

Annual Report

Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville

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2010-2011

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Introduction

Lead Minister

Reverend Mark Ward



We have shuffled the deck a little this year in how we present our annual report, in keeping with a shift we are making in how this congregation governs itself. You'll recall that under this new approach, called Policy Governance, our Board of Trustees moves to a policy-making func-

tion, providing leadership in articulating what this congregation hopes to achieve. And so we begin with a report from Board President Kay Aler-Maida on what the board's work has been, as well as reports from two independent committees created in our by-laws – the Nominating Committee and Committee on Ministries

Decisions on how the board's ends are to be achieved, however, are the responsibility of the church's professional leadership, centered in the Executive. The Executive, then, is ultimately accountable for our church accomplishing the ends that the board sets out for this congregation to realize our mission. Essentially, this is our ministry to the world. Of course, while I, as executive, am accountable for this, only a small share of this work is mine. We have a capable staff and many dedicated lay volunteer leaders who are carrying out the bulk of this work. So, while I will summarize some of the directions we've followed this past year, you'll read more of the details in the reports that follow.

Governance

Board of Trustees

Kay Aler-Maida, Board President



This year our congregation launched two bold initiatives. We began the implementation of Policy Governance and committed to invest in a five-year plan to be fully staffed.

Last September we learned that both our Director of Lifespan Religious Education and our Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care would be leaving us this June. Although we deeply regretted their leaving, we could only wish them well.

But still – we had some really big shoes to fill and big decisions to make. With two key staff vacancies it was the right time to take a close look at our staffing configuration and needs. Our strategic plan and our common sense told us that we needed a second minister who was full-time. The challenge was being able to handle this financially.

And our financial challenges included more than moving to a full-time assistant minister, we needed to address other financial issues such as pay equity for our current staff, proper funding of all budget areas and staff support for social justice, and more hours for membership retention.

Using a financial forecasting tool developed by the Finance Committee we could project that if congregational giving continued to grow, as it had been doing, in approximately five years our income would be adequate to what we needed NOW. Our quandary was what to do in the meanwhile. The answer came in the form of a generous gift from **Marion Elmslie**.

Marion had been a long time resident at Highland Farms. She played bridge nearly every day until her death at the age of 102. She was generous to the institutions she loved including us.

The Board decided to invest part of Marion's gift as a financial bridge to the future and have faith in the congregation to continue to respond generously building the financial base we need. The Southeast District also had faith in our congregation and selected us for the June 2011 Chalice Lighter call to support our staffing plan.

Going forward our Lead Minister, Board and Finance Committee will be working together closely to monitor key benchmarks of growth, attendance and giving, and identify in advance strategic decision points. However, in reality, the key to our future is with the congregation and its generosity.

Our other initiative was to launch a three-year trial use of the Policy Governance model. We began our first year

expecting we would learn and adjust and modify. And that is exactly what has happened. Our commitment is to continue to be flexible.

Policy Governance has already provided greater clarity about responsibilities. Staff and volunteers have been freed up to do ministry while the Board has been freed to focus on strategic thinking and the future. For more details please see the Governance Task Force report.

On a personal note I'd like to express my thanks to the congregation for the privilege of serving as your President. Everyone has been helpful, responsive, and supportive. Special thanks to the staff always ready to serve and assist and to **Mark Ward** for his steady sure guidance. And last but not least, but in many ways foremost, my fellow Board members – a pleasure to serve with each of you.

Committee on Ministries

Elizabeth Schell, Chair

Members: Melissa Davis, Christine Grant, Elizabeth Schell, Carla Taylor, Dale Wachowiak

Article X of the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville provides that the Committee on Ministries (COM):

...shall act to strengthen the practice of shared ministries and to promote effective leadership within the church by:

1. Educating committees and the Congregation to enhance their understanding of the nature and scope of shared ministries;
2. Periodically evaluating the shared and professional ministries of the church;
3. Recommending to the Board and Congregation improved ways to define the roles and responsibilities of the church's leadership.

During the 2010 year, the COM conducted an evaluation of our congregation's Community Worship Ministry. The work of the committee included: review of our current worship practices, review of membership and service attendance data, review of various books on worship theory and practice, review of data on UUA's Worship Web, visits to worship services at various area UU and non-UU churches, preparation and administration of a survey among UUCA

Members and Friends, and interviews with our minister. A list of Findings and Recommendations was presented to the Board and minister based on the above research, observation, and survey. These specific findings and recommendations are attached. A copy of the full report which was presented to the Board and minister, which included accompanying data, summaries, analysis, etc., is available upon request.

After our exploration of worship, the COM turned its focus to the topic of Social Justice instead of Administration (which was technically our next topic of study). It was generally agreed, in consultation with the Board and staff, that it would be best to postpone a focus on Administration until the transition to policy governance was further along in process. Meanwhile, a focus on Social Justice was considered to be a timely topic with the expectation of a full-time assistant minister coming on staff in the fall of 2011 with Social Justice as part of his/her portfolio. Thus far, we have been gathering information to feed our study, including: interviewing members of the congregation who have a strong history (or present) within the Social Justice ministries of UUCA; looking at the work done back in 2006 on Social Justice as well as the archives, and other UUA resources; talking to other congregations (non UU in Asheville and UU similarly sized congregations farther afield) about their Social Justice programs; and attempting to map the plethora of existing Social Justice projects and initiatives underway at UUCA. We look forward to sharing our findings regarding Social Justice with the Board in December 2011.

We began the 2010-11 year with the following members: **Melissa Davis, Jill Preyer, David Ray, Elizabeth Schell, Frank Valenti, and Dale Wachowiak.** Shortly thereafter, **David Ray** and **Frank Valenti** had to step down due to the increase of other commitments at church. In early 2011, **Christine Grant** and **Carla Taylor** joined us. In the spring, **Jill Preyer** determined that she needed to step down due to health concerns. The process of exploring ministries of our congregation has been meaningful and enjoyable to us all and we are thankful for the opportunity to engage and contribute to the congregation in this way.

2010-11 Committee on Ministries Evaluation of Community Worship

FINDINGS:

Demographics

The COM survey results reflect a greater portion of congregants who are fifty and over and who attend the 11:15 AM service. More than twice as many females as males responded to the survey. Over half of the sample described themselves as regular worship attendees.

One hundred twenty-seven congregants responded to the online survey. Total survey respondents were less than

20% of all Members and Friends of the church.

Limitations of Study

While the survey responses are most likely not representative of the congregation as a whole, particularly of younger congregants and male congregants, they may be fairly representative of those who are committed worship attendees. *Caution should be exercised when making any general or unqualified statement about survey responses.*

General Finding

Overall the responses indicate that respondents are generally positive about their current worship experience. The survey results suggest fairly strong accord between what congregants are looking for and what UUCA services provide.

Specific Findings

Overall worship experience:

- Congregants are seeking a sense of community, reflection on values, a feeling of peace and harmony, and a feeling of joy and gratitude from the worship experience.
- There is a desire for more frequent sermons that connect on a personal level with respondents.
- The flow of services should not be disrupted by applause.
- The order of service includes the right amount of information.
- Respondents feel welcomed to the service by greeters, the minister, and other congregants; however, the welcoming is not of a consistent quality; also, RE welcoming could be improved.
- Respondents said that they would like to see more humor in services; also viewed favorably were more congregational participation, reverence/holiness, and innovation.

Intergenerational Services

Generally, respondents appear to enjoy having the children involved in the services; however, those responsible for the children see the services as providing mid-level enjoyment for, or impact on their children.

Music in Worship

A high percentage of respondents are either quite satisfied or very satisfied with their musical experience during worship.

Viewed favorably are:

- Having three hymns; however, many congregants would be comfortable varying the number.
- The particular hymns and songs that are typically selected.
- A wide variety of types of music that reflects a mixture of feeling

Lay Participation

There are sufficient opportunities for lay participation in

services.

- The role of worship associates in services is viewed favorably.
- Lay persons leading an entire service was generally approved of; however, a quarter of the respondents didn't think it was appropriate.

Preaching

Respondents were generally positive about present preaching, including:

- Topics selected for the sermons (the most desirable sermons tended to be those based on spiritual principles and values or what is going on in the world).
- The length of sermons is satisfactory.

There should be more frequent sermons relating to congregant's personal lives.

Special Ceremonies

- The right amount of time is being devoted to special ceremonies.
- These ceremonies are properly honored within the Sunday services.

Technology

- Other than podcasts, there is little enthusiasm for bringing higher levels of technology to the worship experience.
- Technology should be used judiciously during worship services to ensure that it is appropriate, moderate and not distracting or interfering with the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

General

It is important that UUCA offer diverse community worship activities that nurture the eclectic spirits of Members and Friends.

Worship Experience

- Worship planners should not shy away from "lightness" and even humor in services.
- Worship planners should consider addressing member concerns about applause at services.
- Ongoing training of greeters for consistency and quality control would be helpful.

Intergenerational Services

- Seek more information from parents and grandparents to determine what would make intergenerational services have more of an impact on the children.
- Explore ways to strengthen the intergenerational service experience for children, with care to avoid impairing the adult experience.

Music in Worship

- Ensure the continued offering of a wide variety of musical genres.
- Obtain a good replacement for James Richards.

Lay Participation

- Continue to nurture lay participation as an important part of UUCA services.
- Have worship associates involved in lay led services to provide continuity with established practices.
- Continue training of lay leaders and worship associates to assure consistent quality control.

Preaching

- Consideration should be given to more frequent sermons that create a balance between "head and heart," with an emphasis on bringing the sermon to a personal level and the everyday experience of congregants.
- Consider more events such as drama, storytelling, dance or interactive experiences to complement sermons.

Special Ceremonies

- Continue the incorporation of special ceremonies during worship services.

Technology

- Ensure that technology is used judiciously during the worship service to ensure that it is appropriate, moderate and not distracting or interfering with the service.
- Implement online podcast services.

Nominating Committee

Paula Robbins, Chair

Members: Drew Jones, Bruce Larson, Nancy Nachman, Martha Shepard

The Nominating Committee is required to present a slate of nominees to the congregation for approval at the **Annual Meeting, June 5**. The Committee is pleased to announce the names of well-qualified nominees for the positions listed below. According to the Bylaws, "Additional nominations for any elective office to be filled at the Annual Meeting may be made by a petition signed by ten (10) voting Members and submitted to the Board of Trustees at the May Board meeting." This year's Nominating Committee consisted of **Drew Jones, Bruce Larson, Nancy Nachman, Paula Robbins** (chair), and **Martha Shepard**.

Board of Trustees:

President*	Linda Topp (first one-year term)
Vice-President*	Carol Taylor (first one-year term)
Clerk*	Jane Bramham (first one-year term)
Treasurer*	Sammy Fong (second one-year term)

*Individuals noted above along with Minister as ad hoc member, consti-

tute the Executive Committee and serve for a one-year term.

Trustees:

(1st year, 2-year term)	Gay Lambirth
(1st year, 2-year term)	Juliana Austin
(1st year, 2-year term)	Sheldon Altschul

Dane Barrager, Jean Larson and **Michael Vavrek** will serve the second year of a two-year term; this does not require a congregational vote.

Nominating Committee:

(1st year, 3-year term)	Cathy Agrella
(1st year, 3-year term)	Paula Massey

Committee on Ministries (one position elected):

(1st year, 1st 3-year term)	Jennifer Fulford
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Ministry

Executive Report

Reverend Mark Ward, Lead Minister



Overall, this has been very much a year of endings and beginnings at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville. Chief among the endings has been changes in key staff positions.

Personnel

Rev. Sarah York, our part-time Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care, announced her retirement from congregational ministry as of July 1 and has embarked on a path to become a spiritual director. I am grateful for all the ways that Sarah has enhanced our pastoral care program. She created an effective training program for pastoral visitors, then organized the team to provide reliable coverage for pastoral needs. She also has helped us integrate this congregation's many pastoral opportunities and this year took on leadership of our covenant groups. I feel we have a strong, good functioning pastoral care function to pass on to our new full-time assistant minister, **Rev. Lisa Kemper**. In addition to pastoral care, Lisa will help us focus our Social Justice efforts to help increase participation in that important work and invite us to understand how it is a central ministry of this church. In addition, she'll work with Membership Coordinator **Linda Kooiker** on membership retention and ways to help people better connected.

Taryn Strauss, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, leaves for a new position as Director of Religious Education at All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, a wonderful opportunity at a prominent congregation in our association. Taryn has brought vitality and passion to this work, together with a deep commitment to the mission of education of children, youth and adults within our movement. We feel confident that the person who will fill her spot, **Benette Sherman**, will not only carry on the strong programming that Taryn has helped develop but also help us integrate the gains we have made and make our religious education even stronger.

Another important personnel change this year comes among our office staff. **Susan Yost** helped create and was the first person to occupy the position of Communication Coordinator. Indeed, the quality of her work and its impact on the church helped persuade us of the need for making it the focus of a full-time position. Susan improved the look in all church communications and helped inaugurate our

Friday email blasts and digital newsletters. Her skill won her best church newsletter in our district twice. We are delighted to welcome **Jules Smith** to follow in her shoes, and we look forward to her helping us enhance the digital profile of our congregation, making our website one of the central portals to and sources of information about our church.

In related matters, I'm grateful to our Personnel Committee – **Dawn Klug, chair; Carol Rovello, and Karen Vernon** – for their help this year updating the job descriptions of key staff and helping us review how we compensate our staff so that we remain a fair employer. All our exempt staff are paid within appropriate ranges under salary guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and all non-exempt staff are paid at levels in keeping with prevailing wages in this area for their positions; in every case we pay at least a living wage.

Policy Governance

Among the most important beginnings this year has been our inauguration into Policy Governance. Every congregation that has undertaken this shift has discovered that the model must be tweaked to best fit the culture of that church. So, our Governance Task Force has spent much of this year working on how to adapt this model to best fit us. As **Linda Topp** notes in her report of that Task Force's work, this remains a work in progress and will be for the next couple of years as we live into this model and shape it so that it will best serve us.

One of my most important roles in this format is to draw up a Work Plan for the church year that lays out what we hope to do in the coming year to advance the ministry of the church. The plan is framed in response to Ends Statements created by the Board of Trustees that describe what we hope to accomplish.

I am preparing a detailed report on my work plan for the Board that will be available on our Web site, but I wanted to take a moment to summarize some of what we accomplished in the past year.

The Work Plan, like the Ends Statements, is divided into three areas: **Within** – goals aimed at spiritual growth and understanding; **Among** – goals aimed at making us a hospitable, spiritually vital and supportive community; and **Beyond** – goals aimed at making us a visible leader seeking to make a positive impact in our community and in the world.

In the Within goals, our work has focused on ways to integrate elements of our worship life – words, music visual art – and to pull together themes that reinforce each other

both in the sanctuary and in religious education classes and ensure that what happens Sunday mornings is a meaningful experience.

So, worship services this year centered on themes emerging from the 50th anniversary of the joining of the Unitarian and Universalist churches, which will be celebrated at General Assembly this year. These themes were reflected in the music in worship and in children's stories told in worship and their gathering time. We also saw the inauguration of Worship Arts group, led by **Maureen Kampen, Elizabeth Schell** and **Richard Oversmith**, that has added a new dimension to our Sunday experience. I'll have more to say about worship later in this report.

In Religious Education we saw growth in programs of all ages – from Spirit Play for the younger classes to a diverse selection of adult education classes, all aimed at cultivating a strong sense of spiritually mature, UU identity. Read more about Religious Education below.

In our Among goals, Membership Coordinator **Linda Kooiker** has upgraded our newcomer classes, UU 101, to better introduce potential Members and Friends to our congregation and help them make connections early. She has conducted a survey of people in our congregation who have been here two to three years to get a reading on how well they are finding their way into our community and what we might do to improve the retention of Members.

To help continue building relations of trust and caring in our community, **Sarah York** conducted a training to bring in new pastoral visitors as some visitors move on to other areas and continuing to grow support groups and teams of people who help members in crisis. Sarah also worked with coordinators of our covenant groups to help keep them connected to the work of the church.

Our office staff under Administrator **Marilyn Martin** has stepped up to play a larger role in budgeting, monitoring and supporting our stewardship efforts and tracking trends in membership, attendance and religious education programming. We are working to make better use of our data base to follow membership involvement. We're also planning renovations to accommodate new staff and better use our space.

In our Beyond goals, we've been working to improve participation of people of all ages in social justice projects and encourage greater use of the Flame, our electronic newsletter, to make the congregation aware of justice initiatives. I've continued to remain active and have seen our congregation's participation grow in local interfaith groups. We have promoted attendance in the UUA General Assembly in Charlotte this year and the Board has reached out to our neighboring congregation, UUs of Transylvania County in Brevard to look for opportunities for our congregations to partner in the future. Among the projects resulting from our Green Sanctuary commitment was work to make Jefferson House more energy efficient.

Policy Governance Task Force

Linda Topp, Chair

Members: Kay Aler-Maida, Mike Horak, Ed Jenest, Michael Vavrek and Mark Ward

The job of this task force is to do what is necessary to help the board make a transition to policy governance. Eventually the job of this task force will be to aid the Board in constantly reviewing the Governance Task Force and keeping in good contact with the members of the congregation. This year, our objectives were to inform the congregation about this project, edit the Governance Document in light of the fact that our original Ends Statements did not do what we wanted them to do and then review in public meetings the new Ends Statements to see if they represent the thinking of the interested members of the congregation.

Over the course of this year, we have accomplished all three of our objectives. A full brochure was mailed to all members of the congregation describing policy governance, a web page was written as the source of all things policy governance, we spent some time getting a better understanding of WHAT policy governance entails, and this spring we tackled the new Ends Statements as well as started work on editing the Executive Limitations.

Work on the Governance Document will continue as we learn more and more about how we need to operate and what we need to have written in the Document.

Annual Budget Drive

Julian Ferris and Ken Brame, Co-chairs

Members: Mary Alm, Barbara Brownsmith, Michael Ellis, Laura Jump, Gene Lambirth, Melissa Stanz

Purpose: The Annual Budget Drive Committee supports the congregation's budget process by encouraging members to make as generous a financial commitment to the church for the year in support of our first covenant to "share the ministry of our church through our gifts of time, talent and money."

Background and Structure

The ABD is structured on the fiscal calendar with a goal of completing its function prior to the start of the budget process. Financial commitments are made for the calendar year starting in July. Historically the ABD campaign has been a six-eight week process that includes two-four weeks of pre-publicity, and then a four-week campaign that includes Stewardship visits, mailings and direction communications to the congregation. This year's ABD started preliminary planning in July 2010. The preliminary calendar for the ABD this year was set at the end of August around **Mark Ward's** schedule, the needs of the finance committee, and other events in the church calendar. This year's campaign

started three weeks later than the 2010/11 ABD. Major dates included:

- March 5: Leadership Event
- March 6: Kick Off
- March 12: Step Up: UU's On the Edge of Tomorrow (the Big Event)
- April 3: Celebration Sunday

The committee had its first meeting October 3 and met monthly. We retained a similar organizational structure to last year:

- Co-Chairs: **Julian Ferris** completed a second year as co-chair. **Ken Brame** for his first of two years as co-chair.
- Publicity: **Mary Alm** returned to the ABD in this role and was joined by **Melisa Stanz**. Publicity was tremendously augmented by support from **Susan Yost** in the office.
- Stewardship: **Gene Lambirth** bravely took on this challenge.
- Events: **Laura Jump** and **Michael Ellis** organized a new initiative for the ABD by writing and directing a production in support of the ABD. An events coordinator could not be recruited prior to or during the campaign, but numerous members of the church supported the events which occurred.
- Callers: **Barbara Brownsmith** returned to organize the post campaign calling and received invaluable support from **Gene Lambirth**.

Data/Reports: **Jerry McLellan** and **Dane Barrager** had previously performed this function; the office took this function over this year. The ABD had tremendous support from **Christine Magnarella Ray**.

Key Features of 2011-12

There were significant differences in this year's ABD compared to last year's:

- Messaging Strategy: We started the campaign with a brain storming session to develop a messaging strategy. This was moderated by **Melissa Stanz** and attended by the ABD, **Mark Ward**, **Marilyn Martin**, board chair **Kay Aler-Maida**, and other members of the congregation.
- Set a Goal: A financial goal of \$525,000 was set after consultation with **Kay Aler-Maida** and review of the board's goals.
- The Big Event: The highlight of this year's campaign was the Step Up! Production.
- Front Load Commitments: The intent of the campaign was to request and encourage early commitments as opposed to recent years past where commitments were collected at the end of the campaign.

In addition, there were aspects of last year's campaign that we wanted to replicate and if possible build upon:

- Open Communication About Money: The publicity continued to stress on the need and expectation for giving with specific suggestions for a starting place (3% last year

and 5% this year).

- Online Commitments/Giving: Survey Monkey was again used; and in addition staff made the link to the commitment form available on the web site and online giving available.
- Stewardship Gatherings/Cottage Meetings: Last year's response was similar to previous responses with individual meetings and we hoped to build on this.
- Increased integration with the church: The administrative staff played an increasing role in publicity role out and design for both the message and the big event. Also staff completely took over the data gathering and presenting role.

Results

The most recent results are as of 5/17/11. Typically the results are finalized in June, so the total commitment numbers are expected to increase somewhat though the average commitment is expected to fall as later commitments tend to be smaller:

- Total commitments so far this year are 371, this compares to a final number of 387 from last year and 401 in 2009/10.
- Total amount committed so far is \$496,109. This is already above last year and puts us in realistic range of \$505,000, but most likely short of our goal of \$525,000.
- Of those who committed last year but have yet to commit this year, their commitments totaled \$25,369 last year.
- Average commitment amount \$1,337 compared to \$1,238 last year.
- % Increase of repeat givers: 5.0%.
- % Of on-line commitments: 23%. This is a decrease from 31% last year.

Committee Successes This Year

The Step Up! event was viewed as a great success in the amount of participation and, given the conflict with the Asheville symphony concert on the same evening, a successful turn out. The feedback was very positive. The event did not achieve the number of commitments at the event that was hoped for, however the average commitment amount was up substantially from those that attended.

- The Music Committee stepped up to produce the production as part of their service to the church with **Laura Jump** and **Mike Ellis** taking the lead.
- New Membership Commitments. Although not a function of the ABD, commitments from new Members were at their highest level.
- The publicity campaign including video testimonials posted in the e-newsletter, the mailings/email blasts.
- The hard work of the callers.
- The "message" that a higher level of commitment is needed.

- Publicity of the goal.

Committee Areas for Improvement

- Number of commitments is significantly below anticipated and down two years in a row.
- The message to give more may alienate those not able to give, who may feel reluctant to fill out a commitment form.
- Stewardship Gathering/Cottage Meetings were less attended than last year and are generally attended by those already very involved and committed to the church.
- The stewardship component of the ABD is too big a job for one person.
- We never had an events coordinator such that the social portion of the big event was rushed and rapidly put together, and Celebration Sunday was lackluster.
- Need to continue to improve communication with the staff; they did a great job of reading our minds
- Improve and encourage on-line commitments.
- The committee needs a defined end to the campaign just like the congregation.

Recommendations for Next Year

- Keep the big event. There is still a lot of interest to continue this and it is a worthwhile effort to build upon.
- Build on the ability to commit and donate on-line by increased education/publicity and making it as easy as possible.
- Commitment forms in the pews during the campaign.
- Return to individual visits, initially with a target group. This should be viewed as a three-five year effort to build on each year such that eventually the entire congregation is contacted in the last year.
- Stewardship visits are a huge effort to build on and sustain. Ideally the number of participants should increase very year such that everyone will be contacted in the future. Keep in mind that a gathering approach was pursued because participation in individual visits was shrinking and response was stagnant.
- Consider having the role of the Stewardship Council be to coordinate/educate/train stewardship visits during the ABD.
- Use existing groups such as covenant groups as an alternative method of gatherings, such that during the ABD campaign stewardship and the financial support of the church is addressed and commitments are encouraged.
- Coordinating Events is a two-person role to really have fun with this and celebrate.
- Use Survey Monkey early in the process to gauge attitudes of the congregation.
- Plan early and often prior to December 1.

Planned Giving

Ruth Christie, Chair

Members: Beverly Cutter, Stephen Jones, Michael Lord

The purpose of the planned Giving Committee is to assist with establishing a firm long-term financial foundation for the UUCA by encouraging planned gifts to the church, particularly for unrestricted endowment.

Our work to-date in 2011 has focused on the following:

- Updating the planned giving brochure available in Sandburg Hall.
- Updating the list of Members who have already included the UUCA in their estate plans.
- Enhancing communication between the Committee and the Stewardship Council, Board Chair and Treasurer, the Fund Management Committee, Finance Committee, and Church Administrator and staff to understand how planned gifts have been handled in the past and to identify areas where clarification, refinement, or consistency are needed.
- Communicating special opportunities for giving in 2011, such as the ability of people 70.5 years of age or older to make gifts directly to the UUCA from their IRA that are tax-free and can count toward their required minimum distribution.

Our work in the coming year will include:

- **Endowment Management:** recommending improvements to current Planned Giving policies and procedures to ensure that gifts are managed consistently according to best practices and according to the wishes of the donor(s).
- **Donor Recognition:** surveying the church community to ascertain if additional individuals have included the UUCA in their wills; updating and enhancing the recognition plaque for the Legacy Society; reporting gifts received and their donors in UUCA publications (with donor approval); hosting a special thank-you reception for Legacy Society members.
- **Program Visibility:** creating a UUCA planned giving website that is simple, user friendly, and provides up-to-date information.
- **Personal Conversations:** once the mechanics of our planned giving program are well established, we will seek volunteers to assist us in proactively seeking additional planned gifts.

Stewardship Council

Mary Alm, Chair

Members: Adam Griffith, Mike Murray, Joy Christi Przeworski, and Larry Wheeler

The Board of Trustees created a Vision for Stewardship in the spring of 2010 and established a working group to pursue that Vision during the 2010-11 church year. The Board charged the working group (which it named the Stewardship Council) with two major tasks: (1) plan a retreat on the subject of Stewardship for both the Board and the working group, and (2) study the Council structure and recommend how to increase its likelihood for success.

The members conducted the Stewardship retreat on October 2. At the May 18 Board meeting, they presented an amended structure for the Council with some detail as to its operations for the 2011-12 church year. In addition, **Larry Wheeler** worked with **Linda Kooiker**, Membership Coordinator to incorporate financial commitments as an integral aspect of UU 101, and the Council recruited a revitalized Planned Giving committee who are functioning independently with the assistance of **Marilyn Martin**, Church Administrator.

Administration

Marilyn Martin, Church Administrator



The administration of a large congregation includes many diverse duties and a number of valuable staff members and volunteers who assist in supporting and advancing its ministry. Here are the highlights of this year:

Human Resources

Over the course of the year, we were challenged to find a Receptionist/Administrative Assistant who could maintain the friendly and helpful connection to our administrative office for the longer term. We believe we have found that person in **Tish Murphy** who joined our staff the first of March.

After over five years on staff, **Susan Yost**, Communications Coordinator, resigned to move to Dallas, Texas to join her partner who has accepted employment there. We have now added **Jules Smith** to our staff as of April 18 to fill that position. Jules will be working on a major update of our website, as well as connecting us to “social media” with the presence of our congregation in the near future in addition to providing new direction and oversight to our communications plan.

We are fortunate to have **Christine Magnarella Ray** continuing on our staff having been hired during the same period our Minister **Mark Ward** came to us, both of them beginning their seventh year with UUCA later this summer. This year Christine initiated our relationship with VANCO for on-line giving, expanded our use of automatic debit for payment of Member and Friend annual financial commitments, and took on the responsibility for providing in-house all necessary reporting for the Annual Budget Drive.

Steve Sloan, Sexton, will complete his first year on staff in August. The congregation has greatly benefited from Steve’s presence each Sunday morning and throughout the activities of that day. Particularly appreciated is his assistance with “coffee hour” each week. This position was expanded to 30 hours per week which Steve fills with cleaning and maintenance duties for our busy congregation.

Finances

As our congregation has grown in size and organization, as well as our move into Policy Governance, the Church Administrator’s role has continued to expand in the area of church finance. Continuing the work of administering the day-to-day operational expenses, payroll, as well as capital expenditures for maintenance, improvements and purchase of equipment, this position continues to be ideally suited for the development of the annual operating budget,

and regular interaction with the Treasurer, Annual Budget Drive Coordinators, Stewardship Council members, Finance Committee members, Planned Giving Committee and other volunteers connected to the financial work of the church. Working closely with the bookkeeper, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, and the needs of various teams and committees, we produce the reports which make our financial procedures and activities accurate, verifiable and accountable.

Facility & Campus Management

The most notable item under this heading for the year was the demise of our 30-year-old furnace in Jefferson House during cold winter months. Using the guiding principles of our Green Sanctuary approach, we were able to select and purchase a highly rated energy efficient model. Using the authority given the Church Administrator under Policy Governance, quick action could be taken to make the purchase, schedule the installation and have the new furnace in use within a two week period.

Two notable teams of volunteers participate in the maintenance and improvement of our facilities and grounds, one of which is the Buildings & Grounds Team ably headed for many years by **Bill Agrella**, and the Green Sanctuary Team – a team under the Social Justice Council, but who recommends and participates in projects that reflect our commitment to environmentally sustainable purchases and practices.

Communications

This year the Communications Coordinator assumed the leadership role in developing the overall communications strategies and scheduling. **Susan Yost** was an integral leader in the Annual Budget Drive strategies with regard to message and materials. She worked closely with the communications sub-group of the ABD team (**Melissa Stanz** and **Mary Alm**), and produced all the print materials, the banners, visual display and electronic publicity – including working on the videos that were featured on the UUCA website throughout the Drive.

Building on the recommendations Susan made for the coming year, and the strengths of our new Communications Coordinator, Jules we are moving to a greater use of our website and social media options. Jules is especially interested in developing a team of church volunteers to assist with videotaping and digital photography to maintain a visual record of the programs and activities of our congregation and to find appropriate ways to use them to enhance our on-line presence. We are following our intention to be “greener” in our reduced use of printed material, while gaining a larger audience for the UUCA message.

“For everything you have missed, you have gained something else, and for everything you gain, you lose something else.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson quotes (American Poet, Lecturer and Essayist, 1803-1882)

This year we have, and will experience the loss on our staff and much appreciated colleagues while welcoming the “gain” of new staff members joining us in our ministry.

Finance Committee

Shel Altschul, Chair

Voting Members: Sheldon Altschul (Chair), Jerry McLellan, Frank Valenti, Fred Miercort, Ken Brame, Steven Obremski and, Ralph Damiani. Jim Tobin (Assistant Treasurer) served on the committee for most of the fiscal year.

Ex officio (non-voting) Members: Sammy Fong (Treasurer), Marilyn Martin (Church Administrator), Christine Magnarella Ray (Bookkeeper) and, Mark Ward (Minister)

The Finance Committee is an amalgamation of volunteers and salaried staff that meets monthly to review the financial status of the church and to make recommendations to the Board of Trustee on financial matters.

Although reviewing financial reports is an essential part of what we do there are many other duties that we have assumed. Realizing that our congregation is growing and changing, we have been suggesting different ways to make the financial information easier to comprehend. To these ends multi-year computer projection tools and analytical systems to better understand the sources of our fund raising that were developed continue to be refined. These tools also make it easier spot trends and enable the Finance Committee to make recommendations regarding budget matters or when unexpected circumstances arise. This ability to understand our financial position helps provide a basis for the congregation to make decisions about how it will address its ever changing needs. We continue to suggest ways to balance the congregation’s needs with our financial resources. Current economic conditions have made this a challenge. Marilyn Martin, our church administrator and ex-officio member of our committee has done an exemplary job of preparing the budget in these challenging circumstances.

The new software system continues to be implemented which improves our financial tracking and enhances communication to the congregation. The new system has allowed the implementation of electronic pledging and enabled electronic payment for convenience and cost savings.

We are continually looking for ways to enable the congregation to realize its goals.

As Chair of the Finance Committee, I would like to thank the members of the committee for sharing their tal-

ents, experience and, hard work with our congregation.

Administration Partnering with Green Sanctuary

Under the facilities and grounds management of the Administrator, significant projects and efforts are coordinated with the Green Sanctuary Team, led by **Grace Curry** and under the Social Justice Team leadership. Together we installed a new generation of compact fluorescent flood lights in Sandburg Hall which meet our need for functional lighting while reducing energy.

Mid-year a project was conceived to mount a joint effort of the Peace and Environmental Justice Team, Green Sanctuary Team and Building and Grounds Committee to upgrade the weatherization of Jefferson House. Instrumental to this project was **Kirk Denny**, the project leader, who arranged for Isaac Savage to conduct a free energy review, and volunteers from Building and Grounds and Peace and Environmental Justice volunteers to carry out the work. Kirk was instrumental in getting affordable products and supplies for the project as well.

Last year our church grounds were Certified by NC Wildlife Federation as a wildlife habitat under the F.A.I.T.H. program (Fellowship Actions Impacting the Habitat). UUCA Member **Dan Clere** and his covenant group initiated this project, and continue to oversee its ongoing development and maintenance in coordination with the Administrator and the Building & Grounds Team. This is another project that supports our Green Sanctuary efforts.

Buildings & Grounds Team

Bill Agrella, Chair

Buildings and Grounds, in coordination with several other church committees and with the energetic assistance of over 30 volunteers, kept the church and its grounds “looking good” over the past year. Some of our more successful undertakings were:

- Assisted with the weatherization of Jefferson House, especially the insulating of the duct work in the JH basement.
- Completed an exceptionally successful Fall 2010 cleanup which put the grounds in perfect condition to get through what proved to be another cold and snowy winter.
- Accomplished more during the Spring 2011 cleanup than anyone had anticipated:
 - Spread 15 bags of mushroom compost over the two largest flower gardens.
 - Thoroughly weeded all gardens.

- Re-arranged the concrete blocks bordering plants along Bond Street to present a more appealing look to neighbors and passersby.
- Shoveled and re-spread parking lot gravel that had been scraped thin by winter plowing.
- Cleared weeds and debris from the RE window well
- Elevated the rain barrel used to water the recently planted flower garden by Charlotte Street hand-capped entrance.
- Removed a large fallen section of a hemlock tree and repaired damage to roof gutter caused by the tree.

The year was one with few, if any, dull moments! We are all looking forward to the surprises of the coming year!

Mountain Spirit Coffeehouse

Don and Louise Baker, Co-coordinators

The Mountain Sprit Coffee House continues along in our sixth season with two outstanding shows in June; Amy Speace on June 12 and Beppe Gambetta on June 25. A highlight last August was our show with Pat Donoue of Prairie Home Companion that brought in a record crowd of 149 people. Then in March of 2011 we hosted Al Petteway and Amy White again for a CD release show and had an all time largest crowd of 160 attending. We continue to bring high quality folk, blues, bluegrass, singer-songwriter, Celtic and acoustic new age talent from around the US to our cozy “listening room venue”. We consistently have talented musicians asking us to play at our shows and we are currently booked into 2012 with a variety of performers. We have established a reputation as a desirable place to play on the folk touring circuit.

Some of our highlights from the past season include, Pat Donohue, Freebo, Wood’s Tea Company, Chuck Brodsky and Robin Bullock. We will host a two Celtic shows this fall with Jamie Laval in October and Brendan Nolan in November and hope to have John McCutcheon perform in December.

We average audiences of 80-120 people. Some folks travel from as far as Knoxville, Charlotte, and Greenville to attend our shows. All of our shows are now held in the sanctuary to take advantage of the space and acoustics. We use the coffee house atmosphere of Sandburg Hall to offer our refreshments and a place to meet the performers and purchase their CDs. We sell wonderful desserts that are home baked by volunteers and members of UUCA. Our bakers include **Gwenn Roberts, Sherry Woethke, Cathy Agrella, Alan Tucker, Paula Massey** and **Martha Shepard**. Martha has also taken on the coordination of the baked goods.

This season from August to April we have already donated over \$3,000 from ticket sales, baked goods and coffee sales. The money from the food sales goes to the Discre-

tionary Fund for UUCA.

Our dedicated group of volunteers keeps our shows going. These volunteers include: **Joyce Birkenholtz** and **Trevor Wallis, Larry Holt, Cathy** and **Bill Agrella**, Louise and Rich Loveland, **Jay Bretz, Paula Massey, Gerri Solomon, Rod Jackson**. Meredith Norwood, **Larry Golden, Joe Barrett** and our sound technician Charlie Van Buskirk. Thanks to staff members **Susan Yost** and **Jules Smith** for their help with publicity too. New volunteers are always welcome! We can also use help with placing posters around town promoting the show.

We hope more UUCA members will come out to enjoy the music and support UUCA in our 2011-2012 season and to support our “Ministry” of music to this community. All shows start at 7:00 PM and end by 9:30 PM with an intermission for refreshments and social time. For more information and to volunteer please contact **Louise** and **Don Baker**, Mountain Spirit Coffee House hosts by calling 299-4171 or visit our table in Sandburg Hall after Sunday services to learn more.

Auction

Clark Olsen, Chair

Members: Carol Taylor (Chair 2011), Jim Aycock, Jan Goffney, Suzy Jones, Maureen Kampen, Gay & Gene Lambirth, Al & Nancy Long, Diane Martin, Ann McLellan, Joy McConnell (2011)

In our UUCA covenant, we promise each other to “share the ministry of our church through our gifts of time, talent, and money.” The 2010 auction was our covenant in action.

At its first meeting in April, 2010, the Auction Committee set two goals: to throw a good party, and to raise money for our church budget. How’d it go?

The party: The auction was held on November 6 at the historic Manor Inn, across from UUCA. The 240 people who attended enjoyed a handsome venue, good food and drink, entertaining auctioneers, lively music, wonderful company, and excellent shopping. The feedback? “Great party!”

Members, Friends, and supporters of UUCA donated 173 items to the auction—everything from dinners to vacation homes, from artwork to babysitting. Dozens of volunteers made and served food, auctioneered, designed displays, mixed drinks, set up tables and chairs, checked out folks at evening’s end, and much, much more.

The money: Between ticket sales and auction purchases, the 2010 auction raised a net contribution of \$22,967 to UUCA. The verdict? Hallelujah!

The committee experience: Everyone on the committee agrees that this was the most fun we’ve ever had on a committee. A low bar, perhaps, but welcome nonetheless.

So we're doing this again. The 2011 UUCA Auction will be Saturday, November 5 at The Venue on North Market Street, downtown Asheville.

Memorial Garden

Iris Williams & Charles Wussow, Co-coordinators

Volunteers: Ruth Christie, Paul Fleisig, Larry Knees, Peter Olevnik, Judy Watson

There were eight interments in the garden this year. The volunteers who maintain the church Memorial Garden work as teams of two for weekly watering and upkeep. They meet as a group twice a year for the general spring and fall clean-ups and for planning and replacing or adding plants. They take care of the interior and exterior of the garden, as well as the stretch between the upper and lower parking lot driveways along Bond Street. The goal of the team is to preserve the garden as a place for quiet contemplation by congregation members at any time. More volunteers are needed. If you have a knack for gardening and could spend a little time once a month at the garden, please contact **Iris Williams** or **Charles Wussow**.

Worship

Lead Minister

Reverend Mark Ward



As a focus of Sunday services I once again turned to a theme to guide me. This year, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the joining of the Unitarian and Universalist churches I chose moments in UU history. I sought to use a focus on important figures or moments in our history to emphasize themes that have long resonated with our movement.

So, I began in September with a service celebrating our commitment to invite people to name the truth in their own minds and hearts and, also, to open themselves to change. My annual service on forgiveness raised up the path to atonement laid out by the famous Universalist Hosea Ballou. Our Association Sunday service in October focused on the heritage of covenant that remains vital to our own congregation, and in November I explored the influence of the transcendentalist movement and how those thinkers influence our religion today.

In December I invited us to reflect on the role and influence of women in our movement, and in January I turned to how our movement has responded to the call for racial justice. February turned to the diversity of theological perspectives among us, how gathered as theist, atheist and many other perspectives we can still get along. March I turned to our congregation, how we are poised to enter a new time together. In April I reflected on the roots and branches of our movement, and in May I explored the illusion of separateness created by the many ways we divide ourselves from each other.

Other highpoints in the worship year included a month of services in August with different voices, including me, **Rev. Sarah York**, a guest – Michael Carter – and our Peacemaking Potluck group reflecting on that theme. I also enjoyed a service on Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, assisted by **DiAnna Ritola**, and a service on the poetry of Emily Dickinson, assisted by **Virginia Ramig** and **Natale Polinko**.

It has always been a joy to create intergenerational worship with our departing Director of Lifespan Religious Education **Taryn Strauss**. This year's services included our Day of the Dead service – Filling Their Shoes, our service on Martin Luther King Sunday – Following King Down the Jerico Road, and Earth Day – Home Sweet Home, with photos from the Discover Life on Earth project. We

were also treated by our YRUU Youth to their service: Transform Yourself, Transform the World.

Sarah York, our Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care, was an inspiring presence in our pulpit a total of five times this year, a big help as the search process took me from many Sunday services in the spring. **Rev. Sally Beth Shore**, UUCA Member who recently completed a ministry at the UU Congregation of the Swannanoa Valley in Black Mountain, also took a turn with a service on her experience in Uganda. Three of our Worship Associates also led worship this year – **Frank Valenti**, on religious freedom, **DiAnna Ritola**, on Sabbath, and **Joy Christi Przeworski** on National Coming Out Day. Other lay services last summer included our annual Poetry Sunday and one led by our "Naming the Sacred" class.

And we had many guests, including the Rev. Chris Buice of the Tennessee Valley UU Church of Knoxville, TN; Rev. Joe Bennett, a hospice chaplain from Burnsville, NC.; Rev. Keith Kron, Director of Transitions for the UUA; Rev. Pat Jobe of the Greenville, SC UU Fellowship; Rev. Farley Snell, an instructor at the Reuter's Center; and two guests who were both speakers at my ordination and installation in 2005, Rev. David Bumbaugh, recently retired from Meadville Lombard Theological School, and Rev. Michael Schuler, parish minister of the First Unitarian Society of Madison.

I am grateful for the hard work and inspired words of our Worship Associates, who have done so much to raise the standards of excellence in our worship. Serving this year were **Juli Altschul**, **Linda Bair**, **Art Poultney**, **Joy Christi Przeworski**, **Virginia Ramig**, **DiAnna Ritola**, **Elizabeth Schell** and **Frank Valenti**. Juli and Linda will be leaving our crew this coming year. Newcomers joining us in the coming year include **Ron Marable**, **T.S. Pennington**, and a youth, **Morgen Cobb**.

Passages

This past church year saw the death of eight church Members, people whose passing has made our community poorer, and who we pause to remember now. We hold them in loving memory, grateful for so much that they contributed to this community and also for the blessing of their presence. We remember **Nancy Hanover**, **Cleve Mathews**, **Jane Richter**, **Bob Potter**, **George Simpson**, **Shelly Stone**, **George & Virginia Love**, and **Barbara Orke**.

But it is also a joy to welcome children into our midst, as we dedicate ourselves to their care, support and growth as persons confident in self, joined to a larger humanity, and loving of life. This year we welcomed **Milana Shandra Novak**, adopted daughter of **Kimberly Layne Novak** into our congregation.

Our Wider Community

Time commitments resulting from the process of searching for two key positions on our staff this year prevented me from being as active in our community as I have been in the past. I remained involved in the Mountain Area Interfaith Forum and People of Faith for Just Relationships. Last September I was among the leaders of an interfaith celebration of an International Day of Peace to commemorate the 9th anniversary of the 9/11 disaster and in February I was among the speakers at a gathering of 25 faith leaders encouraging the City Council to adopt a resolution calling for full equality of GLBT citizens in Asheville.

Our Wider Association

In February I took part in the Institute for Excellence in Ministry conducted by the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association and in March I was among seven leaders from our congregation who attended the UUA's Eighth National Conference for Large Congregations. I look forward to joining a large contingent from our congregation attending the UUA General Assembly in Charlotte, NC.

Personal

This year **Debbie** and I have seen our daughters spread across the world. Our youngest, **Meredith**, after graduating from Guilford College headed for a year of AmeriCorps and for next year has been admitted to a Fulbright program in Germany. Our middle daughter, **Erica**, left July 1 for Malawi, Africa, where she has been a Peace Corps volunteer doing health education with youth in a small village. Our eldest daughter, **Anna**, remains in Madison, Wisconsin, with our granddaughter, **Eliza**, as her husband, **Langdon**, completes a post doctoral program in chemistry. It was a pleasure for Debbie and me to visit them in May and for me to have a chance to preach at the UU congregation where they belong, First Unitarian Society of Madison, where I was a student intern eight years ago.

It still seems a bit unreal to be looking ahead to a six-month sabbatical next January through June that I am grateful to this congregation for planning. Not much is fixed in my plans, but certainly I look forward to learning connected to trips to visit our daughters in Germany and Malawi. I also plan to schedule visits to other large congregations to learn some best practices for dealing with some of the challenges we face as a congregation and doing reading, reflection and research to fill the well again for worship.

Ushers & Greeters

Joy Christi Przewor, Coordinator

This past year saw several new Members step up to handle this important aspect of stewardship in our community. We all worked well at handling a completely on-line means to tackle both schedules for ushers and greeters. Our volunteer base continues to grow through our UU101 class where volunteer opportunities are shared and new Members and Friends say "yes" to this area of involvement.

I am listing every person who has handled at least one Sunday between June 1, 2010 and this past Sunday May 15, 2011. I have chosen not to list people in alphabetical order because it's more fun finding your name in a list (well isn't it?) A BIG THANK-YOU to:

Elinor Artman, Michael & Fran Vavrek, Al & Nancy Long, Kate Hartnett & Sarah Gagliano, Carla & Bob Taylor, Gay & Gene Lambirth, Iris Williams & Charles Wussow, Sam Zurich, Cleve Mathews, Nicole Hincbaugh, Adam Griffith, Hannah Epperson, Renate Schuchardt & Russ Lee, Mary Alm, Nels Arnold, Brenda Robinson & Larry Rogers, Brittany Beckwith, Barbara Brownsmith, Dennis Campbell, Nancy Bell, George Salazaar, Ronnie Marable, Suzanne & Stephen Jones, Pat Todd, Cathy & Bill Agrella, Ken Brame & Judy Maddox, Marianne Newman, Elin Cotts, Paula Robbins, Juli & Sheldon Altschul, Ann & Jerry McLellan, Donna Robinson, Ruth Christie, Kay Nelson & Ron Anderson, Joyce Birkenholz & Trevor Wallis, Katy Brooks, Mary Campbell, Jean & Bruce Larson, John Huie & Jaan Feree, Diane Martin, Bailey Mundy, Maureen Kampen, Arthur Poultney, Linda Bair, Cynthia & Dane Barrager, Lesley King, John Bates & Mara Sprain, Ed & Vicki Jenest, Valerie & Hal Hogstrom, Vicki Careccia, Fred Miercort & Martha Kiger, Christy Gunther & Ray Strickland, Cyndi Calhoun, Lesley King, Michelle Cooke, Carol Taylor, and Jamie Perkins

If I missed someone I apologize but I believe I named everyone that provided a welcome smile and a helping hand to those who arrive each Sunday. We are still challenged for volunteers for the 9:15 services; people just love the warm and cozy blankets and comforters in the early morning hours on Sundays!

If you have any suggestions to improve our services please do not hesitate to send them to **Joy Christi Przewor**.

May this coming 2011-2012 year be full of generous volunteers who understand that welcoming is one of the critical elements of our stewardship!



Music

Lenora Thom, Director of Music

Once again, it has been my great pleasure to serve as your Music Director at UUCA. I am ending my eighth year here and looking forward to my ninth.

Our choir program continues to evolve and to contribute significantly to the life of the church. The Adult Choir has become a significant part of the congregation in recent years. And the Intergenerational Choir just gets better and better! Both groups have grown impressively this year in membership and ability. Working with all these wonderful singers continues to be a source of immense satisfaction for me. (See lists provided)

I am especially proud of the fact that we have had a choral or vocal presence at all 9:15 services this entire year! Our resident choirs, soloists, small choral groups, duets, trios, and guest artists have all enhanced our worship experience. These are very dedicated, hard-working, talented folks. I have FUN working with them, and I thank them so much for the wonderful contribution they make to the life of this church!

Some highlights include:

- Choir soloists were **Marissa Cranford, Mike Ellis, Nana Hosmer, Jesse Lee, Pamela Miller, David Robertson, Connie Schrader** and yours truly.
- Semi chorus participants included all of the above plus **Jeremy Bacon, Dennis Campbell, Judy Clouse, Beth Gage, Tom Lawton, Kimberly Mason, Jacqui Schechter, and Allen Tucker.**
- From the IG Choir, our fabulous soloists were **Bohème Desserau, Hazel Grotenhuis, Emma Himelein-Wachowiak, Kenzie Himelein-Wachowiak, Isabel Horak, Mackenzie Martin, Karen Mason, Bergen Murray, and Kelsey Sutton.**
- Instrumental contributions were from **Dennis Campbell**, recorder; **Marissa Cranford**, accompanying the IG Choir on piano; **Morgen Cobb**, percussion; **Matthew Kitson** and **Corey McDonough**, violin; **Margaret Moores**, cello; and **James Richards**, guitar
- Guest artist Freebo returned in October with his array of fabulous original material
- **Melissa Himelein** played piano duets (Debussy and Mozart) with me on several occasions
- **Laura Jump**'s award-winning hymn "New Worlds Manifest" premiered in November

- Laura's beautiful new anthem, "i thank you God" with text by e. e. cummings, will premiere in June
- **Mike Ellis** lent his extraordinary writing skills to original lyrics several times, and premiered his own "Solstice Carol" (with harmonization by Laura Jump) in December
- A special note of thanks goes to audio technicians **Bob Scuorzo** and **Wendy Motz** for their excellent and consistent work on the sound system in the sanctuary.

An "electronic advance" for the UUCA Music Program is that I now send practice materials to both choirs via email. In the past, I made numerous practice tapes and/or CDs, but now I'm able to send "note-plunking" tracks to all the singers made with my groovy digital recorder - a nice, convenient, environmentally-friendly change.

Suzanne Williams has helped me maintain our ever-growing Choir Library this past year. Her efforts have been extraordinary. Thanks so much, Suzanne!

I've enjoyed planning services with fellow staff members **Mark Ward, Sarah York, Taryn Strauss** and **Asher Zaccagnini**, and with members of the Worship Committee for several guest speakers. As always, one of my great joys is programming for the thematic content of each service. Through choir anthems, piano and organ solos, and the inclusion of guest artists, I feel the array of repertoire gets wider and wider every year! Throughout the season, I offer classical music of all periods, spirituals, gospel and folk, popular music of many eras, New Age, musical theatre, art song, and ethnic music from many cultures. I look forward to the continuing creative challenge that UUCA affords me!

Lastly, I want to thank ALL of my fellow staff members for being such great colleagues. What a pleasure it is to work with such caring, competent, wonderful persons!

2010-11

ADULT CHOIR

SOPRANOS

Marissa Cranford
Lydia Davis
Melody Goldberg
Joyce Hooley
Nana Hosmer
Laura Jump
Elizabeth Mount
Pamela Miller
Jann Nance
Connie Schrader
Julienne St. James

TENORS

Ned Cabaniss
Dennis Campbell
John Clarke
Phil Fleet
Bob Gingrich
Tim Grotenhuis
Jesse Lee
Judith Moore
Ben Orbach

ALTOS

Judy Clouse
 Sarah Davis
 Joan Fleisig
 Beth Gage
 Jan Knees
 Kimberly Mason
 Jacquelyn Schechter
 Peggy Tobin

BASSES

Jeremy Bacon
 Morgen Cobb
 Mike Ellis
 Bob Jump
 Richard Kark
 Austin Kellenberger
 Tom Lawton

2010-11

INTERGENERATIONAL CHOIR

SOPRANOS

Fiona Austin
 Sadira Austin
 Marissa Cranford
 Elin Cotts
 Bohème Dessereau
 Juliana Pett Floriani
 Hazel Grotenhuis
 Emma Himelein-Wa-
 chowiak
 Kenzie Himelein-
 Wachowiak
 Isabel Horak
 Lisa Horak
 Molly Horak
 Nana Hosmer
 Addison Martin
 MacKenzie Martin
 Ivy Mason
 Karen Mason
 Eleanor Murphy
 Athena Murray
 Bergen Murray
 Jennifer Oversmith
 Maya Oversmith
 Kelsey Sutton

ALTOS

Juliana Austin
 Donna Criswell
 Sarah Davis
 Monika Gross
 Melissa Himelein
 Lisa Holt
 Gretchen Lewis
 Kimberly Mason
 Melissa Murphy
 Judy Polinko
 Natale Polinko
 Peggy Tobin
 Marnette Yeager

TENORS

Bruce Criswell
 Tim Grotenhuis
 Mike Horak
 Michael Murray

BASSES

Morgen Cobb
 Chuck Cranford
 Vince Floriani
 Larry Holt
 Michael Lord
 Rodney Sutton
 Allen Tucker

Music Committee

Laura Jump and Michael Ellis, Co-chairs

Members: Elin Cotts, Beth Gage, Suzanne Williams, Dennis Campbell, Joan Fleisig (former Chair)

This committee provides support for Music Director **Lenora Thom** and serves as the liaison for the Adult Choir, the Intergenerational (IG) Choir, and the congregation. We are available to communicate with and support both Rev. Mark Ward and the Worship Committee when we are needed.

The music program serves the UUCA mission primarily through the choices of music repertoire selected by the Music Director to complement the sermons given by our ministerial staff through the 10-month program year. The music is intended to inspire the congregation through the excellence and spirit of the choir's performance and to enhance the search for meaning for all who listen as well as those who perform. We take the congregation's enthusiastic responses to the weekly service music as strong evidence that the music program, through Lenora's selections and her ability to teach and direct the choir, is achieving those goals. She sets a high standard for thoughtful cooperation with our worship leaders in presenting musical parallels to the subjects and themes chosen for each Sunday.

Music Committee meetings are task-oriented and often informally held online, or immediately after a rehearsal. Our purpose is to work closely with the Music Director, as well as all that touches the musical life of our church. During the summer hiatus of the Music Director, we are active in music planning for summer worship services.

Proposals:

The list below carries forward proposals which are still in the works or on our wish-list. This year found our meetings focusing on laying the groundwork for the eventual purchase of a new piano. We are happy to say that one of the results of this work will be to draw up a new policy for the use, maintenance and protection of all our instruments, now and in the future. This proposal will be put forward for approval in the coming year.

Proposals in the Works:

- to purchase a new upgraded house piano for the sanctuary.
- to compile a new musical instrument security and usage policy.
- to purchase professional choral binders for adult choir.
- to purchase 100 additional hymnals Singing the Living Tradition.
- to purchase new professional-quality percussion instruments that can be used for educational purposes with the IG choir and for accompaniment of the adult choir.
- to upgrade the sound system/recording system in the sanctuary.

- to upgrade the lighting for choir area in the sanctuary.
- to design and build a new speaker cover for the organ.

Accomplishments:

The committee agreed with Music Director, Lenora Thom, to temporarily discontinue the concert series which was a featured project for the last several years. This change freed the committee co-chairs to contribute time to supporting the annual budget drive on behalf of the music program. They were asked to create an evening of entertainment for the kick-off event. The staged event featured musical and dramatic talent not only from the choir, but from the congregation as well.

The Intergenerational (IG) Choir, with children, young families and the young-at-heart performed several times during the church program year. Lenora continues to challenge this group to attempt more complex levels of music – with great success! The Adult Choir continues to grow in musical ability, and now includes some adults from the IG Choir. Over the past year, Lenora has continued to feature a small chamber choir made up of volunteers from the adult choir to perform the Sunday anthem for the early service. Early service music is also provided by **Pamela Miller**, soprano, other soloists, duets and trios as well as Lenora on piano.

This year, for a time, the Postlude was omitted from the end of the service. It became apparent that this feature of the service was missed, and so it was reinstated. Now the congregation is invited to sit and listen or leave the sanctuary quietly during the Postlude.

We are fortunate to have the talent of **Ben Orbach**, **Melissa Himelein**, and a variety of other musicians available to provide music on those Sundays when Lenora is not playing.

We welcome suggestions and comments from the congregation, and invite others who love to sing to join this worthy and successful music program.

Congregational Care & Connections

Assistant Minister

Rev. Sarah York, Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care



My ministry at UUCA comes to a close at the end of June. This is occasion to reflect upon the last five years with gratitude for this opportunity to serve the congregation that is my own religious home. I have enjoyed building a strong pastoral care program, and take pleasure in knowing that the

Rev. Lisa Kemper will begin her ministry with excellent programs in place. I look forward to witnessing the continued growth of this ministry under her leadership.

As a part-time minister, my time averages about 13-14 hours per week. One of the greatest rewards of my job is working with great volunteers. Although I visit with individuals and families who are ill or in crisis and conduct services and memorial services at **Mark's** request, my primary role is to recruit, train, and support the volunteers who are vital to the caring ministry of the congregation...

Helping to oversee and evaluate the entire program of Pastoral Care is the Congregational Care Council, chaired this year by **Fred Miercort**. The council offers opportunity for communication and support for those who lead programs.

It is been a pleasure to work with a wonderful team of Pastoral Visitors, who are at the center of our caring ministry. We meet monthly for support and continuing education. Serving on the team this year were **Nels Arnold, Virginia Bower, Sarah Delcourt, Erna Earle, Judi Efland, Jim Fox, Bonnie Habel, Doug Hibshman, Bob MacPherson, Fred Miercort, Joy Christi Przeworski, Brenda Robinson, Ephraim Schechter, Ilona Sena, Carol Taylor, and Jo Yates**. Some of these have retired or resigned, but I am pleased that after participating in eight sessions of training this spring, seven new Pastoral Visitors will join the team.

Support Teams have provided services (transportation, visits, respite, etc.) to several Members, and new teams can be formed as needed to help more people with long term support. With many volunteers in the Caring Support Network we have been able to help people in need of food, rides, etc. Our current support groups include a Support Group for Single Moms, the Pet Loss Support Group, the Caregivers Support Group. Support groups can be formed or dissolved according to the needs of Members. Although

Gather Rings have no specific Pastoral Care function, they help build community and are part of our informal caring network.

This year we added Covenant Groups to my portfolio, and I have enjoyed offering ministerial support to leaders at their monthly sessions.

During the period covered in this report, I conducted five worship services and assisted with or conducted two memorial services. I enjoyed leading an adult class on Forrester Church's book, *Love and Death*. My continuing education included three four-day intensives at the Haden Institute, where I have enrolled in training for Spiritual Direction. I have also attended regular UU clergy meetings.

As always I have enjoyed working with Mark and the staff, as well as the wonderful volunteers who share the ministry with us.

Gather Rings

Nancy Heath, Coordinator

Mission: Gather Rings invite connections among Members, particularly those who are new to the congregation. Gather Rings do this by providing one to one contact to Members and invitations to events that encourage friendships between and among Members and Friends of our congregation.

What is a Gather Ring? The purpose of Gather Ring events is to help us get to know our UU neighbors and to build a sense of community. There are 10 Gather Rings defined by geographical area. Members of Gather Ring 7 (Far South) and Gather Ring 11 (Far West) are now honorary members of Gather Ring 1 (Downtown) since getting events organized in those areas has been difficult.

Gather Ring Leaders: **Cynthia Barrager, Cindy Berryman-Fink, Iris Williams, Christine Grant, Juli Altschul, Virginia Bower, Carla Taylor, and Nancy Heath**. The following people helped with the contacts for new Members in areas that don't have a designated leader: **Linda Best, Sunita Patterson, and Joyce Hooley-Gingrich**. Ending their long-time service as Gather Ring Leaders are: **Christine Grant, Juli Altschul, and Cynthia Barrager**.

Nancy Bragg is taking on leadership of the downtown Gather Ring, taking **Cynthia Barrager's** place. Gather Ring 10, West Asheville and Leicester, continues to have no official leader.

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Successes: Each Gather Ring has met at least once during the year and some have met several times. Gather Rings usually meet in homes. The closer-to-Asheville groups often meet on Sunday for lunch after services. Others have met for late afternoon or evening events on varying days of the week.

Goals as defined in the 2010-11 Annual Report have not been totally fulfilled. In UUCA as a whole the goal of building community has been positively enriched through the Life Long Learning program as well as the many social gathering groups (Restaurant Groups, Dinners for 8, Covenant Groups).

Goals for 2011-12: Continue working as we have while working with UUCA leadership including our new Assistant Minister to assess if and how Gather Rings can best work to meet the UUCA mission and specifically the end goals as defined by the Board of Trustees.

Pet Loss Support Group

Christy Gunther & Veronica Fisher, Co-coordinators

This ongoing group still meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30 PM in Jefferson House. It is for anyone who has either lost a pet or is anticipating the death of their companion animal. It is designed to support them through the bereavement process. A telephone and e-mail list of current members is available for newcomers, who may need additional support between meetings. They also receive handouts on ways to cope with loss, plus a resource list of hotlines, websites, and books regarding pet bereavement. Average attendance continues to be five to six participants. The flyer created by the Congregational Care Council to promote the group has been successful in drawing church Members/Friends.

Single Mom's Support Group

Sunita Patterson, Coordinator

This group, started last year by **DiAnna Ritola**, is open to anyone who is a solo parent to children at home. We meet on the second Friday of each month from 5:30 to 7:00 PM in an RE classroom. Conversation stems from whatever is on people's minds, whether it be parenting, co-parenting with an ex-partner, dating and re-partnering, and/or juggling all the responsibilities of parenting without a partner. Our goal is to support each other in our growth and challenges as parents and individuals. We do so by listening and sometimes by sharing resources or strategies. Nine women are on the e-mail list; average attendance is three or four moms.

Covenant Groups

Susanne Skok & Laura Hansen, Co-coordinators

The covenant group program celebrated five years at UUCA this year!

Covenant groups are small groups of six to ten people who make a commitment to meet at least once a month, for at least a year, for the purpose of examining spiritually relevant topics of common interest. Participants meet under a covenant, a mutually established set of guidelines all agree to at the beginning of the year. Covenant groups provide an opportunity for members and friends of the UUCA to get to know other members and friends of the church in an intimate setting, pursue spiritual growth, and provide service to the church and community. Each group has a trained facilitator, but topic leadership is typically shared among all group members. Groups meet at various times and location according to member preferences.

Facilitators met each month this year with the group

coordinator and **Sarah York**, our ministerial support team member. This year we experienced some transition in covenant group coordination as **Susanne Skok** has been preparing to move to California with her family. Her leadership will be missed. **Laura Hansen** agreed to take her place and will continue to provide covenant group coordination in the upcoming year.

Groups and group members have been active in church events throughout the year and are looking forward to continuing covenant groups through the upcoming year. Covenant groups were involved in these projects this year: thanks to the Balanced covenant group for running the recruitment table and participating in Room at the Inn; to the Having Our Say covenant group for sending cards to church members and friends experiencing illness and loss, to the Tides of Change covenant group for ushering the third Sunday of every month this year, for service to the Room at the Inn project, and volunteering at the CROP walk; to the Young Families' covenant group for initiating the battery recycling project; to the Family-Centered covenant group for coordinating the vitamins for children project. Many groups also donated gift baskets or items to the auction this year.

This year we continued to recruit new covenant group members through the bulletin board in Sandburg Hall, through UU 101 classes, and with occasional articles in the newsletter. We also added some new techniques to share members' experiences with covenant groups, such as sharing at the pulpit and doing a mid-year recruitment during coffee hour. We had eight groups this year, and are looking forward to recruiting new facilitators for the coming year. Look for an afternoon of facilitator training in August or September!

Current groups, facilitators, and meeting times:

1. Balanced Group, **T.S. Pennington & Tricia West**, first Mondays 6:30-8 PM (RE #4).
2. Couples Group, **Joy & Richard McConnell**, second Sundays, 3-5 PM (off site).
3. Family-Centered Covenant Group, **Lisa Horak**, third Sundays 6-8 PM (off site).
4. Givens Covenant Group, **Ann Bury**, second Saturdays, 3-5 PM (offsite).
5. Having Our Say, **Andy Reed**, second Wednesdays, 10:30-12 PM (JH).
6. Tides of Change (with childcare), **Laura Hansen**, second Wednesdays, 7-8:30 PM (JH).
7. Women's Group, **Mary Campbell**, first Thursdays, 2-4 PM (JH).
8. Young Families (with childcare), **Susanne Skok** and **Ben Fleming**, third Sundays, 1:30-3:30 PM (RE #4).

Lifespan Religious Education

Religious Education (RE)

Taryn Strauss, Director of Religious Education



Although we started out the year with **Jasmine Kimmel** as Coordinator of our Early Childhood program, in October we said goodbye to Jasmine who accepted a full time media specialist position with Western Carolina University. We hired **Melissa Blazen**, who had previously held the position, and was interested in taking on Spiritplay as well as the Early Childhood Program. Melissa has done stellar work this year organizing the Spiritplay baskets and program, and we're thrilled she'll be staying on next year.

We also had a staff changeover when **Mike Kimmel**, who accepted the Youth Coordinator position this summer, left in October to pursue a PhD. **Asher Zaccagnini**, previously a volunteer youth advisor, stepped up to take Mike's place, and she has done a terrific job organizing our youth and helping them realize a common vision for their program.

We continue to appreciate the work of **Susan Enwright**, RE Assistant, who provides administrative and logistical support to the RE Staff and teachers. She decorates bulletin boards, devises children's crafts, and makes sure everyone has everything they need to run this RE program.

Early Childhood Program 0-5 years

Melissa Blazen, Coordinator

The Early Childhood Coordinator is responsible for the following programs: Uni-tots (Birth through age 3), Chalice Children (Ages 3-5), Church-wide Child Care, Spirit Play (Grades K-3) and our Summer Presenter Program (grades K-5). The Early Childhood Coordinator also supports the DLRE in programmatic ways including running children's worship, helping plan and implement Special Program Sundays and meeting with the Lifespan Religious Education Committee. Thanks to the support of our entire congregation to run these programs, we are able to embody freedom, justice and love even to our youngest community members and their families.

Our Uni-tots program (Birth to age 3) was led for most of the year by the staff-team including **Pam Jaillet** and **Macon Foscue**. Macon decided last month to leave his position. We have asked **Michelle LaRoche** (one of our Church-wide childcare providers) to fill in for the remainder of the semester. The very young children who come to our community on

Sunday are extremely comfortable with our staff. They amaze the substitutes that come in now and then with how well adjusted they are to the space. Visitors often come with their small children and are naturally apprehensive about leaving their babies, but it doesn't take the parents or the babies long to feel totally comfortable with the situation. Each Sunday you will find our staff sitting on the floor, cuddling babies, reading, blowing bubbles, playing with toys, singing and having a great time.

The Chalice Children room is for children ages 3 to 5. Our amazing staff members, **Karis Roberts** and **Mandy Bean** have been guiding our sweet children all year. Together they make lesson plans using our UU Pre-K curriculum as a guide. Each week they have a lesson prepared that includes a craft and a story connected to the craft. They have a formal circle-time where they light the chalice with a chalice lighting poem, read a story and share joys and concerns. It is always amazing at how articulate and empathetic the children are with each other. We owe a special thanks to **Linda MacKay** for her guidance in ways to make our classroom accessible to all of our students!

Thank goodness for our Church-wide Childcare Program. We have had some amazing success with this program this year. The staff members of our program are well-qualified for all types of child-care situations. They substitute in the Unittots and Chalice Children rooms on Sundays and provide child-care for all church-wide events including memorial services. Our program has such dedicated staff that they wanted to have a hand in crafting policy for large events. We met together and created a policy for large events designed to create a safe and well-prepared environment for the children when there are more than ten of them. The staff also wanted to make a hand-out to give to the parents when they come to an event explaining what to expect. That hand-out was created and is available to our staff to hand-out when parents have questions. Our Church-wide Child Care staff members are **Ash Devine, Karis Roberts, Susan Enwright, Michelle LaRoche, Macon Foscue, Mandy Bean, Pam Jaillet, Anjali-Silva Natarjan, Adam Wright** and **Elizabeth Mount**.

K-1st Grade: "Spirit Play"

Melissa Blazen, Coordinator

This is the second year for our Spirit Play program and it has

come a long way. Each story is carefully chosen making sure that the spirit of love and mystery is present. The materials for each story are also carefully selected and put together by volunteer story-basket makers. This year we were blessed with many willing volunteers to take their time and materials to put together beautiful story pieces for us.

Our wonderful basket-makers included: **Anna Olsen, Nels Arnold, Christine Magnarella-Ray, Daniel Wright, Amy Moore, Tracy Smith, Pamela Tiger, Jennifer Oversmith, Anne Sarzinski, Jenna Tosi, Julie Adkins, Cynthia Barrager, Kristin Doe, Barbara Kruszewski, Andrea Owenby, and Amelie Delunay-Vandal.**

Our Spirit Play teachers for this year were: **Ruth Christie, Nancy Long, Maureen Kampen, Nels Arnold, Anna Olsen, Laura Gordon, Jean Larson, Suzanne Skok, Mame Flemming, Tom Davis, Kelly Riedesel, Ann McLellan, Addison Martin, Anne Sarzinski, Jennifer Oversmith, and Jessica Brown.** We also had fill-in help from **Barbara Kruszewski.**

The Summer Presenter Program in 2010 was another successful year thanks in no small part to our volunteers. The volunteers for our program think of something they want to share and they bring it to our children ages 6-12. Our volunteers were **Caryl Silberman, Julie and Frank Adkins, George Riedesel, Jill Huebner, Jean Larson, Sammy Fong, Molly Hitchcock, Jennifer Oversmith, Michelle Gregory, Elly Wells, Glen Locascio, Elizabeth Schell, Juliana Austin, Melissa Blazen and Geri Soloman.** Summer 2011 is shaping up to be a great time as well. The schedule will soon be posted on our website.

We also owe an acknowledgement to **Heather Blair.** We wanted to use towels instead of paper products to clean the table before and after the children eat. Heather not only washes those towels and returns them; she also makes homemade play-doh for our children in four classrooms.

4th-5th Grade: "Amazing Grace"

This marked the second year we have used one of the UUA's new Tapestry of Faith programs in our 4th-5th grade classroom. Although we started the year with a 4th-5th grade class at the 9:15 service, only one to three children attended, so we cancelled that class, which resulted in a much larger 4th-5th class at the 11:15 worship service. Our fabulous teachers were **Rodney Sutton, Lucy Sawyer, Deb Turner, and Susan Weidel.** The group considered moral and ethical questions, relating our seven principles and UU values to back to daily choices they are beginning to make as they lead their own lives.

6th-7th Grade: "Neighboring Faiths"

Drew Jones, Kay Aler-Maida, Wendy Fletcher and Kelly Harrison put together an excellent year in Neighboring Faiths. The class invited guest speakers from the local Islamic center, and they took field trips to the Jewish Temple, the

Greek Orthodox Church, a Yoga center, Biltmore Baptist Church, Mount Olive A.M.E. and more. During this class, our youth had the opportunity to explore and truly understand the theology of many other religions, and this is part of the foundational experience of our UUCA children leading up to their Coming of Age odyssey a few years later.

8th Grade: "Traditions with a Wink"

Teachers **Mike Horak, Clark Olsen, Paul Olszewski, and Ashley Smith** led this UU Identity curriculum for older kids with enthusiasm and creativity. Some of the activities I was privileged to witness were: making a UU rosary with a bead for each of the seven principles and six sources, creating their dream house of worship out of toothpicks and marshmallows, learning about the work and tragic death of James Reeb in Selma, Alabama from our own **Clark Olsen,** learning about the origins of our church building from architect **Bill Moore,** and so many other interactive activities deepening our 8th graders' connection to their faith.

9th Grade: "Coming of Age"

Coming of Age improves each year. This year, we had 8 youth who went through the program. Our fearless leaders were **David Ray, Michele Stratta, Juliana Austin, and Kristen Kershaw.** They led two weekend retreats, and spent time adapting and improving on our curriculum. Our youth spent time fundraising together for their trip to Boston, met with **Mark Ward,** solidified their knowledge of Unitarian Universalist history, and articulated their faith statement to the entire congregation. Their mentors worked with them all year long to help hone their faith statement and to share new experiences and ideas. Our fabulous mentors were **Nancy Heath, Kirstie Fischer, Michelle Goyeau, Lisa Horak, Benoit Delcourt, Chuck Cranford, Anna Olsen, and Kristen Kershaw.**

10th-12th Grade: Young Religious UUs

Asher Zaccagnini, Coordinator

This year YRUU has experienced a wonderful example of youth, parent, and volunteer involvement that has helped build a safe and supportive community for our youth to continue their spiritual growth. Three youth advisors have consistently volunteered their time this year, including **Charles Somerville, Mark Claibourne, and Sarah Hargrove.** By being present for lock-ins, driving the kids to youth conferences, and showing up on Sunday mornings for our gatherings, their mentorship and assistance to the youth and the group as a whole has not gone unnoticed.

This year YRUU has strived to achieve balance in the quality of the religious education it offers our youth. This has meant providing activities that support and encourage worship, community building, social action, learning, and leadership.

Upon every YRUU meeting, the youth have participated in a worship, where our chalice is lit and all present “check in” on what is happening in their lives, and offer a reflection for a topic given. The group also led their own worship ceremony for the larger congregation entitled “Be the Change You Wish to See in the World,” which other Members and Friends of the UUCA community found inspiring and uplifting.

Leadership has certainly not been lacking in any amount, as the group has proven this year how efficiently they can achieve their goals. A youth conference entirely run by our youth was held at UUCA this year for approximately 35 UU youth from the surrounding area. They have also shown leadership in running a special program successfully for the younger RE children making Mother’s Day crafts.

Social action has been a key component of the group this year, with a week-long trip to New Orleans, installing energy-efficient lighting for surrounding homes in the city, as well as assisting with the reconstruction of the home of a well-deserving community member. **Scott Kitson** and **Carol Rovello**, both parents of youth present on the trip, graciously offered their time to serve the New Orleans community with us as well. During and before the trip, the group was educated in issues related to race issues in America, and how a natural disaster such as Katrina could expose such issues. **Kimberly Mason**, a UUCA and RE committee member, also offered her van to the group for use on the trip. Earlier in the year the group also spent time volunteering at a local women’s shelter to assist with cleaning tasks.

Throughout this RE year, by playing, learning, sharing, and experiencing together, YRUU has succeeded in forming a tightly-bonded spiritual community, where together they can support one another’s spiritual growth, exploration, and identities. Goals set for this year were focused on providing a safe, healthy spiritual community where youth would be exposed to different cultures, religious practices, and lifestyles, and develop a sense of responsibility to our larger spiritual community. These goals were met by YRUU this year with a successful year of fun and learning, and the program will only continue to grow from here.

Library Committee

Bill Utz, Coordinator

The Library Committee will complete orders for about \$185 worth of new books this year, using all of the \$68.32 balance from a book sale several years ago with current budget funds. The library has received gifts of over 20 books accepted which would have cost \$300 if purchased new. Although some are relevant and useful but would not have “made the cut” for purchase, many were.

The Jaywill ResourceMate integrated library software system has been working reliably. Annual maintenance on the ResourceMate software went up to \$80 per year. No

supplies were purchased this year. We received a gift of circulation cards and pockets which had been discarded by another library but are quite useable for us. The total budget line for the year was \$200.

All of our card catalog records have now been entered into ResourceMate and new materials are now being added to the automated catalog as they are received. At the end of this year, with all materials accessible, we are entering circulation records in ResourceMate. If the person checking materials out is not comfortable using ResourceMate the transaction is recorded on the circulation cards that are still printed for every item to handle this procedure as well as to back up for times when the computer may be down. Information from the cards is then entered into ResourceMate by the following week.

New catalog card records are not being printed so that the card catalog is now closed. All current inventory and searching is now on ResourceMate only. File backups are made on CDs when new transactions have been entered. We will also be printing two lists per year with titles and authors which will be kept at the library desk where they may serve as an off-line catalog when no one is attending the library desk or the system is down. Next year we will explore the possibility of posting this abbreviated catalog on the UUCA Web Page.

Eunice Nichols and **Bill Utz** have been the most active members this year at the desk and processing materials.

The Ethical Eating Study Group and the Green Sanctuary project of the Campus Council have put circulating books and materials on the library display shelves for use by Members of the congregation. Some materials are on loan from Members and some were donated to the UUCA Library. **Doug Hibsham** and **Sheila Valenti** have been especially active with gift and loan items for this program. The Green sanctuary program has also had material on display and for circulation. The Committee on Ministries and the Church Governance committee have also been active this year using library materials and donating materials they have acquired. We believe we can provide more displays and management of lending borrowed materials for committees and projects of UUCA as they are requested.

The Library Committee is seeking more volunteers to serve.

RED Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- Belinda's Bouquet
- The Tenth Thing About Barney
- Four Creations to Make Man
- Pagan: Celebrating Samhain
- Follow the Drinking Gourd
- Buddhist: The Long-handled spoon
- Jewish: Ten Good Rules for Living

ORANGE Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- What if the Zebra Lost their Stripes?
- Christian: Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Buddhist: Monk and Scorpion
- Interfaith in My Neighborhood
- The Magic Seed
- My Secret Bully

YELLOW Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- My Prayer Beads
- My Many Colored Days
- Our Church Lesson
- Christian: Parable of the Mustard Seed
- Christian: Parable of the Great Pearl
- Stella Luna
- Small Fry

GREEN Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- Native American: Ghost Wings
- Introduction to World Religions
- A Carrot Seed
- Many Ways to Pray
- Islam: Introduction to Islam
- Symbols Lesson
- The Mouse at the Seashore

BLUE Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- John Murray
- Seven Blind Mice
- Jewish: Noah's Ark
- Dan and the Heifer Project

INDIGO Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- Christian: Parable of the Good Shepherd
- Jewish: Hanukkah Nights Lights
- Ruby Bridges
- Francis David
- World Religions: St. Lucia
- Stone Soup
- Christian: Parable of the Leaven

VIOLET Promise Stories K-1st & 2nd-3rd:



- Theodore Parker
- Hey Little Ant
- Old Turtle
- Christian: Parable of the Sower
- Norbert Capek Flower Communion
- The Planter of Trees

UUCA Adult RE 2010/11

Course	Instructor	Class Time	Number of Participants
Exploring Spiritual Practices	Sandra Smith (paid instructor)	Sept-Oct, Sunday afternoons	18
Parent as Resident Theologian	Melissa Himelein and Taryn Strauss, DLRE	Oct-Nov, Tuesday evenings	14
Spiritual Crafts	Gay Lambirth		0 class cancelled
Mandalas and Meditation	Martha Kiger	April, Saturday, Class Cancelled due to instructor illness	9 (class limit)
Love and Death	Rev. Sarah York	Jan-March Sunday afternoons	24
A House for Hope	Rev. Mark Ward and Frank Valenti	Feb-April Tuesday evenings	21
Principled Commitment	Sarah and Benoit Delcourt	Feb-April Sunday afternoons	16
Cakes for the Queen of Heaven	Elinor Artman	April-May Tuesday evenings	15 (class limit)
Twelve Steps to Compassionate Life	Bruce Larson, Peacemaking Study/Action team	May-June Wednesday Evenings	18

Outreach

Social Justice Council

Paula Massey, Chair

Participants: Cecil Bothwell, Grace Curry, Melissa Davis, Gay Lambirth, Nancy Nachman, Vicki Nichols, Lew Patrie, Carla Taylor, Nancy Williamson, Gene Zimbalkin

The Social Justice Council (SJC) acts as the administrative body to facilitate the work of these teams: Peace and Environmental Justice and Economic Justice/Human Rights (combined this year into one team). In turn the collective work of the Council and the teams provide many opportunities for all Members and Friends and their children to “walk the talk” of social justice activism, both within the congregation and beyond. While the teams operate in accordance with their respective goals and activities, it is the Council that conducts the general business relative to social justice including allocation of funds and review of new projects. Representatives of the teams attend the monthly SJC meetings, as well as the chairs of ongoing groups such as Share The Plate, Friday Social Justice Film, Habitat House, editor of THE FLAME, and the SJC treasurer. In addition anyone interested in the Council’s activities and proposed projects are invited to the open meetings held the third Tuesday of the month at 12:30 PM in Sandburg Hall.

The Council, like all structural units of the Church, has been involved with the implementation of the new Governance Document this year. In addition to becoming aware of the Mission and End Statements in general, we have focused on: Beyond – Ends that represent our work in the community and beyond, including social justice, growing our UU faith, living our principles, participating in the larger UU community, and living green. While this helped us in our overall work we still formulated our own objectives for the year.

1. To enhance communication regarding the collective activities and projects of the council and teams. In addition to the ongoing objective of increasing the circulation of THE FLAME so that all members and Friends have access to current news and opportunities to participate, we compiled a Social Justice Directory, thanks to the initial work of Ben Flemming and Gay Lambirth. This includes general information about the teams as well as the various projects that are undertaken throughout the year. The Directory was completed in March 2011 and is given to Members and Friends upon request electronically. It is our intent to have this published on an annual basis. In addition to continu-

ing to enhance communication overall, we are currently compiling a calendar of projects, in particular those that take place annually. We hope this will help us in our planning as well as evaluate the timing of specific projects like “Teddy Bear Sunday” that will now take place in February around Valentine’s Day rather than during the busy December holiday season.

2. To increase participation of RE families in the various activities of the Teams and SJC ongoing projects, such as Holiday Giving and Room In The Inn. While we do have regular communication and representation from the Religious Education Committee, we do make special effort to promote “children wanted” activities in the monthly and weekly e-news and of course THE FLAME. We also include a special welcome during the UU 101 classes that we are eager to have children involved in such activities that are “teachable moments”. The Council will continue to work to facilitate inter-generational involvement on social justice projects.
3. To explore the process and feasibility of implementing a congregational focus or theme for social justice initiatives. While this objective seemed feasible when we met in August, we realized that this was not the time to undertake such an ambitious task in view of the possibility of having a new Assistant Minister position that, in part, would include social justice. So rather than attempt a congregation-wide focus this year we decided to focus on our internal operational issues, such as the SJC Directory. In this transition period we did identify activities that we believe will engage the entire congregation in social justice activities, such as conducting a UU Social Justice Workshop, and have made a request for allocation of funds. And of course we look forward to working with the new Assistant Minister this upcoming year!

In addition to these objectives we did review requests for special funds and met several times with a member of our congregation who is interested in increasing the communication and collaboration with the Hispanic community. Tabling and plans for multi-cultural forum were identified as ways to assist in this effort.

A very special thank-you to all members of the SJC, the teams and project coordinators: **Vicki Nichols**, Treasurer; **Cecil Bothwell**, Editor THE FLAME; **Melissa Davis**,

Peace and Environmental Justice Team chair; **Gene Zimbalkin**, Economic Justice/Human Rights Team chair; **Gay Lambirth**, member; **Bruce Larson**, Peacemaking Potluck, **Carla Taylor/Sue Miller**, Habitat for Humanity; **Anita Fletcher**, Women At Risk; **Grace Curry**, Green Sanctuary; **Lew Patrie**, Friday Social Justice Film; **Martha Shepard**, Room In The Inn; **Nancy Williamson**, Share the Plate. And, of course, all our Members and Friends who have served on committees and participated in social justice activities this year!

Human Rights Team

Gene Zimbalkin, Co-chair

The mission of the UUCA Human Rights Team (HRT), which functions under the auspices of the church's Social Justice Council, is to provide service, witness and advocacy for civil liberties, criminal justice, human rights (including international) and economic justice issues.

This year has been busy one for the HRT as we have worked to significantly expand our membership, take on new projects, get the congregation more involved in various initiatives, as well as continue work on long-standing core missions like criminal justice, homelessness, and economic justice.

Criminal Justice Initiatives

The HRT's criminal justice initiatives include selling UUSC holiday cards each year, as well as leading the congregation in sending holiday greeting cards to North Carolina's large death row population with messages of hope and support.

The HRT founded the UUCA jail ministry, where teams of lay ministers from the congregation conduct discussions with Buncombe County Detention Center inmates around UU principles and philosophy. The team has also started a jail library program, whereby UUCA Members volunteer time and donate books to the jail library. HRT has also co-sponsored educational forums on conditions at the jail, the exercise of the right to dissent, as well as the Freedom Ball, an annual fundraiser for North Carolina Death Row Exoneree Edward Chapman.

Lastly HRT serves and shares monthly lunches at the Western Carolinians for Criminal Justice facility, in support of an alternative sentencing program for women-at-risk.

Human Rights and Economic Justice Initiatives

Homelessness

HRT's work to alleviate homelessness in Asheville and Buncombe County continued this past year with participation in Project Connect by over a dozen UUCA Mem-

bers. Project Connect is an annual event sponsored by the Asheville Buncombe Homeless Initiative and brings together the homeless with city and county assistance service providers, as well as private charities, businesses, and volunteers offering a gamut of services including access to various assistance programs, haircuts, massages, free phone calls, and many other services.

HRT continues on a quarterly basis to provide Breakfast in Pritchard Park, in partnership with Friends of North Asheville (Quakers) to 60-130 homeless members of our community. In addition to providing nourishing, often home-made breakfast offerings, the gathering builds community, trust, and support for Asheville's homeless.

A new initiative this year is UUCA's participation in a new program titled Hope to Home, which pairs teams from Asheville's faith community with a formerly homeless person recently placed in housing by Homeward Bound. In May 2011 UUCA formed its first team of 10 congregation members who will provide intentional relational support for one year to an individual or family recently placed in permanent housing.

Habitat for Humanity

The UUCA congregation partnered with 13 other inter-faith churches to help build the 2010 Interfaith House for the recipient selected by the Habitat organization, Andrea Fernandez. Through this annual economic justice project, over \$3,000 was raised for the home's construction through Share-the-Plate contributions, individual donations by UUCA Members and Friends, and through the annual Habitat luncheon. The luncheon raised over \$1,000 by inviting UUCA Members to purchase a lunch of homemade soups, salads, sandwiches and desserts prepared and served by UUCA members following a Sunday service prior to the annual meeting in June. In addition to financial support, 22 UUCA volunteers helped to build the Interfaith House, assisting with construction and finishing tasks such as framing walls, installing siding, painting and landscaping. The UUCA Habitat Coordinator also informs interested UUCA Members about the various interfaith project events and status throughout the year.

Room in the Inn

UUCA has been a long-time partner with other faith-based groups to provide continuous shelter and meals for homeless women in the Asheville area through the A-Hope non-profit organization. Since UUCA does not currently have appropriate facilities to house the participants, we partner with Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. Through this partnership, up to 12 women sleep at the Presbyterian Church and receive three meals per day for four weeks per year. UUCA volunteers make dinners and lunches for all participants, provide transportation for the women to and from the A-Hope facility, and act as overnight chaperones.

International Human Rights

This year the HRT has taken up the initiative of raising awareness of the devastation in southern Sudan caused by almost 25 years of civil war. Countless people of southern Sudan have been killed, the economic infrastructure destroyed, and tens of thousands of refugees have ended up in camps across the border from Sudan in Ethiopia and Kenya.

The HRT will conduct a lay-led service this year centered on the personal experiences of one of our community neighbors, Abraham Deng. Abraham is one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, the name ascribed to the thousands of orphans created from the killing and devastation of the civil war.

The lay-led service will bear witness to that conflict, raise and advocate for international human rights, and on a practical level support Abraham's quest to raise money to equip a rudimentary medical facility in his home village in southern Sudan.

Partnerships with the Latin Community

The goal of this newest initiative is to support members of our Latin Community by bringing about immigration reform and joining with the UUA in making immigration reform a multi year priority.

There are two ways to have a lasting impact on this issue: First is to learn about our Latin American neighbors, thus helping to dispel misconceptions about who they are, why they came to be here, and why have they taken these risks. How do we go about getting to know our neighbors?

HRT plans to create opportunities to mingle our communities, such as sharing a meal at the church, getting children of both communities to bat piñatas, providing safe jobs, and many other ways. All ideas are welcome. Another way for our congregation to support our Latin American neighbors is to learn about their struggles for basic human rights and advocate for repeal of local, state and national legislation that would diminish these rights. There are currently 14 proposed laws in the NC legislature that, like Arizona laws, will break up more families, give local police powers that many are reluctant or unprepared to use, end education for children even while we benefit from the labor of their parents, and ignore their financial contribution in taxes and their work that results in lower prices for foods.

The HRT welcomes a partnership with UUCA congregation to dispel myths about our Latin American neighbors, as well as contribute ideas and energy to ensure basic human rights are respected, and encourage full participation in what we know as the American dream by all of our Latin community members.

Tabling

Several years ago the HRT started tablings the second Sunday of every month in order to garner advocacy for our work, as well as to generate opportunities for the congrega-

tion to join us in our many service and witness projects. The tabling has provided opportunities for advocacy by soliciting signatures for letters advocating clemency for every death row inmate facing imminent execution in North Carolina, on behalf of an immigrant facing deportation and separation from her family, in opposition to extraordinary rendition flights out of North Carolina, torture and war crimes, in support of equal rights for GLBT individuals, and many other human rights issues.

The HRT is a co-sponsor of the Civil Liberties Resolution pending before the Asheville City Council and has been active in racial justice advocacy, organizing the UUCA's hosting of Building Bridges, launching the congregation's lifetime membership in the NAACP and rallying support for the NC Racial Justice Act.

Peacemaking Potluck

Bruce Larson, Coordinator

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. You are invited to gather with us.

The Potluck immediately follows the Singing Meditation that takes place every Wednesday from 5:30 to 6:30 PM in the Sanctuary; each Potluck typically has eight to twelve participants. We: gather from 6:15 to 6:30 PM, eat from 6:30 to 7:00 PM, transition from 7:00 to 7:15 PM, participate in an activity or program from 7:15 to 8:15ish, and close and tidy from 8:15ish until done. Those who wish to participate only in the activity or program are welcome to arrive at any time prior to 7:15 PM.

The Potluck is part of the Peace and Environmental Justice Team, which is part of the Social Justice Council. We began meeting in March 2007 to engage with the Unitarian Universalist Association's (2006) Congregational Study/Action Issue on "Peacemaking." On Friday, June 25, 2010, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association overwhelmingly passed the "Creating Peace" Statement of Conscience. The result of four years of discussion and dialogue, which involved hundreds of congregations and thousands of congregants, its opening words boldly declare "We believe all people share a moral responsibility to create peace."

The time between the Minneapolis GA (June 2010) and the forthcoming Charlotte GA (June 2011) was intended to be a year of action. In preparation for that year of action, and also to draw attention to the passage of the "Creating Peace" Statement of Conscience, the Potluck (with the support and guidance of **Joy Christi Przeworski**) developed and

presented (August 22, 2010) the service “Creating Peace,” during which attendees were presented with an opportunity to share their thoughts on two questions:

- What can I do to create peace? [197 responses]
- What can we do to create peace? [158 responses]

The results were compiled, organized, and distributed to a variety of individuals and groups within our congregation for their consideration and possible action. It will be interesting to learn how other congregations have acted during the year.

In addition to the “Creating Peace” service and its follow up, here are some additional activities of the Potluck during the year:

- encouraged and supported the weekly Singing Meditation—this is principally the work of **Kendall Hale** and **Jean Larson**, which stemmed from the responses gathered from the “Creating Peace” service.
- developed a list of local meditation opportunities—this is principally the work of **David Williams**.
- participated (December 8, 2010) in an activity and discussion on creating inner peace led by **Grace Curry**.
- learned (February 9, 2011) from Clare Hanrahan on Peacemaking through Social Justice Action: Individually and Collectively, who also shared information about the New South Network of War Resisters
- participated (April 13, 2011) in a workshop by **David Williams** and **Elizabeth Erb** on Joanna Macy: “work that reconnects” meets “awakening the dreamer”
- formed (April 2011) a group to discuss Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011) during May through August 2011

Our gathering schedule for the next thirteen months is:

- **2011:** June 8, July 13, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, December 14
- **2012:** January 11, February 8, March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13

It will be interesting to see what direction the study and practice of compassion takes the Peacemaking Potluck in the year to come. Please come and share the journey!

If you have questions, thoughts, or feelings about peace or peace-related matters, contact **Bruce Larson**.

Social Justice Film Committee

Lew Patrie, Coordinator

Since 2005 the Social Justice Film Committee has offered monthly films and discussion, highlighting various aspects of social justice issues for our UUCA family and the community on second Fridays.

We plan informally via email and personal contact. **Da-**

vid Williams, Jean Larson, Elizabeth Erb, Bob Scuorzo, Melissa & Mike Davis, and Kendall Hale have been very helpful in this effort along with the Social Justice Council and its teams. Often non-UUs in attendance outnumber UUCA among those attending our movie nights. Please contact me if you are interested in helping out. This past year’s program follows:

“**A Sea of Change**” (June 11) Sven’s interaction with his grandchild about the world he is leaving future generations with focus on the sea.

“**Pray the Devil Back to Hell**” (August 13) depicting determined Liberian women who brought peace through nonviolent means

“**Dirt**” (September 10) an astonishing, humorous & meaty look at the glorious, under-appreciated ground beneath our feet, while emphasizing our seventh UU principle

“**Pax Americana and the Weaponization of Space**” (October 15) about the prospects of the United States controlling Earth from space

“**Hope Rises from the Ashes of My Lai**” (November 10) Mike Boehm’s slide presentation and discussion on current peace and reconciliation projects in Vietnam.

“**No Impact Man**” (December 10) fun-filled factual family film related to our seventh principle, in which a liberal family goes organic and reduces its carbon footprint

“**Nuclear Tipping Point**” (January 14) hope for freeing the world of nuclear weapons and taking steps needed for realizing that vision.

“**Gasland**” (February 11) A new boom in natural gas drilling, includes a process called “fracking”, raising concerns about health and environmental risks.

“**What in the World Are They Spraying?**” (March 11) questions those peculiar jet trails “Chemtrails?” as to whether they convey special significance

“**Keep Nuclear Waste Out of WNC**” (April 8) meditation, music, poetry and discussion on US nuclear energy; Japan’s disaster and implications for Western North Carolina.

“**Permaculture: The Growing Edge**” (scheduled for June 10) an antidote to environmental despair, a hopeful and practical look at a path to a viable, flourishing future.

Share-the-Plate

Nancy Williamson, Coordinator

Members: Nancy Nachman, Lauri Powell, and Cathy Agrella

In its sixth year, Share the Plate continued to increase our donations with the extreme generosity from UUCA Members and Friends.

On the first Sunday of each month, all cash donations

and any designated checks are given to a non-profit organization nominated by a Member or Friend volunteering in that organization. The program continued through the summer months and was very successful. Representatives from the non-profits were available for questions/discussion after the services and to recruit volunteers.

Team members meet quarterly to review applications and select the recipients. We also supported organizations that have been longtime commitments for UUCA. Habitat for Humanity, Room at the Inn, and the Mel Hetland Scholarship are funded through STP along with the Minister's Discretionary Fund and the UUA.

From July 2010 – June 2011, Share the Plate has raised the following amounts for qualifying organizations:

2010-11		TOTAL \$
July	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$ 948.00
Aug.	WNC Alliance	795.00
Sept.	Manna Food Bank	1017.00
Oct.	UUA	1429.00
Nov.	Asheville Prison Books	837.00
Dec.	Eliada Home	1010.00
Jan.	Mel Hetland Scholarship	1074.00
Feb.	Homeward Bound	1177.00
Mar.	Habitat for Humanity	1636.12
Apr.	Canary Coalition	1118.57
May	Room at the Inn	1138.00
June	Unavailable at this time	

Continued Activities

Provision of a "Green Tip," for each Sunday's Order of Service. The tips consist of a sentence or two addressing conservation practices. Also, provided articles containing information on books and issues on environmental topics for a column, "Green Sanctuary Corner," in UUCA's monthly newsletter. **Melissa Davis** was a regular contributor to this project.

Posting of information on the Green Sanctuary bulletin board in Sandburg Hall. The information includes community or church-wide events and activities that are addressing environmental issues.

Green Sanctuary

Grace Curry, Coordinator

Our UU congregation is one of over 100 others that are participating in the Green Sanctuary Program administered by the Congregational Steward Services Office of the UUA. We received certification in 2008.

As stated in the Green Sanctuary Manual, the program's goal is to invite congregations to:

- Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues;
- Encourage personal lifestyle changes;
- Engage in community action on environmental issues;
- Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness;
- Work to heal environmental injustices.

A significant project was participation in UUA's 40/40 Challenge for Earth: an Earth Day project coordinated with the Peace and Environmental Justice Team as a part of UUCA's Earth Day service, "Home, Sweet Home: Earth Day." Over 60 congregants signed-up to participate by committing to undertake "green" actions for at least 40 days.

Membership Coordinator

Linda Kooiker, Membership Coordinator

UU 101 Team Members: Mary Campbell, Peggy Damiani, Kathy Munro, Cathy Keckeley, Larry Wheeler, Nancy Heath, Iris Williams, Charlie Wussow, Donner Lohnes, Donna Robinson, Joyce Birkenholz, Maureen Kempen, Lorie Groetzinger, Ina Alexander, Barbara Kern, Fran Vavrek, and Pete Tolleson



As Membership Coordinator I serve under **Rev. Mark Ward's** direction and in collaboration with the Welcome Table Team lead by **Jim Weekly** and the UU101 Team which I led.

This year we held three UU101 workshops spread throughout the church year.

We had two evening workshops of three evenings each, and one Saturday workshop. These re-vamped workshops included short presentations by church leaders, history of UU and UUCA given by Mark Ward, some getting to know each other activities, and a meal prepared the UU101 Team. Adding the meal gave all involved an opportunity to get to know one another and to ask questions of the various leaders. Leaders have an opportunity to meet new members in a small group. Board members were invited to join the group for dinner this spring.

As people sign up for UU101 they are sent information about the workshop and what is expected of them. Each person who wants to be a Member or Friend meets with a visiting steward who discusses their involvement and financial commitment. The membership signing ceremony is held on a Sunday. New Members and Friends are welcomed by name and Members sign the membership book at that time.

I continue to link new members and friends with the activities of their choice. Chairs of various activities appreciate new volunteers. New Members begin fitting in right away. We now have five Restaurant groups which serve to link church Members in small social groups that gather monthly for dinner and getting to know one another. Covenant groups offer current and new Members a special opportunity to explore spiritually relevant topics. Our various Adult LifeSpan Learning classes have brought many together in small groups. Other volunteer opportunities and activity groups fill a need for connections of our Members.

Networking Members with one another or a group is one of the joys of my position. Sometimes some of these connections seem to have nothing to do with UUCA, but they do bring our Members closer to each other which does build our community.

This fall and winter I made personal phone calls to everyone who had joined the church as a Member or Friend between the years of 2005-2008. There were about 150 people in those categories. I was able to talk to almost 100 people. Everyone I talked to appreciated the calls and shared with

me how they feel the church is serving their needs – or not, and how they are involved in the life of the church. I passed the results of our conversations on to Mark. These conversations reinforced the premise that those who are the most involved, receive the most in their own lives.

Welcome Table

Jim Weekly, Coordinator

Those UUCA Members who staff the Visitors Table (aka the Welcome Table) are frequently the first personal contact with visitors to the Church. These volunteers always endeavor to ensure that such contacts are welcoming, helpful, and informative. There are currently some 30 volunteer units (i.e., couples and individuals) who take turns in covering the Table at every regular church service throughout the year. They warmly greet each visitor, attempt to answer any questions, and encourage the visitor to fill out an information card, which provides the church staff with data on the background and interests of the visitor. They also assist the Church staff in distributing directories, announcements, and other materials to UUCA Members and Friends.

Staffing the Visitors Table is an important and pleasant experience, and additional volunteers are always welcome! Contact **Jim Weekly**, current coordinator of the Visitors Table.

Activities & Groups

Dinners for Eight

Ann Bury, Coordinator

The purpose of this social activity is to help people in our church get to know each other better by sharing potluck dinners for eight people in homes. This is primarily for couples, but any two people may form a "couple". Each couple hosts once and attends three other dinners. I use a formula which provides that each couple will dine with different people at each dinner from September through May. This past year, 52 people have participated, and many of those have been involved with this fun activity for a number of years. This is the tenth year that I have been managing Dinners for Eight. This year there have been 24 couples dining at six different homes in each two-month period. The schedule is sent via email at the first of September, November, February, and April; then the hostess decides on the date for her dinner after consulting with her assigned guests. The dinners can take place on any night of the week. To participate, each couple has to agree to host one dinner. We're always happy to have new people join this fun activity. It's a good way to become acquainted with people in our

church and have meaningful conversation with other UUs. Our dinners are over for this season, but it's not too early to sign up for the next round which begins in September.

Fibre Friends

Maurie McClure, Coordinator

Fibre Friends meets the first Saturday of each month to enjoy a few hours of companionship and creativity. Our main focus is planning and executing handknit projects for holiday giving and community outreach. 2010 was a very productive year for Fibre Friends! The women of Room at the Inn each received a warm handknit hat and scarf again this Christmas. We delivered two large cartons of beautiful and colorful lap robes, washcloths, shawls, wrist warmers, knitted bags and afghans to a very grateful Meals on Wheels for their Santa for Seniors gift bags. We also provided colorful hats and scarves for teens spending the holidays at the Trinity Teen Shelter. The shelter staff were thrilled to be able to have these available for the teens in time for a snow outing! We always choose bright colors and trendy yarns to appeal especially to the young people.

The members of Fibre Friends have a special camaraderie and feel joy in giving handmade gifts to those in our community who might otherwise be forgotten at the holidays. We teach and learn from each other, and share personal projects and inspiration as well. We always welcome new members of any age and skill level; and we have a supply of yarn, patterns, and needles to share.

Hiking Group

Ellen Welles, Coordinator

During the past year, the UU Hikers met the third Saturday of each month and carpoled to nearby trail locations (within about an hour's drive of the church) for a five to seven mile hike. For the group's annual service project, four members hosted the Cookie Reception after the early Christmas Eve Service: **Sue Miller, Marianne Newman, Adam Thompson** and **Ellen Welles**. Typical locations for the hikes are close to the Blue Ridge Parkway and in the Pisgah National Forest, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the North Mills River Recreation Area, Bent Creek, Montreat College, Ridge Crest Retreat Center and DuPont State Forest. Current leader and group founder, **Ellen Welles**, wishes to thank **Sue Miller** for graciously taking over the leadership position for 18 months starting in 2008, while Ellen dealt with a foot problem.

All adults are welcome to join the group. They simply show up at Jefferson House at 9 AM the third Saturday of each month. (The group is exploring the possibility of switching to the second Saturday.) For hike details, inter-

ested persons should contact **Ellen Welles**.

History: Welles and friend Gail Pitts started the hiking group in March of 1996 as the Blazers Singles Hiking Group. In 2006 Welles expanded her duties to include an addition group, the Trekkers, which met quarterly to participate in longer and slightly more strenuous hikes (six to seven miles). This group was open to all adults. When Miller took over the leadership, she combined the two groups into one, the UU Hikers, and alternated between shorter and longer hikes each month.

At the most recent UUCA Community Fair, Welles collected contact information for people interested in easier hikes, put them in touch with each other and offered to be a resource if a group were formed. As of 5/22/11, no one had volunteered to lead that group. Anyone interested in this leadership role is encouraged to contact **Ellen Welles**.

Women's Brunch Bunch

Cindy Berryman-Fink, Coordinator

We are a voluntary group of women meeting the third Saturday morning of each month in Sandburg Hall to share food and build community. The composition of the group changes with an average of 13 participating monthly. Any UUCA woman may attend. Our monthly speakers, discussion leaders and programs serve our church mission of an individual search for meaning while seeking community, freedom, justice and love. Our programs vary from speakers, discussions, and hands-on activities. In the last year programs have included:

- UUCA History – **Maureen Kampen**
- Creativity and Personal Relationships – **Victoria Easterday**
- Creative Dramatics for Mind and Body – **Morgana Morgaine & Nels Arnold**
- Spirit Play Curriculum – **Ann McLellan & Maureen Kampen**
- Holiday celebration and life blessings – **Nancy Gouin**
- Gender issues in religion and personal spirituality – **Elinor Artman**
- Animal emotions and communication – **Patricia Todd**
- Wisdom and life's lessons – **Cindy Berryman-Fink**
- New life, rebirth and resurrection – **Elinor Artman**
- Fair trade issues – **Sue Miller & Ellen McClintock**

Women rotate serving as hostesses for set-up and clean up and volunteer as speakers/discussion leaders, as well as suggesting outside speakers. The Women's Brunch Bunch builds a loving community through sharing of food, ideas and and feelings.

Men's Discussion Group

Hal Hogstrom, Coordinator

Members: Jim Duffey, John Fragale, Larry Arnold, Pete Karp, Ralph Lambert, Rick Ott, Russ Tillotsen, Wilbur Oliphant, George Oerke, Cleve Matthews (deceased)

One of the Church's missions is to seek out truth. The Men's Discussion Group has that as its objective. To this end we have monthly meetings which last between an hour and an hour and a half. Each of the meetings is focused upon a particular problem which has significant effects upon the nation and the larger community of humankind. Among the concerns which have been examined by the group are healthcare, relations with the Muslim world, the economic recession, the media, and global warming. Through these discussions our group has found a measure of success in seeking enlightenment about these and other important issues.

The average attendance of our group is six, though at times there have been as few as three and as many as eight. Death and illness, as would be expected with a group composed of retired men, have depleted us but our ranks have been replenished by new recruits. Not every attender of our discussions is a Member of the church but we have welcomed those individuals who are not, as we value the knowledge and wisdom they are generous enough to share.

The group meets the first Thursday of each month in Jefferson House. This winter we had a two-month hiatus in consequence of the weather conditions. I have been convening the group for two years. Prior to that it was led by **George Oerke**. I met with the group during his absence as convener but I don't know how long it had been in existence before he invited me to join.

Parents Night Out

Christine Magnarella Ray, Coordinator

Parents' Night Out (PNO) is a small closed group of families (UUCA Members and Friends) that have formed a cooperative childcare program. Parents enjoy six Friday "date" nights, in exchange for watching the children any two Friday nights over the course of a session.

The group is limited to 16 children and there are always at least four parents on duty on any given Parents Night Out, allowing for a 4:1 child-adult ratio. Two PNO sessions run over the course of a year: fall, September-December and spring, January-May. There is sometimes a summer option from June-August.

Each term starts and ends with a family potluck. During date nights, parent Members take turns watching children at UUCA while other parents have the opportunity to go to dinner, a movie, home to sleep, clean, or whatever else needs

doing. Children enjoy indoor and outdoor play, crafts, pizza and a movie. PNO will be taking a break for the summer of 2011 and will resume in September.

Restaurantours I

Ginny Hayes, Coordinator

Restaurantours I, founded in 2004, is flourishing. We are a group of couples and singles who meet each month in the home of a member and then go out on the town together for dinner. We have 21 members, most of whom have been with us since the group's inception. The concept is so popular at UUCA that several additional groups have been created.

Restaurantours II

Linda Kooiker, Coordinator

We are a group of 25 individuals and couples who meet monthly in the home of a member and then go out on the town for dinner together. Over the years, some folks have left the group as new people joined. Our fifth year began in February. During the last year, we enjoyed marvelous appetizers and wine in individual homes. Some of the restaurants we visited were Bonfish Grill, Nine Mile, Modesto, Chef Mo, and Olive & Twist. We joined the Restaurantour I group at a Tourist game for hot dogs and beer! We combined with other Restaurantour groups to venture to a play at SART in Mars Hill. At the end of each evening, we have contributed to the local economy, had much fun, and gotten to know each other better. The Restaurantour groups have been so successful that we now have five groups.

Restaurantours III

Cynthia Barrager, Coordinator

Restaurantours III spun off from Restaurantours II in 2009 when that group became too large. We follow the same format as RT I and II. Hosting rotates among members. We gather at the home of that month's host for appetizers before going to dinner at a restaurant chosen by our host. Meeting together for dinner once a month for a combination of good food and great conversation has enabled us to become a close-knit group of friends.

Restaurantours IV

Iris Williams, Coordinator

This group, formed in 2010 follows the same format as previous groups with the notable distinction of being a vegan group.

Restaurant Tours V

Nancy Bragg, Coordinator

This is our newest group. FMI, contact **Nancy Bragg**.

Sing-Along

Dave Bates, Coordinator

The Sing-Along group gathers around the piano in the sanctuary on the first and third Tuesday evenings of each month to share in the joy of singing. We sing a wide selection of pop songs and show tunes, with lyrics provided. Visitors and new regulars are always welcome. No musical training is necessary, not even a good singing voice. The Sing-Along has been meeting for over a dozen years, and has served as a great way for newcomers in the church to begin forging social connections. Dave Bates serves as the pianist and Christy Gunther handles the email reminders.

Strictly German

Christy Gunther and Elfi LaPlante, Co-coordinators

Elfi LaPlante recently started sharing in coordinating this group. It is a conversational group for people fluent in German to practice their speaking skills. We continue to meet for lunch at noon on the first Saturday of the month at a local restaurant.

Women's Brunch Bunch

Cindy Berryman-Fink, Coordinator

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- Gender issues in religion and personal spirituality–

Elinor Artman

- Animal emotions and communication- **Patricia Todd**
- Wisdom and life's lessons – **Cindy Berryman-Fink**
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Women Harvesting Life

Mary Metcalf, Coordinator

On the second Wednesday of the month, a small group of women meet and "visit" with each other. We each bring food and share dinner and conversation. This is a closed group so that we feel free to talk about whatever we like. As members drop out, space is available for new members. FMI, contact **Mary Metcalf**.

Notes