

This document is prepared with a historical perspective in mind. It includes detail about programs that we wish to track in case someone in the future has questions such as, "When did we start using themes for worship?" or "When did Spirit Play become a multi-aged program?"

At the same time, anyone who reads the entire document will have a reasonably good idea of the depth and breadth of programming here at UUCA.



Lead Minister Annual Report by Rev. Mark Ward, Lead Minister

It's been a momentous year for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville, where we firmed up the financial foundations of our congregation and dove into the work of social justice in a deeper way than we have for some time.

First, we broke ground for the most significant alteration to our Main Building in 35 years. I hope you will like our new look. I'm especially proud of your decision to radically improve the accessibility of the building, with changes to the sanctuary, entrance areas and a new accessible restroom. This is one of those moments where we are truly living our values. Also, a strong response to our Annual Budget Drive has put us on a course to fully cover our operational expenses from annual income and bolster efforts to keep members connected. I am so grateful for your great generosity and the incredible volunteer team behind our combined capital-operating fund drive that made all this possible.

We also responded to the outbreak of racial tensions across the country as well as here in Asheville by committing ourselves to a course of action to affirm that Black Lives Matter. Our "common read" of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander gave us deep insight into the work that is needed to assure that all African-Americans are treated fairly and have an equal opportunity to thrive, and that the shackles of institutional racism are demolished. Many members of our congregation are volunteering in ways that support and build relationships with African-American communities in Asheville. I look forward to seeing what fruits these efforts bring.

In other areas:

WORSHIP

We have joined with a group of dozens of other UU congregations that cooperate in choosing their monthly themes for worship and small group ministry. The group uses a model developed at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY called "Soul Matters," which invites participants to share resources that help the congregations delve deeply into the themes. They

offer reflections and questions and many resources to consider, ranging from poems to YouTube videos. It has been great to have access to these rich resources both for worship planning and for participants in our small groups to dig into.

Our themes for September through June were: PROMISE, RENEWAL, BELONGING, IMAGINATION, INTEGRITY, FAITH, RESILIENCE, REVELATION, TRADITION, AND DELIGHT.

In September, we pursued such topics as the power of promise through covenant in our tradition and how our promises invite us to return to relationship, even when we fail each other. Also, in a memorable moment for this congregation, we installed the **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper** as our Associate Minister. In October, we considered how holding a welcoming space renews us. Pursuing the theme of belonging in November we adapted the play “Our Town” to help us reflect on how we belong to each other, then turned to considering our role in preserving the wild, which affirms our interdependence and how we are challenged to make room for and affirm people with disabilities, and finally how we name an American faith to which we all might belong.

December brought a call for us to imagine a way past the racial tensions we live with as well as some reflections on the nature of fear. The centenary of the Christmas Truce of World War I was an occasion for us to imagine an alternative to war. Our traditional Christmas Eve services included a “no-rehearsal Christmas pageant” and reflections at our later service about gifts. And we continued our now two-year-old tradition of Singing out the Old Year and Singing in the new.

In January when I was away in India, Lisa took two sermons to explore the story of our covenant, and on returning in February I shared my India experiences and invited a reflection on how faith invites us to reflect on where our heart rests. Our reflections on Resilience in March touched on the life and work of Joseph Priestley, my reflection on the Black Lives Matter campaign in light of the 50th anniversary of the Selma civil rights march, and Lisa kicking off a pilot project encouraging everyone to prepare advance directives. And, of course, we had our amazing Mozart service as part of the Asheville Amadeus Festival, the first time that I know of when we had a full orchestra in worship.

April had an earthy theme, with a return of the flower communion to our Easter service and a new Dirt Communion in celebration of Earth Day, and we were invited to consider how ours is an “antifragile” religion. We head into May with celebrations of Mother’s Day, the credos of our Coming of Age class and Music Sunday.

We also welcomed guests: Taryn Strauss, former UUCA director of religious education who now serves in that role at All Souls Church in New York and also is completing a Masters of Divinity degree at Union Theological School, invited us to reflect on the implications of racial tensions in Ferguson, Mo.; Todd and Meg Hoke, a hospice nurse and social worker who suggested we look for “Five Happy Things” to guide our spiritual reflections. John Snodgrass, who spoke to the vagaries of human nature, Tim Tyson, author and divinity school professor, who used the story of Herod to invite reflections on the implications of Martin Luther King’s work, and Rev. Aubra Love, who helped us celebrate the empowerment of women.

I am grateful to my talented and creative team of Worship Associates. They add so much to our worship services, and their assistance is a great help in coordinating worship services when Lisa and I are away. Our team this year included **James Cassara, Monika Gross, Patricia Morell, Virginia Ramig, John Stoffels, Sharon VanDyke, Bob Wilson, and our youth worship associate Destin Newfont.** This year we also experimented with a new format in worship: a UUCA Speaking Chorus, which gave dramatic choral readings in our services. Participants this year included **Mary Alm, Tom Dessereau, Monika Gross, John Huie, Clark Olsen, John Stoffels, and Sam Zurich.**

The following section about this year’s Alternative Worship Experience was written to document the program should others wish to continue something like it.

AWE

Also this year we tried an experiment in worship: an **Alternative Worship Experience (AWE)** held on one Wednesday evening a month. The idea for the service emerged out of conversations between the ministers and Worship Associate, **Elizabeth Schell,** who was looking for new ways to serve the congregation and its

various worshipping needs. In the summer of 2014, Elizabeth held a brainstorming session attended by six individuals ranging in age from 30ish-60ish where the services were planned.

The goals of the service were to...

1. provide a mid-week worship space for people to recharge and reconnect spiritually and communally with their UU faith community.
2. provide a mid-week, non-Sunday service for those who cannot or choose not to participate in worship on Sunday mornings.
3. provide an alternative, more multi-sensory worship experience that is more difficult to visualize or enact on a Sunday morning, even perhaps serving as a kind of “worship lab” for new ways of doing worship that could feed into Sunday morning.

❖ What Happened?

Services began with a call to worship song (“Come, Come, Whoever You Are”), chalice lighting, and welcome and ended with a closing song (“May the Longtime Sun Shine Upon You”). The idea for all the AWE services was to be, see, and move in the space in new and different ways. For some services, chairs were brought in from Sandburg Hall to create more of an intimate circle up front. For others, the whole space was used with walking meditations, gatherings of groups for sharing meditations, or movement and dancing. For one service, a long banquet table down front was created with a feast of art supplies. Several services used a big screen with projection of images and words while others used no technology at all. Microphones were never used, mainly due to no budget, but the small attendance proved this not to be much of a problem. Some services included short verbal reflections while others included no singular message, but were more experiential (art feast, digging and mixing dirt, spiral walk, fire communion, etc.). One service was directed by a large stuffed chicken who laid eggs randomly which, when opened, gave participants things to say or lead on the

theme of foolishness! Humor was always near at hand, though having the services in the evening gave a naturally more meditative air to the Sanctuary space. All services welcomed multiple generations.

Music sometimes included guitar or piano accompaniment or solo performance. **David Ray** and **Paul Moore** were among the contributors. Other times songs were sung a cappella and background music provided by recording. We had no musician to accompany hymns.

Except the two that occurred on Beginning Points nights, services started at 7:30pm with a 6:30pm potluck dinner before. Elizabeth thought it was important to include food—breaking bread together is a ritual all its own, plus she hoped it would make it easier for people to come if their sustenance needs were met. Though called a “potluck” she always made sure a main dish was provided and that people knew that so if they couldn’t bring anything they wouldn’t be deterred in coming.

❖ **Attendance/Participants**

Attendance was spotty. As of this writing, eight AWE services have occurred with a minimum of six and a maximum of 17 participants. Average attendance has been 10. In those eight services, there have been at least 35 different participants. Some attended multiple times, while others came only once or twice. The ages of participants has included infant, elementary age, tweens, and adults from their late 20s through 60+. A companion dog also attended several services. Participants included visitors (who then moved to Asheville), those new to UUCA, and short-, and long-term members and friends. Participants also included single adults, couples (married or otherwise), single parents with kids, and couples with kids. Though childcare was offered in advance if requested, only once was it utilized for two toddlers not included in attendance numbers.

❖ **Communication**

The services were announced in Sunday orders of service and the weekly E-News. Elizabeth wrote a couple of longer announcement/articles for the monthly E-newsletter as well. Each month Elizabeth created a Facebook Event page for the event. Elizabeth invited people to the page and posted links about it on the UUCA Family and Young Adult Facebook pages as well as on the UUCA Facebook page. Verbal announcements were also sometimes made in worship the week or so prior to AWE. A basic flyer was regularly updated that included upcoming dates and topics/themes, which was posted in Sandburg Hall. To date, a separate teaser flyer was only created for the April service to garner more interest. This service was also included as a calendar listing in a local paper. But otherwise no communication about AWE was made for outside/beyond the UUCA community.

❖ **Learnings**

Those who attended services seemed moved by experiences when present. Though some people attended repeatedly (about 6-8 main core participants), most only came once or twice. We have done no survey, but conversations and observations lead Elizabeth to think that the only once-a-month schedule made it difficult for the service to gain familiarity in people's schedules. Also, the service was a big lift for Elizabeth, who did almost all the work in planning, organizing and preparing the worship services and even the potluck meals. A team devoted to AWE services could have spread the load and possibly helped spread the word.

❖ **Next Steps**

Elizabeth does not plan to continue the AWE services past June. She has recommended that if the AWE service or something like it is resumed it should be a weekly event and that a team be recruited to plan and organize it. She plans to survey regular attenders of the AWE services for their feedback and observations. We will continue to explore interest in alternative worship venues.

EXECUTIVE

Under the form of Policy Governance that we use, I am charged to act as Executive, which means that I am accountable to the Board of Trustees and the Congregation for achieving the Ends set by the Board of Trustees that accomplish the ministry of our congregation. Obviously, though, it's not my work alone. Working with me are our nine staff members and many volunteers. As the Board's policy says, we all work together "in the spirit of shared ministry."

In this role I serve as staff leader, worship director and the one charged with the overall management of our day-to-day operations. We are blessed with a committed and extremely capable staff, and thankfully after some turnover in recent years we look ahead to the new church year expecting no staff changes. I meet weekly with our senior staff, **Director of Administration Linda Topp, Associate Minister Lisa Bovee-Kemper, and Director of Lifespan Religious Education Joy Berry**, to plan the directions of our ministries. And we meet as a full staff on the first Wednesday of each month. Each year we try to provide some training that improves skills and builds connections and collaboration among staff members. Last fall all staff members participated in training on the Enneagram led by the Rev. Sandra Smith. We found it an insightful tool that helped us understand how we process information and respond to others.

I also meet with the Board Council to plan for monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees, and I attend the Board meetings themselves. I report to the Board on the progress we are making in achieving the Ends and what we are doing to comply with Executive Limitations. These are policies the Board sets to assure that all of our practices in running the congregation meet ethical, professional and financial standards.

The principle tool that we use to measure whether we are achieving the Ends is a congregational survey we give each spring. This will be the third year that we have conducted this survey. In the first survey we asked for feedback on how well we are meeting all three categories of Ends: those that advance our personal spiritual growth – Within; those that create connections of care and support – Among; and those that advance our work on behalf of freedom, justice and love – Beyond. In our second

survey, last year, we surveyed the congregation on our success in meeting our Among Ends. As reported in the eNews, we found that a sizeable majority feel that they are part of a vibrant and nourishing religious community, that there are ample opportunities to connect with others, that they feel supported in times of both celebration and need and that generally we do a good job of welcoming people and communicating. This year our survey will look at the Within Ends.

WELCOME PROJECT

The biggest project our congregation was engaged in this year was our combined operating and capital drive – where at the same time we sought an 11% increase in annual financial commitments and pledges of \$750,000 for our Welcome Project. It was the most ambitious fundraising drive in this congregation in more than 30 years, and the response was amazing. Total pledges for the Welcome Project are now \$758,000 and growing, and annual financial commitments were up 7%.

We knew our goal for the Annual Budget Drive was ambitious. In recent years, the net growth in annual commitments has been around 4%. So, 11% was quite a reach, but we had a reason. Back in 2011 we made a decision to invest in our staff by increasing the hours of our Assistant Minister position from 1/3 time to full time and upgrading our Director of Lifespan Religious Education position. We couldn't afford that right away, so we decided to set aside \$130,000 of a \$200,000 unrestricted bequest to bridge that gap over the next five years, expecting that by then regular income could cover those expenses. We have made some progress in that goal, but have not yet reached it. An 11% increase in financial commitments would have taken us there.

So, we put together a comprehensive campaign that for the first time in over a decade involved personal visits to every member and friend of the congregation. For a community with around 600 members and 130 pledging friends that was a huge undertaking. And yet we did it, thanks primarily to **Larry Wheeler** and **Nancy Heath**, who coordinated the campaign. They recruited a carefully structured team of some 165 volunteers to visit members and friends, contacted former members and even people and organizations in our community who know us. That campaign was truly a work of art! And to nearly double the percentage

increase in commitments that we have received in recent years was a monumental achievement.

While we didn't reach our goal, the level of commitments we did receive puts us on a reliable path to reaching it soon. Our five-year plan, using conservative assumptions, projects that by the fiscal year 2017-18 we will no longer need to supplement our budget with money from the bequest. Also, because we have used less money from the bequest than we thought we would need, we have enough left over from that \$130,000 to get us there.

In fact, the 7% increase has given us room to create a part-time position beginning July 1 to help assure that we reach our goal. We are calling the position a Connections Coordinator, and that person's task will be both to help with New Member classes and recruitment and to create systems to improve our retention of members. We've noticed in recent years that while we have no problem bringing in new members, many don't stay very long. In a congregation of our size it's easy for newcomers to feel overwhelmed, and if they don't make a connection soon after joining they drift away from us. So, the Connection Coordinator will be tasked with helping people who are new to our community, and even people who have been around for a while, find meaningful connections in the congregation.

PLANNED GIVING

While fundraising was going on for the Welcome Project, our Planned Giving Committee also knew this would be an occasion for some members and friends to think about their possible legacies with this congregation. So, they worked with Welcome Project volunteers to provide Planned Giving brochures where the volunteers felt it was appropriate. It meant that the Planned Giving Committee had a limited window to approach members about joining our Legacy Circle, which is the list of people who have made provisions to support the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville in their estate planning. Still, they managed to sign up eight new members to the Legacy Circle, bringing the total now to 62. To explain our estate planning options they created a new Planned Giving section to our website. You can find it under the "For Members" tab.

The committee also worked with the Financial Advisory Committee to draft a proposed bylaw amendment that will come before the

congregation at the Annual Meeting that outlines how estate-planned gifts that we receive are used. Many thanks to members of the Planned Giving Committee: **Beverly Cutter**, chair; **Dane Barrager**, **Jill Preyer**, and **George Ramig**.

PASSAGES

I take note with sadness of those Members and Friends of UUCA who died in this past year: **Monty Berman**, **Larry Carlson**, **Marylee Davis**, **Stephen Jones**, **Bailey Mundy**, **Laura Sims** and **Marge Stewart**. All of them people who brought much to this community and gave much to the world, good people who will be missed and who we are proud to hold in loving memory.



Director of Music Annual Report by Dr. Milton Crotts

This report is a review of my second year as Music Director for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville, outlining the variety of musical experiences that have enhanced our worship service in their own special way, fulfilling the goal of creating vocal/instrumental opportunities that bridge cultures and strengthen a sense of community through music while enhancing the worship experience.

The Choir continues to share music at both services on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month and at special services such as **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper's** Installation, Christmas Eve, and the last Sunday of the year that has evolved into a "Sing Out the Old; Sing in the New Tradition."

Rehearsals are held every Thursday from 7-9pm beginning in mid-August to the end of May. The "tradition" of the choir remaining in the congregation, then coming forward continues to be an asset for the worship experience for many. As always, membership in the choir is open to anyone in the congregation who expresses an interest and commitment to participating.

Current members include:

Juli & Shel Altschul, Amanda Anderson, Ned Cabaniss, Dennis Campbell, Judy Clouse, Mary Cornielsen, Beverly Cutter, Jon Dana, Virginia DeMoss. Karin Eckert, Mike Ellis, Melody Goldberg, Doug Hibshman, Joyce Hooley-Gingrich, Carol Howard, Kassie Hughes-Lampros, Richard Kark, Lynda Keyer, Maurice Loiselle, Matthew McCombs, Norris Orbach, Laura Palermo, Andy Reed, Ashley Renfro, Jeffrey Robbins, Carol Shultheis, Ann Thompson, David Williams, and Debbie Ward

In addition to our choir, the following Musicians from the Congregation shared their talents this year as soloists or with small ensembles:

Melissa Himelein, Jeff Robbins, and Paul Moore on piano,

David Ray, Brett Johnson, Brittany, Kassie Hughes-Lampros, Phil Fleet,

Juliana Austin's trio: Kari Sickenberger along with Vollie McKenzie,

Sue Richards, Celtic Harpist

Additional members who occasionally participate; Sally Beth Shore, Barbara Kruszewski, Emma Gardiner-Parks, Gena Vesely, Beth Gage, Anna Martin, and Rev. Mark Ward

The **Village Orchestra** began the year, but due to inconsistent instrumentation it was deemed best for instrumentalists to be incorporated as needed for special services or selections as needed. The following were active members at the beginning of the year:

Dennis Campbell, Arthur Daniels, Jim Fox, Samantha Isakson, Russ Lee, Susan Lee, Linda Nash, Grace Sideris, Pete Tolleson, and Mike Wallace

Nicholas O'Leary, organist and pianist joined us on a regular basis in August 2010 and has contributed a great deal through his talent for our worship services.

The Multigenerational Choir or All Ages Choir participated in Time for All Ages Services on September 28, December 24, and February 15. Participants included the following:

Juliana, Fiona, and Sadiva Austin, Donna Criswell, Wendy Fletcher, Daisy and Luther Hollifield, Kate Hyde, Amy Moore, Michael Murray and Natalie Polinko and their daughters, Athena and Bergen, Anna, Langdon and Eliza Martin, Kimberly and Karen Mason, Katherine and Henry Murphy, Noah and Sally Beth Shore, Lily Stejskal, Linda Topp, Debbie Ward, and Emilie and Maddie White

The main event of my Professional Development was attendance at the Rowe Center in Greenfield, MA for a workshop in Hospice Choir. I returned with numerous additions to our repertoire. During these three weeks in

New England, I visited several Shaker Villages, explored their musical traditions and incorporated several selections into our repertoire.

GUEST MUSICIANS

WomanSong, a 40+-member choir has rehearsed on Monday evenings for more than a decade in Sandburg Hall and I extended their first invitation to join us for a service. They gladly accepted “gratis” and shared their music on Mother’s Day, May 11, 2014. It was a great success and they will return for another Sunday this May 2015.

The following Professional Musicians shared their music for our worship services:

Kim and Reggie Harris,

Dan Weiser, classical pianist, on April 27, August 10, October 19, November 23, and March 1,

Dan Warner, singer-songwriter; Julee and Mark Weems, Billy Jackson, Celtic harpist; Andrew McGill, Celtic fiddler; Ellis, singer-songwriter; Ryan Kijinka, jazz bassist; Bill Bares, jazz pianist; Robin Bullock, guitarist; Lew Gelfond, violinist; Michael Stevens and Zack Page, jazz duo

Mountain Spirit Guest Musicians

Buddy Mondock, Holly Hanson, Tod and Meg Hoke; Sally Burris, Pat Donahue

I arranged for the following community musicians to be part of our services:

UNCA students Ariel and Caitlin; Asheville Clarinet Quartet – Gary Spaulding, Steve Loew, Anne and Dan Salter; “Jiivanmukta” aka Geoffrey Steen and Alex Dickie, Kiirtan/Bengali Love Song; Paul Storable, violinist; Doug and Darcy Orr along with the Highlanders; Steven Tristan, classical violinist; Madison Fiedler, vocalist; Nolan Anthony, guest organist and pianist; And Stan Schmidt, piccolo trumpet with our Choir

There were many highlights for the year, but the recent Mozart Celebration on March 22 was certainly a memorable experience that was reviewed at www.cvnc.org

The March 22 services included a full chamber orchestra, along with the choir augmented by voices from the Blue Ridge Orchestra, four professional soloists and the Chamber Symphony from the BRO. The services were publicized throughout WNC as two of the featured performances of Asheville Amadeus, the Mozart festival sponsored by the Asheville Symphony. Brochures went out to some 26,000 homes. There was additional publicity in the *Laurel*, WCQS and in newspapers. The attendance exceeded our expectations with people beyond our UU congregation. Musically, this combined ensemble was on a par with other performances presented during the festival.

The following members of the Blue Ridge Orchestra participated in our Mozart Service:

Arnold Brown, Ash Doty, Dawn Shepard, Karen Rose, Day Ann Emory, Rachel Dunn, Erin Klimstra, Elizabeth Glatstein, Judy Handley, Pat Stone, Carlton Alexander, Steven Loew, Mary Williamson, David Lehlbach, Casey Coppenbarger, Richard Plyler, Michelle Summey

Voices of the Orchestra who augmented our Adult Choir:

Margaret Stratton, Janet Spletzer, Karen Cianciulli, Brenda Phetteplace, Annette Hudson, Marion Bradford, Peggy Eckel, David Teague, Kim Neidlinger, Mary Thomas

In addition, I engaged and rehearsed a quartet of professional singers for the Mozart Mass: Gwenn Roberts, Mary Cornielsen, Randall Outland, and Phillip Haynie

SUMMARY

The Music Program continues to evolve and I remain flexible to meet the needs of our worship. The mission with which I was charged two years ago was to encourage more participation from our congregants and to provide a more eclectic approach to the musical offerings from week to week. This has been accomplished and appears to have been accepted by most congregants. Among the necessary tasks dealt with on a regular basis

are: scheduling, planning, studying scores, rehearsing, coordinating, conducting, cajoling musicians and responding to dozens of requests for “more info” from our Welcome Visitors Form.

With few exceptions, I have enjoyed meeting the challenges set forth by the Music Committee as well as those I set for myself.

Thank you for the opportunity to broaden the UUCA's horizons as well as my own.



Associate Minister Annual Report by Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

The Pastoral Visitors program continues to run smoothly, congregants receiving good, consistent care. Prayer shawls, baby blankets and lap robes created by Fibre Friends are much appreciated, as they are treasured by congregants who receive them. We are continuing to raise awareness of the caring ministry of the congregation through written communications, one-on-one conversations and from the pulpit. New Pastoral Visitor training will be completed by September of 2015.

I continue to encourage the UUCA community to engage in end-of-life planning through completing advance directives and life crisis forms and continue to meet with families and individuals to assist with this process. **Jill Preyer, Cindy Bovee-Kemper** and I piloted a congregation-based program for education about and completion of Advance Directives (Living Will and Health Care Power of Attorney forms) in March & April. Eight facilitators were trained, and close to 100 people participated in workshops at UUCA.

Memory Café was discontinued due to lack of appropriate venue. The “church fellowship hall” atmosphere of Sandburg Hall was not amenable to the spirit of the café, and we were unable to locate an alternative setting in town.

MEMBERSHIP

The Sunday Welcome Team, which includes Welcome Tablers, and ushers & greeters, organized by **Michael Vavrek**, have been short of volunteers in the past six months. We are providing training and extra support for the teams to help people feel more comfortable, as well as recruiting aggressively.

Our new-member process has been going very well this year. **Christine Magnarella Ray** has devoted five hours a week to “Membership Coordinator” work and is assisting with new-member classes as well. The consistent staff administrative support, even at such a low level in terms

of hours, has made a dramatic difference in our ability to provide reliable service to new members. **Linda Bair** heads the food/hospitality team for the classes, while **Paula Massey** is tasked with making individual connections with new members. **Rita & Charlie Marks**, with the assistance of **Jim Steffe**, run the Visiting Steward program for new member commitments.

We completed three new-member class cycles in this fiscal year.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

We are very pleased to see the growth of our Small Group Ministry at UUCA. Last year (2013-14) we had two-three theme groups and four covenant groups, only one of which was really new. In 2014-15 we had six theme-group facilitators and five groups (including John's summer group): **Joy McConnell**, **Kendall Hale**, **Richard Kark**, **Bill Kleiber**, **John DuPree** and **Jim Steffe**. It's hard to get accurate numbers but I think 35 would be a pretty good guess for theme-group participation.

One of the old covenant groups came to an end. The couples' covenant group of the previous years split and expanded so that we now have two couples' covenant groups. We have also added a covenant group for young parents, two mixed-gender multi-age covenant groups, and another multi-age covenant group for women, bringing the total to seven covenant groups with 75 members. I think we can attribute the growth of the small group ministry to the vocal support of both of our ministers, more announcements about groups forming, as well as to more frequent presence of an information table for Small Group Ministry on Sundays before and after services. We are hoping to involve many more of our members so that they can experience more and deeper relationships with other members, as well as the self-reflection on and sharing of their own lives' journeys that is integral to Small Group Ministry process. It is exciting to hear how much these groups mean to their members.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

As of July 1, the congregation made a big shift in our community giving. We changed Share-the-Plate collections from once a month to every week. The vision put forth by Mark & me was to increase both the dollar amount of donations and the level of engagement by individuals in the

congregation. The application form has been updated to reflect this, and the Share-the-Plate committee has worked hard to take on the increased workload, and have adjusted well. December giving (Alternative Gift Fair, Holiday Giving, etc.) has been shifted to the Share-the-Plate umbrella as well, making plans to streamline giving opportunities in December so that the congregation does not get maxed out on holiday-focused asks. The impact of the increased giving has been greatly appreciated by our partner organizations.

In September, we suspended monthly meetings of the Earth & Social Justice Ministry (ESJM) meetings, since attendance had consistently been fewer than five members, regardless of the addition of potluck/fellowship time, mandatory voting representation, and/or programmatic offerings. Congregational engagement continued through the affiliate groups (see individual reports later in this report).

Leading up to the Coghurn decision on October 10, the congregation supported the Campaign for Southern Equality's efforts calling attention to the need for marriage equality in North Carolina. Rev. Mark Ward and members **Betty Mack & Carol Taylor** were plaintiffs in the lawsuit that eventually made marriage legal in the state. **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper** performed the first legal same-gender wedding in North Carolina, on the steps of the Buncombe County Register of Deeds on the evening of October 10. On "Day One" of marriage equality (October 13), dozens of people (including six officiants) gathered at UUCA throughout the day to provide food, photography, flowers, and wedding services free of charge to anyone with a Buncombe County marriage license.

In December, there was a great deal of interest in working for racial justice, as a result of the events in Ferguson, Staten Island, et.al. We declared a UUCA "common read" this year, with many of the congregation reading Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. More than 70 UUCA members and friends deepened their understanding of the book by attending 6-session classes or one of three drop-in book discussion sessions.

While the common read activities were going on, we had two open meetings (12 people attended in December, and 45 in March) to identify areas of interest, and have had a running column in the eNews detailing opportunities for engagement. In May, a Steering Committee was

appointed to oversee this ongoing congregational work. Individuals in the congregation have participated in tutoring for GEDs and with other students, attended community events, vigils, and rallies, and are continuing to discover new community partnerships working toward racial justice in Asheville. An increased number of UUCA members attended Building Bridges in the spring session as a result of this initiative.

The congregation continues to remain connected to the Moral Monday movement, which began in May 2013. These non-partisan protests have also included organizing and registering voters, raising awareness of issues, and collaborating with the local and state level NAACP. **Michael & Jan Beech** are representatives for UUCA at the NAACP, living into UUCAs lifetime membership. The Mountain People's Assembly (MPA) steering committee holds its monthly meetings at UUCA, and UUCA has hosted a number of events and trainings for the group. I completed my term as co-chair of the MPA in September, after emceeding Mountain Moral Monday for the second time in August 2014.

Affiliate Groups

Hunger Committee by Susan Steffe

Our mission is to provide funds and food to the hungry in the Asheville area. To that end, the 2014/15 calendar year have included:

1. Continuation of the annual Pie Party fundraiser for MANNA Food Bank. \$2200.26 was raised at this fun-filled event.
2. Oversight of the lunch sites for low income children during the summer. Over 60 volunteers served at three sites in Buncombe Co.
3. Coordination of the weekly supplementation of MANNA packs. Between 32-36 bags were picked up, supplemented and delivered to Isaac Dickson Elementary School every week during the school year with the exception of school holidays or snow days.
4. Weekly inventory management of supplemental food supplies at 23 Edwin.
5. Working with Ingles on a BOGO basis of cases of peanut butter and tuna fish with monies donated to the Hunger Committee for MANNA packs.
6. Recruitment and coordination of teams of volunteers who went to MANNA Food Bank on a once-a-month basis to pack food.

7. Respite Care provided dinner for eight homeless patients/two staff for Haywood Street Center on the 2nd Saturday of every month. February 2015 – UUCA collected cleaning supplies for the Respite Center. Also held Share-the-Plate for Respite Center raising \$2,400 for this non-profit organization.

Pritchard Park

by Gene Zimbalkin

Over the past 12 months we've have held four breakfasts. Our next one is this July. We generally have about 8-10 people participate, mostly from UUCA and a couple of Quakers. Overall, about 20 different people have participated in one or more of the four breakfasts held so far. All breakfast menu items are donated. We typically feed from 60-110 homeless folks, depending on the season (fewer during cold months, etc.).

Room In the Inn

by Paula Massey

UUCA's Room In The Inn team worked in partnership with members of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church to provide shelter and food for up to twelve women four weeks during 2014. Our team was made up of members who provided all lunches, dinners for many of the evenings and overnight hosts. Children were encouraged to assist in meal preparation and interaction with the women and volunteers. UUCA has four RITI coordinators who share the responsibility of signing us and promoting volunteerism, as well as working with our partner, Grace Covenant, and our 12 women guests: **Martha Shepard, Paula Massey, Allison Jordan and Iris Williams**. There were 192 opportunities for individuals to assist plus the four volunteer coordinators, with many people serving more than once.

Peacemaking Potluck

by Bruce Larson

The Peacemaking Potluck meets on the second Wednesday of every month in Sandburg Hall "To explore peace and the way of peace so that we might practice and promote peace in all of our relations." Its members are those who gather.

The activities of the Potluck vary from month to month. We gather from 6 to 6:15 pm, potluck from 6:15 to 6:45, and transition from 6:45 to

7pm. Activities take place from 7 to 8:15ish, after which we tidy up. Information about the Potluck is communicated through the weekly UUCA *eNews* and a monthly email “The Month Begins” using a distribution list; the distribution list has 34 addresses and was recently updated on a “must opt in” basis.

During the ten months covered by this year’s report, the Potluck:

- Viewed the annual Ware Lecture of the UUA given by Sister Simone Campbell. July.
- Discussed the development of a peace pole and the languages that might give voice to the words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” as grounded in the sources of Unitarian Universalism and our broader community. This project was placed “on hold” as our congregation was engaged in The Welcome Project and the Annual Budget Drive, so as not to pose a distraction. The exciting idea that has emerged is that a peace pole need not be fixed but mobile as the occasion arises. August, September, and October.
- Reflected on the 2014 elections and their meaning for peace. November.
- Shared the annual “Stories of Peace.” December.
- Viewed the annual Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies recognizing Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzi. January.
- Viewed the DVD on “The Jim Crow Era,” which is part of the video series “The Africans Americans,” by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. This was done to connect with the congregational reading of *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander. February.
- Celebrated the eighth anniversary of the Potluck. March.
- Read and discussed “Break-In at Y-12,” an article from *The New Yorker*, that drew the largest group of the year, most of whom were new to the Potluck. It seems that there is a real interest in nuclear issues, especially given their local connection. April.

Twenty-six people participated in the activities of the Potluck during the 10 months covered by this report. Average attendance was eight.

During the upcoming year there are three areas, in addition to annual events, that seem likely to take place: (1) the reading of a peace-related book; (2) the development of “Community Conversations” on peace; and (3) further action in relation to the peace pole.

**Move to Amend Buncombe County (MABCO)
Report of MABCO activities June 2014-May 2015
by Ruth Christie**

6/5, 7/3, & 8/7 co-sponsored film showings at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Swannanoa Valley

7/12 MABCO members gathered signatures outside Shindig on the Green

7/23-26 MABCO members tabled at the National Veterans for Peace conference in Asheville. MABCO member Diana KRUK & Move to Amend national leader George Friday led a workshop for the conference.

8/4 Gathered signatures at Mountain Moral Monday rally in Asheville

10/12 Tabled at Fiesta Latina.

10/21 Sponsored Move to Amend leader David Cobb's speaking at Jubilee! in Asheville. About 100 in attendance.

10/26 Sponsored public showing of *U.S. of A.L.E.C.* at White Horse in Black Mountain.

December - March: MABCO study group reading & discussing of Thom Hartmann's book, *Unequal Protection*.

3/4: Joined other NC affiliates at a press conference in Raleigh regarding the introduction of a resolution calling for the NC Legislature to urge Congress to act on legislation proposing an amendment to the federal constitution stating corporations don't have the rights of persons and money is not free speech.

Since its founding in Nov. 2010, MABCO has gathered over 5,000 signatures on the Move to Amend petition. The Earth & Social Justice table in Sandburg Hall displays the Move to Amend petition and proposed amendment most Sundays.

Social Justice Movie Night by Charlie Wussow

- 7/14 *Uranium Drive-In*
Environmental protection vs employment opportunity in rural towns
- 9/14 *Puzzles*
A small town's response to a hate crime against LGBT patrons of a gay bar
- 10/14 *Disruption*
Public action about climate change
- 11/14 *Promises*
The Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the points-of-view of seven Palestinian and Israeli children
- 12/14 *Paycheck to Paycheck*
The plight of women and their children living in or near poverty
- 2/15 *Girl Trouble*
Teenage girls entangled in the failed juvenile justice system
- 3/15 *Coal Ash Stories & Groundswell Rising*
Coal Ash Stories: The impact of coal ash pits on the environment in North Carolina and elsewhere, and *Groundswell Rising*: The dangers of fracking and the growing public resistance to it
- 4/15 *Gen Silent*
Discrimination and abuse of GLBT seniors in the long-term health care system
- 5/15 *Food Chains*
Low pay, working conditions, and abuse of migrant farmworkers in the US
- 6/15 no film, due to the unavailability of Sandburg Hall

In spite of a growing email list, now nearly 200, attendance for 2014-2015 slightly lower than last year, approximately 30-40 people.

Screening license fees were somewhat higher than last year, as film distributors have not been offering discounts as generously as they did in the prior year. We are still offsetting a reasonable percentage of the fees with donations.

OUR WIDER ASSOCIATION (UU Relations Committee)

- Publicized Cluster, District and General Assembly meetings, and enlisted UUCA members to attend and report on their experience.
- Continues to support General Assembly accessibility and attendance with disbursement of scholarships and both on & off-site delegates.



Board of Trustees Annual Report by Jane Bramham

This Board could be described as a Listening Task Force, eager to hear from the Congregation and committed to keeping communication open.

LISTENING TO COMMITTEES AND CONGREGATIONAL VOTES

Our first action as a Board was to recommend to the Congregation an amendment to our Bylaws regarding bequests. Conversations with Planned Giving, Finance Advisory Committee, the Executive and the Board about bequests had resumed in earnest last year. Each listening made positions, assumptions and concerns more clear; transparency led to trust; and from trust came agreement on the Planned Giving wording. The Board immediately incorporated the language into our Governance Document, which gave the Executive parameters for the endowment and quasi-endowment funds. A vote to add this to the Bylaws will occur at the 2015 Annual Meeting.

The Congregation voted in March 2014 to call **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper** as our second called minister. The Board drafted and offered a Letter of Call, which was accepted by Associate Minister Rev. Bovee-Kemper, and we joyfully participated in her Installation. Lead Minister **Rev. Mark Ward's** Letter of Call, scheduled for triennial review, was updated by the Board to include his role as Executive, and his revised Letter was accepted.

The Congregation also voted in June 2014 to undertake the Welcome Project, which will visibly manifest and promote our being a welcoming congregation. Design, architect and contractor interviews and selection, fund raising are all part of the Executive's role; the Board had agreed the project was Mission driven, approved the fund raising target, had input on and approved the architectural contract, and concurs with the Executive that construction will begin on the accessibility and safety parts of the project. Search for additional funding continues; the Board strongly feels the expanded south lobby opening onto a usable "front yard" is an integral part of the project.

LISTENING TO MEMBERS

The Board inverted the custom of a Board Retreat, instead inviting members of the Congregation to come to a Board meeting to talk about what was meaningful to them at UUCA, what hindered participation, and what they would change about UUCA. **Lynn Sellers** and **Henry Morrow** volunteered as facilitators; the Board listened, and heard that

- Corporate time for contemplation, worship, music and singing is nurturing. Excellence in worship requires continued balancing of spiritual, intellectual, artistic and emotional desires.
- Making connections and achieving a sense of belonging is often not easy. It is vital that we facilitate, especially through small groups, formation of relationships because it is through the emotional moments of connection that we are motivated to continue our involvement at UUCA
- Asking is a form of personal connection, and the best way to increased volunteerism and participation.
- We can improve our attention to and honoring of the diversities that already exist within the congregation.
- Participation as a faith community in social justice actions, with the opportunity for involvement by more members from wider age range, is valued.

A strong connection was created, and a different model of Board work created.

In the spring, DRLE **Joy Berry** facilitated Board member attendance at RE classes for similar conversations, where we heard from children and youth what they enjoy, would do if they were in charge, and want more of at church. We also participated in the RE Visioning conference this spring.

Two Task Force reports were completed this year:

1. The Ministerial Review Task Force, chaired by Melissa Davis, developed a multiyear process for assessing the Lead Minister's roles in 1) Shared Leadership, Services to Board and Committees and Relationship to Church Staff; 2) Pulpit and Worship Services and Services to Persons; and 3) Community Activities. From their recommendations the Board established and gave charge to a standing Lead Minister Review Task Force.
2. The Annual Meeting Task Force both developed a calendar for

nominations and notifications dates that can be used with each Annual meeting, and reviewed Process Observer feedback from the 2014 Annual meeting to make recommendations for meeting organization and voting process.

LISTENING WITH GRATITUDE

We heard news of the many volunteers who were accomplishing great results for UUCA by teaching, fundraising, connecting and other service. Our Board job calls us to “express gratitude to members of the Congregation on behalf of the Board for exceptional service,” and every month we sent notes of gratitude for the expertise and hours contributed. Special recognition was given this year to **Jerry McLellan** for his contribution to the financial reorganization and accountability aspects of the congregations, and to **Larry Holt** for his tireless efforts on the Campus Development Committee, especially around the MSD and culvert project. **Nancy Heath** and **Larry Wheeler** will be honored for conducting our amazing Combined Campaign.

MONITORING AND LISTENING

The Board monitors Ends and Limitations via reports from the Executive following a calendar that focuses each month on a specific area of congregational and administrative activity.

In the area of fiscal accountability, the Board recognized the able work of the Finance Advisory Committee, which includes internal “mini-financial reviews” and voted to change our periodic outside evaluation from biennial financial review to a full financial audit. Because this is a larger expense, a fund was established to accumulate towards an audit in 5-7 years.

When the Lead Minister’s monitoring report on Ends concluded that the Global Ends in particular were vague, he and the Board reached consensus that our Ends—the vision of what the Congregation strives to be and become—needed renewal. Ends review was anticipated when the Governance Document was adopted. We used threads from our facilitated conversations to update our Ends, in our Governance Document, and recommend a wording change to the Mission, to be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

Our Mission (proposed)

As a Unitarian Universalist faith community, we **nurture** individual search for meaning as we **work** together for freedom, justice and love.

Our Ends

Within Each Congregant: We Seek

Embrace principles, values and practices which explore the sacred in the world and the mystery of existence.

Gather together in worship, which guides and sustains our individual and communal response to the sacred through multifaceted creative artistic and musical experiences.

Among the Congregants: We Care

Feel welcome and connected with each other.

Share generously of our personal resources of time, talent, and money.

Honor and **support** each other in times of celebration and need.

Beyond our Congregation: We Work

Act meaningfully and visibly in community service, social justice advocacy and education.

Serve as a beacon of liberal religious thought and action.

Offer our space for events which serve a varied audience and inspire community dialogue.

Partner with other congregations and organizations in support of shared objectives.



Director of Lifespan Religious Education Annual Report by Joy Berry

RE committee: Suzanne Klonis (chairperson), Michele Gregory, Anna Martin, Linda Pohl, Rik Schell, Alison Scheiner-Dendy, Wes Miller

RE staff: Jen Johnson (RE Assistant), Nick Andrea (through 3/15), Kim Collins (Interim LRE Coordinator), Joy Berry

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Overview

200 children and youth registered as of April 1. Average attendance was 92 (September-April) in Sunday RE program. Integrated faith development is a process that pertains to within, among, and beyond facets. It begins with parents visiting, then registering, and is supported through families' commitment to regular attendance. An attendance rate of 50% of those registered is considered normal. We have visitors almost every week.

Within Congregants

- A new RE Spirit Play program was implemented, with K-5th grade (later changed to K-3rd grade) enjoying stories from many traditions including Unitarian Universalism, deepening their religious understanding, then choosing their own activity (to engage more fully and individually with the story) from among five activities: Art, Science, Contemplation, Drama, and Music/Movement.
- The Spirit Play spaces were transformed; the classrooms (now called centers) are bright, welcoming, and well-curated to support children's active, engaged processing of the stories we hear together. Paint, new furniture, and lots of props and supplies were needed to complete the planned program transition. A welcoming, well-equipped space encourages families and children themselves to choose religious education programming from among many options

on Sunday mornings, facilitating the faith development of young children.

- In particular, the Contemplation center has attracted a great deal of attention. Children and adults alike love this space, where activities are not planned or directed: only curated and supported. Imagine: Children center themselves, come in to the beautiful space where instrumental music is playing softly, and take up work of their own choosing, like sewing, mandala-making, stained glass art creation, yoga, reading, puzzle work or block building, as well as the prayer and meditation corner, where children can engage the concept of sacred space with altars of their own making, using icons and sacred objects from many world religions, including Unitarian Universalism. This is the quietest room in the church, despite often being filled with ten or twelve 6-10 year olds. We believe this experience is greatly needed as a kind of respite in a chaotic, noisy world, and that we are teaching without words how children can build resilience through contemplative practices that support and inspire interior balance and calm.
- Ten Coming of Age youth finished a nine-month journey to learn more about Unitarian Universalist Principles and UU history/heritage, as well as their own emerging spiritual beliefs. They will present their Credo Statements at the COA worship service on May 17, a process that will help them deepen their own faith development and UU identity.
- Six multi-age worship services were planned and implemented including: Water Communion/ingathering; Day of the Dead; Christmas Eve; Youth Sunday; Earth Day; and Coming of Age Sunday. These worship services provide an opportunity for parents to model their commitment to UUCA as well as allowing children/youth to witness the rituals and traditions of UUCA. Both of these may deepen one's spiritual growth.

Among the Congregants (relating to one another)

- Time for All Ages, once a month, was a success. I brought the Wonder Box into this time, telling stories crafted and told so that young children and elders could all enjoy a multigenerational moment together. We framed the value of this event in the life of the congregation like this: *Time for All Ages (TFAA) is a special time of shared worship for the whole congregation. On the first Sunday of most months, children, youth, teachers, families, and the rest of the congregation gather in the Sanctuary as a faith community to share our songs, stories, and rituals. This usually includes the Wonder Box, a story with “layered” meanings for both children and adults. After about 20 minutes, the teachers, children and youth are sung out to their classes. Bringing children, even babies and preschoolers, into the Sanctuary is a gift to them and a blessing to the congregation, though nursery care is available at this time.*
- The Coming of Age group held Soup Sundays and one all-congregation dinner/trivia contest bringing together people in a social and community-building manner.
- The Coming of Age program provided numerous opportunities for mentors, parents, teachers and youth to socialize, learn from each other and celebrate each other.
- During summer Sundays, various adults from the congregation offered talks, activities and presence to the children.
- A fledgling Junior Youth Group has begun, led by parents. We hope this group will provide a setting for socializing and social justice for 6th-8th graders, to help them bond more before heading into OWL, Coming of Age and YRUU.
- Two high school seniors will be presented with graduation gifts and recognition by the congregation in a Bridging Ceremony on June 7.
- The Coming of Age group’s Boston Heritage trip in June will provide them with a better understanding and connection with the UUA and our wider association.

- Several high school, junior high and elementary students attended Mountain Con in the fall and spring strengthening inter-congregational connections.
- A Visioning Workshop facilitated by a district staff person was challenging, and disappointed some. However, the conversations that happened there between Board, congregants, RE staff, minister, and DLRE were very valuable in reflecting UUCA's deep commitment to excellence in Religious Education. It led directly to the Board making a decision to get feedback from children and youth in their own discernment process regarding their work of Building Access.
- Several parent/volunteers organized Family Fun Night, which started meeting in the winter and has successfully attracted families. These events meet monthly and encourage multi-generational community-building among UUCA families.
- The UUCA Board of Trustees met with all children and youth RE classes to get their feedback on the same kinds of question the congregation as a whole has been asked to consider. Kids felt heard and appreciated in their church family, while Board members felt engaged with the children and youth in a meaningful way, as representatives of the entire congregation, not just adults.

Beyond the congregation (how our participation influences the way we work in the world)

- The Coming of Age group volunteered at a local elementary school, which allowed them to focus attention and energy on our public schools' inadequate funding and the need for communities to help them with even the basics.
- The Our Whole Lives (OWL) class for 7th-9th grade was offered, with about ten youth attending. We know that our kids' own lives are enriched by comprehensive sexuality education, but I firmly believe that what they learn in this class will make a difference in the world. The focus on respect, non-exploitation, trust, and healthy choices is one way we encourage and support our young

people to be the change we want to see in their interpersonal relationships, generally outside the congregation, especially as they become physically and emotionally involved with others in ways that have the capacity to help or harm.

- The children in RE researched, debated, and voted on how to spend the money collected from the Alternative Gift Fair. Here is the article we shared with the congregation about that:

***Change, for Good** We had a great program on December 28 in Religious Education! Without knowing how much money we had to donate via Heifer Project, we split into four groups, each group learning about the benefits of one possible choice for our donation funds. One group researched the advantages of donating funds for an efficient water pump to give clean drinking water and irrigation water for crops to a community; a second group learned the benefits of donating a flock of chickens and rabbits to a family; a third group examined how sending a girl to school could change lives; and the last group learned all about how donating trees and bees could impact a family and a community. In each case we learned that the consequences of helping one family could actually make differences in many lives, and change the opportunities of the children and adults in that family for good. The web of life was definitely discussed—we are all connected! The groups came back together and shared with everyone the advantages of donating to their specific cause, and finally we voted on which of the four donations we wanted to give. Each choice got votes, so we needed to narrow it down. This half of the project helped kids see democracy in action, and how each person having a vote (after gathering information and learning about our choices) really mattered. We opened the envelope telling us how much money we had to spend, and were delighted to find we had enough—\$610—to get ALL FOUR items we were considering. This helped the kids see that with generosity and teamwork, we could do a world of good as a community of faith, outside our walls!*

CHALLENGES

- **Disconnected Systems, Recruitment for Spirit Play (SP):** The RE Committee and staff adopted a new format for Sunday mornings and for K-5th grades at the end of last year. The pedagogical approach to the new program was progressive, sound, and a much-needed change for children's developmental and spiritual needs. However, it was a huge challenge to fill the new program's recruitment needs: 200 unique slots had to be recruited for with the plan as presented to me, the new DLRE, in July 2014, and less than 50% had been successfully filled at that time. Throughout the year, the lack of teaching teams for centers meant that the consistent weekly cancellations by recruited leaders and assistants were not managed by the canceling party, by calling to switch dates with a team member, but instead fell to RE staff to manage. Most weeks we spent hours arranging, calling, rescheduling, and sometimes begging folks to fill the required roles. It was common to begin the week with all 15 positions needed just for Spirit Play filled, and to find on Thursday, (or worse, on RE staff Sabbath of Friday-Saturday) that we had lost one to three participants. The program plan had been meant to reduce the amount of time and energy needed from parents. Unfortunately, the total number of resources needed for the new format went up. This, together with a lack of teams that would be accountable to each other for rotation and substitution, meant that an unplanned consequence was the RE staff expending all the energy conserved by parents.

Solutions:

1. set up the registration system such that families were required, not requested, to volunteer in some way in RE,
2. reduced the number of centers offered at the early service, when attendance is lower, reducing the number of leaders needed,
3. moved 4th/5th graders (about ten kids) into their own class (see next bullet point), reducing total number of kids in SP at the busiest time, who also happened to be the least engaged,

4. made the decision to keep the new format but go back to requiring recruitment of teams of leaders/teachers for SP, encouraging greater connection, engagement, commitment, and accountability to the group work: who would lead when, reflecting the approach used by our older-grade classes.
- The 4th/5th graders were not served well by the new Spirit Play format. They were ready to be separated from younger kids, and to have more time to talk and form connections with consistent teachers and each other, which the mixed-age, inconsistent leadership approach in Spirit Play did not support.
Solution: form a new class just for them, in Jefferson House. Veteran teachers stepped up to lead and we saw a HUGE response. Many families began bringing 4th/5th graders back who had not been attending. This class currently has 12-16 kids weekly!
 - The early and late sessions of Spirit Play continue to be unbalanced, resulting in too few kids for planned activities at 9am. We have needed to thank folks for their preparation and let them go without leading, unfortunately, in some cases. Although some are relieved or grateful about being sent back upstairs, others have been frustrated that their work was "wasted." It has been impossible to gauge how many kids will be present, meaning we must prepare and recruit for a baseline level, regardless. At times this results in a waste of energy and sometimes can affect people's future willingness to volunteer.
Solution: I hope to continue to consider with leadership how our 9am approach might be different, or how we might compel families to attend more regularly.
 - Families generally do not make church or RE attendance a consistent priority. We know they will get the most benefit from attending three or more times a month, yet many are attending just once or twice per month.
Solution: under consideration. Getting buy-in from families is essential to create and sustain a successful RE program. To that end, Parent Orientation is a must this fall.

- It was a challenging year for Adult RE as we continue to find our footing with regard to the structure and approach that best reflects our mission and the pathway toward spiritual growth and maturity. The major challenges and changes in YRUU and SP meant that Adult RE did not receive the attention it deserves. Although there were no major concerns, it is not operating at the level of excellence I want to see.

Solutions:

- 1) Clarity should be reached at the ministerial/DLRE level about our mission-based goals for the program, allowing me to provide direction for Adult RE's types of offerings and structure of classes, placing adult classes into the arc of faith development I use to ensure the quality of the rest of RE. A "pillars" approach is being considered, and the UUA's *Tapestry of Faith* curricula will be encouraged.
 - 2) Formation of Adult RE Vision Team, to collaborate with the LRE Coordinator in planning and implementing high-quality classes for all ages.
- Youth (10th-12th grade YRUU) An overhaul of this program is needed. No one enjoys it. Details can be found in the report following mine in this document. My philosophical overview: Attention must be paid to the arc of faith development. After the enormous "capstone course of RE" emphasis we place on 9th grade COA, we have welcomed YRUUers back in 10th grade with a return to Sunday school as usual. The time between our rites of passage, Coming of Age at the end of 9th grade, and Bridging at the end of 12th grade mark a time when teens are growing away from their families and faith quickly. If we want to engage them during this busy, stressful, psychologically and developmentally transitional time, we must commit to letting them lead. What do they want from the faith community at this time? What would make it meaningful to them? What do we have to learn by listening to them, if we are willing to give them a seat at the table?

Solutions:

- 3) Hire an LRE Coordinator with youth development experience, then train that person with professional development opportunities in the wider UU youth community.
 - 4) Form a Youth-Adult Vision Team to plan, in collaboration with the LRE Coordinator and DLRE, how our youth program can provide opportunities for leadership development, congregational integration, worship life, and community service of their choosing, is essential.
- The LRE Committee needs revitalization. Almost every committee member cycled off this year, leaving just one person on the LRE Committee. We have noted that the implementation of the new SP program was exhausting for them, and most were more than ready for a break. Some felt overworked. There was no time or energy this year to focus on any aspect of the LRE program beyond SP and 4th/5th. This meant that for the important middle school classes, including OWL and Coming of Age, the DLRE and staff had little to no collaborative support from the LRE Committee.

Solution: Rather than attempting to reforge the committee as such, I have instead begun recruiting Vision Teams for the different elements of Religious Education. Spirit Play, Coming of Age, OWL, YRUU and Adult RE will now each have a small task force of people interested and energized to work on that one element. I believe this will engage more people in the life of Religious Education and make the job of supporting and planning for it more human-sized. At 1-2 hours per month, the time needed for these teams is manageable. And a benefit will be that more people involved in manageable ways will lead to less burnout and more of a sense of ownership in the program as a whole.

Lifespan Religious Education Coordinator Annual Report by Kim Collins

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) Grades 10-12
Youth Advisors and RE Staff: Kristi Miller, Christa Hildebrand, Tom Blanford, Maurice Loisell, Nick Andrea (resigned 3/15), Kim Collins (Interim LRE Coordinator)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Youth Sunday

From speaking with the youth and the advisors, it is apparent that everyone loved doing Youth Sunday. One of the kids said that she wished it were later in the year because it felt like sort of a let down when it was over. They enjoyed the planning and really felt connected to the congregation. We will still have some veterans among the youth who have worked on this so I think we can count on doing this again next year and having it be a great success.

Belonging

When I recently met with the kids and a couple of members of the Board, several of the kids said that they feel comfortable here at UUCA and have a real sense of belonging. This is something we will continue to foster, we really want the kids to understand and appreciate that this is their church too.

Youth Group

They really enjoyed Youth Group. This is when they meet outside of their regular Sunday morning class. Several of them mentioned that Sunday mornings and Youth Group are the only times when they get to see their church friends and they love the bonding that comes from that. As we move forward with YRUU, there is certainly room to expand upon this experience and make it more of a main component

MANNA Food Drive

Many of the kids expressed that they liked doing the food drive for Manna and want to continue working on service projects. The food drive is certainly something we can do again next year. From looking at the

advisor notes, it is apparent that the kids did a great deal of the planning and had really great ideas. They have also mentioned liking the service projects because it helps them take care of the community service hours many of them are required to do by their schools. With our kids as busy and overscheduled as they are, this can be an important way for the church to help fulfill some of their needs.

Discussion of Social Justice Issues in the News

The kids also spent some time this year discussing social justice issues, in particular, the issues surrounding the deaths of young, unarmed men at the hands of the police. They even did homework assignments where they each took a part of the system, e.g., grand juries, and researched it so they could present it to their peers and help everyone have a better understanding of the issues.

Youth Conferences at the Mountain

Youth are beginning to be interested in this. We have made a decision to encourage and support, at some level, cons as an integral part of the YRUU experience. Further discussion and decisions are needed, but we believe the camaraderie built at cons is faith-formative, helping our youth see UUism not as the faith of their parents but one that is progressive, exciting, and changing the world. Meeting UU youth from other churches is key to this faith-identity-strengthening process.

Feast!

Everyone agreed that anything having to do with food, whether eating it or preparing it, was a big success. Preparing and eating food together is great for bonding, no matter the age group. There is room here for a lot of exploring, both with social justice issues and spiritual matters. We can feed not only their hungry teenage stomachs, but also their souls.

CHALLENGES

Lack of Enjoyment and Participation for All

It seems that the biggest challenge, both this year and in years past, is to keep everyone involved and present through the end of the year. This is a problem for the kids, and this year, for the advisors. Having not been here

at the beginning of the year, I don't know what the recruitment process was like. There are at least two advisors who expressed that this ended up being a much bigger commitment than they thought it would be. They also felt that they were not adequately trained and didn't really have enough support. There was some frustration voiced that this was a much bigger commitment than was asked of the Spirit Play volunteers. I don't look at that in a negative light though, because this should be a big commitment. There needs to be a level of trust and a strong covenant between youth and youth advisors that isn't necessarily needed with younger kids.

Disconnection from Youth in Larger Faith

There are a lot of youth opportunities through the UUA and other UU organizations that we don't seem to be taking as much advantage of as we could. There are leadership opportunities on local and national levels that we haven't seemed to be able to generate any interest in. Going forward, we will continue to advertise for these programs and openings, but we will need to be more aggressive in the roll out. I think actually making presentations to the kids instead of just posting things on bulletin boards and in the newsletter would help with this.

Lack of Fun

While there was a big push at the beginning of the year to make things fun and inspiring at the beginning of the year (per the advisor meeting notes), it seems like a lack of fun is one of the things that is making the kids stop coming, especially once there isn't something to focus on, like Youth Sunday. It is possible that sometimes we are spending so much time and energy trying to make things meaningful, that we forget that there is spiritual worth in laughing and having fun with our friends.

Looking Toward the Future

We have been putting some energy towards re-imagining what YRUU will look like next year. I have spent time with the kids a couple of times now and they seem to be really interested in shaping and changing the way we do things in regards to YRUU.

The biggest change that we plan to make is to no longer have the youth meet every Sunday. We put a lot of emphasis on Coming of Age and how they will be a part of the congregation after they finish CoA, but then we still expect them to go to “Sunday School” every week. The kids and advisors alike have indicated that going to the service more would be a good thing.

We will also give the kids the chance to come help in Spirit Play. The level of involvement will depend on what is going on week to week in Spirit Play but there will be room for them to lead and assist in the various centers.

We are in the initial stages of a plan to give the kids a space of their own, taking an office that has not gotten much use and making it a dedicated YRUU space. Not only will they be able to meet here on the Sunday mornings they do meet, but we can hold Youth Group here and use the space for planning meetings, etc. We can spend some time at the beginning of the year decorating and making the space their own, in order to continue to foster the feeling of comfortable surroundings and belonging.

The kids have indicated that they would like to do even more social action work and service projects. Not only is this a great way to nurture and strengthen their values as UU’s, this is a great way to help them meet the need of having service hours for school, making them more likely continue to be involved at UUCA.

Something that came up recently that is something to think about for the future, is having youth mentor the Coming of Age kids. I think there is some value to this and it is something we should explore as we consider the future of the Coming of Age program.

As far as youth leadership, it is important to note that while we have given them lots of options for leadership outside of the congregation, there do not seem to be many opportunities for leadership inside UUCA. This is something that we should consider deeply. It’s hard to imagine one of our kids running for Youth Observer for the Unitarian Universalist

Association (UUA) board when we haven't given them the chance to lead on a smaller scale.

Overall, the things that were repeated the most when asking the youth what they would like to see happen in YRUU, were more bonding opportunities (sleepovers, cons etc.), more movement, and more fun. We are in the process of putting together a Vision Team that will include youth and adults to imagine the future of this program. Change is a natural part of everything and we have great hope for the future of the youth program at UUCA.



Director of Administration Annual Report by Linda Topp

In general, the activities that are grouped under “administrative support” help the Executive stay within the Executive Limitations as laid out in the Board’s Governance Document. Although the Board remains the responsible entity for the workings of the congregation, the Board has delegated all programming and administrative functions to the Executive while the Board maintains a very deliberate “watchful eye.” This gives the Board time to do its most important work, that of working with the congregation to set the vision and direction for the congregation.

Administrative support entails six major areas of responsibilities: general administration, human resources, buildings & grounds, finance/accounting & fundraising, membership support and communications.

The day-to-day work involved in providing administrative support for the activities of the congregation is not necessarily annual report-worthy. Details of specific areas of church administration are reported to the Board on an annual cycle that is part of the Governance Document. Here is a rundown of the highlights of our year.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Interestingly, administratively speaking, the big highlight of the year was the replacement of our Ricoh copier(s) with a new Savin copier. The staff has never been happy with the performance (or lack thereof) of our Ricoh 6501. Matters got so dicey last year that Ricoh gave us a second, refurbished 4500 copier to be a back-up for our mis-performing main copier. Our Ricoh lease does not expire for another year and a half, but a local company, Image Solutions, has bought out our lease and contracted with us for a five-year lease for a Savin C6003. Let us just say that copier performance has notably improved.

During the year we also replaced several XP personal computers. Like any prudent congregation, we use office equipment until it dies. In this case, the computers weren’t quite dead yet, but Microsoft stopped supporting the XP operating system, leaving it wide open for malware of all sorts. So, several staff members have either new desktop or laptop computers.

HUMAN RESOURCES

For some reason the number of personnel changes we sustain in a year is surprising, despite historical evidence to the contrary. In July, we hired our new Lifespan Religious Education Director, **Joy Berry**. She's done such a phenomenal job of getting settled in and doing great work that it's likely that you are surprised that she hasn't even been with us a year yet.

In September, the congregation called **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper** as UUCA's Associate Minister. Due to budget constraints, her salary was not boosted accordingly, but certainly her commitment to UUCA and its work has only increased as a result of that call.

Our Sexton, **Steve Sloan**, resigned to move on to bigger and better things in October. Thanks to diligent research by volunteer **Nan Jarema**, we were able to reduce costs by contracting with a "green" cleaning service, Organic Planet, to do similar work. Owners Laura and David Stewart have been wonderful to work with and were willing and able to supply not just cleaning services but staffing for our Sunday coffee hours as well as taking responsibility for inventories that the Sexton had previously covered (toilet tissues, paper towels, cleaning products, etc.). Organic Planet is a certified Asheville Living Wage employer.

In the fall, we noted that **Nicholas O'Leary** was performing regularly as our accompanist and organist. According to IRS rules, this means that Nick ought to be treated as an employee, not a contractor. Consequently, he was added to the UUCA payroll in December.

In January, our Children and Youth Coordinator **Nick Andrea** resigned. Within a few weeks we were able to hire a 30-hour per week interim replacement, **Kim Collins**, whose job description was rewritten and retitled Lifespan Religious Education Coordinator. At the same time, Lifespan Religious Education Assistant **Jen Johnson** increased her work hours from 10 to 15 hours per week.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS - The Year of the Welcome Project

Welcome Project

*This area of the congregation's work could not possibly have happened without the Campus Development Committee of **Bob Roepnack**, chair,*

John Martin, Bill Agrella, Shel Altschul, Larry Holt, Elizabeth Schell and Sonya Friedrich. An extremely special shout-out goes to Bob Roepnack who has devoted many, many, many hours and his substantial expertise to this project.

Might as well start with this year's obvious Buildings & Grounds project. At last year's Annual Meeting, the congregation voted to pursue fundraising with a goal of \$750,000 to improve accessibility and the welcoming feel of the entrance area of the main building. Since then, MUCH work has proceeded. As briefly as possible, we:

- Hired Kerns Landscape and Planning, Padgett & Freeman Architects and Patton Construction to help us in planning, designing and building
- At the urging of **Stephen and Suzy Jones**, added an accessible/family restroom to the project.
- Assembled three support teams under Campus Development: Video & Lighting (**John Schuerman**, chair, **Bob Scuorzo**, **Ed Jenest**, **Eric Hoffman**); Furnishings (**Dan Clere**, chair, **Elizabeth Schell**, **Jaan Ferree**, **Susan Cooper**, **Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper** and **Rev. Mark Ward**); Grounds (**Bill Agrella**, chair, **Ann McLellan** and **Nancy Herbert**, vice-chairs and a very competent crew: **Dan Clere**, **Dee Eggers**, **Debbie Fischer**, **Paula Massey**, **Maurie** and **David McClure**, **Jill Preyer**, **David Williams**, **Sparrel Wood**.)
- Continuously communicated project progress to the congregation through the weekly eNews and through Campus Development and/or Combined Campaign leaders posted at the Welcome Project boards at the back of Sandburg Hall every Sunday.
- Organized the project so that preparation of construction documents and city permitting could happen simultaneously.
- Contracted with Patton Construction in the pre-construction phase to help keep the design at or below a total project price of \$750,000.
- When costs were looking high-ish, made a decision to send the project out for competitive bidding. Invited 4 bidders to bid, two submitted bids, and both were significantly above the project budget. (We needed a construction cost around \$575,000—the low bid was around \$770,000 and the high bid was slightly above \$1 million.)
- As of this writing, the congregation's generosity is shining through as we have collected additional commitments of more than \$50,000 while at the same time we have worked with our general contractor, Patton Construction Group, Inc., to reduce costs where we can.

Other Buildings & Grounds Projects

*The following volunteers were indispensable throughout the year as they supplied work equity to various maintenance and repair issues: **Bob Roepnack** (who understandably dropped off this list as the Welcome Project took off), **Shel Altschul, Ian Fischer**. At the end of the year, **Linda Kooiker** led a team of volunteers, including **Susan Markowitz** as design consultant, in a restroom upgrade in the main building while **Michael Stevens** assumed responsibility for getting our new Nest thermostats to “play nice” with our new wi-fi system.*

Here are the year’s major purchases/repairs:

- Emergency response transmitters and pagers purchased
- New refrigerator for 23 Edwin (remember, we don’t replace anything until it breaks!)
- New faucet in the main kitchen
- Wi-fi programmable thermostats (Nests) replace all thermostats in all buildings
- New cabinets constructed and installed in the Sanctuary
- Malfunctioning Nest thermostat in Sanctuary replaced with Honeywell wi-fi programmable thermostat
- Wi-fi system upgraded across entire campus
- All the lights in Jefferson House replaced by LED lights
- Jefferson House door and door frame repaired
- All the toilets on campus had their shut-off valves replaced if necessary (and most were necessary)
- Jefferson House heating system repaired
- Jefferson House roof repair over sun porch fire escape
- Jefferson House upstairs bathroom renovated; kitchen, front porch and stairwell painted
- Main building’s upstairs restrooms cosmetically upgraded
- Wi-fi system “adjusted” to work better with Nests

FINANCE/ACCOUNTING & FUNDRAISING

The Combined Campaign

*UUCA has the good fortune of having many folks in the congregation with skills and expertise that they graciously contribute to us. This especially applies to the duo of **Larry Wheeler** and **Nancy Heath**. This couple has devoted many, many, many hours to the financial health and well-being of*

*this congregation culminating in a highly successful Combined Annual Budget Drive and Welcome Project Fundraising Campaign. Their trusty, invaluable vice-chairs were **Ian and Debbie Fischer**.*

Here's how it happened:

These fundraising goals were set:

- We asked for \$663,000 for the annual operating budget which was the number estimated to fully fund our annual operations. At the present time, we are using a Board-designated (in 2011) \$130,000 to cover five years of budget shortfalls as we grow into being able to fully fund our second minister and our highly experienced Director of Lifespan Religious Education. (The Board has since chosen to allow that \$130,000 to be allocated across as many years as it lasts. At the current rate, it is estimated to be depleted in two more years.)
- We estimated that the Welcome Project could be completed for \$750,000.

The Combined Campaign was organized as a two-phase, every-member-canvass. **Larry Wheeler** and **Nancy Heath**, with help from **Ian** and **Debbie Fischer**, recruited and assembled a volunteer network of over 70 members and friends who acted as team leaders, visiting stewards, special gift leaders and more. This was a very large operation that also included production of brochures for each campaign (ABD - Live It! Grow It!; Welcome Project - Imagine It! Build It!), training of every single person involved in visiting our donors, and multiple contacts of members and friends of the congregation via email and snail mail, all done twice. The fall phase of the campaign covered about 1/3 of the congregation while the winter (February) phase covered the remaining 2/3 of the congregation. All of these visits had three objectives: 1) building community as visiting stewards had personal conversations with their contacts, 2) providing information as visiting stewards were able to take time to make sure that all of their contacts understood the components of the Welcome Project and the goals of the annual budget drive and 3) handling the paperwork as visiting stewards accepted and checked for accuracy the completed commitment forms for both campaigns.

Here's what happened:

During the course of the campaign, we were given a challenge by visiting UUs Darwin and Myra Smith. They directly committed \$75,000 to the Welcome Project and then promised an additional \$75,000 (to be used to

fund our Capital Fund if not needed for the Welcome Project) if the congregation could meet both the ABD and Welcome Project goals by February 28. We did not meet that goal and therefore did not receive the additional moneys.

The Welcome Project fundraising was successful as we ended the fundraising with slightly more than \$750,000 in commitments to be paid through January 31, 2016. The Annual Budget Drive was also successful in that we increased our commitments by a very healthy 7.6%, to \$635,000. However, that still left us short of our goal. So, a wonderful fundraising drive, but not quite enough to terminate deficit spending this year.

Other Fundraisers

The Falltastic Auction

The 2014 annual auction was held November 15, 2014, at the Greek Orthodox Church Cultural Center. We had a full house with 220 attending. A plentiful Italian buffet dinner was catered by Travinia. The auction sold over 200 donated items and events and grossed \$30,982. After expenses for catering, venue, database fees, decor, child care and other, the auction profit was over \$28,000.

Beyond the financial success, the auction brings the congregation together in so many ways: For a fun evening, for parties and events occurring for months after, and for the opportunity to participate in gracious giving to our beloved congregation. We love our auction!

This was our first year using an outside auctioneer who added much to the entertainment and success of the live auction. The auctioneer, Allen Brasington, also brought in several major sponsors who contributed over \$250 each, plus we received cash and in-kind sponsorships from members of the congregation, all greatly improving our bottom line this year. As always our volunteers were key. We had dozens of active volunteers, not including all the donors. The Coming of Age team contributed hours of help during the dinner, live auction, and cleanup, and were paid via our contribution toward their Boston trip. Staff assistance was major, especially by **Jules Smith** for graphic design work, **Christine Magnarella Ray** for financial records, for publicity, **Nick Andrea** for child care arrangements and **Linda Topp** for ideas and guidance.

Auction Committee members were:

Karen Morris, Chair

Don and Judy Galloway

Pat and Steve Kutay

Robin and Steve Loew

Paula Massey

Ann McLellan

Tory Schmitz and Mike Dingus

Renate Schuchardt and Russ Lee

Used Book Sale

by Ken Cameron-Bell

The Book Sale, conducted in October, raised approximately \$3150 for UUCA. Volunteers are **Martha Shepard, Ephraim Schechter, Kay Harger, Linda Nash, Susan Weinerman and Willa Newell**, all ably led by **Ken Cameron-Bell**.

Holiday Craft Fair

by Sammy Fong

The UUCA Annual Holiday Craft Fair was held on Sunday, November 23, 2014 and was organized by **Sammy Fong**. Eighteen UU artists, craftspeople, and writers participated in the Craft Fair and were required to donate 20% of their sales to the UUCA (although a couple of them donated more), raising a total of \$756.55.

Finance/Accounting

*The Finance Advisory Committee members are **Ken Brame, chair, Ann Cargill, Sammy Fong, Robin Loew, Jim Steffe, and Michael Stevens***

This year the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) perfected a system of conducting biannual mini-reviews of randomly selected accounting transactions in several categories (payroll, accounts payable, bank statements) of the congregation's accounting system. With the FAC providing this check, the Board felt confident enough to eliminate biannual accounting firm "reviews" and instead plan for full audits to occur once every six or so years.

This year we continued to invest a small share of our reserves (\$30,000) in Mountain Bizworks as a socially responsible community investment. We also hold reserves with Self Help Credit Union.

North Carolina tax changes starting January 1 resulted in a change in arrangements with Mountain Spirit Coffeehouse. All of their income and expenses are now accounted for in the congregation's accounting system.

Communications

The website is our key communications outlet. It is updated nearly daily and has become the repository of much information about this congregation. Whenever you have a question about operations, procedures, programs or just about anything else, check the website. One easy way to do that is to use the search box at the top of the home page.

The website is continually changed. This year we have added a "news" section called "The Scoop," extensive information about the Welcome Project and the Combined Campaign and a new weekly blog written by staff leaders and the Board President, which takes the place of the columns written for the monthly newsletter.

This year we discontinued the monthly newsletter. Instead we have made the weekly eNews the main communications vehicle of the congregation. In addition to being emailed on Thursdays, the upcoming events sections are printed and inserted in each Sunday's order of service. The eNews is also posted to the website (under the For Members tab) for easy reference. For those members with no access to electronic communications, we produce and snail mail a monthly "Communique."

In Sandburg Hall, we re-arranged the bulletin boards and discontinued scrolling announcements on Sunday mornings.

Membership Support

Although none of us is overly thrilled about the user interface of MY INFO (it remains the best system available for large congregations), we have continued to work hard with congregants to help them access the system when they need to. Most members are able to check their financial information, volunteer, sign up for classes and even check their membership records through MY INFO. Those with smart phones have

quick and easy access to contact information and photos of our members and friends (the app is called “Church Life”).

Our database is becoming more and more useful as we get more and more information loaded into the system. All incoming members are asked to complete interest forms, and during the Combined Campaign we asked existing members to do the same and we have since input that data into our database. Now it is possible to have a volunteer need, such as finding people who would like to help with special events, and run a database search to produce a list of possible candidates. Additionally, we work hard to track who is attending our programs. With that data we are able to tell how many people are participating in the life of the congregation and eventually we ought to be able to tell what kinds of programs generate the most interest and when we need to contact members to help them re-engage.