by Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley and Meghan Mulvenna. Attendance was a high with 25-30 folks attending each of the six sessions.
- Adult Programs became the budgetary umbrella for major social action groups within the congregation, including the Racial Justice Task Force, Green Sanctuary, and LGBTQA. None of these groups had ever had a budget before, and this reorganization demonstrates UUCSS commitment to social action.

Challenges:

- We need to better understand congregational needs in order to deliver quality, meaningful programming.

Opportunities:

- We plan a repeat of Quiet Day and the Immigration Film Festival for the coming church year.
- We will host a church-wide social action summit in October to plan out coordinated action for the remainder of the year.
- We are looking at the possibility of repeating the summer meditation series.
- We will gather information from the Spiritual Summit to influence programming for the coming year.

Prepared by David Miley, Adult Programs chair

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Communications Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

Committee Formation

The Communications Committee formed in November 2015. The three members of the committee (Daniel Clark, Bailey Whiteman, and Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley) have spent the past six months engaging with church members informally through one-on-one discussions and more formally in meetings with the Program Council and other church committees. The Communications members believe those engagements have resulted in an increased level of awareness and dialogue within the community about a variety of different aspects of church communications. The committee's first six months consisted of lots of listening and some dialogue, but is now shifting into tangible products, led by the development of a new church website.

Building a New Church Website

The Communications Committee believes a new dynamic website, with opportunities for different church groups and individual members to contribute content on a regular basis, could serve as the backbone of a broader communications strategy to support a variety of church needs and our vision and goals as a community. Prior to the formation of the Communications Committee, Laura Nelson developed the basic architecture and foundation of a new website utilizing Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and Wordpress, the popular, effective, and easy to use Content Management System (CMS). These are powerful tools for creating dynamic websites with fresh and relevant content on a regular basis. The site is now ready for the final phases of development.

Together with the Program Council, the Communications Committee has begun to form a working group consisting of several church members and staff to transfer content from the current website and development of new content and useful online tools, including a Community Forum, an Events page linked to an online calendar, and a dynamic home page that can be easily updated to feature upcoming events or important church news. Each committee within the church will be given the opportunity to create their own page if desired. Once this final development phase is completed, it will be presented to the Board with a recommendation to make the website live and replace the current website.

Social Media

In addition to the website, members of the Communications Committee, along with several other church members, have invested time and energy to create and sustain greater communications between church members through our Facebook group. Informal discussions are beginning to take place on how the church might further utilize other social media platforms, in particular Twitter and Instagram.

Periodic Newsletters and Updates

One of the reasons the Communications Committee was called into place was that *The Uniter* ceased to be produced. While a replacement for *The Uniter* has not been developed, the Communications Committee will, at a future point in time, recommend the creation of periodic email newsletters (and a print version) utilizing the blog features of the Wordpress website under development. In the meantime, thanks to the efforts of Melinda Yalom, the all church weekly email has become an effective tool for keeping people informed of church activities and for distributing articles, such as the Volunteer of the Month feature.

Submitted by Daniel Clark

DEAF ACCESS COMMITTEE

Deaf Access Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

Committee Members and Primary Roles

- Angela Conant, chair 2015-2017
- Melissa Clarke, internal communications coordinator
- Miako Rankin, principal interpreter and interpreter coordinator
- Scot Ryder, technology coordinator
- Lisa Schumaker, budget management
- Deborah Weiner, lead interpreter coordinator
- Megan Wysong, committee member

HIGHLIGHTS

- DAC welcomed the following new members: Scot Ryder and Megan Wysong
- DAC members accepted the following positions: committee chair; internal communications coordinator, and technology coordinator
- DAC and Deaf members and friends coordinated the 4th annual silent dinner as an auction item. The silent dinner was hosted in the home of UUCSS member, Kubby Rashid. This event is designed to build connections with UUCSS members, and highlight Deaf culture and language.
- Miako Rankin and UUCSS member, Kubby Rashid, hosted a tour of Gallaudet University as an auction item. This event gives participants an insight into intentional design of Deaf space, as well as culture within the Deaf community. In addition to Miako and Kubby, this event was also co-hosted by several other DAC members and friends.
- Angela Conant taught sign language to RE children and youth during the RE mini-sessions.

OPPORTUNITIES

- DAC began the process of recording minister-led sermons interpreted by Miako Rankin to be placed on Youtube as a way to reach out to the Deaf community broadly, and provide an additional resource for Deaf members within the congregation.
- EqUual Access reached out to DAC to propose a plan for recording or live-streaming services in ASL on the UUA website, so we can reach out to UUs and potential UUs who are geographically dispersed who use ASL.

CHALLENGES

- Determining when an interpreter should be hired through an agency. We are currently creating an SOP to outline the process of hiring through an agency when Miako Rankin and interpreters from the DAC list are unavailable to interpret.
- Following up with event coordinators to ensure that event information includes the interpreter request policy as stated in the Program Council handbook.

Submitted by:

Angela Conant, Deaf Access Committee chair

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

Green Sanctuary Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

Supporting and promoting congregation members'/individuals' efforts:

1. Commit2Respond follow-up: 49 people made commitments during the spring of 2015 to engage in earth-friendly practices, and we followed up with them in the fall. At least 10 people confirmed that they had been able to fulfill their commitments.
2. Groundswell wind power sign-up reopened Oct 26, 2015. We had 11 new households signed up for a grand total 53 households.
3. To help members with hard-to-recycle items, we have initiated a monthly recycling program. Each month (with the exception of August) we are going to offer our members/guests the opportunity to recycle hard to recycle items such as packing material, polystyrene (Styrofoam), personal care and beauty products (make-up) pens and markers, toothpaste and other dental products. Each month will feature different items and members/guests may bring them to the community hall during coffee hour on pre-selected Sundays. So far, there has been great interest—and lots of good questions—about these programs. Members may continue to recycle corks year round.
4. To educate members about more sustainable ways, we initiated the following programs:
 - December: write environmental New Year's resolutions
 - January/February: focus on legislative issues (by sending post cards to legislators) while Maryland state legislature is in session
 - February: educational display about Valentine's Day candy and flowers
 - March: taxes (prep for April 15)
5. Solar Power for UUCSS Members and possibly for our campus: Tim Maclay and Fred Teal are researching this and will make a presentation to the whole committee and then to the congregation. Options being investigated are a) leasing or buying solar arrays for your own roof and b) solar coops where individuals either invest in or subscribe to a coop that puts up solar panels in a solar "garden".

Greening our own operations:

1. Catoctin retreat: a) compost at future Catoctin retreats and at UUCSS; b) make vegetarian the default menu for church events and ask people to request meat.
2. Standard Operating Procedures: expanded information on environmentally sustainable practices for church events have been submitted as edits to the Program Council Handbook. We have suggested that a one or two page checklist could be made to give/email to anyone planning a church event at the time they contact Melinda Yalom to reserve space. Part of the plan includes the use of compostable plates and utensils and ultimately, composting. We feel that if compostable items are not available at the church, it is unlikely that event planners will take the time and effort to find and purchase them, even if given a list of sources. Thus we would like to provide this on-site. The main barrier is lack of space to store these items. We are hoping to find or create closet space for storage during the Blue Jeans clean-up day, May 28.
3. Recycling at UUCSS is not going well currently. The dumpster designated for recycling plainly states that no plastic bags should go in the recycling dumpster, yet ALL of our recycling is in plastic bags. We called Waste Management to confirm that recycling should NOT be in bags. We will work through proper channels to see how bona fide recycling can be re-established and sustained.
4. As a result of information learned at the Montgomery County Energy Summit held April 5, 2016, Green Sanctuary along with Dream Builders, Property, and the Board will be meeting with experts to help guide our way forward with our renovation and building plans. On May 31, we will meet with a local expert to learn more about a financing tool called C-PACE available to commercial entities, including churches, for energy and water upgrades. In addition, we are scheduling a meeting with a representative from the U.S. Green Building Council to help us know what questions to ask about sustainability at every step along the process as we go forward with renovation and building. This representative will help us become skilled in using the free EnergyStar web tool to benchmark energy use and produce cost-benefit estimates for energy-efficiency upgrades.

Coordinating with other UUCSS social justice initiatives:

Five one-on-one meetings have been held with Racial Justice Task Force members to discuss overlap and common cause. There are several projects that would be candidates for joint action. In addition, a Justice Summit is tentatively planned for next fall.

Other ways of connecting with our larger community:

We hope to learn what neighboring congregations are doing or would want to do regarding climate change work. We know St. Camillus, a multicultural Catholic parish, does a lot of climate-related work. In addition, we would like to find out what local Black and Latino organizations are doing to work on climate change.

Education:

We held two movie screenings: “Revolution” in September (about how our oceans are collapsing) and “Cock Fight” in November, about the environmental impact of the poultry industry, followed by Q&A with Craig the farmer. We had a good turnout for both, but the effort needed and financial shortfalls make movie screenings very labor-intensive and costly.

Policy and legislative:

1. On December 12, Green Sanctuary co-sponsored a workshop, “Learn to Lobby Like a Pro,” organized by Alexa Fraser.
2. On January 23, Team UUCSS, comprised of Richard Lorr and Lori Hill, participated in the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Keep Winter Cold Polar Bear Plunge. They raised \$4,290 for CCAN and were the #1 team in fundraising!
3. Throughout the 2016 Maryland Legislative Session, about 70 members and friends sent 96 postcards and likely many more sent emails supporting two major climate bills. Partly as a result, the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act passed and has been signed into law, and the Clean Energy Jobs Act also passed and is awaiting the governor’s signature but may become law without his signature in any case.
4. On the international scene, after the U.N. Paris talks ended in November, we looked for a way to participate. We learned that the Green Climate Fund was created by the U.N. Conference on Climate as a mechanism for developed nations to fund sustainability projects in developing nations, but that the U.S. missed its first payment through inaction by Congress. Through contacts at the EPA, we have been investigating a mechanism for individuals to contribute directly to the Green Climate Fund. Even if the money raised were minimal, it could perhaps have symbolic meaning in showing that US citizens are supportive, even if our Congress is not. Through the Maryland legislative session, this investigation has been put on hold. The next step would be to see if environmental organizations like CCAN, Sierra Club, or our own UU Ministry for the Earth or UUA would be willing to make contributions.

Spiritual Development/Worship:

1. On March 26, along with the Racial Justice Task Force, we sponsored a workshop titled “Finding Hope: Transforming Pain for the World by Moving through Despair” to help people feeling overwhelmed with issues such as climate change, police shootings of black men, mass shootings in the daily news, war and refugees by the thousands. Led by Mary Pike of Arlington UU, the half day workshop was attended by ten people.
2. On April 23, we celebrated Earth Day by the performance of the “Missa Gaia/Earth Mass”. It was a beautiful and moving performance. Overall, it was well attended but we felt that more people would have attended had they been aware of the history/meaning of this concert. The lesson is to have more extensive promotion farther ahead of time. Another factor that may have affected attendance was the timing on top of the second Seder. We would like to see the Sunday before or after Earth Day become a time to lift up our denominational and congregational commitment to climate action every year.

Submitted by Lori Hill.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Membership Committee Annual Report 2015–2016

The UUCSS Membership Committee has regrouped a bit this year and is working to achieve the church's growth goals. The committee itself has grown and taken several steps to develop UUCSS's membership team.

In February, we met with a great group of new members to hear about their process of joining UUCSS. We learned what drew them to the church and what could have gone better in their joining process. The group talked about our amazing ministers, our strong religious education program, and our wonderful music. All mentioned the welcoming nature of our congregation! Being greeted warmly and acknowledged is very important to those coming to the church. The committee thanks our incredible Sunday Support team and all of the UUCSS members who participated in the greeter program this year to welcome members and visitors each week. This important ministry has made a huge difference!

The committee has taken several additional steps to provide welcoming experiences for Sunday visitors. First, the committee purchased the new sidewalk sign that greets everyone arriving to the church from the parking lot. This sign, designed by Scott Sleek, leads the way to the sanctuary.

Second, the committee members have become active in our Sunday coffee hour welcoming, which was started by membership coordinator Ashley Burczak. Each Sunday a member of the team sets up a table with UUCSS information and activities to help engage visitors and newer members. The goal is to help make connections with all that UUCSS has to offer.

Third, the committee took a more active role in the church's joining process after Ashley Burczak's reduction in hours. The committee now offers the "UUCSS 101" session each month, which is an informal time for visitors and newer members to learn more about the church. The committee also took over the "Pathways to Membership" class, which is part of the official UUCSS joining process.

The committee has many ideas and looks forward to working with other committees throughout the church to strengthen our church's ability to open its doors to others. Working with the Communications Committee, we plan to update the relevant website pages. Working with the Operations Council, we plan to improve and simplify some of our information tracking and our email communications with visitors. And, working with Adult Programs, our Inreach team, and others, we would like to provide more opportunities for our newer members to strengthen their connections in the church.

I want to thank Jim Paoletti for his terrific work as past chair of the committee. Jim has graciously agreed to stay on the committee, providing invaluable service to this team and our church. I would also like to thank Ashley Burczak for all her work and for her openness to me as I came on board asking thousands of questions. And, of course, I would like to thank the other members of our wonderful Membership Committee team who have all been hard at work this year: Dorothy Hale, Maggie Hayes, Emily Harris, and Linda Barrett.

I would also like to thank all UUCSS members and friends who are always part of the Membership Committee! All that you do every day to make UUCSS such a beloved community for our members and friends, also works to serve as a place of hope for the many visitors who come to us seeking a spiritual home.

Patti Poss, Membership Committee chair

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Annual Report of the Music Program 2015-2016

Committee Members: Tina Borrer (chair), Marty Atias, Bruce Krohmer, Bob McGaughy, Deborah Thornton, Ron Turner, Michael Holmes (ex officio), Phyllis Stanley (ex officio)

The Music Committee works closely with the music director, Michael Holmes, to plan and coordinate the music program at UUCSS. The committee is open to anyone who shares a passion for the musical life of our community, including musicians and non-musicians.

Accomplishments:

- The Sanctuary Singers (choir) gained several new members and continued to provide a wide range of high quality music for Sunday services.
- The A Cappella ensemble performs once a month and has attracted new members from outside the choir.
- Our music program is becoming more intergenerational. The Children's Choir continues to perform a few times a year, and middle- and high-school youth are now performing music for the Coming of Age and YRUU services, and even sing in the adult choir from time to time.
- The UUKes group meets monthly to play ukuleles and sing songs, and occasionally plays for services and other events. Several new members joined this year. All are welcome!
- In December, Jennifer Cutting and her Ocean Quartet performed a concert, "Song of Solstice: A Celtic Winter Celebration," with the UUCSS choir accompanying for some songs.
- The Music Committee organized two residencies with outstanding guest artists:
 - In October, David Smith from All Souls UU Church of Tulsa returned for a sixth residency that again took the UUCSS music and worship programs to new heights. The Saturday workshop included broad participation from our congregation, plus music directors and choir members from other UU churches in the area and many participants from the wider community. The 40-member choir for the Sunday services included many church members who do not consider themselves to be musicians. *Mark your calendars for October 15, 2016, when David will return for another special residency!*
 - In April, we celebrated Earth Day weekend with a multi-media performance of the "Missa Gaia/Earth Mass." Celebrated UU composer, singer, guitarist, and environmentalist, Jim Scott, who was a member of the Paul Winter Consort during the original 1982 monumental recording of "Missa Gaia," was the featured soloist for the event. Jim Scott was joined by the choirs of UUCSS and the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church. The event was co-sponsored by the Green Sanctuary team.
- The Special Music team, led by Tina Borrer, lined up musicians for all summer services.
- Suite Treat 2016 was an artistic and financial success. We raised over \$800 for the music fund, which will benefit the music program. This year's Suite Treat theme was "Isn't It Romantic? Love Songs Through the Ages," and featured vocal and instrumental solos and ensembles, performed by UUCSS members and friends. It was very well received.

Challenges:

- A 30 percent reduction in funding from 2014 made it difficult to maintain the quality of our program without going over-budget.
- Participated in UUCSS Audio/Visual Stakeholders Summit to gain a better understanding of how our music, worship, and A/V interact, and how we need to interact in the service of the church. Discussions are ongoing.
- We would like to find more effective ways to get larger audiences to our special events. The turnout for events in the last year was less than expected and quite unpredictable.

Opportunities:

- UUCSS has been approached by Strathmore performing arts center regarding their East County Initiative, a community development project for the east part of Montgomery County, and they are

connecting the dots between several churches in our area. The endeavors include education, massive Latin dances, choral festivals, student orchestra concerts, blues, and so much more. We could be a part of their project and even provide venues if we are interested. We met with Eliot Pfanstiehl, the CEO of Strathmore, to discuss the possibilities, and a member attended a church music mixer.

- Seek outside funding to support high caliber guest artists and improve production values. Grant funding could be used to develop our arts programs for music, film, literature, dance, folk arts, visual arts, and other disciplines, to include additional residency programs, workshops, a coffee house concert series, educational programs, community youth programs, partnerships with other non-profit organizations, etc.
- Continue to expand the diversity and quality of music performed by UUCSS musicians.
- Increase collaboration with other committees to ensure that the music program engages the entire congregation.
- Increase outreach to and connections with the wider community.
- Improve publicity for residencies and other events, both within and outside the church.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Borrer, Music Committee chair

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Outreach Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

The Outreach Committee is tasked with managing outward-facing UUCSS programs and activities, including signage on New Hampshire Avenue, the public-facing portions of the website, our Shepherd's Table service to people who are homeless in Montgomery County, and a UUCSS presence at parades, festivals and other community events.

Long term projects at or near completion this year are the new sign on New Hampshire Avenue (timbers defining plant bed still need to be removed, and replaced with low edging to allow easier mowing— work that will be done by summer) and, most significantly, a new UUCSS website, which is nearly done, thanks to efforts by webmaster and webpage designer Laura Nelson and a talented web production task force.

As in previous years, this year we were in charge of the third Sunday night of each month at Shepherd's Table, providing 2-4 people to set tables and prep food from 4:00-6:00 pm, and 8-12 other volunteers to serve food, bus tables and wash dishes between 5:45-7:45 pm. Shepherd's Table provides dinner and breakfast 365 days a year, as well as eye care, career counseling, mailboxes, clothing, and other assistance to people who are homeless in the area. We serve between 100 and 140 people on a typical Sunday night.

For the purpose of publicizing outreach activities, UUCSS has press release and calendar announcement Word document templates with the UUCSS logo, headers and footers and boilerplate language. Writing and distribution of media releases and calendar notices is currently delegated to event organizers.

In recent years, Outreach has been more of a loose organization of teams than a real committee, and hasn't participated in area events as in the past, such as the Takoma Park Fourth of July Parade, the Takoma Park Folk Festival, and various area street festivals. The committee could use a new chair and members who will restore some of these activities and revitalize the important work of spreading the word about UUCSS and Unitarian Universalism as a whole.

Submitted by Bob Hirshon

RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Racial Justice Task Force Annual Report 2015-2016

Internally focused activities at UUCSS:

- **Worship Services:** The Racial Justice Task Force led two Sunday Services:
 - “Why We Do Racial Justice Work” August 9, 2015, on the one-year anniversary of Mike Brown’s death. Discussion circle following the service.
 - “The Right Way, The Right Time” February 7, 2016
- **Reading Groups:** We organized and facilitated reading groups on Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* in the summer and fall of 2015.
- **Email List:** We developed and maintained a racial justice email distribution list of 100 people. Different people and varying numbers of people show up to different events, but our overall engagement is high.
- **Coffee Hour:** On a regular basis, the task force hosted a table during Sunday coffee hours.
- **Films:** In February 2016, UUCSS hosted a screening of the documentary film “Hands Up,” followed by a discussion with the filmmaker, Zinhle Essamuah.
- **UU Legislative Ministry:** The UUCSS Board formalized our church membership in the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
- **RE for Children & Youth:** Phyllis Ryder and Daniel Clark lead the RE spring mini-course for middle school children about the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s and the Black Lives Matter movement of today.

External actions, trainings, and other events:

- **Legislative Action:** Numerous church members participated in different actions aimed at the Maryland General Assembly (phone calls, emails, trips to Annapolis, and making financial donations to the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland) in support of the successfully passed Justice Reinvestment Act, SB1005/HB1312 and the Public Safety and Policing Workgroup--Recommendations, HB1016.
- **Training and Development/Building Collaborations:**
 - Several UUCSS members attended JPD-sponsored **Jubilee Workshops**.
 - UUCSS members attended all five of the **Racial Justice Summits** held in the DC area in the past year.
 - Susan Westenbarger and Alexa Fraser participated in **Intercultural Competency Training** held at the UU Church of Annapolis.
 - Six UUCSS members and staff attended the **Leading Edge Multicultural Conference** in New York City, April 2016.
 - In solidarity with local organizations, UUCSS members have attended trainings and events sponsored by the Washington Peace Center; attended several BLM DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia) Spokesouncil meetings; participated in September’s Week of Action sponsored by BLM-DC Spokesouncil and the “Racism Speaks” Solidarities’ action in Washington DC.
 - Susan Westenbarger attended the **JPD Racial Justice Summit**, held at the UU Church of Cherry Hill, NJ, in October 2015.
 - Susan Westenbarger also completed the “**Citizens Academy**” offered by the Montgomery County Police Department. This 15-week course gives county residents a close-up look at police training and practices.

Submitted by Susan Westenbarger

WORSHIP SERVICES COMMITTEE

Worship Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

The 2015-2016 church year saw the Worship Committee bring a diverse group of speakers with a broad range of topics, from both within and outside our membership, to the UUCSS pulpit.

Speakers from within the congregation included board member Chris Lindsley and membership coordinator Ashley Burczak. Sally Porter and Rebecca Fowler spoke at a service of remembrance for Memorial Day, and Jeffrey Noel-Nosbaum returned to the pulpit to lead the Labor Day service. David Miley and our own Gaia Circle joined Rev. Leon in a Samhain service to celebrate the Day of the Dead at the very start of November, and the last Sunday of December we returned to our Jazz Service tradition, led by Bruce Krohmer and Robbi Kimball.

Alexa Fraser spoke on the right of those with terminal illness to end their own lives, honoring another congregational mandate to focus on Death With Dignity. The Racial Justice Task Force in one service, and Daniel and Melissa Clark in a second, brought perspective and passion to the unfolding developments of Black Lives Matter, in keeping with a congregational vote to highlight that movement.

Throughout the year six speakers from outside the congregation brought their gifts to our church, including Rev. Vanessa Southern, singer-songwriter Tret Fure, and author Susan Katz Miller.

In April we moved ahead with training, led by Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay, for worship associates, who provide the liturgical support at our services. A group of us are now midway through short classes to focus on bringing more skill to our supportive role at the front of the church.

We sustained a painful loss when Kubby Rashid, a former chair and a faithful member for several years, rotated off the committee in April, in deference to family and travel obligations. Her absence makes us more grateful for Edith Salazar, who joined the committee last fall, as well as for Preston Mears, who will come aboard in August. We are searching all corners to fill out our group and to keep us growing.

Respectfully submitted,
Carey Schneider, Worship chair

MINUTES FROM CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

ANNUAL MEETING – JUNE 7, 2015

Welcome and Call to Order – Barbara Eyman, president of the board of trustees

Opening Words: “Dreams” by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Chalice Lighting and Lighting of the Sabbatical Chalice

Introduction of board members and their terms

Review of the agenda

Approval of the minutes from 2014-2015 congregational meetings:

In accordance with UUCSS policy, the minutes from the congregational meetings held during 2014-2015 were reviewed and ratified by the board of trustees at the subsequent board meetings, and are contained in the 2014-2015 annual report, which has been distributed to the congregation.

1. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Barbara Eyman

Board president Barbara Eyman reflected on the past 9 months since she became president, excerpted below: There is passion and commitment in every corner of this church, expressed in ways large and small, quiet and with more fanfare, publicly and privately. We endorsed a major renovation of our building and grounds and entrusted a small but very busy group of members dubbed the Dream Builders. The dreams that we expressed are big dreams for our world, big dreams for our church, and big dreams for ourselves. I am constantly amazed by the wealth of diverse talent and generosity of time and commitment that so many people continually demonstrate on behalf of the church, from our musicians, to our RE teachers, to those who serve on committees, pull together events, care for our property, mind our books, welcome visitors and friends, and give beautiful flowers on Sunday mornings.

A book called *Simple Church* by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger presents an idea that many of us have found intriguing and enticing, which is that a church with a simple, clear focus can help its members move through sequential stages of spiritual growth as they become more deeply involved in the church. The board has had lengthy discussions about how we can help people find their personal “ministry”—a word we have deliberately chosen—that will propel them forward on their own spiritual journeys. Three members of the UUCSS community who, in no small part due to the nurturing and growth they have found in this church, are in the process of becoming Unitarian Universalist ministers. That is really extraordinary and is something that I think we should really take pride in. It reflects well on all of us.

I would like to recognize two outgoing board members:

- **John Henderson** served as an at-large member of the board, was our resident expert parliamentarian, and graced us with his calm demeanor, his wisdom, and his thoughtfulness.

- **Kathy Lorr** served as our VP for Personnel for the past three years, which is an incredibly demanding job. Kathy has served in this role with grace and humor and has been a tireless and passionate advocate for our staff.

2. HIGHLIGHTS 2014-2015

Barbara Eyman asked congregants to share some of their favorite highlights from the past year:

- The 10th anniversary Families Living UU Values (FLUUV)
- Music residency with Jennifer Cutting and the Ocean Celtic Quartet
- The quiet work of the Dream Builders team, headed by Phyllis Ryder
- Silent Dinner given by the Deaf Access Committee
- Jean Alexander, Queen of the Grounds
- The UUCSS Caring Community
- Religious Education at UUCSS
- The 2015 annual budget drive (ABD), led by Erik and Alison Leaver, Emily Tien, and Jim Street
- Quiet Day and the Healing Circle
- The choir members who rehearse, and perform long hours each week, and all the other musicians who grace us with their music
- Racial Justice Task Force
- The Seder
- The first K-1st grade Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum and teachers

3. BUDGET FOR 2015-2016 – Chris Lindsley/Michelle Lévesque

MOTION: Adopt the 2015-2016 annual budget.

Moved by Deb Ferrenz; seconded by Nicole Lévesque

VP-Finance Michelle Lévesque thanked the ABD chairs and stewards for the incredibly successful ABD in which we exceeded our budget goal. She also thanked Lisa Schumaker, treasurer, and Lynn Edmiston, collector, for, in her words, “tirelessly, year after year, keeping the train on the tracks.”

Budget highlights for 2014-2015 are described in the annual report. Michelle announced one correction concerning contributions to the endowment fund. The report credits “various members of the Kim/Sleek family in honor of Scott’s [Sleek’s] parents’ wedding anniversary”, but it was in honor of Jiwon Kim’s parents. She expressed apologies for this error.

Following questions and discussion, Chris Lindsley called for a vote on the motion.

MOTION: Adopt the 2015-2016 annual budget.

Motion carried.

4. ELECTIONS FOR UUCSS LEADERSHIP – Chris Lindsley/Tamara Bowman

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Tamara Bowman presented the slate of candidates for church leadership positions:

Board of Trustees (three-year terms)

- President (Candidate: Barbara Eyman)
- Vice-President for Personnel (Candidate: Sharon Snyder)
- Member at Large (Candidate: Doug Weisburger)

Nominating Committee

- Candidate: Cynthia Curry-Daniel
- Candidate: John Henderson
- Candidate: Robin Moore

Program Council

- Vice Chair, also Volunteer Coordinator (Candidate: Heather Dennis)

MOTION: Approve the nominees for UUCSS leadership positions.

Moved by Tamara Bowman; seconded by Noni Barker

Motion carried; unanimous.

5. DREAM BUILDERS UPDATE – Barbara Eyman/Phyllis Ryder

Phyllis Ryder provided a brief recap of the Dream Builders' work this year. In October, the congregation covenanted with Dream Builders regarding the UUCSS building and grounds priorities. After interviewing five firms, Studio Twenty Seven (S27) was hired. They conducted a thorough review of the UUCSS campus this spring, including the state of all buildings, walls, roofs, insulation; the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in all buildings; energy use over the year; the storm water management; and the memorial gardens and landscaping. Phyllis shared that it is especially gratifying to be working with S27 because they see the beauty and possibility in our campus, and it's been exciting to look at what we have through new eyes.

Given the conditions of our current spaces and what have been identified as UUCSS priorities, Dream Builders and S27 are developing a 20-year master plan. The goals are to design the project to accommodate our major tenants throughout the construction and build in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner. Throughout the summer, Dream Builders will work to complete the master plan and prepare materials to communicate with the congregation in September through small-group meetings. In October, there will be a congregational vote about whether or not to move ahead with the capital campaign.

Barbara Eyman expressed deep appreciation to Phyllis Ryder and the Dream Builders for their dedicated leadership in this work, and the congregation responded with a round of applause.

6. SOCIAL ACTION RESOLUTIONS – Barbara Eyman/Chris Lindsley

Barbara Eyman opened this portion of the agenda. Church policies envision a process whereby social action statements on behalf of the church are adopted by a vote of the congregation. This is an expression of the fact that committed, deep-seated social action comes not from a top-down directive but from a personal spiritual commitment. We had two resolutions submitted for consideration and Chris Lindsley led the process of considering them.

6.a. DEATH WITH DIGNITY RESOLUTION – Chris Lindsley/Alexa Fraser

Chris Lindsley called Alexa Fraser to the floor; the Death with Dignity resolution was read:

In 1988 General Assembly approved a resolution that said in part: Unitarian Universalists advocate the right to self-determination in dying, and the release from civil or criminal penalties of those who, under proper safeguards, act to honor the right of terminally ill patients to select the time of their own deaths.

The past legislative session in Maryland saw the first bill that will allow Death with Dignity in Maryland. In brief, a person with less than six months to live and two doctors who affirm they are of sound mind, can be given a prescription by their doctor to end their life; the person must take

the prescription themselves. This bill has not yet passed and will likely come up before the legislature again in future session(s).

We, the membership of UUCSS, agree that people dying of terminal illnesses should have a choice in how they die. We support the enactment of a Death with Dignity bill in Maryland as a way to expand the choices a dying person might make.

Chris then invited a motion.

MOTION: Adopt the Death with Dignity resolution as written.

Moved by David Miley; seconded by Laura Ellis

The floor was opened for discussion and questions. Chris Lindsley then called for a vote on the motion. An individual count was requested from the floor.

MOTION: Adopt the Death with Dignity resolution as written.

Motion carried, with a count of:

In Favor = 80

Opposed = 0

6.b. RACIAL JUSTICE RESOLUTION – Chris Lindsley/ Eli Briggs, Daniel Clark, Al Nathan, Susan Westenbarger

Chris Lindsley called representatives from the Racial Justice Task Force to the floor—Eli Briggs, Daniel Clark, Al Nathan, Susan Westenbarger--and the Racial Justice resolution was read:

According to the vision of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring for 2012 to 2017, "We seek justice, and therefore work with energy and love to transform ourselves, our community and our world." Grounded in the first principle of Unitarian Universalism, the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the members of UUCSS affirm that a social action priority for the church is racial justice and working toward a more just society where black lives truly matter.

MOTION: Adopt the Racial Justice resolution as written.

Moved by Chris Perry; seconded by Laura Ellis

As discussion began, a motion to amend was put forward.

MOTION TO AMEND: Replace “all black lives truly matter” with “all lives matter.”

Moved by Alex Custin; seconded by Doyle Rice

After some discussion, Tina Borrer proposed an amendment to the amendment and Alex Custin accepted it.

AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDMENT: The final section of the resolution will read:

“ . . . a social action priority for the church is racial justice and working toward a more just society where black lives truly matter and, indeed, all lives matter.”

The floor was opened for discussion on the amendment to the main motion and then brought to a vote:

MOTION TO AMEND: The final section of the resolution will read: “. . . a social action priority for the church is racial justice and working toward a more just society where black lives truly matter and, indeed, all lives matter.”

Motion failed with a count of:

In Favor = 13

Opposed = 47

The original motion was then brought back to the floor:

MOTION: Adopt the Racial Justice resolution as written.

Motion carried; unanimous.

7. REVISIONS TO THE UUCSS CONSTITUTION – Chris Lindsley/Barbara Eyman

Chris Lindsley opened the floor to entertain the motion to adopt revisions to the UUCSS constitution. Barbara Eyman reviewed the purpose of the revisions.

MOTION: Adopt the Constitution revisions dated June 7, 2015.

Moved by Deb Ferrenz; seconded by Lisa Schumaker

Motion carried.

8. APPRECIATIONS - Kathy Lorr/Barbara Eyman

Kathy Lorr to Sarah Gonzalez:

(Excerpt) I would like our congregation to recognize, honor, and celebrate Sarah Gonzalez, after years of hard work, in achieving the status of Credentialed Religious Educator (CRE)—Credentialed Level. She has mastered competency areas deemed essential to strong religious education leadership: discipline, time, commitment, and dedication to our values as Unitarian Universalists. She submitted a comprehensive portfolio, reflections on books and resources, personal statements, and a self-assessment. Her in-person evaluation by the UUA’s Religious Education Credentialing Committee affirmed her ability to promote excellence in faith development in the life of our congregation. Sarah will be recognized and celebrated at General Assembly and at the Liberal Religious Educators Association fall conference. She regards as her most important achievements this year the implementation of a K-1st grade OWL (Our Whole Lives) class, which is a huge step toward offering OWL across the lifespan. We offered multigenerational religious education during our 11:30 services, and we started a junior American Sign Language class. This gift is a symbol of our gratitude and love.

Kathy Lorr to Ashley Burczak:

(Excerpt) Ashley completed her seminary studies in 2010 and was granted candidacy status to become a minister last October. As part of her process, the board approved Ashley’s request for “congregational sponsorship” of her ministerial fellowship process with the UUA. She loves UUCSS and has built a deep connection with us in her three years as membership coordinator and ministerial assistant. “Congregational sponsorship” means that we support her and believe she understands UU congregational life and, in particular, the life of our congregation. Her next step is to obtain an internship with UU oversight, either with a congregation or as a chaplain. She is seeking an alternative internship with a UU supervisory chaplain at the National Institutes of Health, in part so she can stay at UUCSS. As an intern, she will need a UU committee who will guide her and prepare her to be a minister. The committee will perform an evaluation that is taken seriously by the UUA. Ashley may reach out to individuals in our congregation to be on her committee. We have greatly benefited from Ashley’s work; I present her with this gift as a small symbol of our gratitude.

Barbara Eyman to Rev. Dr. Leon Dunkley:

(Excerpt) We have put incredible demands on Rev. Leon over the past couple of months, and he has stepped up beautifully and naturally. I know I have relied heavily on his wisdom, perspective, calm, and integrity. Rev. Leon came to us just three short years ago but I think the results of this year's budget drive—where bringing equity and integrity to the level of compensation we choose to provide to him was a central theme—is a testament to the appreciation in this community of his many gifts. We know Rev. Leon is a big Red Sox fan; please accept this gift as a token of our appreciation.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn was made by Jim Paoletti, seconded by Deb Ferrenz. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Janne M. Harrelson
Board Secretary

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

Welcome and Call to Order – Barbara Eyman, president of the Board of Trustees
Lighting of the Chalice

Opening Words - Rev Liz Lerner Maclay, senior minister

Invocation by Heather K. Janules

From the power of our memory and history,
With high hopes for the days that lie ahead,
We gather to craft the destiny we share with one another.

We gather with faith in the practice of democracy.
We gather with hearts and minds open
To the wisdom in every voice among us.

In our gathering,
May we dream and design a bold future.
May we bring our best selves to this service,
And may we dream these dreams
And do this work
With love.

Amen.

Barbara Eyman thanked everyone for coming, and offered a huge round of applause for the Dream Builders, noting that the beautiful building plans they presented to the congregation truly embody who we said we are. She thanked everyone for attending the small group meetings and participating in the important processes leading up to this day.

1. Dream Builders – Phyllis Ryder, chair of the Dream Builders

Phyllis Ryder expressed her appreciation to the Dream Builders and the entire community, and then briefly described “how we got here”. She shared that 174 members, friends, and youth participated in at least one of the 11 small group sessions. They saw the master plan and were able to ask questions and raise comments, all of which were captured and will be actively used if the congregation votes to move forward with the capital campaign.

2. Congregational Meeting Process - Michelle Lévesque, Vice-President/Finance

Michelle Lévesque informed congregants of the process for the meeting, how the presentations, discussion, and voting will occur, including a brief recap of Robert’s Rules of Order.

3. Capital Campaign – Erik Leaver, chair of the Capital Campaign

Erik Leaver reported that our consultants, J. D. Klotz & Associates, prepared a “readiness assessment”, and based on the four prerequisites for campaign success, they recommended that UUCSS move forward with the campaign. The prerequisites are: (1) proper timing, (2) appealing case, (3) influential leadership, and (4) constituency with adequate resources. In these categories, UUCSS is well within range for launching a campaign.

The amount needed to accomplish all of the priorities the congregation has set forth, as reflected in the master plan, is \$9.7M. The plan is divided into four phases. Phase 1 will require \$5.2M. Erik described the capital campaign in terms of goal, need, and desire. The goal is to make a personal presentation to all members and friends in the congregation so everyone has first-hand information and all questions can be answered, regardless of an individual's ability to pledge. We want everyone to understand clearly what the church is doing, and have an opportunity to participate. The need is to raise \$9.7M. The desire is to go as far into or beyond Phase 1 as possible, to raise a minimum of \$5.2M.

Erik then described the next steps if the congregation votes to embark on the capital campaign, along with various contingencies depending on how much money is raised. For example, if we raise \$5.2M, we can begin immediately on all the steps outlined in Phase 1. The architectural firm, Studio 27, will start working on schematic drawings. As the campaign is running, a financial task force will be established to assess alternative funding sources. If we don't raise the desired amount, the financial task force will advise the board about how to bridge the gap. If we raise less than the \$5.2M, we'll proceed similar to how we always operate. The board will charge Dream Builders to revisit the designs for Phase 1 and to make recommendations for how to adjust it to the amount raised, including the anticipated bridge funding. Communication with the congregation will occur throughout the process.

4. Board Endorsement - Barbara Eyman

Having reviewed the readiness assessment, the board has unanimously endorsed the plan to embark on a capital campaign.

5. Motion / Discussion / Vote - Michelle Lévesque

Michelle called for the motion.

MOTION: Move forward with the capital campaign.

Moved by Carol Hamilton; seconded by Laura Ellis.

The floor was then opened for discussion and questions.

CALL THE QUESTION: Kathy Lorr

Requires 2/3 majority. Passed unanimously.

Those who had not yet spoken were given an opportunity to do so, and then Michelle Lévesque called for the vote.

MOTION: Move forward with the capital campaign.

The motion carried, with 2 opposed.

Note: This includes all absentee ballots.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was moved and seconded; motion carried. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janne M. Harrelson
Board Secretary