

# *UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN*

*2014-2015 Annual Report*

*Presented May 17, 2015*



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## **MINISTER'S REPORT**

*Submitted by Rev. Kent Matthies, Senior Minister*

This year so many excellent things happened at USG it is tough to summarize. Near the top of the list was our congregation co-ordaining Rev. Daniel Gregoire. Over 50 USG people attended the event at the Community Church of New York on November 9<sup>th</sup> - celebrating with UU's from far and wide. Making Rev. Daniel our Assistant Minister has increased our ability to minister to not only children and families, but also in worship, caring and community involvement. I am extremely grateful to have Daniel as a ministerial colleague.

What a tradition we are carrying on! For 150 years people have gathered at the Unitarian Society of Germantown based in theologies of compassion, service and empowerment. The founding of our freethinking Unitarian Church in Germantown brought blessings to generations of people. Today as Unitarian Universalists going forward I believe we are at a *kairos* moment of grand potential and important in decision-making.

The pace of changes in our world is rapid. Changes in the job market and economic disparity, environmental crisis, increased multi-tasking and stress, and less quality relationships are some of the challenges. There are also many blessings of increased global awareness, interdependency and support. The church universal needs to help people adjust to these macro-level changes as best we can. In some cases this means the church itself needs to change.

Last year we engaged change and entered a new system of Governance and Ministry. I have been honored to lead the Ministry Executive Team with Beth Lazer, Treva Burger, and Gloria Guldager. As you will see in our MET report we worked hard with many different people to make the operations of the congregation best live out the mission and the board's strategic initiatives. I am extremely grateful to Beth, Treva and Gloria for their tireless, excellent efforts! I am proud of what we have done in collaboration with so many others to make things a bit more efficient and enjoyable in getting things done for the good of the church and our world. I look forward to continuing on in progress.

Over the last year our nation has experienced incredibly difficult times with racial tension, discrimination, violence in our streets and a massive prison industrial complex. From Ferguson to Baltimore to Philadelphia we have strife, but also opportunity.

Recently Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison Reed spoke at our nearby sister UU church: Restoration and preached at USG. Mark explored the history of African American Unitarian Universalists, UU's efforts in racial justice work, and the future of a multi-cultural Unitarian Universalism.

Mark helped me to reconnect with my belief that at USG we have been working hard for decades, slowly tilting the tables towards a more radical inclusivity and dynamics of empowerment for all. At times many of us – including myself –struggle with the slow pace of welcoming a wider variety of people. However, we are growing every day in our embrace of a church where people look different from each other, talk differently, listen to different radio programs, read different books, and have different ideas.

A diverse congregation is not always as easy as a more homogeneous one. But I believe in the depths of my heart that a truly multi-cultural church can help all of us find more wholeness in our personal lives. It can also more fully empower others and us as effective agents for compassion and justice in the wider world. We are making great stride of success. As of this year with our adult members, children and youth we have over 70 people of color. This is over 18% of our church community. This level of integration in a religious community is significant because Sunday morning remains one of the most segregated times in America. The fact that we

are approaching the 20% mark of people of color is a fact that brings great pride and joy to my heart.

Another high point of the year came when we hung our “Black Lives Matter” banner on Lincoln Drive. If you haven’t seen it already, check it out! Go to our website or Facebook to see the photo of dozens of people showing support. From the time we hung the banner, people from the neighborhood have parked their cars and walked into the church to thank us and meet us. People have sent messages on Facebook saying the same. We thank them and cherish the interactions.

In order to keep meeting the spiritual needs and aspirations of a wide variety of people we need to continue developing worship, faith development and social justice ministries that matter. Let’s all keep raising our voices and opening up to new encounters.

This year we worked hard to create two unique **Worship experiences** to meet a variety of spiritual needs and wants. At 9:15 AM we had our Center Service. Because we live in a culture of stress, multi-tasking, and technological engagement; because we are enriched by UU, Quaker, Yoga and Buddhist meditation traditions; we established a service to unplug, contemplate, breathe, pay attention, connect with the inner spirit, find peace and healing. This was accomplished with meditative music, fewer spoken words and a longer silent meditation.

At 11:15 we had our Celebrate Life Service. Because life often feels painful and unfair; because it is also filled with miracles, awe-inspiring experiences, and acts of love; we have strived in this service to inspire, uplift, praise, and gather the spirit.

Thanks so much to Debbie Ward, our Worship Arts Chair and everyone who worked so hard to make this happen. We would love to know about your experiences with these services. Have you felt nurtured or connected? Have you felt encouraged, inspired or cared for? Do you have suggestions for future worship at USG?

This year we have also improved the sound system and installed a new Audio Visual system with a large screen. For various worship services, funerals and community meetings we have used the screen to project images that conjure the imagination and lift the soul. This year our USG Band the UUrban Mystics played fun and meaningful music for our worship as well. We would love to know your feedback.

The **Small Group Ministry** program provides visitors and members a direct experience with others. Through sharing our stories and exploring monthly spiritual themes we become alive and known to each other. The existence of our small groups supports personal and community growth.

**Monthly Spiritual Themes** were integrated more this year into worship, children’s spiritual development and small group ministry. Next year we are excited that under the leadership of Anne Gwynne and Mel Strieb **Social Justice** efforts will bring various program areas together within thematic focus.

Of course, caring for one another remains as one of cornerstones of our community. Thanks to Linda Bernstein, Sarah West, Rev. Daniel and all of you for all the times you have reached out to support one another.

Over the last decade in America fewer people are attending and joining religious communities. I am grateful in the depths of my heart that USG grows in strength and vitality offering all kinds of people opportunities to partner with each other and the wider world in building beloved community.

*In Faith, Kent*

## **CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

*Submitted by Gloria Guldager, Church Administrator*

It has been another busy year at USG. I can honestly say there is never a dull moment! With the growth of the homeschool program and various daytime classes and meetings, the office and building is abuzz with activity on a daily basis and we are greeted by more visitors, church leaders and volunteers than ever before. From my vantage point, there is more engagement at deeper levels by many church members and leaders. It is an exciting time to be at USG and to witness the transformation that is slowly at work.

### **I am pleased to report the following developments and select accomplishments in the office this past year.**

First order of business was to hire a new Assistant Administrator. Lida Holota, long-time member and assistant in the office, retired at the end of June 2014. It was very difficult to replace Lida, so we were pleased to be able to hire church member Carolyn Scott as our new assistant. Carolyn brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the office and definitely “hit the ground running” and hasn’t stopped since! Carolyn’s availability allowed us to create a somewhat different division of labor that has Carolyn taking the lead on all regular communications such as the weekly eCommUUnicator, Sunday Order of Service and announcements, the monthly printed CommUUnicator and now a weekly SPIRIT email (developed and created by Carolyn!) to highlight the spiritual development programs at USG. Carolyn also handles most space requests and creates the daily and weekly building schedules. We are blessed to have Carolyn working in the office and to benefit from her diversity of skill and creative sensibilities.

Second, I worked closely with Kent and the new Ministry Executive Team lay leaders, Beth Lazer and Treva Burger, to begin our work under the new governance structure. (please see the MET report below for detail of this work)

SMART goals were broadly defined for my position and my work with MET as:

1. MET operations:
  - a. help to clarify, establish and communicate a working understanding of authority and responsibility within the ongoing operations of the church
  - b. Help to guide and manage committees under MET to develop and achieve SMART goals; carry out the strategic initiatives as directed by the Board
2. Finances:
  - a. Help to guide and manage the review and improvement of financial operations.
  - b. Assist with the creation and oversight of operations budget
3. Communications:
  - a. Continue to develop and improve communications to USG community and beyond, especially using website and social media formats
4. Welcoming/Sunday Mornings:
  - a. Provide support and guidance to welcoming, worship and spiritual development teams with the goal of the most excellent Sunday morning experience possible.

In addition, much of my work involves the management of building usage and maintenance, working closely with the Buildings and Grounds Team on various building projects, repairs and

maintenance, human resources/personnel operational tasks, and general management of office operations.

### **MET Operations:**

I attend weekly MET meetings and the detail of our work is included in the MET report below. I also began attending monthly Finance Council meetings (as a staff member and MET representative) and continue to attend monthly Board meetings. These connections with top leaders in the church have helped us all to become more effective and efficient in our work. The collaboration we are able to achieve under the new governance structure has been instrumental in our ability to stay on track both financially and programmatically.

### **Finances:**

As part of my work on MET with finances and also on the Finance Council, I was asked to serve on the special Finance Sub-Task Force to develop a new Finance Council Charter and Finance Policy in line with the new governance structure. These were not easy tasks, but after several months the task force successfully completed the Charter and the Finance Policy and both have been approved by the Board.

Now that this new Charter and Policy are in place, MET and the Finance Council are reviewing and updating all financial related policies so that they align with the new governance structure.

Some of the most important financial work I have done this year is to become more familiar with our financial structure including our bank accounts, investment accounts, and the usage of our ACS Financials Accounting system. I have learned how to research and draw data out of the system that has proven useful to the Board, Finance Council, MET and other committee chairs and church leaders. The ability to create statements, research transactions, find mistakes and direct corrections to our bookkeeper have helped us to become much more educated in how the monies flow in and out of our budget.

Other important accomplishments from this year include:

1. Became the main contact/liaison with our bookkeeping company, Brennan and Associates.
2. Increased coordination and communication with B&G, MET and the Finance Council to improve day-to-day operations.
3. Completed logistics of budget creation for 2015-16 church year
4. Provided input and content for several town hall/finance meetings
5. Worked with MET and committees to do a midyear budget review to successfully keep expenses under budget to account for rental income that is slow or unlikely to meet budget expectations.
6. Worked with David Dearden and B&G on letters to neighbors requesting driveway/parking lot financial support

### **Communications:**

Communications within our church community and to the broader community is more important than ever and Carolyn and I have worked very hard to respond to these communication needs. We have received a lot of feedback this past year that publicity of our ministries and programs to the wider community is very important to our members and so we will be working with the staff, MET and other leaders to develop a plan to improve in this area. How we market rentals of our

facility is also very important and I will be working with Carolyn Cotton in addition to the groups mentioned above to improve our rental publicity.

Key accomplishments in communications this year include:

1. New SPIRIT weekly email that focuses on all of the spiritual development offerings at USG. Our goal for next year is to development a similar weekly email for our social justice programs.
2. Increased use of Facebook and Twitter. It is clear that more and more people of all ages are using social media to communicate and to find information. We are responding to this need by increasing our postings to Facebook and Twitter. Of note, one of the photos and headlines I tweeted during our MLK Day of Service warranted us some publicity via Huffington Post that day! We have also learned this increased use of social media, especially for real-time publicity, seems to be what works in getting local reporters to respond and cover our events.
3. We were thrilled to receive a Chalice Lighter's Grant from the JPD that allowed us to install a professional projector and screen in our sanctuary. The ability to bring images and video to the sanctuary has enhanced many of our worship services and special events. It has also allowed us to create better visual presentations for meetings and workshops and to provide information to the congregation on upcoming events, such as the auction. Sarah Spath and Mary Lee Keane have offered their expertise in creating some of the images that have been used and we hope to bring more people onto the A/V team.
4. Now that we have the projector and screen in the sanctuary, I was able to have the TV in the hallway moved to the dining room to make our Sunday morning announcements more visible and effective. We were also able to use the TV in this new position to enhance the festivities on the night of the service auction.
5. Some of the best publicity we have received lately has been due to the unveiling of our "Black Lives Matter" banner on the front of the building facing Lincoln Drive. With the assistance of the Ending Racism Committee and the skill of USG member and photographer Joanne Davis, we had the congregation that attended our 9:15am worship service on April 19<sup>th</sup> pose out front of the building with the banner. The picture has been used on our website, Facebook page, Twitter feed and in a new poster that was used to promote USG at Mt. Airy Day. These forms of communication and publicity have worked very well and we hope to duplicate these efforts as we move forward into the promotion of our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **Welcoming/Sunday Mornings:**

This year I have continued my work with the Welcoming Community Team in our efforts to improve the Sunday morning experience for members and visitors alike. The specific Sunday morning teams that I work with and help to coordinate efforts with include: Worship Arts, Spiritual Development, Welcome Table, Fellowship Hour hosting, Sexton support, Ushers, and the Sound and A/V team. I must give a shout out to Debbie Ward, Jess Slivak, Jenn Leiby, Alice Parker, Mike Rogers, Bob Williford, Jeff Smith, Brian O'Leary and Steve Conrad who are key leaders in these areas. It is amazing what they all do on Sunday mornings to make sure that everything runs smoothly! I must also mention Bernice Webb who worked side-by-side with Alice and Mike many Sunday mornings this year and provided so many delicious treats for us to enjoy! And of course there are many more. Look around on a Sunday morning and you will notice all of the individuals who give so much to help us live out our mission of Building Beloved Community. It is a beautiful sight to see!

With all of these good things, there are challenges as well. In general, all of the various Sunday morning teams could use more participants. We could use more individuals to staff the welcome table, host fellowship hour, teach child spiritual development, usher, provide sound and projection support, and act as ambassadors for various events and projects.

### **Future Goals**

In July, Kent and I will begin work with three new Ministry Executive Team members, Linda Bernstein, Jenn Leiby and Bill Dowdall. Our first task will be to review our accomplishments from last year and any unfinished business, but then to create new SMART goals for the coming fiscal year. I have no doubt that there will be many exciting initiatives to work on and there is much work to do in many areas of church life. A few that stand out at this moment include:

1. Work with MET and Carolyn Cotton on finding ways to increase rentals.
2. Work with MET to develop a new Communications Team. Explore ways to increase visibility. Internal building signage and outdoor signage, possibly to include driveway signage, along railroad track signage, and more front signs and banners.
3. Work with Welcoming Community and Stewardship teams to develop a process to check in with members on an annual basis on how they are connecting at USG, what activities or programs they currently participate in, what programs and activities they would like to do, and ways to be of service to USG and the broader community.

In regards to Professional Development, I am thrilled to be attending General Assembly (GA) once again at the end of June. And for the second year I will have the opportunity to go one day earlier for Professional Days and engage in additional training and networking specifically designed for Administrators. The Professional Days are organized by the AUUA (Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators) of which I am a member. I am also a member of the UUAMP (UU Association of Membership Professionals). Both of these professional organizations give me support and access to best practices in all areas related to Church Administration and Membership.

### **ASSISTANT MINISTER**

*Submitted by Rev. Daniel Gregoire, Assistant Minister*

Overall 2014-15 has been a good year for USG in the program area of Spiritual Development. There has been many accomplishments under my leadership as Assistant Minister. 2014-15 can be characterized as a year of understanding our capacity for growth and outreach in Spiritual Development. It has also been a year of notable “firsts” for this program area. Spiritual Development pertains to the work with children, youth and adults, although I work actively with all aspects of church life, especially Pastoral Care (Caring) and Worship Arts.

In terms of accomplishments, I am most proud of the development of our Adult Spiritual Development (ASD) offerings. Our focus here has been on broadening and deepening the range of practices at USG. I have the pleasure of working with an amazing chair Gerry Whelan and a dedicated committee. And, we see progress in the Sunday Mindfulness practice, which now takes place every Sunday between services, and has a core group of 7 participants and is growing. We did not have a regular practice of mindfulness, as a practice here, and past efforts to getting a regular program going had not been successful. The ASD has streamlined its processes so that congregants know how to launch new programs and receive the support of the committee and the



congregation. We have had very successful ASD registration fairs, and the Winter/Spring ASD semester, has seen one of the highest registration rates in recent memory of 160 participants in classes (90 people in total, or a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of USG's membership). Overall, the congregation is excited about ASD offerings and so is the community in Northwest Philadelphia.

This church year I have proposed a UU Academy called Harper Academy. It is named after a 19<sup>th</sup> century African American Unitarian abolitionist and education advocate Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. This is a two to three year course of study based on existing UUA curricula. And, it is being offered in response to many in the congregation who are thirsting to engage in learning more about UU history and identity, beyond our very good UU 101 program. Kent and I will lead many of the classes along with trained lay leaders. It is expected to launch in the fall 2015.

I have been working to foster affinity groups based on the UU Six Sources of Inspiration. Currently we have a Humanist group headed by Paul Teti. One of the most exciting ASD offerings has been the Haiti service and learning trip that began with a 5 week class that I taught, on the history and culture of Haiti. The class culminated in a week long service and learning trip to the remote farming communities of Haitian central highlands with the UU College of Social Justice.

Under my leadership through ASD, we expanded our outreach to the local Haitian community by hosting a Haitian Cultural Exchange in partnership with the Haitian Professionals of Philadelphia. This event brought 5 community groups to USG supporting the Haitian community in Philadelphia and in Haiti. These groups included Penn Medicine, the author and celebrity chef Nadege Fleurimond, and Community Engagement Network based in Washington DC among others. We had 50 participants.

In the Child Spiritual Development (CSD) side we have seen what a true sense of the full range of possibilities is in this program area. My work with the amazingly talented Jess Slivak and the committee has led to building our capacity for growth. In April we engaged in our first CSD Open House, and organized 6 of our 7 CSD programs to have representation at the event designed to showcase the programs offered in CSD both to the church community and the neighborhood. The outreach did not result in the kind of community engagement we were hoping for, based on long attendance, but it showed how we might do a similar event in the future, perhaps at the start of the church year. Under my leadership CSD has offered a Family Fun event every month, our last event the Spring Bonfire brought in 50 people including a number of people from the neighborhood, who saw flyers and came in. In our CSD Sunday School we have 81 registered with an average Sunday attendance of 60 people. We have seen that we can offer a great learning and spiritual development program for children, that engages them on Sundays and with Family Fun events and events in the community. The YRUU has focused on Social Justice, with one Sunday a month focused on a project of group interest. This year they participated in the Philadelphia AIDS Walk and represented us at the UU UNO Spring Seminar in New York City. We have expanded our presence on Facebook where we have an active group page dedicated to CSD parents, and over half our parents (27) are members on Facebook. We have even developed new traditions this year in CSD such as Blessing of the Backs when the children return to school and a Sunday School beach day in the USG Grove planned for August.

In April CSD conducted a feedback survey. The CSD Committee will use the findings of the survey to explore ways to strengthen our already strong Sunday School curriculum and look at adding exposure to religious traditions in the classes. Our current Sunday School curriculum is based on the USG Spiritual Theme of the month and the Small Group Ministry model. And, while the current set-up means that parents and children are covering the same topics in Small Group Ministry as in the Sunday School, parents might have different expectations in this regard.

In order to better ascertain their needs we might consider focus groups and listening circles with parents to get a better understanding of what they mean by more religion in the program. Structure in the classes and programming seems to be of value for parents. We will examine the current structure of our program to see if it is the best fit for our families. We will look at strengthening our new Behavior Covenant and equipping the volunteer teachers with more tools for classroom management. We should look at ways of giving the children more practice in Social Justice, this might mean trips into the community on Sundays or at other times, or looking at more hands-on projects for the children to do at church. We should consider adding more music to the Sunday School program. The results suggest that we should reconsider our Family Fun model, once monthly programming might not meet the needs of our families. We should look at ways of strengthening friendships among the CSD students. The CSD committee should work with other stakeholders in the congregation to explore how we can expand our outreach into the community and increase our capacity of welcome.

I organized with an amazing team of lay leaders the Annual Passover Community Seder in April. We returned to the annual Mt. Airy Day fair in May, after a long hiatus under my leadership. There we interacted with the community, promoting our programs with brochures, large signs, postcards, candy and direct conversations with the attendees.

In my role as Assistant Minister I have been an active participant in many other areas of church life including the board, where I am assisting the sub-committee exploring a new Covenant on Right Relations. I have worked with the Welcoming Community to ensure that Spiritual Development is seen as an active part of the welcoming process and new member sign-up. I'm involved in the Annual All Church Retreat and Men's Retreat planning and I work with the Program and Events Council to support other church-wide events. I do pastoral visits with many members of the congregation, my hospital visits to Sally Strebig and Gary Bromberg and their families were profound moments of ministry for me. My other visits with USG members in the community are among the most meaningful parts of my job. I have expanded my role in the worship services by preaching more regularly and by working with Kent to do rites of passage for USG members, such as Child Dedications and Memorial Services. I am pleased to have brought the Universal African Dance Troupe and Ensemble to our Kwanzaa service this church year, replacing Queen Nur. I have represented the congregation in my volunteer/outreach work at the William Way Center, the Morris Arboretum, and the Maxwell Mansion where my ministerial role and my volunteer role often go hand in hand. This includes simple things like putting up flyers in the neighborhood and telling the people that I meet about USG.

I work very hard to support the mission and vision of USG and I am glad to be supported in this work by Kent, Gloria, Carolyn and other staff, my committee chairs and the members of adult and child Spiritual Development committees. I am grateful for their involvement, and the many, many other volunteers, the subcommittees of ASD and CSD, the Youth Advisers and office helpers. This year's accomplishments are our accomplishments. Through grace and Spirit I look forward to many more accomplishments and fulfilling our potential in the months and years ahead.

*In faith, Daniel*

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

*Submitted by Mark Daugherty, Music Director*

This year my responsibilities as Music Director continued as expanded last year to coordinate and provide music for an additional worship service – the 9:15. The additional services has run from September through the second Sunday in May. It has been the intent of our worship team to present two different services: the so-called “Center” service at 9:15, and the “Celebrate” service at 11:15. I have attempted to establish a tone and “vibe” for the earlier service that is more contemplative in character, more meditative if you will. It has also been my intent to feature different styles of music from what we normally have at the 11:15 service. To that end, I have worked with several in-house instrumentalists, among them Kris Alutius (trumpet), Deanna Kemler (flute), Tara Duey (piano), and Ben Smith (piano). We have also had the opportunity to hear violin and guitar played by friends of USG. I have occasionally had a vocalist provide special music. Our band, the UUrban Mystics, has typically covered one Sunday a month, although this year they have played at more 11:15 services.

At the later 11:15 service, the choir presents high quality choral music of considerable breadth and diversity. The choir also presented three musical services: in December we performed Vivaldi’s much-admired “Gloria” with a small instrumental ensemble; in March we presented Gwyneth Walker’s powerful “I’ve Known Rivers” with dramatic readings by Robert Anu; and in May we offered Ariel Ramirez’s tuneful “Misa Criolla. In each musical service I attempted to appeal to a specific musical constituency within the USG community. But the music, I hope, was not inaccessible to most people and offered something meaningful to the average USG listener (assuming there is such a thing).

We continue to have several professional soloists: Emily Joy Goldberg (soprano), Beverly Gross Spencer (alto), Robert Hefele (tenor), and Thomas Schoonmaker (baritone). It is a pleasure to work with them as well as with the choir. I am always impressed with their loyalty and dedication to providing quality music to enhance our worship services. Taking our good news out on the road, in January the USG choir combined with my synagogue choir to present an interfaith musical celebration in honor of my thirty years of service as Musical Director at Old York Road Temple Beth Am. It was a well-received musical event – so much so that we want to make it a yearly event.

Last summer I went to Providence to attend General Assembly and once again I found it to be an inspiring event filled with passionate worship and opportunities for learning. I also went to San Diego to attend the UU Musician’s Network annual conference, an experience I did not want to miss after attending this event the two previous summers in Tulsa and Dallas. Once again it was marvelous. The music-making was phenomenal, consistently on a high level. And of course it was great to meet with my colleagues from all over the USA (and Canada) to exchange ideas and learn from each other. I came back with several new selections for the choir and they have thoroughly enjoyed learning this new music. The congregation has also been the beneficiary of this wonderful denominational resource. It has also been an invaluable resource in developing the 9:15 service.

I still use the organ to enhance our worship when it seems most appropriate. The instrument has not yet been repaired and brought back to tip-top shape, but it works well for some hymnody and some repertoire. But most of the time I am at the piano for services. Since this is the case, we may want to consider upgrading the instrument in the sanctuary. While it is acceptable, it is certainly not wonderful. However, with the climate control issues that we routinely face in the sanctuary, perhaps it is better left the way it is. Additionally, we have an additional upright piano in the sanctuary, a piano in the committee room and the old grand in the assembly room (which I

still think should be replaced). This year I also had the chance to use the electronic keyboard that Shannon and Dennis Strain donated for use in the sanctuary. I used it as an electronic harpsichord for the Vivaldi service.

I continue to serve on two committees as a part of my employment at USG: the Worship Arts Committee as well as the Music Ministry Committee. About my work on the two committees I can only repeat what I wrote last year: “It has been enjoyable to get to know the different folks who serve on these committees and to work with them to enhance our Sunday morning worship.” I think we’re succeeding: I know when I look out at the congregation on a typical Sunday morning; I am pleased and delighted to see such a lively mixture of people who have come to worship together at our wonderful USG.

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

*Submitted by Dennis Strain, President*

◆ **Members** - Dennis Strain (President), Marina Patrice Nolan (Vice President), Bob Williford (Secretary); Craig Miller, Ann Schoonmaker, Judy Rodes, Linda O’Gwynn, Linda Brunn, Scott Wolkenberg

◆ **Mission** - The Board of Trustees is charged with the temporal affairs and property of the Society. (bylaws, 1978).

### Strategic Initiatives

The Board of Trustees began the year adopting Strategic Initiatives to guide the Ministry Executive Team and to focus the efforts of the congregation for the coming years. Drawing on the USG Mission Statement and the Covenant of Membership, the Board has adopted the following initiatives:

1. *Member Engagement*

Breathe the spirit of life into the membership covenant so that its five tenets are known, meaningful, and engaging and the covenant animates our congregational life.

2. *Spiritual Development & Growth*

Offer a variety of lifespan spiritual development opportunities that assist participants in discovering, articulating, and sharing their values, beliefs, and faith so that we may grow and develop as individuals and as a community.

3. *Outreach*

View our community as expansive, creating opportunities to connect, witness, and serve beyond our congregation, taking our seven principles out into the physical and virtual world beyond our walls.

### Expansion of Nominating Committee

In response to comments at the May Annual Meeting, the Board amended its proposed amendment to the Bylaws to expand the Nominating Committee to six members, each serving a three year term, with the terms staggered so that two persons rotate off each year. The congregation approved the amendment at the September Annual Meeting.

### 2015-16 Budget

In October, the Board set the following parameters for next year's budget:

- Board agrees that we are committed to fair compensation;
- Board agrees that we should pay UUA and JPD dues;
- Board agrees that we should not pursue a paid intern but instead pursue a student minister with grant support;
- Board endorses vigorous pursuit of increasing income in order to reduce the deficit. Aggressive reduction of expenses has been pursued in previous and current budget years, and the Board agrees that to significantly impact the deficit income increases are needed.
- In January, the Board directed that the budget deficit be reduced by 10% a year for the next three years. In April, the Board approved a budget that (1) provides fair compensation, (2) pays UUA and JPD dues, (3) does not fund an intern minister, (4) increases income by \$24,000, and (5) decreases the deficit by \$18,000 or 37.5%.

### Approval of Minister's Contract

The Board approved an updated version of the 2002 contract. The principal change was adding flexibility to the minister's use of sabbatical leave. The contract was signed in December.

### Reverend Daniel Gregoire's Ordination

The Board approved the co-sponsoring of Reverend Daniel Gregoire's ordination, as did the congregation in a unanimous vote. The Board also approved Reverend Daniel assuming the position of assistant minister.

### Recognition of Edna Jones Bequest

The Board passed a resolution requesting the Ministry Executive Team to develop a plan for recognizing the large (\$296,000) bequest from Edna Jones. The Ministry Executive Team appointed a task force that recommended (1) the Assembly Room be renamed "The Edna Jones Assembly Room," (2) that a plaque be made commemorating Edna's many contributions, and (3) that a recognition ceremony take place in the spring. In December, the Board approved these recommendations.

### Congregational Meetings

In response to concerns raised at the September Annual Meeting, the Board conducted a Focus on Finance Meeting in November. Issues concerning finances, membership growth and governance were discussed at a Town Hall Meeting in February. A meeting on the proposed budget was held in March.

## Finance Policies

The Board approved a number of policies developed by the Governance and Ministry Task Force. These included a new charter for the Finance Council and a new Finance Policy, designating the responsibilities of the Council and the Ministry Executive Team.

## Task Force on Right Relations

The Board appointed a task force to develop a Covenant of Right Relations. The task force is engaged in a process that will include input from the congregation, with the goal of developing a congregational covenant by the end of the year.

## **GOVERNANCE & MINISTRY TASK FORCE**

*Submitted by Andrea Parry, Chair*

### **◆ Members**

2015-4-2015; Linda Brunn, Treva Burger, Beth Lazer, Kent Matthies, Scott Murray, Marina Patrice Nolan, Andrea Parry (chair), Dennis Strain.

2015:2016: Not fully determined. Linda Brunn, Treva Burger, Kent Matthies and Andrea Parry will continue to serve.

### **◆ Mission of Committee**

The Governance & Ministry Task Force (GTF) was created by the 2013-2014 Board to assess whether changes to USG's governance structure might help USG better live out its mission, and if so to recommend those changes. In April 2014, the Board approved a motion to delegate to the Minister, supported by a team of staff and lay leaders, the authority to manage the regular operations of the church, in accordance with the high-level guidance and strategic direction provided by the Board; pursuant to policies adopted by the Board; and in consultation and collaboration with the Board and others performing the function of governing the church. The Board asked the GTF to continue in church year 2014-2015 to provide support in implementing the revised governance structure, which went into effect on July 1, 2014.

### **◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Please see below.

### **◆ Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

The GTF has done the following this year, in accordance with the objectives developed in consultation with the Board:

- Provided forum for discussion of various Board issues and MET issues, including significant issues facing the congregation, and provided guidance in accordance with the current governance structure
- Facilitated and monitored collaboration between Governance (the Board) and Ministry (the MET and other church leaders and volunteers)
- Developed, monitored and refined allocations of responsibility between Governance and Ministry on an ongoing basis, based on feedback and working experience, for Board review
- Developed procedure for selection of new lay MET members for Board review

- Prepared an “organizational chart” that lays out who is responsible for what, so there are clear pathways for decisions
- Developed a guide to assist in determining whether the Board or the Ministry function should have ultimate decision of complex issues.
- Developed definitions of “policy” and “procedure” for Board review, in order to ensure a unified approach to policy creation and to assist the Board in keeping to its role of high-level strategic thinking and avoiding micro-management of operations
- Proposed policy “buckets,” or categories in which policies are needed, to support the Board in its role of policy development
- Developed a proposed new Finance Policy for Board review, which adopted features from existing policies and added others in order to create a framework for the formation of more detailed finance procedures
- Working on development of other policies for Board review
- Continue to refine governance processes and interactions
- Prepared communications to the congregation, including participation in preparation for multiple congregational meetings
- Assisting Board in its oversight responsibilities by obtaining feedback on actual experience with the revised governance structure

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Not yet determined.

**MINISTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM (MET)**

*Submitted by Treva Burger, MET Representative*

The Ministry Executive Team (MET) manages the day-to-day operations of USG including spiritual and life-long learning programs and events, social justice activities, membership, caring, property, and finances. MET works within policies set by the Board. MET encourages the use of the Board’s Strategic Initiatives and the Congregational Mission Statement, Core Values and Intentions when the councils and committees are setting their goals, to ensure that Board, council and committee priorities and goals are synchronous.

The MET is headed by the Senior Minister; members are the Church Administrator, and two to three lay leaders.

MET has the responsibility to

- 1) assign resources (people and money) based on the Board’s strategic initiatives and priorities,
- 2) assign and clarify tasks of USG councils and committees, and
- 3) collaborate with committees and councils to evaluate their achievements in accordance with their goals.

Since July of 2014 when the new governance structure was put in place, the MET members have been staff: Rev. Kent Matthies and Church Administrator Gloria Guldager, and lay leaders: Treva Burger and Beth Lazer.

## **MET SMART goals, 11/19/14**

Implement the ministry organization within the new governance structure during the 2014-15 church year:

- Create clear lines of responsibility and authority in the new model through ongoing work with committees and groups. Fine tune organization and procedures as needed to ensure new system functions optimally.
- Communicate the new governance structure across all levels of leadership, with various committees and groups, and the congregation at large so the changes are transparent, easily understood, and supported utilizing email, e-news and order of service articles, the website and face-to face meetings throughout the year. Address all feedback promptly.
- Ensure that all teams (councils and committees) know the Board's strategic initiatives and use them in setting their SMART goals by January 2015. Review each committee's SMART goals when they are set and bi-annually (mid-year and end of year) to help ensure the group is successful in meeting their goals.

Facilitate a focus on the Board's Strategic Initiatives throughout the 2014-15 church year:

Establish a healthy, functional Communications Team to develop a plan to communicate, support, and promote the new governance structure and the Board's Strategic Initiatives (team in place by February 15; plan created by April 30.)

Build a sustained collaboration among committees to ensure Membership Covenant is known and enthusiastically embraced and there are established pathways for members to engage. Work with Programs and Events Council to improve member retention rates, thereby increasing membership numbers and re-activate the Social Action Task Force to increase accessible Social Action opportunities during this church year.

Craft a budget which balances compliance with the budget guidelines established by the Board and the Board's Strategic Initiatives using an open and participative budget process with the entire congregation. Begin the budget process in January; enable input from all committees and teams; utilize the Finance Council; communicate frequently with the Board. Submit preliminary budget to Board in March and final budget to Board in April. Publish the final budget on the website within 2 weeks of its approval; notify all committees and teams of their individual budgets by year end.

Ensure that members are offered Sunday morning experiences which engage them in rich spiritual encounters and offer opportunities for service and fellowship. Sunday attendance will increase as a measure of the success of the worship services.

Maintain our spiritual health by caring for ourselves and each other through communications, support, enriching experiences, and laughter.

## **Evaluating the first year of the Ministry Executive Team**

We spent the majority of our time this year implementing and communicating the new governance structure and working on financial issues.

Implement the ministry organization within the new governance structure:



- Assigned management responsibilities and described reporting structure for program and operational councils and committees;
- Met regularly with councils and committees to ensure understanding of new structure;
- Facilitated SMART goal setting with councils and committees;
- Held two congregational meetings to explain the new governance structure to congregants
- Created documents to help members understand the new governance structure;
- Communicated to members via weekly emails and website;
- Met monthly with the Governance Task Force to fine tune various Board and MET new governance structure.

### **Focus on Financial Issues**

- Facilitated the pay off of the loans for the Sullivan Chapel renovations;
- Worked with Buildings and Grounds to create a Board approved policy on the use of the Edna Jones Maintenance Reserve Fund
- Worked with the Governance Task Force and the Finance Council to develop a new Finance Council Charter;
- Facilitated and participated in congregational meetings to increase the clarity and reporting on financial issues;
- Monitored the current operational budget to ensure revenues will cover expenses without increasing operating deficit;
- Created and implemented a process to involve councils and committee chairs in the drafting of next year's budget;
- Prepared a 2015-16 Operating Budget and presented it to the congregation for feedback before Board approval. Integrated feedback and presented adjusted budget to Board, which they approved on April 28, 2015. The approved budget reduces the deficit by over \$18,000 or 37% over the previous year's budget.

### **Focus on Board Strategic Initiatives**

- SMART goals: Met with program and operations committees to describe concept of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely) goals. Assisted as needed to ensure councils and committees created goals.
- Communications: Created a website survey as the start of a plan to improve communications. Requested increased funds for 15-16 to help develop a marketing & publicity plan for USG to improve visibility and income potential;
- Membership: Worked with the Welcoming Team to restructure membership related activities for 2015-16. Developed plan for focus on meaning, value and growth of membership in 2015-16
- Membership Covenant: Through letters and Stewardship meetings highlighted details of the ways which Membership Covenant is "being lived out" with all members, councils and committees to ensure.
- Program Teams: Worked with program teams, especially Transformation, Ending Racism, Social Justice, and Adult Spiritual Development to ensure strong leadership and efforts to increase member diversity and involvement;
- Worship: Continued focus on improving quality of both services and improve attendance.

## **Other Items**

- Encouraged the Board to develop and pass a Covenant of Right Relations for the congregation;
- Worked with the Transformation Team to prioritize their work of helping the congregation transform into an intentionally anti-racist, multi-cultural congregation;
- Recruited Anne Gwynn and Mel Strieb as new Social Justice coordinators;
- Recruited a team to plan a recognition of Edna Jones' generous bequest to USG;
- Developed orientation for new MET members before they begin their terms July 1.
- 

## **Goals for next year**

### **Communications**

Next year we will explore and implement ways to better maximize communications effectiveness to the wider Philadelphia region. We will look for marketing experts for guidance in best practices used other congregations and similar organizations. Website, video, sophisticated email, social media, signs on our property are all possible tools.

We will continue to increase effectiveness and synergy around programatic usage of themes between worship arts, children's spiritual development, small group ministry and social justice.

### **Continual Improvement of MET**

MET is losing the two lay members who served this year, Beth Lazer and Treva Burger and gaining three new ones, Linda Bernstein, Bill Dowdall and Jenn Leiby. The goals will need to be revisited and reshaped based on the last year and the skills of the new team. That said, this year's MET feels that with all the time spent this year on the governance change and finances, next year should be focused on programs.

## **FINANCE COUNCIL REPORT**

*Submitted by Michael Campbell, Chair*

◆ **Members** - Michael Campbell (chair and CIF Treasurer), Dennis Strain (Board Liason), Helena Tucker (Treasurer), Gloria Guldager (MET Representative), Beth Lazer (MET Representative), Carolyn Cotton (Rental Coordinator), Scott Murray (B&G Representative), Al Martin

◆ **Mission** - Provide advice and support to the Board and Ministry Executive Team (MET) on financial matters, and serve as a monitor and resource on financial matters.

### ◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

One of our primary goals for the current fiscal year has been to improve the transparency and accountability of USG's financial status, decisions, and results so the congregation has a greater understanding of our financial picture.

### ◆ **Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

This has been a year of transition. The Chair of the finance council passed from Charles Gabriel to Michael Campbell, and the Church adopted a new governance structure. In conjunction with

the new structure, the Finance Council participated on the development and review of new governing documents, the Finance Council Charter, outlining the overall duties of the Council, and the Finance Policy, detailing the responsibilities and procedures for all significant financial aspects of the church. In addition, a revisions of other financial policy documents are underway.

In furtherance of the goal to enhance openness and transparency, the Council participates in two open church meetings with a significant focus on finances. The meetings generated some lively discussion but proved an excellent opportunity to further a general understanding of our financial picture and how we got there. In addition, the FY16 draft budget was presented at an open meeting to provide an opportunity for congregational input.

The Edna Jones Maintenance Reserve Fund was established at the direction of the Board to provide funds for ongoing and urgent maintenance needs of our facilities. This Fund became the newest component of the Consolidated Investment Fund.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Continue and complete revisions and updates to finance-related policies and procedures.

Work with the Church Administrator and MET to help ensure that our bookkeeping functions provide clarity, timeliness, and accuracy in recording the Church's financial transactions. This includes establishing clear procedures and timelines for correcting errors and anomalies so our fiscal year close can be completed in a timely fashion.

**PROGRAMS & EVENTS COUNCIL (PEC) formerly Ministries & Programs Council (MPC)**

*Submitted by Delores Hill, Co-Chair*

◆ **Members**

Treva Burger (MET), Delores Hill (Co-chair), Eli Searce (Transformation Team), Kin Sims (Social Justice), Jessica Slivak (CSD), Susan Smith (Co-chair)

◆ **Mission**

Because of the change in governance structure, the role and responsibilities of this council changed significantly over the past year. The mission will be determined after the Ministry Executive Team (MET) completes a review of how PEC will function under the new governance structure.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

- Develop and implement an evaluation process by Fall 2014 to assess current and proposed programs and activities, as well as determine whether new ones should receive church sponsorship.
- Develop a questionnaire by Fall 2014 to be used to determine if proposed programs and events are consistent with the church mission and goals and that resources are available to support these activities.
- Per MET request, recruit individuals to serve as leaders for selected church events and programs during the year.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year**

- Developed and implemented an evaluation process to assess current and proposed programs and activities.
- Developed a questionnaire used to determine if proposed programs and events are consistent with the church mission and goals and that resources are available to support these activities.
- Hosted a reception of church members to begin brainstorming for the 150th Anniversary Celebration.
- Visited sites to help determine the best possible venue for the June All-church Retreat.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

- To be determined after MET review.

**MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE (MPIC)**

*Submitted by Carolyn Cotton, Chair*

◆ **Members**

Carolyn Cotton (chair), Mark Bernstein, Bill Blasdel, Charles Gabriel, Scott Murray, John Pron, Howard Silver, Gloria Guldager Smith

◆ **Mission of Committee**

The implementation of the Master Plan approved by the congregation in 2009.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Smart goals were not created.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

The majority of the improvements outlined in Phase One of the master plan have been completed prior to July 2014. This last year audio/ visual improvements in the sanctuary were installed including a drop down screen. These improvements enhance the Sunday worship services and are available for use by other groups and rentals.

The committee looks forward to working on the last part of Phase One which is the installation of an elevator.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

The committee has not had the opportunity to create smart goals.

## **ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Submitted by Gerry Whelan, Chair*

### **◆ Members**

Gerry Whelan – Chair, Daniel Gregoire - Ministerial Staff, Maggie Beaumont, Jerry Lindauer, Nancy Radcliffe, Rick Rodes, Mel Strieb, Sarah West - on leave

### **◆ Mission of Committee**

The ASD Committee of USG is committed to offering a variety of programs that deepen and broaden the range of spiritual practices in our congregation. ASD seeks to promote offerings that engage the heart and stimulate the intellect and create opportunities for USG members to share their talents and wisdom, as we strengthen the bonds of our Unitarian Universalist community.

### **◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. Establish goals for 2015-2016

### **◆ Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Both the Fall and Winter/Spring semesters were launched with ASD Fairs held between and after Sunday services and ASD tables were in place for several subsequent Sundays to encourage and facilitate registrations.

The Fall catalogue had 5 offerings, 4 of which were successfully implemented. The Fall semester had 78 registrants into all courses. The Winter/Spring catalogue had 10 offerings, 2 of which were continuances from the Fall semester and 7 were successfully implemented. There were 156 total registrations representing 107 individuals of whom 81 were USG members.

The third Annual Community Day was held and was the most successful to date other than running out of eggs at the brunch.

A weekly mindfulness meditation practice was established and has been maintained. Other significant accomplishments included streamlining the registration process and the supporting database, making ASD information more accessible on the website and creating and maintaining a highly visible bulletin board in the Dining Room.

### **◆ SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

1. By the fall of 2015, implement a comprehensive catalogue of courses exploring Universal Unitarianism based on the UU Tapestry of Faith program. In effect creating a “UU Academy” where a participant would receive a certificate after completing a one to two year course of study. The main courses to be offered will be New UU, Faith Like a River, and What Moves Us.
2. Initiate advance planning to ensure that these programs become part of a UU Academy with course offerings as described above in each semester on an ongoing basis.
3. In each calendar year offer at least one course addressing a specific issue of the life cycle, e.g., Death and Dying, Dealing with Illness and Infirmary in the Family, Downsizing, Raising Teens, and similar topics as proposed.

4. Implement a clear and simple process that will encourage USG members to submit suggestions for courses and programs and/or identify themselves or others as having specialized expertise who might serve as resources for courses or programs.
5. In response to identified needs or requests, support and promote UU-hyphenated discussion or interest groups deemed consistent with UU principles and traditions.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive system for course registration and tracking and program evaluation including assignment of committee liaisons for each course.
7. Disseminate information regarding programs and invitations to participate to the wider local community beyond USG.
8. Engage at least 30% of the USG membership in one or more ASD programs or courses each semester.

## **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Scott Murray, Chair*

### **◆ Members**

Co-chairs: Scott Murray, Bill Blasdel, Tom Schoonmaker, Howard Silver, Lynne Kalish, Andre Stormont, Carl Leiby, Carolyn Cotton, Scott Smith, Al Parker, Linda Maldonado, Kurt Ahrens, Van Cherrington

### **◆ Mission of Committee**

Operate, repair, maintain and continually improve our historic, beautiful property, working within constraints according to the following priorities:

1. Assure a Safe facility
2. Preserve & protect the property from degradation (biggest threat – water intrusion)
3. Reduce/control operating costs
4. Enhance the property for members' use, accessibility, and for rental income
5. Cosmetic improvements

And refurbish one space each year.

### **◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. Finalize policy and/or procedures for Maintenance Reserve Fund - final proposal submitted to MET for approval.
2. Stay within approved FY15 budget utilizing MRF for any extraordinary exceptional items. No MRF funds were required. We not only will stay within the approved FY15 budget, but will be well within our committed reduction from that budget.
3. Re-affirm priority statement and develop a prioritized list of projects for the fiscal year. Identify and execute projects accordingly. Projects identified, prioritized and underway.
4. Formulate, Propose and negotiate budget for FY16. Done
5. Find new co-chair person for FY16 to replace Scott by end of FY - Not Done.

#### ◆ Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year

- Completed the insurance claim for the Youth Lodge, with all expenses covered except for our insurance deductible. This allowed return of \$15,000 to the endowment.
- Completed insurance claim related to the car hitting the courtyard wall. Repairs were completed at no expense to USG.
- Significant attention and expense was required to repair multiple locations of steam damage to flooring in Daskam, Sullivan stairway, and Sullivan flooring. The steam leaks have been resolved, but this is a continuing issue to be attended.
- The heating bill for this fiscal year will finish just slightly above \$11,000. This is for a year with slightly above average heating degree days. Compared to our original estimate of \$15,000 this result is quite favorable and reflects the continued improvements in our systems.
- By year's end, we will also have replaced the central stair carpeting, and painted that space. We also hope to have repaired deteriorating columns under the sanctuary.

#### ◆ SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year

These will be prepared during our May and June meetings and be available by June 30, 2015.

### CARING SYSTEM

*Submitted by Sarah West, Co-Chair*

#### ◆ Members

Co-Chairs Sarah West and Linda Bernstein

All USG members are part of our caring system which is facilitated by Sarah West and Linda Bernstein. Sarah and Linda meet monthly with Kent and Daniel to make sure we are not missing anyone who would like outreach. With the permission of the member involved we write caring notes for the weekly announcements. When it is appropriate we offer help with meals, transportation or errands and send email to the congregation. The two co-chairs are grateful to the congregation for making our job so easy. Our appeals for assistance are answered and we are almost always able to meet the specified need. Our members make visits, send cards, email, and make calls when caring notices are sent. We are truly a caring congregation.

### CHILD SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (CSD)

*Respectfully submitted by Jessica Slivak, Chair of CSD*

This year, the former Religious Education program changed its name to Child Spiritual Development (CSD) to better reflect the cohesion between the education available to children (CSD) and adults (ASD) at USG. The 2014-2015 committee is comprised of the following members: Daniel Gregoire (Director), Jessica Slivak (Chair), Kira Baker-Doyle (Social Media Team), Cynthia Byron-Williford (YRUU Liaison), Lee Carpenter (Secretary and Lesson/Curriculum Planning), Carol Ann Davidson (Social Justice Team), Stephanie Johnson (Social Justice Team), Jenn Leiby (Lesson/Curriculum Planning), Rachael Pontillo (Family Fun Team and Social Media Team), and Jessica Stanforth (Family Fun Team). The CSD program consisted this year of a large group class for PreK to 6<sup>th</sup> grade students during the 9:15am service and smaller group, grade-level classes for PreK-K, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students

during the 11:15am service. In addition, all PreK-6<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in monthly Social Justice and Children's Chapel programs during both services. Also, the 11:15am service offered the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program for students in grades 7 and 8, as well as the Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) program for high school students. These programs were led by more than 20 committed volunteer leaders and many parent assistants who participated in our new Parent Co-op program, by which CSD fees were eliminated in lieu of active volunteerism in CSD programs.

The CSD program is currently experiencing high rates of congregational satisfaction, with 75% of respondents to a recent survey citing that they at least satisfied with CSD offerings. Small-group classroom instruction in grades PreK-6 has followed a curriculum that mirrors our Small Group Ministry monthly themes. Social Justice has continued our outreach efforts including collecting school supplies for Lingelbach and holding a winter clothing drive, as well as making birdfeeders, learning about the importance of bees, and beginning the implementation of our newly-created Behavior Covenant. Our Children's Chapel program has taught our children about spiritual practices including yoga, chanting, meditation, and hymn-singing. Our OWL instructors have recently completed a successful year of educating a large group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders about human sexuality, and our YRUU program has participated in attending multiple youth conventions while also raising funds for purchasing a television monitor that is used for their spiritual development and group cohesion. Additionally, our youngest children, ages birth to three, are well cared for by our childcare workers, who have begun using activities such as chalice-lighting and story-telling to instill UU values early on.

#### Conclusions:

Based on the findings of the survey, together the CSD Committee will explore ways strengthening our already strong Sunday School curriculum and look at adding exposure to religious traditions in the classes. Our current Sunday School curriculum is based on the USG Spiritual Theme of the month and the Small Group Ministry model. And, while the current set-up means that parents and children are covering the same topics in Small Group Ministry as in the Sunday School, parents might have different expectations in this regard. In order to better ascertain their needs we might consider focus groups and listening circles with parents to get a better understanding of what they mean by more religion in the program. Structure in the classes and programing seems to be value for parents. We will examine the current structure of our program to see if it is the best fit for our families. We will look at strengthening our new Behavior Covenant and equipping the volunteer teachers with more tools for classroom management. We should look at ways of giving the children more practice in Social Justice, this might mean trips into the community on Sundays or at other times, or looking at more hands projects for the children to do at church. We should consider adding more music to the Sunday School program. The results suggest that we should reconsider our Family Fun model, once monthly programing might not meet the needs of our families. We should look at ways of strengthen friendships among the CSD students. The CSD committee should work with other stakeholders in the congregation to explore how we can expand our outreach into the community and increase our capacity of welcome.

Our USG grounds are full with the sounds of our children on any given Sunday morning, with classes taking place in all three Sullivan classrooms, Committee Room, Daskam Room, and in the Austin Youth Lodge. Our average attendance so far this year is 58 students per Sunday, which is a slight decrease from last year's average of 63.



In addition to our Sunday offerings, the CSD Committee has undertaken the planning of an increased number of Family Fun events on Friday and Saturday evenings. These have included a Barn Dance, Pumpkin Carving, Games Night, Movie Night (during which we watched Star Wars: A New Hope), and our recent Campfire/Beltane celebration. The committee has also begun the process of improving communications using social media (like Facebook and Twitter) to promote community-building among our families, and outreach to the wider community, regarding our programs and events, as well as by providing feedback on the revamping of the USG website to improve its functionality for CSD parents.

Our committee goals for the upcoming church year include continuing the sponsoring of multiple Family Fun events, either on our own or in collaboration with other USG committees in order to involve congregants beyond those who have young children. We also plan to improve our outreach via Social Justice offerings (both in church and in the wider community), as well as by improving our social media presence. Finally, we plan to continue promoting the spiritual development of our children through varied programs that involve grade-level lessons based on our monthly themes and Children's Chapel for our elementary students, a Coming of Age/Neighboring Faiths program for middle schoolers, and a robust YRUU program for our high school-age youth.

## **EARTH HONORING TRADITIONS**

*Submitted by Dennis Strain, Chair*

### **◆ Members**

Dennis Strain (chair), Maggie Beaumont, Sarah Frazier, Donya Coldwell, Fran Gilmore, Susan Bockius

### **◆ Mission of Committee**

To develop awareness of Earth honoring traditions and to celebrate the seasonal changes during the Wheel of the Year.

### **◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Conduct celebrations for Samhain, Winter Solstice, Imbolc, Vernal Equinox, Beltaine, Midsummer, Lughnasadh, and Mabon. Increase opportunities for exploring Earth honoring traditions.

### **◆ Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Finding Our Roots was initiated as a monthly meeting to explore traditions and plan for coming celebrations. It now meets on the first Monday prior to a celebration.

### **◆ SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Conduct celebrations for Samhain, Winter Solstice, Imbolc, Vernal Equinox, Beltaine, Midsummer, Lughnasadh, and Mabon. Increase opportunities for exploring Earth honoring traditions.

## **ENDING RACISM COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Marietta Tanner, co-chair until 1/2016; Kay Weiser, co-chair until 1/2017*

### **◆ Members**

Co-Chairs: Marietta Tanner and Kay Weiser, Nancy Anderson, Carla Campbell, Barbara Dowdall, Shobhi Kanal, June Krebs, Gail Mershon, Jeanne Robinson, Marietta Tanner, Susan Zingale-Baird, Marion Watlington, Fran Emery, Kay Weiser.

### **◆ Mission of Committee**

In an effort to more fully align ourselves with the tenets of our faith (to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relationships), the Ending Racism Committee's goals are to help us become more loving and compassionate. As we build awareness that white privilege and systemic racism are prevalent in our lives and as a society, our challenge is to educate ourselves and our congregation. The Ending Racism Committee believes that we and our congregation have an obligation to understand how our lives are affected by racism and racist institutions. These corrosive effects diminish all of us.

### **◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. To address institutional racism through community outreach, sharing and viewing films,
2. supporting Coalition Against Mass Incarceration (CAMI)-PHILLY and The Center for Returning Citizens (TCRC), and collaborating with other organizations.
3. To increase our congregation's awareness of institutional racism, to work with Child Spiritual Development (CSD), to be a part of USG's 150th Anniversary, to support all USG's committees in becoming more aware of institutional racism, to spot light white privilege, and the need for change in the criminal justice system.

### **◆ Significant Accomplishments of Past Year**

1. Providing the Black Lives Matter banner.
2. Involved in supporting a Daskam Room name change.
3. Hosting a film series.
4. Being involved in USG's 150th Anniversary by interviewing members who have historic knowledge of racial justice issues at USG.
5. Supporting CAMI-PHILLY, UUPLAN (UU Pennsylvania Legislative Action Network) and TCRC, with volunteers at the Rally held last September to register voters and get returning citizens involved in the election process.
6. Writing for a UUA grant to assist TCRC with voter participation prior to and on election day.
7. Making changes in the white privilege brochure.
8. Preparing a Fall 2015 Second Teach-In
9. Writing a USG Statement of Conscience addressing the killing of young black men in
10. America and questioning the use of police force. The statement was sent to the police commissioner.
11. Working with CSD.
12. Several members attended the Joseph Priestley District's (JPD) White Allies work shop at the UU Church of the Restoration in Mt Airy.
13. Several members attended the JPD's Racial Justice Conference in Sterling, VA
14. Several members attended the Jubilee in Bethesda, MD.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

1. To address institutional racism through community outreach, supporting CAMI-PHILLY and TCRC, providing a Second Teach-In, preserving several USG members' historic knowledge of racial justice at USG, using a film series to continue a dialogue regarding racism.
2. To increase our congregation's awareness of institutional racism, to work with CSD, to support all USG's committees in becoming more aware of institutional racism, to focus on white privilege, and the need for change in the criminal justice system.

**MLK DAY OF SERVICE**

*Submitted by Sarah West and Kay Weiser*

◆ **Members**

Sarah West, Kay Weiser (co-chairs); Rest of Team: McKinley Sims, Nancy Dearden, Carolyn Scott

◆ **Mission of Committee**

We started meeting in August or September regularly to plan, prepare and organize the MLK Day of Service, 2015. We worked with church members, the neighborhood communities, organizations, Global Citizens, and public schools with the goal of hosting over 500 or more volunteers. The projects were on-sight at USG and off-sight totaling 27 projects. We collected \$1700 in donations.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

We did not see or have any SMART Goals. However, we used Anne Gwynn and Mel Streib's records as well as having the significant support from Nancy Dearden.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

The actual MLK Day of Service itself was a huge accomplishment. Without USG members and other volunteers the day couldn't have been such a big success.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Now that MLK Day of Service is being co-ordinated through the new Social Justice umbrella with Anne Gwynn and Mel Streib's leadership, the 2016 day will be significantly impressive.

**NICKY BROWN MEMORIAL EDUCATIONAL FUND**

*Submitted by Shawn Miller, Chair*

◆ **Members**

Shawn Miller (Chair); Ingrid Brown, Lida Holota

◆ **Mission of Committee**

The Mission of the Nicky Brown Fund is to honor the memory of Nicky Brown and to provide a yearly financial stipend to all individuals who meet the criteria for the scholarship. The

criteria includes attending college, graduate school, or other professional workshops as well as the family must be pledging members or friends.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Provide additional students with the opportunity to receive the fund

Provide an early awareness of the fund (May). The committee will contact students in early summer to ensure all who are qualified are notified.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year**

This year the committee was successful in reaching the students earlier, which allowed for a late summer follow-up to ensure all eligible students were included. There were 6 students this year who received the stipend. All but one were undergraduate students. One was attending medical school.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

1. Increase awareness of the fund
2. Continue to provide an early awareness of the fund
3. Continue to follow-up with current and past recipients

**SERVICE AUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Sam Stormont and Linda Smith, Co-Chairs*

◆ **Members**

Linda Smith and Sam Stormont, co-chairs; Mark Bangela, Carolyn Cotton, Joanne Davis, John Davis, Lynne Kalish, Gwen Lindgren, Debbie Kish-Silver, Judi Morrow

◆ **Mission of Committee**

To raise funds for USG's operating budget and provide opportunities for fellowship and community building among our members and friends.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

Each year, we look at ways to improve the service auction's financial contribution to the church. One of the ways we do that is to build on our donations and opportunities for fellowship that energize and strengthen our church.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year**

This year's annual service auction was held on April 18, 2015, and its theme of "Roaring 20's" provided lots of opportunities for fun and creativity in decoration, costumes and graphics.

As always, volunteer preparations for the auction and those needed to help the night of the event encompass a large part of our USG community. The service auction brings together the talents and efforts of more than 150 members and friends, from our RE children who provide crafts for sale at the event to those in the community who advertise in our program booklet, donate food and much more.

But clearly, without our wonderful new and longtime donors, the event would never be a success! Each year we see new events and services offered through the main and poster auctions,

as well as an interesting array of items presented for the silent auction. It is these donations that make up the “heart and soul” of the service auction and provide a chance for so many to donate to the church while they enjoy wonderful dinners and events.

This 2015 Service Auction welcomed more new faces to the event and received more donated offerings than at any time in the event’s history. This is due to a number of factors: new publicity opportunities created through fliers, the use of the screen in the sanctuary for our promotional efforts and some innovative strategies developed by the committee. For example, to encourage attendance, the committee decided to waive the \$10 per person registration fee for first time attendees, which proved a successful effort. We also reached out to new and more varied audiences within the church to expand our base for this year and the future.

#### ◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Each year, we look at ways to improve the service auction's financial contribution to the church. One of the ways we do that is to build on our donations and opportunities for fellowship that energize and strengthen our church. We feel that we have an excellent base to build on for 2016, and always welcome your ideas or interest in helping us as we look forward to another successful year.

### **SHARE THE PLATE TASK FORCE**

*Submitted by Gale Gibbons, Chair*

#### ◆ **Members**

Dennis Brunn, Peg Bruton and Jamie Preston rotated off the group. Current members are: Gale Gibbons, Susan Smith, Sandy Capps and Sarah Spath. Gale will rotate off in January 2016, Susan and Sandy later that year. We are currently recruiting several new members.

#### ◆ **Mission of Committee**

To act upon our Unitarian Universalist values by gathering funds from the congregation to support non-profit, non-partisan organizations focused on social justice issues, including but not limited to promoting fair and equal treatment for all; empowering marginalized communities; reducing poverty, racism and homophobia; improving public education; aiding the elderly; reducing violence and preserving the environment.

#### ◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

None established.

#### ◆ **Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year**

The Share the Plate Task Force brought before the congregation the following non-profits from July 2014 to June 2015:

The Kenya Unitarian Church  
The Bethesda Project  
Lingelbach Elementary School  
UU United Nations Office  
Breathing Room Foundation  
Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (PIHN)

MLK Day of Service  
Yes Philly  
Rebuilding Today Philadelphia  
The New Sanctuary Movement  
The Maternity Care Coalition  
Reach out and Read – scheduled for June 2015

The total contributed to these organizations, July through May, was approximately \$10,461. In July a complete report will be made available.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

1. to identify and recruit at least 2 new members for STP by September 2015 (in progress)
2. to continue to identify non-profits doing work that supports our UU values and that offer opportunities for USG members to develop relationships as volunteers or allies.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATING TEAM**

*Submitted by Anne Gwynn and Mel Strieb, Co-Chairs*

In March of 2015, Anne Gwynn and Melvin I. Strieb were appointed as co-chairs and asked to develop recommendations to increase participation in Social Justice initiatives at USG and to strengthen existing initiatives. They held separate meetings with leaders of all the SJ interest areas to learn more about each initiative and share and formulate ideas to strengthen the programs. A meeting was held on April 8 with all the SJ leaders and interested parties to present their findings.

A summary of the co-chairs' recommendations is as follows:

- Develop an SJ calendar aligned with church calendar
- Coordinate the calendar with worship and small group ministry themes
- Focus on one SJ interest area each month
- Include an SJ Ministry Moment as part of the worship service, emphasizing the SJ interest area of the month
- Prepare blurbs for CommUUnicator highlighting upcoming SJ activities
- Keep Website updated, emphasizing what's coming up, not what was done
- Highlight SJ in SGM discussions, relating SJ issues to the theme of the month
- Coordinate more effectively with CSD and Youth programs
- Recommend books, speakers, topics at retreat, film series, classes, SJ commitment as part of the 150th anniversary celebration

These recommendations were approved by the SJ leaders and the co-chairs have begun implementation.

Future plans for each of the interest areas were reviewed and a special discussion ensued about MLK Day of Service and its relevance as an SJ activity. Although the MLK Day of Service is covered elsewhere in this Annual Report, it is important to highlight the commitments that were made at the SJ meeting regarding MLK Day.

The co-chairs expressed their concern that MLK Day is one day a year and doesn't result in a long-term service commitment. They felt that MLK Day could be used to stimulate interest in USG activities and enhance the visibility of SJ activities. Connections could be developed with participants that could extend throughout the year. The co-chairs suggested that SJ leaders could use MLK Day as a way to help build connections with participating organizations and to help set up projects in order to develop long term connections. The SJ leaders agreed that they would take responsibility for MLK Day. The various tasks associated with MLK Day were identified and a list of volunteer coordinators was established.

Other agreements from the meeting include the following:

- Quarterly meetings need to be scheduled with a small team to develop viable action plans.
- SJ interest areas will be linked with the monthly calendar and other church activities.
- Projects will be highlighted as an extra brief announcement in the SGM handouts and at the Sunday services.
- Service in the greater community should be stressed as part of the covenant of membership.
- One SJ initiative will be highlighted each month. The committee with the activity to be promoted in a particular month, will take charge of presenting that theme to the congregation.
- MLK planning will start in September at a quarterly meeting but between now and then, each group should plan an activity (or activities) and/or identify an organization to partner with.

#### ◆ High-Priority Goals for the Next Church Year

- Implement the recommendations presented above by coordinating with other church committees and with leaders of the SJ interest areas.
- Lead a successful MLK Day of Service that establishes longer term connections with members of the local community and service organizations.

### **STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Tom Ott*

#### ◆ Members

Tom Ott, Chair, Christine Ginsburg, Linda Bernstein, Bill Dowdall, Alan Windle

#### ◆ Mission of Committee

The mission of the Stewardship Committee is to foster financial and congregational ownership of USG among our members.

#### ◆ SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)

Our goal for fiscal year 2015-2016 is to raise \$230,000 in pledges for the financial support of the church. It is also our goal through constant communication to foster greater awareness of the financial needs of the church and to encourage a greater connection between church members and our UU mission.

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. The committee re-instituted “Suggested Share” as primary in the coming pledge campaign.
2. The committee agreed that a banner would be used to publically acknowledge pledges as they come in rather than aggregating donors relative to giving category.

◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

Smart goals for the July 1 2015- June 30 2016 Stewardship Committee will be formulated by that committee.

**UU PA LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY NETWORK (UUPLAN)**

*Submitted by Dennis Brunn, Chair*

◆ **Members**

Dennis Brunn, Congregational Liaison with UUPLAN, Yvonne Marlier, Chair, UUPLAN Immigration Justice Team, statewide

◆ **Mission of Committee**

UUPLAN brings together UUs working for justice particularly at the level of PA state policies. The mission of UUPLAN leaders in USG is to support the social justice initiatives at USG by linking them, whenever possible, with broader movements by UUs for justice throughout Pennsylvania.

◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. To increase awareness of UUPLAN among USG members through periodic communication.
2. To increase the number of USG members who become dues paying members of UUPLAN, and
3. to increase the number of USG members who become regular and active members of one of the six UUPLAN Justice Teams (Anti-Mass Incarceration, Reproductive Justice, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, Immigration Justice, and LGBT Justice).

◆ **Significant Accomplishments of Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

1. By taking the lead in establishing a USG bulletin board devoted to social justice, there is more awareness among USG members of the work of UUPLAN and related justice activities.
2. A mailing went to over 100 USG members in December inviting them to join UUPLAN. Currently some 15 USG member have joined.
3. Key founding members of the UUPLAN Anti-Mass Incarceration Team are from USG (that Team is co-chaired by Nancy Anderson and Marietta Tanner). The Team has been active at the state level promoting specific laws to destigmatize those who have served time in prison and want to return to their families and communities. USG members of that Team have also created partnerships with former prisoners through the Center for Returning Citizens.



#### ◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

1. to increase regular publicity within USG of UUPLAN through brochures, bulletin board, and special events.
2. to raise the number of USG members in UUPLAN to at least 30.
3. to support continued collaboration between USG's Ending Racism Committee and UUPLAN's Anti-Mass Incarceration Team.
4. to identify and orient at least 5 USG members to become active in the UUPLAN Immigration Justice Team, currently chaired by USG member Yvonne Marlier. Once identified, these USG members will be encouraged to strengthen USG ties with the locally based immigration justice group, the New Sanctuary Movement.

### **WELCOMING COMMUNITY TEAM**

*Submitted by Jenn Leiby, Chair*

#### ◆ **Members**

Eaine Hills, Margaret Kinnevy (leaving Team for Board 7/01/15), Deb Kish-Silver, Jenn Leiby (chair, term completed 6/30/15), Alice Parker, Gloria Guldager, Tammi Talda

#### ◆ **Mission of Committee**

To build (and nurture) the Beloved Community of USG, providing a welcoming place for all visitors, members and guests.

#### ◆ **SMART Goals Established for Past Year (7.1.14-6.30.15)**

- Expand the Welcome Table staffing by 5 people by September 2014
- Increase membership by 10% by June 2015
- Reduce the President's Letter List by engaging members more fully in the life of the church
- Hold one Visitor Fellowship Hour with the Minister in Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015

#### ◆ **Significant Accomplishments of the Past Year**

- Expanded Welcome Table staff by bringing Board members onto the Team for Sunday mornings
- Welcomed 15 new members between 7/1/14-5/1/15.
- Increased engagement of members, as shown by reduced President's Letter list for this year (5 letters sent).

#### ◆ **SMART Goals for 2015-2016 Church Year**

- Re-envision entire Welcoming process to bring all members into the welcoming efforts on Sunday mornings by June 2016.
- Continue to build the Beloved Community, with an emphasis on engagement of both visitors and members in small groups and ASD classes