

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene

# Annual Report

2020-2021



Empowered by Love, We Transform Ourselves, and Serve Our World

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## Staff and Board Reports:

### Minister's Report

The 2020-2021 year for UUCE was shaped by COVID and staff transitions. Worship went virtual making services both more accessible for some and less desirable for others. My request to end my time with UUCE a year earlier than I had planned and for the congregation to go into search also impacted this year. Staff and lay leadership rose to the challenge in all areas of church life resulting not only in a successful search for a settled minister but for the congregation to remain active and engaged. And the financial generosity continued despite a pandemic and uncertainty about when UUCE would return to in person worship and gatherings.

The year in review:

### Staffing

- Jennifer Hackett joined the staff as an intern bringing with her numerous skills and working across a wide section of church life. She will remain with UUCE for the 2021-2022 church year in a part time capacity.
- Izzy Crecca became our office administrator.
- Katy Siepert, our Director of Faith Formation, departed in December to pursue seminary and hospital chaplaincy.
- In response to the growing tech needs in the time of a pandemic, Kat Johnson was hired to provide tech assistance for worship and in many other areas.
- Mitch Davey left as our Music Director.
- Jody Monegan, our rentals coordinator will leave in June to be a full-time mom.
- Rev. Lo will be retiring from parish ministry June 20.

## **Program**

- The program staff worked collaboratively to provide creative and engaging worship virtually.
- Faith Forward and Membership were reworked in an effort to not only welcome new members but to plan a strategy for retention of all members.
- Coffee, Tea and Thee; the Common Read; Challenging Racism; Harvest the Power; Small Group Ministries; Book groups; the Accessibility Task Force; the auction; and many one time or a short series of program options all provided ways for the congregation to stay involved and engaged.
- Hats off to Buildings and grounds who continued their weekly care and maintenance of our church property.
- The Ministry Council and Lay Ministry Leads kept the communication going between committees and task forces, staff, and the Board.
- With input from the congregation, the Board selected an incredibly hard working and cohesive Ministerial Search Team.
- The Generosity Network strategy for the Annual Budget Drive was one on one steward and congregant contacts resulting in keeping UUCE in a strong financial position going forward.
- A fourth Conestoga Hut will be added in May.
- Rev. Lo established a relationship with the homeless encampment on 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

## **Going Forward**

- Worship will be both in person and live on a video platform.
- At some point, UUCE will return to in person worship, meetings, gatherings, and justice work.
- Rev. Jennifer Ryu will begin her settled ministry on August 1, 2021.
- Rev. Lo will retire on June 20, 2021.
- My hope is that UUCE will continue its commitment to being a place of welcome, hospitality, and inclusion.

- My desire is that UUCE find its social justice niche in the Eugene and surrounding communities.
- That all work of the church is done through the lens of dismantling white supremacy culture.
- That this congregation continue to thrive and grow in all areas of church life.

Submitted with Love and Gratitude,

Rev. Lo

### **Ministerial Intern and Coordinator of Adult Faith Formation's Report**

As a Ministerial Intern I simultaneously learned about all aspects of ministry, including administrative, pastoral care, worship, programmatic and pandemic inventive. I learned about these things while doing them, thus providing a partnership with the lead minister in sharing in the leadership and care for the Church community.

As the lead over Adult Faith Formation (we never quite got around to giving that a title, given that I inherited these extra duties mid-year), I have been responsible for working on all programming for Adults.

We successfully survived, and provided pastoral care, thematic worship, and programming throughout the fall of 2020 with its pandemic spikes, wildfires, and never-ending elections. We participated in several nationwide UUA things such as:

- The UU the Vote Campaign
- The Side with Love Service
- The national UU Common Read (*Breathe*, by Imani Perry)
- The nationwide General Assembly service

We provided engaging Adult Faith Formation experiences such as:

- Faith Forward classes (Inquirers, Beyond Inquirers)

- Programming toward the 8th Principle (including but not limited to the Black Lives film series and discussion, the Black Church series, 3 separate book reads, a training on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, and more)
- A Death Cafe
- Independent/one off book discussions on the topics of religion and church.
- A thematic, ongoing space serving as the always open Small Group Ministry
- And so much more.



Auction SUUperheros; Bat Woman (Jane Wagner), Chalice Woman (Jennifer Hackett), and Cosmic Woman (Susanne Reynolds) invite yoUU to join them at the Auction to fight for "Truth, Justice, and Liberal Religion!"

We provided worship services, vigils and other gatherings of prayer and space holding for events such as:



Jennifer and Izzy play the game Codenames over Zoom for February's Whimsy Hour.

- The fires
- The election
- Christmas Eve
- The insurrection
- The Bridgers
- The New Members



Challenges this year included an ever-growing workload, as staffing continued to shift. I look forward to a full staff again in the Fall!

In the new church year, I wish for a year without trauma or drama or insurrections, a year of getting to know Rev. Jen and her many new staff members being successfully integrated into the life of the Church.

Jennifer Hackett. MDiv

## Office Report

This church year, the office staff has been deeply grateful to be able to work remotely during the pandemic, and for the flexibility offered by compassionate employers. We have continued to adapt to the remote work environment, finding ways to implement systems in a virtual workspace for communication, document sharing, file storage and more. We are excited to share these new tools and systems with the congregation in the coming year. During our limited in-person hours, receiving cards and notes from members with their donations have been one of the best parts of our pandemic. They are touching reminders of the connection we have with you.

For the office's part in staff transitions, Izzy Crecca has spent the year stretching her skills and knowledge base, taking on the responsibilities of the Office Administrator, while Jody Monegan returned from maternity leave to manage the rentals program as the pandemic extended longer than anticipated. She will be departing that role in June, as it is not a good fit for this point in her parental journey. She will be helping behind the scenes with some data entry in the following months. Our bookkeeper, Jen Dondero's hours will be



Thanks for all the love you've sent to the Office this year!



slightly reduced over the summer, and she will return to her full hours in the fall. We are excited to share the projects from this past church year. We updated and expanded the Involvement Guide, a tool developed last year by our Coordinator of Outreach and Engagement, Sarah Skochko, and shared a digital version that can be updated and used in Faith Forward and New Member classes in the coming year. With the help of congregants and other staff we have been updating the website to create a more uniform look to present to a potential new minister. We have also helped the Board of Trustees to provide a virtual solution to our congregational meetings, allowing folks to vote using a secure and reliable electronic method. Finally, we have begun the transition to Breeze, a new church management software and look forward to its expanded features for both staff and members like Volunteer Sign Ups, Text Communications, and an improved Online Giving function.

### **Board of Trustee's Report**

The Board of Trustees is the highest-level governing body of UUCE elected from the congregation by the congregation. The five subjects that the Board considers are: 1) Mission and vision, 2) Personnel, 3) Fiduciary responsibility (finance and legal), 4) Long-range planning, and 5) Policy.

Our highlights from this year included: adopting the 8th Principle; ordaining Rev. Sarah Skochko; welcoming Jennifer Hackett as our Ministerial Intern, as which she regularly attends our Board meetings; and creating the Ministerial Search Team from the candidates provided by the congregation. We oversaw 2 budget processes instead of 1 this year and managed continued financial stability. We met with Zr. Alex Kapitan to discuss how to live into our 8th Principle. One of the practices we established to do so has been examining White Supremacy Culture Characteristics, how they manifest within ourselves and UUCE, and their Antidotes. Finally, we welcomed Rev, Jen Ryu as our new settled minister.

Our biggest challenge this year was maintaining regular communication with members of the congregation. To help bridge this gap, we began a new regular

column in the Weekly Connections newsletter, entitled Boardcast: Sustaining Connections and a monthly Zoom meeting called the Board Social Hour in order to better communicate with the congregation.

We look forward to working with Rev. Ryu. We believe that we are at place of many exciting possibilities for our Church. We will be encouraging each other and our fellow congregants to be as imaginative as possible as we begin to return to worshipping in each other's presences. We will try to extend as much tenderness as possible to each other and ourselves as we slowly emerge from a period of universal anxiety and trauma.

## **Ministry of Connection and Engagement**

The Connection & Engagement Ministry remained upbeat and carried on this year, finding ways to keep going, despite the restrictions induced by Covid-19. Many groups (Crafters, Sister Circles, Poetry, Men's Groups, Young Adults, Accessibility, and Faith Forward) were able to continue meeting via Zoom. Other groups (Welcome Table, Hospitality, Sunday Hospitality, Birders) were on hiatus. The Birders resumed in-person outings just recently.

The Young Adults opened their membership to Young Adults in the Corvallis and Portland congregation. Membership welcomed 14 new members in a welcoming service on May 23. This feels incredible, given that several of the new members came to us DURING the pandemic!

Linda Krenicky, Lay Lead for the Ministry of Connection and Engagement

### **Membership**

The Membership Committee expanded this year, to include Amy Dessert, Peggy Bondurant, and Chair, Sharon Roberts. The committee helps to manage membership and provide guidance to folks interested in learning more about UUCE and joining. This year, despite the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic, and communicating between groups while not in the church building, we are happy to announce we welcomed 10 new members! In the next year we

hope to develop a plan for providing better support for both prospective and new members, as well as improving the coordination between various groups involved in congregational support. We wish to encourage Radical Hospitality at UUCE!

Sharon Roberts, [membership-chair@uueugene.org](mailto:membership-chair@uueugene.org)

### **Welcome Table**

Church volunteers share being behind the "welcome table" when we are at church in-person. This group has been on hiatus during the pandemic but looks forward to returning to church, and hopes for lots of friendly volunteers excited to help!

Kris Topaz

### **Faith Forward**

As part of the Radical Hospitality Crew, this group offers classes designed to inform and engage both newcomers and long timers. This year we resumed Faith Forward classes, adjusted for Zoom, and changed the way we offer the class. What was once a recurring series of the same program now explores even more! We successfully completed Faith Forward: Inquirers, and Faith Forward: Beyond Inquirers. We gained 2 new members from these classes! In the coming year we hope to continue to offer Inquirers and Beyond Inquirers, as well as Roots (from the Dallas church's curriculum).

### **Community Art Gallery**

The art gallery is ready and awaiting our return to church, displaying art by Scott Hovis, Martha Snyder, and Carol Martin. We held a Virtual Art Show in March and April, with the Youth Winners receiving a \$20 cash prize. We had over 35 entries!

### **Sisters Circles**

#### **Spirited Sisters**

Spirited Sisters is a discussion group that meets on the third Thursday of the month. It is an open group, welcoming all those who identify as women. We discuss a different topic every month and also include personal check-in at each

meeting. Each month a member volunteers to facilitate the group and chooses the topic. We cover a wide range of subjects including our spiritual journeys, life changes, relationships and dealing with these uncertain times.

We have been very successful having our meetings on Zoom. We have between the and 20 members each month. We have even had some new people join in the meetings. The group has been a source of encouragement and fellowship during this time of isolation.

It is our goal to start several more Sister groups to make it available to more people. In the past, it has been difficult to get other groups going due to scheduling problems. In the coming year, we will renew that effort, perhaps offering a group in the evening.

Our first hope is to be able to meet in person. While we have continued to have meaningful discussions and a sense of connectedness, we will be glad when we can return to meetings at the church.

## **Men's Groups**

### **Tuesday Men's Group**

We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Our average attendance this year has been about 10 people per session, with 13 members total. The current group is on the verge of becoming too large, and there has been discussion of closing the group to new attendees. We look forward to meeting in person again, and providing a place for men to openly discuss their lives, concerns, and fears.

## **Poetry Groups**

UUCE hosts a monthly gathering for poets who wish to share their original writing, give and get critique, be challenged to think and write on suggested topics, and develop deep bonds of friendship that come from sharing personal expression. Groups are closed due to size, but adding additional groups is always an option. Each group has a name: Poets, Poeta, Poesy.

Two of the three groups kept going during this pandemic year. We zoomed, and were able to use the share-screen feature of Zoom so poems could be seen as well as heard. Two of our poets have self-published poetry books this year. One group is just now beginning to set aside a half hour after the meeting for tutorials in publishing. Individuals in these two groups have remained connected. Next year we hope that we can meet in person again! That the third group can become functional again., and that each group or a combination of all the groups could publish a book of poems and sell them as a church fundraiser!

### **Birders Group**

We are a group that enjoys birds. We have members that are novice and others that are fairly knowledgeable. This has always been followed up with breakfast. Covid has split us up quite a bit this year. We have coped however, by keeping in touch with weekly emails, zoom meetings and smaller groups birding together. As most of us become vaccinated, we are looking forward to meeting as a larger group.

## **Ministry of Sustainability**

The impact of this past year's Covid lockdown did not stop the work of several of the groups within the Sustainability ministry, as these groups are responsible for the operation of the church, whether it be open or closed. While masked and physically distanced, BAGs continued their weekly work beautifying, maintaining, and preparing our church for its eventual re-opening with Covid mitigation in mind. The Safety Committee increased the scope of their work from developing the church's safety policies and procedures, to developing recommendations for reopening the church. Publications continued to produce the Weekly Connections electronic newsletters, which has provided essential communication regarding church news and activities. And despite the limitations on social contact due to Covid, the Generosity Network was able to complete a very successful year of virtual fundraising. COOK and the Library each had a quiet year of operation.

## Building and Grounds

Helping to maintain and improve the church's building and grounds, the BAG team works every Tuesday on indoor and outdoor maintenance and improvement projects. Inside our church, we have focused on pandemic prevention efforts and energy efficiency. For example, we modified the air flow to bring in more outside air, replaced windows along the south side of the building to have the option of opening them for better air flow. We purchased and installed more effective filters. We have replaced the ballasts in the hanging lights in our sanctuary and social hall.



Other projects included finishing the trim and adding chair rails to the table storage closet in the social hall, reoiling the glulam beams, installing hands-free soap dispensers, constantly touching up the paint, installing the AED, discouraging a parkour jumper, refinishing the closet doors in the R.E. hallway with the fine assistance of the high schoolers, adding solar lights and motion sensors on the outside corners of the building, trimming all "cloud" panels in social hall and sanctuary, repairing paint bubbles on the exterior, completing all required city inspections, refinishing south entry doors installing art gallery track lighting in both south and north RE halls. We also completed many smaller repair and maintenance tasks.

We paid contractors for the repainting of the sanctuary and social hall, as well as the repair of the auto-close on the north door and the resurfacing and restriping of the parking lot.

Outside, the volunteers maintained the seven seas – our series of swales that filter and clean the storm water runoff – and our landscaping. The grounds crew picks up garbage and cleans up after the occasional camper. We added an equipment storage shed near the Conestoga huts. The garden is growing like last summer's, and everyone is welcome to share our bounty.

This year's BAGuettes included interior crew Eric Swegles, Emmet Band, Marilyn Milne, John White and Steve Kuzma; the outside team included Saro Hendrickson, Gretchen Miller, Sigrid Jones, Nick Jones and Vicki.

### **COOK (Committee on Oversight of the Kitchen)**

While the church and the kitchen have been closed for the past year, one success is that the Little Big School maintains the kitchen in excellent condition. We hope that we might be able to use the church and kitchen again. We would like to be able to offer use of the kitchen to some specific non-profits in the future.

### **Safety (Previously known as Emergency Planning Task Force)**

The Safety Committee is a standing committee under the Board of Trustees. The committee's mission statement is: "Empowered by love we strive to serve the UUCE community through a concern for the safety of all gathered individuals and ensuring the respectful and appropriate use of our church home." We develop policy and procedure recommendations concerning the safety of the adults and children within our church; safety on the church grounds; and safety in regard to medical, fire, earthquake, active shooter and other immediate emergencies. The committee currently consists of 4 members.

This year we celebrate the growth of the committee, which now includes: Scott Robinson, Dave Dessert, Christina Wagner and Susanne Giordano. In the Fall of 2020, we met through Zoom with Annie Scott, Religious Educator for Congregational Life with the UUA Pacific NW region. This meeting resulted in suggestions such as merging all safety policies and procedures into one simple and slim manual, making a USB stick to give to first responders in the event of an emergency, reviewing our policies and asking the Board to revise/update (only



the Board can revise policies). This meeting brought up the name of the committee—that it should be a committee and not a task force, as we are “standing” and have a long-term commitment to the safety of the church, not a single task. In April 2021 we developed a set of precautions for the church to follow while still in pandemic shut down, to slowly begin to re-use the church building as more people are getting vaccinated. The Board of Trustees will be voting on its approval this same month. • Also, in April 2021 Safety met with Jennifer Hackett (our intern minister) and Kat Johnson (our Zoom tech person) to consider safety measures to take when groups meeting on Zoom encounter a “zoom bomber” – someone not invited who purposefully disrupts the meeting. In the coming year we hope to get AED/CPR training for volunteers *when local centers are again offering Red Cross instruction*. A budget request for this cost was made in 20-21 (not used) and again for 21-22. We need to disseminate to our group users of Zoom the safety measures they can take against zoom bombers. All staff and some targeted volunteers need a refresher on general church safety. This is at least two years overdue. The Safety Committee will make a visiting appointment with Church Mutual to have a walk-through of the building to pinpoint where we are most at risk—child safety (abuse, health) and medical emergencies. These are greater risks than active shooter incidents. •We should try to build a relationship with law enforcement. The Emergency Operating Procedures (EOP) Manual needs updating including the children’s safety procedures. We are holding off at this time until we can get the Board’s temperature on this idea of merging all the church policies and procedures that center around safety into one document. We might even wait until our new minister is settled in.

### **Generosity Network**

We had a successful virtual fundraising year! Our in-person fundraisers pivoted to an online format due to the pandemic. The remote book sale raised \$1,443 with books being grouped by genre and sold by the bag; it was fun and full of

surprises! Our annual holiday bazaar was cancelled, and we had a small but tasty online bake sale that raised \$1,011. Our SUUperheroes auction was entertaining and creative; it was also held online and raised \$8,837.47 even with limited participation due to Zoom meeting fatigue. The spring Annual Pledge Drive was accomplished with virtual visiting stewards. The total pledged at the time of this writing is \$438,817. There may also be between another \$2,500-\$7500 coming in from folks who have been mailed a final letter and pledge card. This pledge total is \$20,493 above last year's pledges. There's also another \$60,000 in gifts that came in during 2020 that can be applied to this year - a \$50,000 gift from one household and a \$10,000 match from a household that matched all new pledges up to \$10,000. Combining those pledges and gifts together provides \$498,817 to fund our UUCE budget. These numbers demonstrate the deep connection, generosity and dedication of our church community during this challenging virtual church pandemic year.

While online fundraising had less participation than in-person events, and they are not the same as having those events in person, we ended up having a successful fundraising year and connected virtually with lots of congregants.

The hopes and dreams of our UUCE Generosity Network are that the congregation will continue to have an attitude abundance about our ability to fund our mission, vision and programs both within and beyond our walls. With the generosity of time, talent and treasure of the entire congregation and our new minister Rev. Jen Ryu, we will work hard to continue this upward, positive and loving fundraising trend!

### **Publications Committee**

The Publications Committee has had that name since February 2021. Prior to that date, the group was called the Publications Task Force starting in July 2020. Prior to then, the group was called the Communications Task Force since it was established in January 2013. Dick Loescher has been the chair since the group was initiated. The group meets approximately monthly to review what is going

well and what could be improved with UUCE publications (Weekly Connections, Sunday Handout, Weekly Meeting and Event Calendar) and other communications tools, in order to support implementing the UUCE Mission Statement. The members of the Publications Committee include church volunteers (Dick Loescher-Chair and Lead Editor, Janet Barnes-Proofreader, Nikki Frank, Frankie Hill-Proofreader, Sharon Roberts-Proofreader, and Jean Marie Stine), church office staff (Izzy Crecca-Office Administrator, Kat Johnson-Tech Support and Proofreader, and Jody Monegan-Rental Coordinator), and church program staff (Rev. Lois Van Leer-Minister, and Jennifer Hackett-Ministerial Intern).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all UUCE meetings were virtual, mostly using Zoom. One of the main methods of communication with the congregation was via Weekly Connections, which contains intermittent submissions from church program staff, UUCE Board of Trustees members, announcements, and a calendar of open events. This document is produced by collaboration of the church volunteer editorial team and the Office Administrator and is sent each Wednesday afternoon via email using MailChimp. A few paper copies are mailed to people without email access. Other major methods of communication included the church website and social media (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram), which are managed by the Office Administrator, with help from the Tech Support person, Ministerial Intern, and church volunteers.

Over this church year, improving the appearance and ease of use of the website has been an ongoing challenge, with always more to do than there is time, and person availability to accomplish what is desired. The online giving function has not functioned optimally, and we look forward to the new payment portal coming in the spring.

We look forward to reopening of the building to in-person gatherings. Decisions will be needed regarding what paper handouts will be used and what documents will be posted. We look forward to improved functioning of the online giving

web page. We would welcome additional church volunteers who would enjoy helping with the Publications Committee work.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Loescher, Publications Committee Chair

### **UUCE Library**

This year, use of the UUCE has been very limited due to the church closure. However, in preparation for the eventual reopening of the church, Rev Lo has purchased 50 each of the gray and teal hymnals, as well as a few large print editions for improved accessibility, so we will have those in addition to our current supply. I hope there will be increased use of the library when the church reopens.

## **Ministry of Transformation and Action**

This Ministry includes lay-led groups focused on Worship, Lifespan Faith Formation and Social Justice. The fact that we have been able to continue work in all three areas of our Ministry during the pandemic is a major success (see reports from each of the groups on their programs during the 20-21 church year.) Highlights include: Sunday Worship services (zoom and Facebook) that continue to attract newcomers, small group ministries, and on-line discussion groups like Coffee, Tea and Thee, Soul Matters and Common Read. Leaders from the Justice groups continue to meet on a monthly basis. Successes here include work on a new and improved Justice webpage, a wonderful Earth Day Sunday service presented by UU Earth Action and the decision to change our Community Offering from monthly to weekly. Though the restrictions due to covid have been challenging, we look forward to being together in person at the church and being able to expand many of the activities that have been put on hold due to the pandemic.

## Challenging Racism, Putting Love into Action

We work to help the church to become aware of and dismantle racism and systemic white privilege in our community, our state, our nation and our world. This year we celebrate that in Fall of 2020 the board voted to adopt the 8th principle - with plan for a congregational meeting in Spring of 2021 to consider adding to our principles in Bylaws. Our hopes and dreams for the future include discussing the 8th Principle as a congregation, continuing the call among ministry and congregants to increase awareness.

This broad goal can be moved towards by adopting the wording offered - for awareness is not the words - it is in the action and spirit of Beloved Community (see below) Live by it. Action - be on the side of Justice!

### **The 8th Principle:**

*We covenant to affirm and promote: Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by building a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.*

Our existing 7 principles imply this 8th principle, but do not explicitly hold us accountable for addressing these oppressions directly, especially at the systemic level. **Beloved Community** happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world. UUs espouse it, but it's not *yet* in our Principles. Furthermore, none of the other Principles mentions love; by having "Beloved Community" in the 8th Principle, it brings our commitment to love higher in our consciousness, consistent with our Side with Love campaign.

Why Single Out Racism? Dismantling racism, white supremacy, and other oppressions requires work at the personal and institutional levels. The UU Principles were designed to be dynamic, not a fixed creed. It means we want to

always continue to be educating ourselves, exploring truth, and raising our consciousness. UUism is the only religion that intentionally builds in flexibility to acknowledge the importance of ongoing revealed truth. This happened when environmental awareness reached a critical mass and got added as a 7th Principle (it is important to be aware that the 7th principle is not "environment exclusive" - it has multicultural relationship implications - think "infrastructure racism"). We are approaching a similar critical mass level of awareness with the systemic nature of racism and other oppressions. We need to de-center whiteness and other dominant cultures in UUism. There is a large segment of our country that are openly supporting white supremacists this shows that we are moving quickly and dangerously in the wrong direction. UUs need to take strong leadership to reverse these trends. The 8th Principle is already evident at UUCE • Our Justice Programs, our Conestoga Hut program, our Food for Lane County volunteer program, our plate collection program, our VERY move downtown. In the past UUs have participated in anti-war, immigration, \$15 Now campaign, and many other programs of the late 90s. Now it is time to do the work of an anti-racism version of the Welcoming Congregation program that was so effective for LGBTQIA+ awareness and progress. Many people of color have been attracted by the values and potential of UUism, but their souls have been repeatedly wounded by its whiteness. Let us make our actions match our values and be a UU movement that feeds them. Remember though - it is not about who sits in the seats - that measures success: it is ensuring every action, policy, and practice governing and operating this congregation aligns with the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. People are drawn to where they feel good and will stay only if they truly feel the connection and joy of our Beloved Community. Our journey's success will be known by the lived experiences of those identifying as marginalized. That would be spiritual wholeness.

As Rev. Jen Ryu said on May 2nd we sometimes "miss the mark" when it comes to our efforts to put "love into action". Our journey's success will be known by

the lived experiences of those identifying as marginalized. Our work is toward Beloved CommUUnity.

## **Food Justice**

UUCE's Food Justice Projects have largely been placed on hold since March of 2020. In this time of uncertainty, it has been a challenge to keep any Food Justice programs up and running. The church sponsored a Little Free Pantry in front of our building. Unfortunately, it became an attractive nuisance and was moved to a site one block west. It has been more of a logistical challenge to get food donations from church members because people previously left donations on Sunday mornings.

For the past four years UUCE has provided 44 sack lunches one time per month for Community Court, a restorative justice program run by the city of Eugene, with volunteers coming together to assemble the lunches. All aspects of this program have been greatly affected by pandemic closures and restrictions. We provided lunches in July 2020 and not again until February 2021. We remain on standby to provide monthly snack lunches. Community Court changed its requirements to allow only prepackaged, individually wrapped food items. Since we had a well-built inventory of peanut butter and jelly we have been making sandwiches to supply three Little Free Pantries in Eugene and Springfield. Beginning in November 2020 we have been providing about fifteen sandwiches per week. We have also provided bottled water, hot chocolate, trail mix, etc. These were items we had in stock in anticipation of Community Court lunch program, which has only operated sporadically due to pandemic restrictions. We are currently well stocked with breakfast bars and bottled water due to the generosity of many individuals plus an SGM group.

All of our other Food Justice programs have been ON HOLD since March of 2020. This includes Trillium Produce Plus, Food For Lane County Food Rescue, Seed to Supper in person classes, FFLC on-site donation barrel. Our biggest



hope/dream/wish is to restart these programs as soon as we are able to do so safely. We would like to gather together once again to serve our community.

### **Sewing for a Cause**

Our group sews items we donate to people-in-need who receive services from non-profit organizations. In FY 2020-21, Sewing for A Cause created and donated the following:



- 50 sets of curtains for Conestoga Huts
- 150 face masks for SW US Native Americans and grammar school students in Eugene
- 20 quilts to St Vincent de Paul programs for homeless teens and families
- 30 quilts and blankets to C.A.S.A, court advocates for children

Our FY 2020-21 challenge was being unable to meet in person at church and being unable to access our supplies which are stored at church. That we can do so again is our hope for the upcoming year.

### **Music Committee**

2020 was the Corona Virus pandemic year and the physical church building was closed all year. When choirs opened up again in the Fall (online only), the Chamber and Sanctuary choirs were combined into one choir only for the duration of the pandemic. Our Music Director, Mitch Davey, had choir practices on Zoom. We learned music every week and recorded in our own homes individual phone videos of the choral music we were learning by the practice tracks Mitch would make for us. From September 2020 to February 2021, we recorded eleven (11) choral pieces which Mitch and his paid singer synced, then Kat Johnson put the final single video of each piece together, to drop into the

Zoom Sunday service. We enjoyed Mitch's addition of guitar music and sung duets with his fiancée Kelly Sweeney, on Sunday services.

In addition to the choir's music, Susanne provided a weekly 45-min. program of meditative piano music for Solstice/Advent, including Mitch plus two other musicians on some of these. All of the above took an incredible amount of time and, in that, is the celebration and success of this year for the choir and Music Program. Since there was money in the Music budget that had not been used to buy music during the year, we bought a piano bench and cover for the Knabe grand piano that lives in the Chapel, and a choir member (Vicki Elmer) bought our piano tuner's rebuild expertise to do some maintenance on the piano that it has badly needed ever since it came to UUCE as a donation years ago. We now have two very functional and high-quality pianos, counting the Sanctuary's Yamaha.

The pandemic put the choirs' potential and growth under its thumb. The prep needed to do a decent "Zoom" Sunday service and choir practices online takes so much time, is not flexible, is not flattering to live music, and became very discouraging to all members of the music program, the result being only 6 people recorded their individual videos for the last piece the choir produced this year.

Since the pianist can only speak for the choir and herself, as we are currently without a Music Director, Mitch having left rather abruptly May 2021, our collective hope, dream and wish is to once again have a Director of Music soon. In the absence of one, the choir decided that once we were all vaccinated, we might try to rehearse outdoors for upcoming events into this summer.

### **Fair Trade Coffee Cart**

The UUCE Fair Trade Coffee Cart is an environmental project and a fund-raiser for UUCE. We have Equal Exchange edibles for sale weekly, all certified organic and all Fair Trade. We have a variety of coffees, teas, and chocolates at the UUCE Coffee Cart. All products support farmers directly and 20-30 percent of the sales

price goes to support UUCE. The UUCE Fair Trade Coffee Cart is open every Sunday, year-round, after the service. Look for us in the South Lobby.

### **UU Refugee Sanctuary Project**

Our mission is to educate ourselves and the congregation about issues concerning refugees, immigrants and asylees. To aid them in their needs and work with other groups. Working with IMIrJ (Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice), UU Voices for Justice and OCAN (Oregon Community Asylum Network), we supported legislation to strengthen Oregon Sanctuary Law HB 3265 and other laws. This year not holding in person meetings with our group, due to pandemic presented challenges with getting accurate information and passing it on to gain support for our work. Next year we wish to continue with our work and grow support for our group to protect those in need of help.

### **UU Earth Action Network**

In its effort to actively promote the 7th Principle, the group advocates and seeks opportunities to educate the congregation and take action to protect the environment with clear attention to issues of environmental justice. While limited in its ability to take action during Covid-19, the group continued to meet and plan. Actions have included, developing a new brochure, sharing information with the church community on educational opportunities, participating in website upgrades and updates and the group facilitated Earth Day Sunday services in 2020 and 2021. We also endorsed legislation. Individuals participate in related local organizations including Sierra Club, NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, 350 Eugene and Interfaith Earthkeepers. We hope to continue to offer education and inspiration to the congregation as we all seek to reduce our carbon footprint and support and actively participate in advocacy and action. We also want to pay particular attention climate justice.

### **Small Group Ministry**

The goals of the Small Group Ministry (SGM) program are to build community, promote personal and spiritual growth, and provide service to the church or the

larger community. The SGM program has been occurring annually at UUCE since 2003. Each year, the groups disband at the end of the church year, and new groups are formed the following year. The program is open to friends and members of UUCE. Each year, some people are participating for the first time, and others have participated one or more times previously. Participants are asked to make a voluntary one-time registration donation to help cover the expenses of the program and support the church budget. The program is planned and implemented by the SGM Steering Committee (church volunteers), in collaboration with the minister.

This church year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were virtual via Zoom, with ten 2-hour sessions from October 2020 through March 2021. Many of the groups continued to meet on their own as a connection group for a variable amount of time after that. A total of 68 people registered, with several dropping out before or after the groups started meeting. The facilitators for the 9 groups were Ed Glennon, Sigrid Jones, Steve Kuzma, Dick Loescher, Cindy Robinson, Jolene Siemsen, Jennifer Tucker, Diana Wise, and William Wise. The SGM Steering Committee members were Dick Loescher-Chair, Kat Johnson, Bonnie Koenig, and Jennifer Tucker. The topics of the sessions were inspired by the monthly church worship themes. Some of the groups did service projects, including writing cards to people in facilities and others, providing lunch to Community Supported Shelters work parties, providing snacks to Buildings and Grounds workers at UUCE, donating food to the Community Court Lunch program, and donating a bicycle. The evaluation forms filled out by the participants and the facilitators indicated a high degree of satisfaction with and appreciation for the SGM program.

Meeting by Zoom was less satisfactory than meeting in person for many people, although much better than not being able to connect at all. In addition, participation was not available to those without internet access. Deciding on and carrying out a service project was also more difficult to do than years past. There

were some logistical challenges on the website in making payment of the voluntary one-time donation.

We plan to continue the SGM program in a similar manner, but with adjustment of the name to be Small Group Connection Circles (SGCC) and dropping of the request for a voluntary one-time donation. We hope to be able to resume meeting in person at some time, although hybrid meetings with some present virtually might be a possibility.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Loescher, Small Group Ministry Committee Chair

### **Interfaith Night Shelter**

We have provided Thursday night dinners to the SVDP Family Night Shelter for 6 months. Volunteers sign up to bring items via Sign-up.com. Our gratitude to the UUCE congregation for their generous donations to this project. This year our first challenge was to find out how we could be of service and coordinating with SVDP. Communication was a small problem. We regretted that we could not interact with residents. Post-pandemic, we hope to be able to serve at the Night Shelter for one or two weeks. This includes preparing and serving meals and interacting with residents which has not been possible during covid. We will need volunteers to help plan and coordinate.

### **Conestoga Wagon Circle**

This small committee oversees the conestoga hut residents on UUCE property. This year we celebrate the successful transition of one of our residents to permanent housing. Adding a fourth hut in May. It has been a challenge this year to find volunteers to work one on one with residents. A challenge has been the impact of the large homeless camp across 13th Ave. Rev Lo has reached out to the group and at the moment things are relatively peaceful. In the future we hope to find volunteers to work one on one with our residents and continue to build relationships.

## **Health Care for All Oregon**

HCAO's mission is to create a comprehensive, equitable, affordable, publicly funded, high quality, universal health care system serving everyone in Oregon and in the United States. This year Oregon passed SB 770, The Health Care for All Oregon Bill, which creates the Task Force on Universal Health Care. It sets a path forward to put in place a healthcare system that'll provide everyone residing in Oregon access to the care they need without the fear of bankruptcy. We also want to pass the Hope Amendment SJR12, which proposes that "health care is a human right" be added to the Oregon Constitution. This was passed in the Senate in March and now moves to the House of Representative for consideration. Additional community support is needed for HCAO to pass legislation. Lack of health care for all fails communities facing cultural and ethnic inequities. The Task Force work needs to be extended due to their late start because of the pandemic. We hope that the House will also pass the Hope Amendment. The State-Based Universal Health Care Act will also be rolled out on June 1, 2021 and HCAO is planning an event to co-inside with it. We welcome people to our meetings, to get involved. We meet the first Tuesday of each month, 7-8 pm, via zoom. Please contact Kathleen Filip if interested in joining us.

## **UU Voices For Justice**

Dennis Reynolds serves as the liaison from UUCE to Oregon's UU State Advocacy Network. The group has offered testimony on a variety of legislation bringing UU values into the decision-making process. In the coming years we hope to offer continuing advocacy and engagement with more UUs statewide

## **Community Offering**

The Community Offering team organizes our give-away of our congregation's offerings. The 2020-21 year saw a major change in the Community Offering program at our church: In January 2021, we began giving away the entire month's offering. Since the Community Offering began in 2006 with one Sunday's offering going to a nonprofit, we have wanted to reach this milestone; it's a great statement about our congregation's generosity and stability.

Our committee selects recipients based on our eight principles. We check to confirm each group's nonprofit status. We look for a mix of local, regional, statewide, national and international recipients who represent the environment, social justice, arts, etc. We welcome suggestions of possible recipients. At the time of this report, we only have offering results from July 2020 through February 2021. They total \$8,711. Read about the recipients at <https://uueugene.org/community-offerings/> .

Committee members include David Bockoven, Valerie Elliott, Gretchen Miller, Marilyn Milne, Ron Milton and Heather Schantz-Mulford.