



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION *of Santa Monica*



REPORT ON PROGRAMS

Fiscal Year
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

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REPORT ON PROGRAMS

2022-23

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LEADERSHIP

2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Eileen McCormack
Vice President..... Norm Richey
Secretary..... Larry Weiner
Treasurer..... Vilma Ortiz
Past President Beth Brownlie
Member at Large Siobhan Braybrook
Member at Large Linda van Ligten
Member at Large Abby Arnold
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2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STAFF

Developmental Minister.....Rev. Jeremiah Kalendae
Minister Emerita..... Rev. Judith E. Meyer
Director of Music..... Saunder Choi
Accompanist..... Ryan Humphrey
Choir Section Leaders..... Jyvonne Haskin,
Chloe Vaught, David Peterson, Kion Hadeiri
Church Administrator.....Nurit Gordon
Admin. Assistant & Communications
Coordinator..... Esther Chase
Audio Video Technician.....Mia Bringas
SextonsKevin Roller and
Thomas Ahern

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND NOMINATING COMMITTEE

2022-2023	2023-2024
Karl Lisovsky	Dan Patterson
Sheila Cummins	Teresa Castelli
Dan Patterson	Wendi Gladstone
Teresa Castelli	John Zinner
Wendi Gladstone	Haygo Salibian



MEMBERSHIP

To become a member of the Church a person shall:

- Sign a Membership statement and participate in the community life of the Congregation
- Reside within the greater Los Angeles area
- Be at least sixteen years of age or have successfully completed the Congregation's Coming of Age Program
- Make a financial contribution of record, or a pledge to do so, or receive a waiver from the Minister of the Congregation.
- Be approved by the Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as the Board) and have their names read into the minutes of the Board

- Anyone who has been a member of the Church for 40 days is eligible to vote at church business meetings.
- Written resignation, failure to make a financial contribution, or moving away from the PSDW area, causes membership to be discontinued.
- A "Friend" plays an active role in our community, supports the Church financially, but has chosen not to assume official church membership.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION (UUA)

This church is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a voluntary association of autonomous, self-governing local churches and fellowships, and of the Pacific Southwest District and the Pacific Western Region of that association. Information and contact with UUA offices and resources can be obtained at www.uua.org.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SANTA MONICA

*Annual Report on Programs
2022-2023*



DEVELOPMENTAL MINISTER REV. JEREMIAH LAL SHAHBAZ KALENDAE

Thank you for making time on this beautiful day to commit to the work of Beloved Community and the democratic processes and decorum which support it. This is an opportunity for us to gather in the spirit of gratitude for this community, its many volunteers, its professional staff, and its elected leaders. Together, we have faced an unprecedented degree of change that upended life as we knew it and invited us to adapt, innovate, and transform like never before.



Developmental ministry is intended to be a long term but not permanent period of intentional ministry that can help a community achieve developmental goals and lead cultural change to strengthen and enhance the capacities of the community. It involves all of the work of settled ministry in addition to these extra dimensions of working on making developmental progress.

When I arrived, and in each subsequent year, I've lifted up the guiding values of sustainability, spaciousness, resiliency, and regenerativity. We have to work in ways that are sustainable and promote a

culture of deep appreciation and healthy boundaries to avoid overworking and burnout. Sustainability isn't only any ecological value, it is also a value that can guide our lives and how we go about doing church together.

We have to cultivate spaciousness—and though this took on whole new meanings in our time of plague—it is really about the spaciousness of being within ourselves and offering that same generous openness to others. Spaciousness invites us to step outside of some of the cultural norms present in white supremacy culture like either/or polarized thinking, a pervading culture of urgency, and a culture of perfectionism. We've been exploring how intentionally cultivating spaciousness can bring us calm and centeredness within while it also encourages both/and thinking, holding multiple realities, a culture of careful deliberation and discernment, and a culture of learning and growth.

Resiliency is our ability to face adversity—and we've had no shortage of that—and not be broken or entirely diminished by it. It is our capacity to be flexible and adaptable and to return to regather and return to our wholeness after challenges or difficulties.

Regenerativity is related to sustainability, spaciousness, and resiliency, and it includes ministering in ways that are regenerative. Our work should lead us to renewal, regrowth, and restoration if we're doing it in sustainable ways with a generous allowance of spaciousness. If we miss the mark, we can experience the opposite as a community. In this year of rebirth and rebuilding following the trauma of plague, we've seen how powerfully regenerative this community can be!

In my first year of developmental ministry with you, we had six months together before the pandemic struck and we had to reimagine, retool, and implement how we do church practically overnight. Our entire church moved online while we were isolated in our homes and we figured out how to minister in this



new traumatic and disorienting reality from the ground up. Our pastoral care systems and small group ministries connected us like never before. We witnessed the murder of George Floyd, and the veil of white supremacy was pulled back and we wrestled as a society with how to create justice and equality for all of its members and specifically the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color most targeted by white supremacy. We also had to continually respond to a hostile, bigoted, and anti-science cultural reality being promoted by some of the media and various religious and political leaders.

In our second year of developmental ministry, we were in total lockdown and our country was in the midst of a presidential election. We further developed our online worship capacities, creating videos in our homes and stitching things together to create online services that became a resource for UU congregations and others across the country. To this day, people I talk with in our wider movement tell me they feel like they know our community from the vast amount of online ministry content we created. In March 2021, our staff leaders marched on behalf of the community to Stop



Asian Hate as the racist vitriol and attacks continued in our larger society. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were elected in the Fall of 2021 and an insurrection followed by a violent mob attempting to overthrow our national democracy.

In our third year of developmental ministry—that's the last church year—we began to transition from services that were created in our homes and offered entirely online to hybrid services which required a retooling of our sanctuary technology. New audio visual systems were created, consultants were hired, grants were received and we upgraded our capacities to be able to livestream from our sanctuaries. First, for many months, just our worship leaders—worship associates, musicians and tech crew—gathered in the sanctuary with the windows open, our masks on, and

appropriately socially distanced. Then last spring, small pockets of a person here, a couple there began to show up in these pews. It was like this for months as we managed yet another major transition.

This fourth year of our developmental ministry, was our first year emerging from the pandemic. At the onset of this church year we declared that it would be a year of rebirth and rebuilding. We'd have to relearn how to operate in person and with the many changes that the pandemic had brought. We'd have to meet new challenges caused by the pandemic and navigate a fourth major transition. When I reflect upon all that's been accomplished in these four years, sustainability, spaciousness, resiliency, and regenerativity are the qualities of our togetherness that helped us to maintain stability through incredibly unstable and tumultuous times. Developmental ministry is a period of intentional ministry that aspires to provide as much stability for a congregation as possible to help it heal and grow following prolonged conflict and a breakdown in congregational systems and the bonds of community. Just as a physical wound takes time to heal, wounds in community take time, patience, and care to experience a full recovery and a return to wholeness.



What has helped us to navigate these four years of incredible disruption and societal turmoil while simultaneously making progress on our developmental ministry goals has been our following of a strategic plan which has guided what developmental goals we work on when and in what ways. We've had to be flexible and adaptable to adjust to the unexpected. With some goals we need to take more time than expected—refreshing our bylaws took longer than expected, for example, which delayed our mission and vision work but we balanced our budget a year ahead of schedule. Most have progressed as we had expected. We've become a Fair Share congregation with the UUA and have continued to engage with the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression in multiple ways across the life of the congregation. We're rebuilding our Children's and Youth religious education program after it collapsed under the weight of the pandemic and we're preparing to do some soul searching work around our mission and vision and shared ministry

in the next church year. We're also reconstituting our Right Relations Team to ensure we are living into our Covenant of Right Relations and that we have systems of accountability that call people back into the community when they are outside of the Unitarian Universalist values and ethical expectations we've set before ourselves as a congregation.

We've had to operate with a high degree of trust, interdependence, and collaboration across the life of the community to meet challenges and seize opportunities. Whereas there was a great exodus of ministers, professional staff, and others during these difficult years in congregations across the country, we managed to cultivate a resilience and adaptive spirit that provided for both stability and progress. We should be grateful that we have such a skillful and gracious community. Our President Eileen McCormack will speak more to the many specific accomplishments of the community in this church year in her Annual Report to follow.

I would like to share a few thoughts about our Annual and Special Meetings of the Congregation themselves as how we conduct ourselves in these meetings is part of our developmental work. One of the reasons I'm engaged as a Developmental Minister is because I have specific experience serving in a variety of congregations from our largest UU congregation to small ones—and serving healthy ones and some with significant conflict and are still learning how to organize themselves effectively, process hurt, and address maladaptive behavior. Such experience gives one some perspective on what's helpful and what's not in congregational systems and cultures.

One thing I've learned, from attending so many congregational meetings over my 25 years serving our congregations as a lay leader and then as clergy is that the best congregational meetings are boring. Yes, you heard that right, boring. I thought maybe things had changed so just to double check I went ahead and watched a few of these proceedings in some of our leading congregations and sure enough: B-O-R-I-N-G.

The reason they should be boring is because highly adaptive congregations operate with a high degree of trust, interdependence, and transparency, and there is a shared understanding of how accountability and responsibility is delegated in a democratic congregational system. By the time things get to a congregational meeting, they should have gone through careful discernment processes

within the organization that strove to act on behalf of the congregation and in its interests. So by the time things are considered in this forum members trust that their elected leaders and the congregation's staff have strove to do their best—to put the time and thought into making the best decisions possible. It doesn't mean there isn't disagreement or questions or concerns but they're usually minimal and offered in a spirit of wonder, curiosity, and goodwill. Now I don't really think we've gotten to the esteemed goal of having a boring congregational meeting just yet but when your settled minister arrives, I'd like to be able to tell them we've gotten to that place as a congregation.

Lastly, in conclusion, some of us are off to the General Assembly of



the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations next week and you can still register to attend virtually if you'd like. This is a presidential election year and I hope we will be electing someone who is extraordinarily capable and gifted, a friend and colleague of mine who once served on my Committee on Ministry as a young minister, the Rev. Sofia Betancourt. We will also consider changes to the UUA's Article II which includes our UU Purposes and Principles and Sources of our tradition. Representatives from congregations across the country and around the globe will discern how we might articulate our liberal religious values in the time we are now living. We will be virtually attending the General Assembly

Sunday Service next week—I'll be waving to you from the Pittsburgh convention center—and then we will be transitioning to summer worship for July and August and we've once again lined up some amazing guest religious leaders and a few leaders of our congregation.

Let us conclude by remembering the names and spirits of those members of our community who have joined the mighty cloud of witnesses in the past year.

Anita Brenner

Helen Brown

Tom Kafka

Anne MacQueen

Susan Marsh

Robert Simon Sr.

Joanna Woods-Marsden

May their memories be a blessing.

I wish everyone a restful, restorative, and delightful summer. Lets celebrate all that's been accomplished



and give ourselves the spaciousness to return restored and renewed in the new church year.

Shanti, Shalom, Salam. Amin, Amen, and Blessed Be.

CONSULTING MINISTER REV. DR. KIKANZA NURI-ROBINS

My primary role as Consulting Minister is to support the work of the Developmental Minister as his colleague. I bring 25 years of experience as an ordained clergy member, serving congregations in transition, along with 40 years working with schools, government agencies and not-for-profit organizations. It has been my pleasure to be a member of this community, and to serve as your Consulting Minister.

I lead **Worship** at least once a month and serve as **Worship Associate** a few times a year. This year, I have served on the **Committee on Ministries**, provided support to the **Pastoral Care** team, and offered **Spiritual Direction** to a few individuals in the congregation.

I have the primary responsibility for **Rites of Passage**. In that role I contacted several families, whose loved ones died during the pandemic isolation, to let them know that our church was open and could provide an in-person memorial service. I conducted **Memorial Services** for Anita Brenner, Helen Brown, Tom Kafka, Susan Marsh, and Robert Simon Sr.

Wedding preparation includes planning the service, organizing the rehearsal, and meeting with the couple at least three times for marriage preparation counseling. I conducted weddings for Julie Nyquist and Jerry Gates (renewal of vows), Charles and Karen Haskell, and Victoria Nichols and Matt Sugden.

This year I also provided support to the **Religious Education** ministry: I conducted a class on Gender Diversity with Beth Rendiero. I led a class on writing your own theology for the Cominig of Age Program. I conducted Listening Circles to determine hopes and concerns for the Youth RE ministry, and contributed to the planning and facilitating of the pilot Leadership program.



PRESIDENT EILEEN MCCORMACK

My heart is full of love and gratitude for this community. When I think about how we've come through unimaginably difficult circumstances and emerged as a more generous, loving, and dedicated community, I'm moved beyond words. However, since I owe you all some words in the form of the President's Report, I'll do my best. Some of what follows was included in our Tri-President's Developmental Ministry report last month, with some updates.

Our congregation has been leading change to prepare for our next settled ministry. Many of our accomplishments were the result of leaders, staff, and a congregation that was incredibly nimble and resilient during unprecedented times.

In addition, there have been specific accomplishments that were not part of our stated Developmental Ministry Goals, but came about in response to the pandemic, such as creating an online ministry and providing excellent resources for congregations across the country during the pandemic. We continually hear from congregations who utilized materials we developed during the pandemic. We're now accessible in a way that we never have been before!



With all of the demands and adaptations required over the last five+ years, it is easy for us to forget to celebrate the accomplishments of so many members working towards innovation, healing, health, and wholeness, so we offer this non-exhaustive snapshot of some of our developmental ministry progress.

1. WORSHIP

Our worship services have evolved significantly over the years and they touch upon all aspects of our developmental ministry. We developed the Worship Associates program. We've ensured topical services that speak to our developmental goals, multi-religious and multicultural appreciation, the pressing issues of the day, and growth in our commitments to anti-racism and anti-oppression. We've incorporated theme-based ministry to fuse together diverse areas of church life. We've incorporated multiple languages, religious expressions, and grounding in our liberal religious tradition. We are so grateful to our Worship Associates, musicians, technicians, ushers, greeters, coffee hour folks, and all those who make Sundays such wonderful times for our togetherness!



2. PASTORAL CARE

Our Pastoral Care Team provided comprehensive support to the congregation through the pandemic by creating new systems of tracking and outreach and showing up to hold space for spiritual wellness throughout the year. We merged the ministries of Pastoral Associates and CareRing into a unified Pastoral Care Team this year. We are providing monthly spiritual care-giving education to our team and we are so grateful to all of our Pastoral Associates!

3. MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We launched Faith Forward, an innovative program that has helped to provide us with a 360-degree understanding of our Unitarian Universalist faith and the roles and responsibilities of membership. We are now offering monthly Visitor Meetups after our services. This helped us to sustain our membership through the pandemic and we hosted our first New Member Ceremony and welcomed 18 new members who joined during the pandemic. We're ready for another New Member Ceremony service, and will get that scheduled soon. We will also be launching another series of Faith Forward soon! Thank you membership team!

4. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This year we piloted a new leadership developmental program with the Unitarian Universalist Association to help us equip members with the latest best practices and leadership skills to ensure success. We had 15 established and prospective new leaders in the program. I was lucky enough to attend the final session, where some of the participants gave presentations on their experience with the program and their leadership journeys. I was moved and inspired by the presentations. I was also struck by the unique talents and strengths that each of those people bring to our community. Deep gratitude to everyone who is co-creating this space for innovative learning together!

5. HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

We developed a Covenant of Right Relations and participated in UUA trainings to help us live into our promises to each other. This work supports us as we strive to live by our principles and values, model healthy congregational behavior, and be accountable to each other and our community. I am thrilled to announce that, after a somewhat dormant period during the shut down, we've restarted the Healthy



Congregations Team. We are so grateful for the people taking leadership on this team, as well as the many people who are supporting the endeavor.

6. MULTI-GENERATIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Adult Programs and Faith Formation helped to keep us connected through new online meditation programs and a variety of engaging offerings during the pandemic. Our Children's and Youth Religious Education is rebuilding following the challenges of the pandemic. Through tremendous hard work and initiative by volunteers from the congregation, we now have a nascent program, which includes onsite activities, as well as offsite community projects, and Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality education. We've hosted OWL for K-2 and 7-9 in the past two years, reaching a total of 27+ kids as well as instructor training for 13 folks, from across the region. The foundational growth of the Children's and Youth Religious Education program, to date, has exceeded expectations. Volunteers/parents have also instituted First Friday Fun Nights at the church, a monthly gathering for families in our congregation and guest families, with food, fun and games. There was also a delightful service led by our youth, just last week.

We have formed a search committee, which has the goal of hiring a Ministerial Specialist for Religious

Education and Congregational Life before the new church year this autumn. We were also awarded a Spirit Level Matching Grant to help fund this position. This new ministerial specialist role will help us to live into our desire to be a truly multi-generational community. Thank you to those who have joined the search team to take this task on. And thank you to everyone in Adult Programs and Children's and Youth Religious Education!

7. ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION

We established an Intersectional Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Commission which has invited us to introspective work around dismantling white supremacy within ourselves, our communities, and the larger world. The focus of this work is one the Commission on Institutional Change's Widening the Circle of Concern Report, the 8th Principle Project which advocates for the inclusion of an anti-racist and anti-oppressive 8th Principle, and the Beloved Conversations program of Meadville-Lombard Theological School. Over 35 members have participated in at least one course series of Beloved Conversations! We are now engaging in a Common Read to help us better understand the complexity and importance of this liberating work. Thank you to Faith In Action, which has been instrumental in advocating for the common read, and to everyone who is participating.

8. COMMITTEE ON SHARED MINISTRY

We created this new congregational system this year to address how best to prioritize our efforts and share the many dimensions of ministry as articulated in the 8 Practices of Effective Congregational Systems. We hope this will allow us to under-gird sustainability and avoid burnout and over-functioning by staff members and our congregational leaders. We aspire to share our ministry broadly!



9. BYLAWS REFRESH TASK FORCE

A major achievement was that we came together as a congregation and passed refreshed bylaws this year following nearly two years of drafting, consultation, feedback, congregational town halls, and a special Sunday service. The refreshed bylaws will help us live into values of trust, transparency, clarity, simplicity, and interdependence in our governance.

10. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL PROTOCOLS

We continue to establish charters for committees and groups to help us be mission driven and strengthen our grasp on accountability, appropriate decision making authority, consultation, and communication. We are also developing and updating policies across congregational life, from how the Board of Directors functions to what safety measures we have in place for our members. We want all of our policies to be consistent, coherent, and easy to navigate to ensure transparency, clarity, and trust.



11. FINANCIAL HEALTH AND UUA FAIR SHARE GIVING

We will have reached our goal of becoming a Fair Share Congregation in the coming church year! We also raised \$50,000 in matching grant funds to support our capital repair and improvement project, and secured multiple sources of additional funding to help us weather the worst of the pandemic.

This year, despite the extraordinary loss of regular income caused by the pandemic, we are putting forth a balanced budget. This is an amazing accomplishment, as the community has consistently been running a deficit since the 2008 economic crash. Our aim is to continue to operate at little or no deficit, primarily through increased pledge income.

12. STEWARDSHIP

We conducted our most ambitious and comprehensive stewardship campaign in years to help us emerge into our abundance in the coming years. We are grateful for your involvement! Members pledged over \$68,000 more than last year and contributed an additional \$22,000 to our Emergence Fund!

Many have commented on the warm and welcoming spirit embodied by our community and we believe this is a result of the work we've invested in to strengthen our congregation. Developmental ministries are intentional long-term transitional periods because, in

addition to providing time to plant new programmatic, cultural, and spiritual seeds to catalyze transformation, we also have to give time for these plantings to take root and for new learning to be assimilated broadly by the community.

Before I wrap up with a look to the future, I'd also like to thank our departing board members, particularly Beth Brownlie. Beth has spent many years on the board, and was already a fixture when I started as a member at large and she was the board secretary. Since then, Beth has been vice president, president, and past president. Her entire presidency took place while the church campus was closed. I always feel bad about that, but am so grateful for the leadership that she showed as president during the pandemic. Beth - Thank you for bringing us through some nerve-wracking times with skill and kindness.

OUR FUTURE

We still have significant developmental work to complete before we enter the search process for a settled minister. The pandemic created unforeseen needs, challenges, and opportunities. Major remaining work includes: renewing our mission and vision, education and development around structural functional protocols, institutionalizing our stewardship program, rebuilding youth religious

education, strengthening our connections with the wider Unitarian Universalist movement, developing a planned giving program, and achieving greater financial stability.

Our hope is that we can achieve many of these goals within the next two church years and then call our new settled minister. We are grateful for the extraordinary dedication of our minister, staff members, and congregational leaders as we continue on this journey. The progress that we've made, under unimaginably difficult circumstances, is a testimony to our congregation's strength and ability.

If I haven't made it clear, I'm incredibly proud of the community, our staff, and leadership. I'd like to thank all of you for your contributions to this dynamic period of learning and transformation as a community!

Thank you all for listening, and for all that you do for our community.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR NURIT GORDON

This is the first year we are back at Church as Covid restrictions were eased and eventually lifted.

Our budget, which was generated when our programs were not fully on schedule, was pretty close to what was projected and so far, we are on track and might see a small surplus at the end of the fiscal year.

Our generous members helped us obtain a grant to rebuild the Arizona Lobby. We raised \$50,000 and received a grant for the same amount. The construction is still work-in-progress and as with most construction, unforeseen obstacles slow down the process and we hope that in the next few months the work will be done.

We had a successful pledge drive for the 23-24 fiscal year and our member's demonstrated generosity,



raising their pledge amounts for the next year. Dining for Dollars has yielded almost \$30,000 with two auctions this year and rental income, although low, after we lost most of our renters during Covid, is at about 80% of what was budgeted.

Our investments at the UU Common Endowment fund were fluctuating due to changes in the market, while CD's at Self Help Federal Credit Union demonstrated low but steady income.

Over all, our finances this fiscal year showed better income than in previous years although, as I write this report, the fiscal year is not over yet.

We had some changes in admin staff when Sibylla Nash, our Communications Coordinator resigned and we welcomed Esther Chase aboard.

A few months later, Cyndee Hayes, who has been our Admin Assistant for 4 years, retired and Esther, took over her position.

Other Personnel changes took place when the UUA switched from TIAA as their pension plan holder and moved their funds to Empower. It took some training after the switch but now I am up to date.



We have switched our membership data from Church Windows to Breeze, which is more user friendly and accessible on line. It took a long time to transfer the data from one program to the other, not without issues and obstacles, but we slowly learned how to use it, removed all data that was not needed (dupes etc) and the 23-24 pledge year should have accurate data.

Maintenance and upgrading of building this year included tree trimming, fire extinguishers re-filling, we finished the Sanctuary entry Door, we replaced our shade structure which was falling apart, we replaced a part of the linoleum in Forbes, which was coming apart, we got our annual backflow certificate and had a fire alarm and sprinkler testing.

Our Weekly Announcements, monthly newsletter and website went through some changes and we are now at a routine of communications through all the media available to us including Facebook and YouTube, better communications through the weekly announcements and streaming our services.



New members now receive a welcome email from Membership once I provide them with access to the members' only section on our website.

Overall, we had a busy year with many changes, new members, new improvements to our building and a very lively year full of events.

FAMILY MINISTRY (WAS YOUTH RE/ CHILDREN AND YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS)

Wow, we have a lot to celebrate! Thank you to the many hands and hearts that contributed to creating an amazing and successful program this year. Jacki Weber joined the team this summer and facilitated visioning, program, and systems development. Continuing team members included Beth Brownlie (board liaison/ logistics lead), Chris Brown, and Erik Paesel. We were thrilled to welcome new team members Cynthia Littleton, Lisa Moran, Shanna Shaked, and Amy Thiel (our lead on OWL). Thanks to Susie Pickett and Lois Hutchinson who have supported communications. Thanks, also, to JoAn Peters who was a key member of the team as we began erecting our RE tent for the year. We have tried to create an RE structure that is flexible for 21st century families. We have invested in systems that will help sustain the program as it continues to evolve (e.g., using OneChurch as a database and Shared Google Drives for documents). And we think that the systems we have created first in the realm of families will be replicable across the congregation.



We have grown back from three families last spring when we reopened (Shanna's, Erik's, and Beth's) to now communicating with 40 families. We have 21 families registered as of April and new families are appearing regularly. On any given week, attendance now looks like:

- 13 teens and pre-teens in OWL
- 10-12 kinder-elementary schoolers (6-8 present each week)
- 2-4 babies to preschoolers.(1-2 present each week)

FROM A PROGRAMMATIC STANDPOINT, HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

- **First Friday Fun and Games** was co-created by the Youth RE Team and the Women+Community. It's geared to serve families with support from the general population of the congregation. It's been an amazing opportunity for new folks to experience UUSM outside of the formality of church. Over the course of fall and spring First Fridays, participation has grown to almost 30 folks, about 1/4 of whom are routinely new. These kids are now starting to come on Sundays and the families are becoming members. Thanks to the awesome folks in the Women+Community who help put these on!
- **OWL** - We recruited 12 families into middle school OWL and look forward to launching their kids into their high school experience as sexually intelligent adolescents who can be allies to folks of all kinds as they enter high school. We needed more teachers, so we set up our own training here at UUSM. The PWR (Pacific Western Region) of the UUA supported us and Jacki and Beth organized and also did the training (boy, that was hard). Mike, Nick and Lisa were part of this training, too. New this year were two OWL weekends:
- **Super Weekends** (a snow weekend at de Benneville Pines and camping in Ojai). Thanks to these efforts,

the kids bonded and look forward to participating in Coming of Age in Fall 2023. We're super grateful to this year's youth and parent facilitators: Alan Brunell, Beth Brownlie, Leon Henderson-MacLennan, Nick Henning, Mike Monte, Lisa Moran, Beth Rendeiro, Jacki Weber, and Larry Weiner.



- **Soul Matters Curriculum** - This flexible UU curriculum has anchored our weekly "Cottage Kids" programming and has been well received by both kids and volunteer leaders. Cynthia took over from Jacki as lead with our K-5th grade kids in January.

- **Nursery Caregiving** - We began offering weekly nursery caregiving in March and consistently have a couple kids coming who are in the infant-to-preK age group. Deyla Valle is our paid caregiver.

- **Kids Corner in the Sanctuary** - in April we started offering a kids corner in the sanctuary - a carpeted spot up front with some quiet toys where kids can plop down on the floor and feel comfortable for the first part of the service. It's been a great success though we are still experimenting with different offerings.

- **Multigenerational Services** - We held a few multigenerational services this year and hope to grow this aspect of family ministry in 2023.

- **Faith in Action** - Families participated in beach cleanups, gardening days, food donation, Lunches for Bunches, and the Guest at Your Table program. We look forward to expanding these efforts in the new year. We look forward to running OWL for other ages in the fall and Coming of Age and a modified Neighboring Faiths (Lisa Moran is excited to lead this effort!) for all who participated in OWL this year. As part of Family Ministry, we hope to have our youth more front and center as part of the congregation as Youth Worship Associates on particular Sundays and being leads with the smaller kids. We are thrilled at the prospect of an investment in paid staff to continue to develop RE and believe that what's good for Family Ministry is good for

our whole congregation and the larger community! We need your continued support and even though we have these programs in place and they're so successful, it's the result of a huge amount of unpaid work and if we had even more support we could grow our programs more.



ADULT PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Teri Lucas, Judith Martin-Straw, Beth Rendeiro, Sarah Robson, James Witker and Board liaison Larry Weiner meet monthly with a rotating chair. We welcome new committee members.

The Adult Programs Committee serves the mission of UU Santa Monica and affirms the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism by helping to provide a broad selection of programs, activities, and learning opportunities that deepen our spiritual lives, help us explore new perspectives, expand our knowledge, connect more deeply with others, and put our faith



into action in our community and the wider world.

Our primary purpose is to sponsor, develop, market and evaluate programs for personal and spiritual exploration, drawing on the Seven Principles and Six Sources of the UU Living Tradition, the rich history of Unitarian Universalism, and the talents, interests and experience of our members and our allies in neighboring areas.

THE 2022-2023 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE IS AS FOLLOWS:

We saw two new thought-provoking offerings: Exploring Mysticism and Spiritual Practices

with Reverend Jeremiah and Bettye Barclay; and Understanding Gender Diversity, a one-off with Beth Rendeiro and Kikanza Nuri-Robins.

- The meditation groups have proven to be very popular (Open Meditation with Norm Richey and Beverly Shoenberger; Morning Meditation & Check-in: Daily Pulse for Peace, Calm, and Happiness with Jacki Weber)
- We saw the on-campus continuation of the popular SoulCollage™ Workshop with Adrienne Sumpter.
- Bettye Barclay added Denise Helton as a co-facilitator for her Writing for Discernment group, which explores monthly ministry themes.
- Norm Richey returned for the third year with his impactful New Year’s Resolution Workshop.
- The UU Men’s Group is now meeting twice a month, with at least one meeting on campus.
- Rebecca Crawford’s monthly Science Nonfiction group is still going as strong as ever.
- James Witker and Judith Martin-Straw facilitated the first session of an ongoing book study of the book “Mistakes and Miracles - Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism.”
- An upcoming offering includes a new course called “Humanist Readings” which will be facilitated by Tom Hamilton and Bronwen Jones.

We saw however the September 2022 closure of Dorothy Steinike’s Nature Journaling Group, which was initially a way for people to stay connected to nature and to each other during the COVID lockdown and beyond.

We wish to thank all the group facilitators who volunteer their time, talent and care to support the growth, development, learning and camaraderie of our UU and beyond communities. There wouldn’t be adult



programming without all of you! Please let us know if you have ideas for future programs by contacting us at: adultre@uusm.org.



TREASURER VILMA ORTIZ

OVERVIEW

Overall, our financial situation is improving: first, our expenses are stable and predictable; second, while we have not fully recouped income lost during the pandemic, we conducted a successful stewardship campaign where church members committed to giving more. Bottomline is that we are moving toward strong financial health. In other words, we are emerging into abundance.

Overall financial strategy. Our strategy for managing recent and significant financial challenges is to engage in a multi-year process of gradual organizational change. We know from past experiences as well as the experiences of other churches that quick and deep financial cuts during crises can destabilize congregational life. The organizational strategies we are undertaking include invigorated stewardship and renewed fundraising, as well as, careful monitoring of expenses, leaning into emergency reserves, and allowing time to rebuild income streams. By planning organizational changes over several years, we strive to maintain stability in our congregation.

Church budget. Every year, we plan a budget which means we develop a plan of expected expenses and income for the following year. Our expenses are predictable in that they are primarily for staff—minister, musicians, leadership for children/youth



programs, and office support. Income sources include pledges, other donations from church members, and fundraising events. Our income included significant giving by congregational members, including pledges, participation in fundraisers, and Sunday service collection. Rentals have also a significant source of income which declined due to the pandemic.

Ongoing deficits. For the last 15 years, our income has been less than our expenses resulting in deficits of about \$30,000 each year. The reasons for the ongoing deficits are: the initial shock of the 2008-2009 recession, a period of changes in church leadership (five ministers in 15 years), and declining membership. While both income and expenses declined over this period, expenses decreased at a slower rate resulting in deficits. We are fortunate to have savings to cover these deficits. However, we recognize that continuing to draw on our savings to cover deficits is not sustainable. Therefore, a primary goal of the



developmental work that we began in 2017 was to align our income and expenses to end deficit budgets. The initial deficit-reduction plan included intensive fundraising and continued assessment of expenses.

These plans were interrupted by the departure of the first developmental minister and the pandemic. Church finances and pandemic. The pandemic interrupted our financial plans. With the closure of our church facility, several income sources almost disappeared. We lost almost all our rental income when community groups stopped meeting in our space. Secondly, we were unable to conduct our annual successful fundraiser, Dining for Dollars, that relied primarily on in-person contact and communication. Fortunately, we made up for these income losses with pandemic-related support largely from government

sources (Payroll Protection Program; Employment Tax Credit). This meant that deficits for the pandemic years continued at the similar level of approximately \$30,000 a year. As we come out of the pandemic, income losses in rentals and fundraising have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, even though both rentals and fundraising have increased from their lowest pandemic levels.



Future rentals are hard to predict since it's difficult to gauge whether community groups will return to in-person meetings. Our fundraising has improved as we shifted to using more technology although it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Based on our income and expenses up to the end of April 2023, we expect that the deficit at the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year will be around \$25,000.

Savings. We are fortunate to have savings; these were provided by bequests from church members. As of the end of April 2023, we have approximately \$774K. Approximately half of our savings (\$365K) are held in the UUA Common Endowment Fund—a diversified investment fund seeking returns through portfolio allocation and professional asset management with UU socially responsible investing goals. We hold CDs (\$275K) in the Self-Help Federal Credit Union, which seeks to provide financial services to benefit communities that have historically faced systemic barriers to inclusion. In addition, we allocate our savings to various funds earmarked for different purposes: \$275K in the Endowment fund; \$175K to provide housing assistance to a settled minister; as well as funds earmarked for contingency, emergency, catastrophe, and capital needs. To offset deficits, we have used significant amounts of the money in the contingency, emergency, and catastrophe funds.

2023-2024 BUDGET

2023-2024 Income. To compensate for the anticipated lower income next year, we embarked on an ambitious stewardship campaign this spring. This campaign involved engaging every church member about their relationship to the church and included sharing about our success in continuing as a community during the pandemic challenges.

Lastly, we asked every member to reflect on their commitment to the church community, reassess their financial commitment, and complete a pledge

form. This stewardship model was successful! Church members increased their pledge by approximately \$60,000. Additionally, members committed one-time donations to the Emergence Fund of \$20,000. Lastly, we received a grant from the Spirit Level Foundation to help support our invigorated children/youth programs; we will need to raise matching funds for the SLF grant.

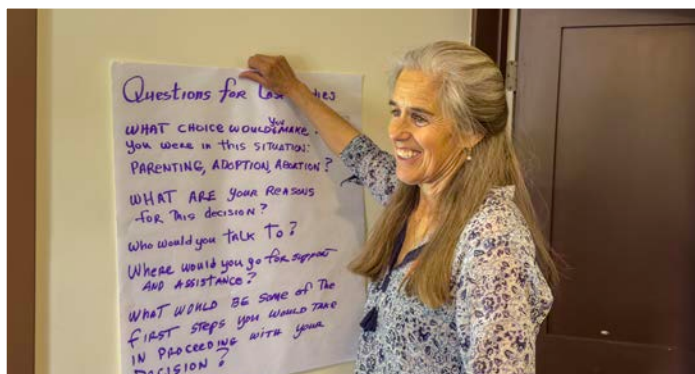
2023-2024 Expenses. Generally, our expenses are stable and predictable. One change in our 2023-2024 expenses is that we will employ a halftime (20 hours a week) staff person for our children/youth programs—Ministerial Specialist. During the pandemic, our prior Religious Exploration program dwindled and we did not know what our Religious Exploration program would look like as we returned to in-person meetings. Fortunately, many families with children, including new families, are attending worship. Approximately 25 children/youth participated in our programs this year. A ministerial specialist will be responsible for the religious education provided to children and youth, as well as lead us toward family-centered, multigenerational ministry. In addition, our budget includes support for our minister and Sunday worship.

We are fortunate to have a rich music program that was central to our virtual worship during the pandemic. It includes a Director of Music that oversees a weekly program with four section leaders and an accompanist and a choir of church members. The cost of the music



program is offset by a grant from the Fletcher Foundation and fundraisers offered by the music program.

Our beloved community is blessed to have many generous members. We are optimistic as we look toward the future as we move toward strong financial health. We appreciate all of our gifts as we *emerge into abundance*.



MUSIC DIRECTOR SAUNDER CHOI

Purpose of committee

To provide and program music for Sunday services, as well as special services and concerts.

Committee members names and roles

- Ryan Humphrey, accompanist and organist
- David Erik Peterson, bass section leader
- Jyvonne Haskin, alto section leader
- Chloé Vaught, soprano section leader
- Kion Heidari, tenor section leader

2022-2023 REVIEWS

• New hires

Hired Kion Heidari to replace Darita Seth; and David Erik Peterson to replace Carl Oser as new tenor/bass section leaders, respectively



• Moving the UUSM Music Library

We temporarily moved the UUSM Music Library to the cottage as the construction at Forbes Hall commenced, blocking access to the choir room

• Regular Choir rehearsals

Choir met for rehearsals regularly every Thursday for the first time post-pandemic. More than rehearsing for music, these regular rehearsals are important for community amongst choir members

• New choir members

- We welcome new choir members Ellen Gill, Kevin Smith, and Kenny Stevenson

- Spanish language hymnal (Las Voces del Camino) Introducing the Spanish language hymnal and its music to the wider congregation

- Gradual increase in the number of times the choir sings in service.

From once a month as we fully reopened in September, to twice a month at the start of 2023.

• Four Major Events

- **Fall Choir concert**, featuring Elizabeth Alexander’s Kindling - a cantata on the UU sources of faith

- **Christmas Eve Service** with full choir and extensive, diverse musical presentation

- **Earth Day concert**, featuring Joshua Shank’s Primavera en Silencio and other works

- Dining for Dollars **Karaoke Night Fundraiser**

GOALS FOR 2023 2024

- Reorganize Music Library as soon as construction in Forbes Hall is finished.

- Develop and expand the UUSM Kazoo Choir

- Singing through the hymnal workshops (co-lead with Jyvonne) – a workshop focused on learning hymnody, context, how to sing it, focusing on Las Voces del Camino and Gospel/Spirituals.

- Greater involvement in music making by



congregation members and the youth

- Have the UUSM Music Program be integral in the development of the new UUA Digital Hymnal, with Saunder as part of the committee

- Music Service with Guest Musician Jim Scott (Fall 2023)

- Christmas Eve services

- Bringing back the UU MLK Choral Festival (a concert that features choirs from the different UU churches in the greater Los Angeles area)

- Spring 2024 concert

- Dining for Dollars Concert (Divas and Drag Queens 2.0) (June 2024)

- Road to Carnegie Hall 2025 (bring UUSM choir to Carnegie Hall like what they did at Neighborhood Church)



PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM

Pastoral care is provided to members of the congregation by networks of pastoral support and care under the supervision of the minister. In a congregation of nearly three hundred members, the minister helps the congregation to take ownership for providing support to our members. You can email pastoralcare@uusm.org if you would like to access support available through Pastoral Care. Your confidential request goes to our Executive Team who then decides how best to respond to the request. You can also send **Joys, Milestones, and Sorrows** to this email address to be shared in our weekly announcements and/or from the pulpit on Sunday Mornings.



Pastoral Care Team Executive Team

The Pastoral Care Executive Team coordinates caring across the groups of the congregation. It consists of the minister Rev. Jeremiah Kalendae, Developmental Minister, co-chairs Denise Helton and Linda van Ligten.

Meetings:

Pastoral Care Executive Team meets on the last Wednesday of the Month from 3-4 PM. (Meetings are confidential)

Pastoral Associates Meets on the 1st Wednesday of the Month from 1:00 – 2:30 PM (Meetings are confidential)

Focus of the 2022-23 Year

February 2022: Our pastoral care leaders have decided to call our new joint effort the Pastoral Care Team and to designate all of its members as “Pastoral Associates.”

May 2022: Circles of Caring

The Pastoral Care Team offered two “Circles of Caring” to hold a pastoral space for the community to meet and reflect upon pastoral needs. The plan is to continue to facilitate these spaces throughout the year



if community members take advantage of the offerings. The dates of these events are as follows:

June 2022: Our newly organized Pastoral Care Team and its Executive Team met and we planned our first Commissioning of Pastoral Associates. This began a practice of “commissioning”.

October 2022 : The Pastoral Care Team met and we put the final touches on our new pastoral care covenant and our new charter which was approved by the Board.

December 2022: The Pastoral Care Team met this month and reviewed the pastoral state of the congregation. We did a holiday card outreach and began work on updating our dataset.

January 2023: Pastoral Care Team recommence with monthly didactic lessons that provide a lay pastoral education for the team. We reviewed pastoral needs in the community and discussed boundary setting and the limits of spiritual caregiving.

February 2023: We mourned the loss and celebrated the life of one of our team’s beloved members: Helen Brown. We also gathered in the midst of the death of beloved community members Joann Woods-Marsden and Robert Simon. We explored death and dying and

the grieving process as it related to pastoral care. We also provided our regular monthly reports on the spiritual care being provided to members.

March 2023: We received our monthly caregiving reports and considered how utilizing designated chaplains at congregational meetings and other events in the life of the church can help to foster and support a culture of pastoral care in the congregation.

April 2023: Updated monthly caregiving reports and planned how we might better offer pastoral hospitality to the congregation and visitors as we planned for the Celebration of Life of our beloved Helen Brown.

May 2023: 2023 Annual Meeting Planning & Annual Report with the goal of having a smooth and loving meeting where all are served. They are working with the Board, Right Relations officials and the Pastoral Care team, who will send 2 Chaplains, to achieve this goal.

DINING FOR DOLLARS COMMITTEE

Karl Lisovsky, chair; Pat Gomez, Greg Wood, Barbara Gibbs, Resa Foreman, Farrokh Allen

This committee has reorganized and refocused post-covid, having had our entire roster of events and goods/services cancelled in March of 2020, even before bidding had begun. That was to be the last “paper” D4\$.

In the new year, 2021, we switched to an online bidding platform: Auctria.com. In our first attempt, events were all held online, and congregants participated to the extent that they could. That first auction had 64 offerings and delivered \$7,329.73 by May 2021.

In 2022, we held two auctions, one in the Summer and one in the Fall. The Summer event felt like a quasi-return to normal, where people were attending events in person, but with plenty of covid awareness and precautions. The event consisted of 36 offerings and generated \$7,823.03.

The second auction of 2022, the one that began in Fall, a bit more like a return to normal, as Covid restrictions loosened up a bit, and we left it up to the hosts and participants to work out any rules. This event was shorter and constrained by the fall



and winter weather, had 27 offerings, and made \$6,022.69.

As of this writing, our current 2023 auction seems promising, but bidding has not yet started. There are 44 items.



FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE PURPOSE

FDMC supports the vision and mission of UUSM. FDMC's objective is to create and maintain a healthy, safe, attractive and accommodating campus for staff, members, and visitors. FDMC's role is to provide budget planning, direction, oversight and coordination and historical design direction of all operations, maintenance, repair, and capital projects impacting the buildings, grounds, and furnishings. For further detail refer to the committee charter and RACI chart.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ROLES

- Co-Chairs: Brad Hutchinson, John Zinner
- Board Liaison: Beth Brownlie
- Staff Liaison: UUSM Administrator Nurit Gordon
- Members: Karl Lisovsky, Alison Kendall (Green

Living Committee Liaison), Bryan Oakes, AIA (Architectural Advisor)

- Beth Brownlie (Design and Historic Design Advisor), Johnny Canales.
- Other UUSM members assist with specific projects

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A 7500 watt Solar System with photovoltaic (PV) roof panels has been ordered and will soon be installed. This was timed to lock in the current financially-beneficial rates before they ended March 30. The result of good and careful planning by the Green Living Committee, the \$24,300 cost, almost fully raised, includes a \$7,300 rebate to UUSM, for a net cost of \$17,000. The estimated savings is \$200/month. See further details on this from GLC Chair Alison Kendall's summary in our May 2023 newsletter.

The Forbes Hall Arizona entrance subsidence/ structural repair and addition of garden door is ongoing. Additional structural repair was found to be required resulting in additional time and additional design and planning needed to finish.

Shade structure covering was old and UV damaged. Tough weather tore it off. Proper replacement was quickly identified and successful replacement installation was made.

- Sanctuary front door is 95% complete and safely operational. Weather stripping to be added in.
- Front door side window replacement: it has been a challenge to find a manufacturer. One is now found and an order is placed. To be complete by summer 2023
- Completed selection and installation of new plants in the Sanctuary.
- Ongoing project-Facilities Master Plan: Began work on first draft of campus operations & maintenance procedures manual. Continued efforts on the list of all durable equipment and facilities, including their projected life span, the best time to replace, and the expected replacement cost.
- Our water bills have shown occasional gross overuse without a pattern, which made little sense. An extensive and long effort to find a leak was not successful. We asked the city for assistance. In early 2023, UUSM received a \$1,000 refund from the city.



- Painted front metal gates, memory garden stucco wall to main gate
- Awaiting estimate from iron works contractor to fix latches on two front gates.

NEXT FISCAL YEAR OBJECTIVES

- Expect completion of Solar (photovoltaic) panel installation and associated electrical system integration.
- Complete Arizona lobby entrance subsidence/ structural repair.
- Expect completion of front door side windows replacement by summer 2023.
- Ongoing project - Facilities Master Plan: expect completion on first draft of campus operations & maintenance procedures manual. Expect completion on the list of all durable equipment and facilities, including their projected life span, the best time to replace, and the expected replacement cost. Design directives for our historic building and campus to be further clarified for future project planning and project management.
- Begin prep and planning to replace Sanctuary and Forbes Hall heating system with electric heat pumps



that provide heating and cooling, while reducing our carbon emissions.

- Ongoing lighting adjustments and additions with new electrician
- Practice 8 elements of effective congregational ministries.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Karl Lisovsky, Outgoing Chair

Formerly known as the Nominating Committee, and often referred to as NomCom, pursuant to UUA recommendations and under the guidance of Reverend Jeremiah, the committee has been re-named and re-imagined to focus on leadership development generally, as well as fulfilling its original mission of assembling a slate of candi-dates for the annual election.

Regarding the name, however, it is possible that people will continue to refer to this committee as the Nominating Committee, just for the sake of



convenience and brevity.

At the same time, the committee has been relieved of its charge of nominating members of policy committees, such as Finance and Personnel, which henceforth will be handled by the Board. So, from now on, Nominating and Leadership Development will nominate only Board members, as well as members of the Nominating Committee.

During 2022-2023, this committee was chaired by Karl Lisovsky. Other members include: Sheila Cummins, Dan Patterson, Wendi Gladstone, and Teresa Castelli. Because of a timing gap a few years ago, where one member resigned early, both Karl and Sheila will be stepping down. New members will be John Zinner and Haygo Salibian.

This year’s work included, in addition to replacing our two out-going members, nominating Rebecca Crawford as treasurer, Trish Brassard and Audrey Erbes as members-at-large, and putting Vilma Ortiz into the vice-president’s role and Norm Richey as the remaining member-at-large. All were elected in the Congregational Meeting.

FAITH IN ACTION COMMISSION: PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

James Witker

In the Spring of 2022, PSJ returned to meeting regularly in-person on 3rd Sundays at 12 PM — now outside in the courtyard. After more than two years of mostly Zoom, it was rejuvenating to be back and to welcome new faces. In addition to regular committee members Deirdre Dietel, Jila Tayefehnowrooz, Roberta Frye, and Kate MacQueen, we were joined this year by Audrey Erbes, Sandra Trutt, and Rima Snyder.



Following is an overview, but not an exhaustive accounting, of activities over the past year.

With the impending overturning *Roe v. Wade*, we increased our focus on how UU congregations and the interfaith community are working to support reproductive rights in the changing political and legal landscape. In late Spring and Summer, several of us attended a three-part online workshop via the UUA on this topic, and we looked for ways to be of further service.

In May, PSJ helped to organize UUSM's participation in the rally for reproductive rights in Downtown LA with Planned Parenthood and the Women's March.

About a dozen members and Rev. Jeremiah met in Grand Park to join the rally — our first in-person event of this kind since before the pandemic.

In June, PSJ organized and funded UUSM's participation in the 2022 LA Pride Parade. The event moved to Hollywood, which presented unexpected logistical challenges. Participation from UUSM members and friends was very low relative to previous years — despite multiple pulpit announcements and Newsletter articles — with a handful of supporters including Rev. Jeremiah, Amy Brunell, James Witker, Leonard Cachola, Jila Tayefehnowrooz, Deirdre Dietel, and Peggy Kharraz. Nevertheless, the group represented UUism's long-standing commitment to LGBTQIA+ rights and had fun.

In October, PSJ worked with the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council (including Rev. Jeremiah) to organize a reproductive rights rally as a counter-protest to a large Christian Anti-Abortion event taking place on the Santa Monica Pier. A dozen or so UUSM members attended with support from the Women+ community. The event generated local press coverage.

In late Fall, we began to study and discuss the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism, which calls for dismantling the legacy of institutional racism in UU congregations and a greater commitment to anti-racism. We resolved to advocate adoption of the 8th Principle at UUSM, and asked the board to support that effort. Relatedly, we looked to the possibility of an in-person workshop on anti-racist identity for white people with an outside expert (deferred to next year). PSJ also helped to plan our congregation's participation in this year's special Common Read, "Mistakes and Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism," in collaboration with the Adult Programs Committee and Intersectional Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression Commission. (The Common Read began in Spring 2023 with the support from the Board.)

In the Winter of 2023, we spent time learning about the unprecedented citizen uprising in Iran. In February, we hosted special guest Prof. Ali Akbar Mahdi of CSUN to speak in the Sanctuary about the protest movement and the ongoing Iranian struggle for human rights.

In the Spring of 2023, PSJ promoted and organized UUSM's participation in the 8th Annual LA Interfaith Solidarity March (April 30th), an event that our congregation has supported since it began in 2016 as a response to increasing rhetoric and hate crimes against religious minorities.

Our application to participate in the 2023 LA Pride was accepted, and planning for that will commence shortly as if this report.

FAITH IN ACTION COMMISSION: UU THE VOTE

Jacki Weber

UU the Vote is a wonderful program of the Unitarian Universalist Association that helps UU congregations promote democratic participation in accordance with our Fifth Principle.

This year the UUA created a competition to encourage congregations to up their game in promoting democratic participation by creating a status of “Good Trouble Congregation” for congregations who could hit extraordinary benchmarks related to promoting democratic participation. Only 24 congregations nationwide achieved this status. UUSM was one of them.



Between July and December 2022, 55 UUSM congregants and friends worked with Reclaim Our Vote and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice to promote participation in the primary election in FL, general election in AZ and GA, and the GA runoff. We also knocked on 500+ doors to help pass Measure ULA in Los Angeles (a transfer tax on mansions that pools revenue to address housing affordability in Los Angeles).

We wrote postcards before services beginning in July. We hosted Postcard Parties during September and October. We wrote blog posts promote youth poll workers, supporting the USPS, ballot initiatives that affect our values. We sent 5,800 postcards, registered 50 Voters, knocked on 500+ doors to help pass Measure ULA, and recruited two poll workers. By the end, more than 50 congregants participated in UU the Vote Activities.

We attempted to develop a shared leadership module that was partially successful but the urgency of the work really did require some professional support.

Jacki Weber is a community organizer and fundraiser by day, so she brought her skills to bear to push forward the initiative. She'll be recruiting a team to carry on the initiative in the coming year.

FAITH IN ACTION COMMISSION: GREEN LIVING/GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

Alison Kendall, Chair, Beverly Alison, Siobhan Braybrook, Barbara Filet, Carl Hoppe, Karl Lisovsky, Elle' Long, Kate MacQueen, Shanna Shaked, Kent Strumpell, James Witker, Greg Wood, Linda van Ligten

The Green Living Committee, part of the Faith in Action Commission, meets monthly on the first Sunday of the month at 11:30 PM on Zoom or in SE Cottage. We have an active core of about eight members, a large email list and partnerships with other church groups for programs.

Paul Robeson Wellness Center and Community Services Unlimited Support: With our fall 2021 Generous congregation donation we continue to support our Environmental Justice partners at Community Services Unlimited, Inc. a South LA non-profit organization working on healthy food access and community empowerment. In April 2020, as the pandemic lockdown restrictions tightened, a group of UUSM members organized a Santa Monica Produce Bag Drop Off Center. With Linda van Ligten and Greg Wood driving and Alison Kendall and Francois Bar hosting the “Veggie Garage” pick up center, members provided financial support to CSU while getting delicious local organic produce.



UUSM Garden Planting Events: Green Living hosted a highly popular Garden Planting event last fall to replant along the edge of the low stucco walls on 18th Street and Arizona. With about \$700 of donated plant material, an enthusiastic group of twenty, aged two to 80, planted the area with an array of drought tolerant plants. Several grandparents and their grandchildren attended, and everyone enjoyed the chance to see each other and enjoy our beautiful church campus together. The plants are flourishing and interest is high in tackling the Vegetable Garden and back patio area soon. A Garden Tour featuring drought tolerant plants

is planned by Committee members Greg Ward and Beverly Alison.

Earth Sunday Service and Green Living Fair 2022
The Green Living Committee worked with Worship Associate Alison Kendall on the Earth Sunday Service on April 24, 2022. After the service we held a Green Living Fair which featured over ten volunteers who shared information on Sustainable Vegan Food,



Waterwise Organic Gardening, Green Home Retrofits, Active Bicycle Commuting and Carbon Dividend Climate Action.

For next year we plan to encourage member political involvement to address Climate Change and Environmental Justice. We are working with CCL to raise awareness of the need for federal Climate Action.

(NOTE: though I've been given a pointed retirement date of 2021, I've been unable to recruit another chair, so I'm continuing for another year)—Alison Kendall, Green Chair greenchair@uusm.org



FAITH IN ACTION COMMISSION: LUNCHES 4 BUNCHES

Lauren Poole, Rebecca Haggerty, Jacki Weber

The Lunches 4 Bunches ministry is a program that invites us to share in preparing and delivering 55 bagged lunches to our unhoused neighbors every Sunday. This effort takes place during coffee hour under the shade structure in the courtyard. Occurring once a month before the pandemic began, it now occurs every week. Previously (and through July 2023) this ministry was funded by donations. Beginning with the 2023-24 church year, it will be fully funded through

our operating budget, illustrating a congregation-wide commitment to this ministry.

From March 2022 through April 2023, we will have prepared and delivered close to 3000 lunches. Each week a number of different congregants, ranging from 3 or 4 people to 10, participate. It is a multigenerational ministry involving children and youth and providing a space for newcomers and older members to easily mingle. Lunches consist of a pre-packaged sandwich, fresh fruit, a package of cheese or nuts, a snack, a small dessert, and a bottle of water. These items are chosen to comply with regulations and provide a convenient and appealing meal for our unhoused neighbors. The items are bagged in an assembly line manner as conversation makes the work quick and easy. Each Sunday a different person from our committee “hosts” - setting up the assembly line and delivering the lunches to the People’s Concern Annenberg Access Center, a nearby resource for unhoused people. The lunches are distributed every Monday.

Our church is the only organization that supplies weekly lunches, relieving the staff of that duty once a week and, importantly, putting our faith in action. In February 2023, we received the following message from



the Access Center Program Director, Charlie L. Jackson, “Thank you so much. Your contribution really helps our clients and gives them something to look forward to.” This month she told us “Your church has been so gracious with the lunches. Thank you for all that you do.”

We currently have eight active “hosts” and six others served as hosts earlier in the program year. We recently adopted the leadership style of having two co-coordinators responsible for scheduling hosts and ordering supplies. Crucial to our team are Esther Chase and Nurit Gordon who receive, unpack and put away the goods. Our intent is to rotate the co-coordination of this ministry among the hosts and to continuously invite new people to join us. Co-coordinators, under

this model, have the chance to rest, recharge and rejoin or to engage in other congregational work.

In the upcoming church year, we plan to organize a congregational visit to the Access Center and to work on offering more healthy options in our lunches. We are restricted to using mostly pre-wrapped and non-perishable items.

This ministry is a simple and accessible way to extend our ministry beyond our doors and our



congregation. It is a meaningful way to let the spirit shine through us and among us each Sunday.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Norm Richey, Chair; Cynthia Cottom, Barbara Gibbs, Carol Ring, Trish Brassard, Sarah Robson, Larry Weiner, Gretchen Goetz, Adrienne Sumpter, Johnny Canales

The Membership Committee is one of the most important committees in our UU Church Community. A committed and participatory membership is the life blood of any congregation.

MISSION

- welcome and reach out to new visitors
- help and facilitate visitors becoming members
- integrate new members into the life of the congregation,
- cherish, nurture, and support existing members,
- actively seek potential new members.

An important goal of the Membership Committee is to ensure that all members have the best possible experience as they explore and participate in UU Congregational life. The Committee works closely with the Minister, the Board of Directors, the office staff, and other committees in order to fulfill its mission.

ACTIVITIES:

Members have been quite excited in returning to in-person Sunday Services the past several months.

- An important arm of the Membership Committee is the **Greeter Team and Visitor/New Member Welcoming table**, under the excellent coordination of Barbara Gibbs. The Greeter team welcomes new visitors and members at the entrance to the church before service, and the Visitor/New Member Welcoming table on the courtyard is open for business after Service to engage with them, hand out visitor or membership packets and answer questions. The Greeter Team provides directions as needed and invites visitors to fill out and wear visitor name tags. Visitors are also invited to sign up to receive Thursday announcements electronically, as well as the online monthly newsletter.

- Carol Ring, Barbara Gibbs and Sarah Robson took on the task of **revising the Membership Packet that is handed out to prospective members.**

- On **January 22nd, during Sunday Service, the congregation welcomed 16 new members in a beautiful New Member Ceremony that was organized by Gretchen Goetz.** It is very good news that we now have 8 new members with the very likelihood of a few more this month so that we can schedule another New Member Ceremony next month.



- During the past year, Norm has been attending a weekly Zoom meeting of the **Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals**, representing various UU Churches from around the country. It is an opportunity to collaborate and share all aspects of Membership, along with the challenges, and the creative ideas to meet these challenges. It's a wonderful resource for membership information and ideas, and a chance to meet other UU's who have a passion for membership.

- **Visitor Meet-Up** now meets the first Sunday of every month after Service at 11:45 am. We encourage new visitors to grab a cup of coffee and join us for the opportunity to learn about Unitarian Universalism, to learn about UUSM and to learn about the various programs we have to offer for intellectual and spiritual growth. UUSM is a wonderful opportunity to develop a sense of community and loving support.

The Membership Committee is looking forward to the coming Church year when we will undertake an important task of reimagining the structure of the Committee. One idea is to look systemically as to how

new visitors and members are engaged in the life of the congregation, and to move more intently in that direction. A possible new name for the committee could be The **Membership Engagement Council**. We are also taking an in-depth look at how we can engage new visitors in a more heartfelt manner and how systemically we can improve their first time experience here at UUSM. We have found that a number of new visitors do not return after the first visit. Our intent is to increase the number of new visitors who return and then take the path to membership..

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Lois Hutchinson, Chair

It was a huge year for the Comm Team! After years of effort, we launched the refreshed and renovated website (uusm.org) in September. It displays a simplified, impressive presentation of all we are and all we are up to. The new design is attractive and visitor friendly. This effort involved the several cogs of communications working together synchronously. It's not quite a well-oiled machine, but coming along, and it's so much easier to update. Check back weekly for fresh news and events along with other changes. We couldn't have done it without the acumen and extraordinary efforts of volunteer Co-Webmasters Pam Teplitz and Liz Fuller and staff Communications Coordinator Esther Chase. Credit is also due our extraordinary photographer Carol Ring.

A full archive of all the video services is available for viewing 24/7 on the site, though we are reviewing this process. And the former, standalone UUSM Newsletter site is now a News section right on the main uusm.org site. An attractive public-facing calendar includes images for all events, while a separate reservations calendar is still available to staff. Both the public-facing calendar and the News posts feed into the redesigned weekly Thursday Announcements. And certain News posts are regularly shared to social media. When new members join the church, staff assigns them a login to the members-only section of the website right away.

The Comm Team hosted an online Website Welcome Wagon to show members around the new neighborhood, and a second Zoom with volunteer event organizers was informative for all parties. We continue to try to ease coordination among the Thursday Announcements, social media, and Order of Service. And the veteran News team definitely needs fresh blood. If you have marketing or website experience, please contact CommTeam@uusm.org and help us spread the word on all our congregation has to offer.

ART WALL

Beverly Alison

The art wall did not start to show until the beginning of this year, post the pandemic restrictions.

Our committee goal is to challenge, inspire and give pleasure through our varied presentations. We hope to broaden perspectives and enrich our time together sharing art. We are excited about this coming year and the art wall calendar is currently being scheduled. We also look forward to being introduced to new artists through your suggestions. Please email Beverly to introduce her to artists you admire.





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**REPORT
ON PROGRAMS**

2022-23

