We unite to strengthen the bonds of kinship among all persons; to promote human dignity; and to increase reverence for life's creating, sustaining, and transforming power through worship, study, and service.

Presented prior to the Annual Meeting to be held on May 21, 2017
A Song for the Unsung  
by Steve Crump

You make the coffee, set up the tables, and organize the cleaning, when the rest of us have gone home.  
You know where the brooms and the supplies are kept.  
You run to the store in the nick of time.  
You find the great stuff to sell at the fundraiser.  
You remember to use “I” language.  
You speak passionately with a clear voice and listen with open-mindedness.  
You consider your tone when you speak.  
You say you want to be part of the solution, part of the healing, by hanging in there.  
You come up with new ideas.  
You gracefully accept the group choosing someone else’s idea.  
You step up to make the extra contribution.  
You make welcoming room for others.  
You acknowledge children and are happy to be around them.  
You hold a child, hold a confidence, hold a hand.  
You go the extra mile, contribute the extra dollar, and give the benefit of the doubt.  
You know that congregational life is all about relationships.  
And because you know this, your spiritual discipline of forgiveness is always at hand.  
You, with your presence alone, offer a holy companionship.  
You accompany others in their dark night of the soul.  
You do what you do because you can.  
You often wish you could do more.  

You labor not for praise or for a song but for the good in the doing of work.  

But we sing this song of praise for you – the unsung in our congregation.  
And our hearts are glad in the singing because we know the many things you do.  
We appreciate you very much.
Our Vision
We come together as a congregation to inspire our quests for the spiritual, ethical, and meaningful in life and to advance respect, compassion, and justice in the wider world.

Our Mission
Countryside is seen as the growing voice and source of liberal religion in the northwest Chicago suburbs by…

…creating a place of inclusiveness, welcome, connectedness, compassion and respect
…providing for the spiritual and intellectual growth of members of all ages
…cultivating a vital future for our congregation and community through thoughtful stewardship of our financial resources and our environment
…acting on a social conscience

To serve our mission and make real our vision, we engage with one another and with this congregation in the light of these

Aspirations of Membership:
To the extent that my life circumstances permit, as a member of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist I will:
• Attend Sunday services and congregational meetings
• Seek out and share opportunities for spiritual, ethical, and meaningful growth
• Engage in congregational projects, programs, or events that reach beyond the church
• Engage in congregational projects, programs, or events that support the life of the church
• Strive to give 3 - 5% of my income to support the mission of the church
• Share with others outside the church the value of my membership at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist

Covenant of Right Relationship
In my relationship with the CCUU community and in keeping with our UU values, I will strive to:
• Take responsibility for my words and actions by being honest and respectful in my speech, while listening to others with an open mind and heart;
• Be sensitive to possible conflicts, and be willing to work toward solutions using available resources, accepting that some differences may not be resolvable;
• Respect and support the diversity within our congregation, and work to create and maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all.
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There is much to celebrate as another church year draws to a close. There is a lot of activity in each of our ministries, both maintaining programming and activities that continue to provide sustenance and meaning for our members, as well as new initiatives. We are very fortunate to have a highly skilled staff that is working effectively as a team to bring new ideas and initiatives that will help us thrive as a congregation. We also benefit from the energy and drive of many of you, our volunteers. All of us, working together, have the future of Countryside in our hands.

There have been exciting innovations, like the drive to ‘go solar’ this year. There have been programs open to the community, as well as teams within our congregation working to deepen our ability to understand and develop positive responses to a society that has an increasing amount of diversity of all kinds. We continue to support partners that are making a difference in our community. Our staff continues to initiate programs that serve all ages and will allow us to strengthen the connections between ages as well.

Our congregation is growing again, both in membership and in the number of visitors that are coming through our doors – many of them families. Many thanks go to our staff and our volunteer membership team for all the work they have been doing to help those visitors make connections. Those of you that are part of a Sunday morning team have made an impact on our growth in membership as well. Your smiling face as you greet people at the door or contribute in other ways on Sunday morning makes a difference in helping all of us, members and visitors alike, feel welcome.

Last year and throughout this year, the board has continued to work with you and with our staff to create a sustainable future for our congregation. We have made progress, especially in connecting with more families and in growing as a more environmentally sustainable congregation. We continue to work towards establishing more transparency and communication about decision-making at the board level, as well as continuing to develop a more integrated approach in planning and implementing programs and initiatives to use our staff and volunteer capacity more efficiently.

There continue to be challenges in funding a budget that allows us to maintain our building, to support our staff in implementing the programming we have said as a congregation we want, and to support the larger Unitarian Universalist (UU) community. Our congregation is a vital part of the larger UU community, and they need our support. Our building and our staff provide a place for us to gather to support each other and to be in community with each other. Our staff and our building provide diverse opportunities as a place for each of us to grow and to enrich our lives, as well as to enrich the community in which we are located.

Many responded to the need to increase their financial support of our budget. A majority of our congregation either increased their pledge or maintained their pledge despite challenging economics for many. We will always have members who are in transition, either due to job loss or changes or moving into more fixed-income stages of their lives. Right now, that includes families that in the past were some of our larger donors. The largest source of our income is and will always be the pledges of our members and friends. We are making strides and will continue to need to work on having a budget in which a larger proportion of our congregation shares the load of that responsibility. We also need to take steps to increase other sources of income and to manage our debt so that the average pledge needed to have a fully funded budget is manageable by most. We will be discussing some of those options at our annual meeting.

I hope that you will read through this report to see the wide range of activities that represent our acting on our UU principles and making our vision and our mission real. If you are looking for a way to make a meaningful contribution or to find a source of support, I believe you can find it in these pages. If you are already active in one area, I hope you will consider getting involved in something new. Countryside is a place where you can come to find sustenance of the soul and of the mind. It is also a place where each of us can make an immediate and substantial difference, within and beyond our walls, when we support our congregation with our time and our talent, as well as our financial support.

We need your thoughtful presence at our Annual Meeting. Come hear our plans for our future and be a part of making them happen. Come join us in sharing ways to build a sustainable future for Countryside!

In Faith,
Karen Noorani
President, Board of Trustees
I am writing the Annual Report in late April – when our monthly theme is “transformation,” and this year has truly been a journey of transformation in the life of this congregation and this minister.

This was our Director of Lifespan Religious Education’s (Jules Jaramillo) first full year here since she started in January 2016. It was Janice Razaq’s first year back as staff pianist. It was our first year with a half time Religious Education Assistant. And it was our second year with our surefooted and gifted Ministerial Intern, Eileen Wiviott. And our Music Director, Alison Vernon, has settled in. All of these things combined to make this a galvanizing, energetic, and creative year at CCUU.

As a result of the partnership with our DLRE, we were able to engage themed ministry this year. This is something I’d hoped to do for some years, and this year, we were able to begin to implement it. This provided greater coherence between our worship and our religious education, our small groups, and our reflection as a whole congregation. If we have the staff support, over time that can continue to expand – to inspire wider congregational conversations, projects, and programs and to embrace the visual arts, our public messaging, congregational events, website, Facebook page, and other forms of communication. The results this year were subtle but deep. Our Music Director even composed some pieces for use in worship to go with the themes, and a few members of the congregation stepped forward to share works of art that connected with a few themes. We will continue with Themed Ministry next year, and with the additional input and involvement of our Ministry Council, we will be able to share the themes even more widely. Providing experiences and materials is only half of the equation. For spiritual growth to happen, each person needs to choose to show up and engage.

You can read more about our Lifespan Religious Education/Study program as you read Jules’s report. I have been inspired this year by the new vision and directions of our program. Study Ministry took on new depth with the added support of an RE assistant. We were not only sad to lose Lisa Vanderbleek, but with her ability to free our DLRE from some of the avalanche of administrative detail and material-supply wrangling, she made a number of wonderful things possible. Upon Lisa’s departure, the number of significant projects that Jules was able to undertake in addition to the regular volunteer coordination, curriculum adjustment, and program coordination vanished in the welter of work that the Assistant would have been handling. Our Coming of Age Program became trailblazing as Jules Jaramillo worked to coordinate the first youth-oriented Civil Rights Pilgrimage with the Living Legacy group. It will take another year to bring the project to full fruition, given the need for numbers larger than our own congregation, but it was visionary enough to get our RE program in the UU World magazine this year. In addition, I am excited to watch the growth and development of the Family Ministry Program that our DLRE innovated this spring. It has already generated new energy, participation, and vision among our families. The DLRE and I are planning to provide more adult faith development programs beginning in the fall.

This year, I was grateful that when the Netflix series 13 Reasons Why came out – a series that highlights the suicide of a teenage girl for 13 episodes – Jules, with her training and background in social work, crafted and distributed an immediate response and resources for our congregation. I have seen the often viral nature of suicide among adolescents and saw the series as a possible factor in helping and also perhaps in hurting, this epidemic. DLRE Jaramillo watched the series and wrote a thoughtful response and provided such wonderful materials that – much to her surprise – they were shared outside the congregation and now the UUA youth programming website has decided to publish them online.

With the hire of a new Assistant in the works, we look forward to a Lifespan program that will enable us to be truly relevant, to serve and to cultivate new generations of Unitarian Universalists, to respond to the evolving needs of our members as well as the evolving needs in the wider community that could draw people here for our special message, and to deepen the shared spiritual life of this congregation.

I look forward at the new year to the implementation of our Enrichment, Engagement, and Empowerment program. It will be a multifaceted program to enable every person to get more out of life here and in the wider world. I also look forward to the Adult Faith Credo course that will be offered in the fall.

This year’s worship has been increasingly rich. After Alison Vernon’s enthusiastic report on the UU Musicians Network workshop with Marcia McFee, an outside-the-box worship consultant, the verger team became even more interested in exploring new forms for worship. I was so impressed that Alison and I are both attending McFee’s Spring workshop on Worship Design. Worship Council is looking forward to exploring new ways to share the message of our faith on Sundays and during the week.
After years of hoping for a Children’s Choir, it has been a pleasure to see Alison work with our kids as they learn how to sing in a choir. It’s also been a blessing that Alison was able to work with Greg Schultz to bring the Peace River Band to our worship almost monthly. These are enthusiastically received services. The band allows us to broaden the ways in which we worship. Alison has continued to draw in new musicians which adds so much to services and adds so much to people’s lives as they learn to share their gifts with the congregation.

For another year, we have been truly fortunate to have the trombone artistry of Charlie Vernon generously shared with us on many Sunday mornings and on High Holy days – such as Easter and Christmas.

We have expanded our use of the screen on Sundays to encourage more people to look up from the hymnal and to share the message through the arts, the spoken word, and the integration of many media on the screen.

The growing social action at CCUU has been inspiring to witness. Many people come here because they want to be among people who put their faith and principles into action. The Beloved Conversations program was a profound experience for the people who participated. Ideally, it will be something that we do again a few times at least so that more and more people have the opportunity to do the deep work of seeing the world through an even wider lens. The Black Lives Matter Initiative continues to bring important programs to CCUU. Our already existing relationships with Partners for Our Community (POC) and with Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants (ICDI) showed their real value when we were able to hold the Interfaith Love Your Neighbor Vigil this winter. It was an inspiring event that has continued to connect us and in some cases, reconnect us with the larger community in the Northwest Suburbs. I and a number of members of CCUU attended an open house at the mosque in Schaumburg in the fall and at the mosque in Rolling Meadows this spring. An interfaith event at the Sikh Gurdwara in Palatine will happen in May. In November, I was honored to participate in the Thanksgiving/Bread breaking service at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Schaumburg; the theme was Welcome the Stranger. In a service that included only unleavened bread, I was also honored to be invited to the women’s Passover Seder at Beth Tikvah, an event attended by over a hundred women.

This was a year of tremendous social challenge. There is always a measure of tension and stress during a presidential election, but this past year’s election awakened a sense of concern and a commitment to justice and compassion in this nation, around the world, and in this congregation. In the fall, I took a webinar on religious communities and social action to learn more about the legal and tax implications of party politics in a congregational setting. The bottom line – focus on the issues and not the parties. We held a soup dinner the night after the election, and it was heartening to see people gather and speak not of party politics but of social justice, not of their concerns for themselves but for the most vulnerable among us, not of hatred but of love.

The election has inspired many to seek out spiritual community, and at CCUU, it has been no different. In our congregation and in others, the number of seekers has nearly doubled. This has meant discovering a renewed sense of commitment and finding new kindred spirits to share that with. It was telling this year that not only did nearly 100 households raise their pledges, but people stepped up to pledge even before they joined. As the minister, this makes me profoundly aware of our responsibility to be sure not only that we walk our talk but that we talk our talk beyond our walls. It is past time to share our good news.

As more people have begun to attend, we have had a significant increase of new members. Much credit goes to our membership team including Tom MacTavish, Kay Grede, Siri Laurin. It is always a pleasure to speak with our path class participants, to learn their stories, and to share some of the story of Unitarian Universalism. In our last class, 10 people signed the membership book, and it was inspiring to hear their stories.

I work in close partnership with our Board of Trustees. It is a vibrant relationship, and I watched as this great Board wrestled with tough issues. No Board escapes without its share of criticism, but this Board has worked together in a truly covenantal and creative way. I have appreciated the wise leadership of Karen Noorani, who has the capacity to understand and respect the past and history of this congregation while pressing toward the future, to balance the fiscal concern of a congregation with the imperative to live our faith, to see both the larger picture and the policies, procedures, and individual people who make the larger picture possible. Our incoming Board President, Christine Organ, brings significant vision and energy to that position, and I look forward to the upcoming year.

The social challenges that we face as a society and a planet pushed the Board of Trustees to support the Green Sanctuary Team in raising the funds for solar panels for the roof. It was a decision to serve the constituency that cannot speak – our earth. It was a risky and bold decision. We ran the risk of having funds diverted from our annual budget by people cutting back on their pledges and giving to the Solar Panel project instead. The majority of people who pledged to the Solar project also increased their pledges to the church, but not by a significant enough dollar amount to offset the number of people who cut back on their pledges for other, largely economic, reasons. I believe that when we are able to install the solar panels on the roof in the summer and celebrate them
in the fall, we will see both the tangible and intangible benefits of this bold decision. I believe that worshipping and working under the panels will inspire and hearten us. I believe that we will be proud to pull up to our earth-friendly building, knowing that we are really living our 7th principle and choosing to think and act like a faith community. It was a decision to lead with active hope instead of managing with crippling caution. There are costs to having done this, but I believe in the long run, we will find ourselves feeling more at home – at CCUU and on our earth. And perhaps in the not so long run, it will inspire greater generosity as we live more openly and fully into our faith.

I am sad to have the internship of Eileen Wiviott draw to a close, but she is ready for our ministry. The presence of an intern does make demands on the time of the minister but it also brings a new energy and new programming to a congregation. The evening worship services, the strengthening of our membership program, and the implementation of the Beloved Conversations Program this year were all gifts in which Eileen Wiviott’s internship played a role. While she came to our Advisor/Advisee relationship with considerable gifts for ministry already in place, I have watched her grow over the five years that we have worked together. This congregation had a wonderful history of growing excellent ministers with the Reverend Ruppert Lovely, and it has meant so much to me to play a role in that history. I regret that our plan to slowly increase a budget line to allow for future internships is one of the sacrifices that we had to make for our budget to meet our pledge income this coming year. [The plan: to create a budget line for an internship with $1000 the first year, which we began this year, and then increase it by $1000 each year for six years. During that time, the funds raised would either be rolled back into the capital reserve or used for smaller part-time internship opportunities. At the sixth year, the funds would be held for one year, and the next year, the total of $12,000 would be used to bring in an intern. Each year after that, the congregation would sponsor an internship every other year. I believe that we are the only UU congregation in the greater Chicago area without a regular internship.] If we are not able to address our budget shortfalls, it may be an even longer time before we are able to bring future internships to CCUU.

We began this year with the sad loss of Donna Calwas in September. It was a sobering start to the year. It is a blessing to be a human community together – to share our lives. And it regularly wakes us to the fullness of life – in all its sorrow and gladness.

I had hoped and planned to take some portion of sabbatical time this upcoming year and the year after – 6 months spread over two years. The funds needed for the sabbatical is already covered by the current worship budget. However, if the budget come in short, I will not take that time and will instead focus on how we raise funds and manage stewardship to build a sustainable fiscal culture.

The church year began in some sadness for me, as my dear father died on July 31. His death at 96 was not a shock, but it was a source of deep grief. As the weight of that grief passed, I returned to a plan I had made a little over a year before – to take a continuing education course through the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It is a course for certification in Grief Support. As I write this report, I am working on my final project for the class – creating a format for a grief support group at CCUU. It will start in the fall and be an opportunity for people continuing to experience grief to work with that in a safe and supportive setting with me and with other congregants.

So it has been a year of transforming ourselves from the inside out. I look forward to the next year as we continue to find our strengths, our vision and our voice in the wider world.

*It is an honor for me to serve this faith with you here.*
*Hilary Landau Krivchenia*
DIRECTOR OF LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This annual report is written as a joyous reflection of my first full church year serving Countryside Church as your Director of Lifespan Religious Education. I wish to extend my deep gratitude to the entire church for your support, creativity and dedication to our Lifespan program.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education Council’s Transition to Family Ministry Team

The RE Council worked closely with me to support the many moving pieces of our RE program. This year’s RE Council had seven members: Susan Conneely and Tim Reuters-Bower serving as Co-Chairs and Cara Duffy, Jeff Oremland, Jennifer Alton, Laura Corrigan, and Lisa Bezella. They were pivotal in supporting the RE program during a transitional year and were actively involved in interim work. As a Council, we continued to take a closer look at the needs of our children and families, engaged in healing work needed in any transition and held an important role in envisioning the future of RE. In November, the RE Council agreed to disband to make room to create the Family Ministry Team. I wish to thank the previous members of the RE Council for their dedication to our RE program. We could not have moved into family ministry, without the work the RE Council bravely engaged in. Thank you.

Family Ministry Team

In January, Countryside Church held its first Family Ministry Team (FMT) meeting with Jenny Morales, Christie Organ, Joel Dennison, Jackie Dennison, Jen Rotchford, Matt Reuter-Bowers, Angela Lis, Michelle Hitchcock, and Sam Pureza. In subsequent meetings, we have added Grace Patel, Ann Blymire, and Stacey Tobin to the team. No Chair or Co-Chair roles have been created as the FMT feels that leadership is a shared responsibility of the team.

The Family Ministry Team is united to create an innovative Family Ministry that will meet the needs of the families at CCUU. We envision Sunday morning religious education classes as small group ministry that encourages not only learning but develops a stronger sense of community among children and the larger church community, as well as a stronger connection with home life. We recognize that parents are the primary religious educator of their children, and will assist families with resources and support and strengthen their Unitarian Universalist faith in their homes. Family Ministry serves as a network for parents and family support, encouraging one another in the challenges and celebrations related to family life, connect to the multigenerational community of Countryside Church, as well as, strengthening families in the ability to live out and articulate Unitarian Universalism in the broader world. This is reflected in the Family Ministry Mission Statement:

\[ \text{Countryside Church’s Family Ministry recognizes each family as the primary source of religious education for their children. Together, we unite to support and nurture families through education, spiritual development, social engagement, community outreach and connection with the larger church community.} \]

RE Staff

We deeply appreciate the work of our RE Assistant Lisa Vanderbleek, and we were saddened by her resignation in March. Countryside Church is in a period of fiscal discernment before we move forward in hiring a new RE Assistant. The shape of next year’s programming will depend upon whether we have this staff position filled or not. Our nursery and childcare providers are Aida Acurio, who is celebrating 10 years of employment here, Cindy Ghrist, and Sarah Gerson. Cindy moved out of state early this year, and Sarah, one of our high school youth was hired until she leaves for college this summer. Thank you!

RE Volunteers

Our RE program is a cooperative effort and would not exist without many hours of generous support. It takes a village to raise our children in faith, as seen by the 100 volunteers that have supported our Children and Youth this year. This year, our RE Classroom Coordinators were Cara Duffy, Susan Conneely, Jennifer Alton, Sam Pureza, Lisa Bezella, Melanie Amin, Chris Smith, and Kim Tifford. I extend my deep appreciation to all these leaders, who give generously of their time, energy and spirit.

RE Classes

This calendar year, we had 139 young people enrolled in our RE program. Throughout the school year, we offer 10 classes for infants through Grade 12.
Curriculum
All classes in our RE program spent the year focusing on UU Identity.
- The Chalice Children (ages 2-4) and Spirit Play (Kindergarten & Grade 1) classes continue to be very strong with the story-based curriculum. Many thanks to Cara Duffy for her tremendous work to continue enhancing our 3-year story and activity sequence for the Chalice Children class.
- We added a multiage class for the 9:00 service called Head, Heart and Hands, a story-based curriculum using activity centers supporting a variety of learning styles.
- Grades 2-4 enjoyed a curriculum around our 6 Sources of the Living Tradition called Love will Guide us.
- Grades 4-7 journeyed into Love Connects Us, exploring stories and activities designed to create stronger connection to the Seven Principles.
- This year, we held a year-long Coming of Age program with 22 youth and mentors, and two coordinators, Chris Smith and Melanie Amin, in an administration role. Many thanks to the entire COA team of coordinators and mentors for their exceptional leadership with the youth.
- Our Senior High Youth Group was very active this year, using the Virtue Ethics curriculum, hosting a MidAmerica Regional Youth Con, and leading their annual worship service in February. A special recognition goes out to Kady Frawley for leading a worship service in January and having this service published on Blue Boat Blog, The Youth and Young Adult publication from the UUA.

Holiday & Seasonal Activities
The RE program supported several holiday activities including the RE Easter celebrations, Hanukkah workshop, Seder, Chinese New Year, and the Christmas pageant.

Faith in Action
This year, our Faith-in-Action continued promoting service learning and advocacy and inspiring young people to make a positive difference in the world. We expanded the program to include children and youth from Kindergarten through 12th grade. We focused our efforts this year to support our outreach service partners: Partners for Our Community, Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants, and Faith in Place. Faith in Action supported POC by holding a Halloween candy and costume drive to serve POC’s families and participated in their annual Trunk and Treat event. The children and youth supported ICDI by holding a clothing, toiletry, and household goods drive to support ICDI’s group homes. They also participated in an educational presentation given by Melanie Schikore to deepen understanding and compassion towards immigrant journeys, and they wrote letters of welcome to incoming immigrants. To learn about Faith in Place and the environment, Dan Huntsha guided the children and youth in listening to immigration stories of members in the congregation as well as how our stories connect us to the earth. This summer, they plan to plant a butterfly garden in the RE garden box as a symbol of compassion for migration and this connection. Many thanks to those that volunteered and donated to the effort of bringing Faith in Action to our children and youth.

Summer RE
The 2016 summer RE program for Grades K-6 focused on prayer and provided fun opportunities for young people to explore prayer through world religions. They read stories, played games, and created art to reflect their understanding of prayer. Our Chalice Children Summer program was also very active. As it was for many years, our Summer program was planned by the Religious Educator and coordinated by the RE Assistant. Our youngest children will continue to go to childcare and to the nursery, however, this year, in the absence of an assistant, there were no resources for planning and will not be a coordinator for a multi-age summer program. A group of dedicated and energetic volunteers has taken on the task of assessing whether a summer program will be viable this year. I will be providing resources and support as we discern whether our children will join us in summer worship or attend a multiage program in the RE Wing.

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

20/30 Somethings
Our young adult group has welcomed many new 20/30s to their ministry. It is a place of deep sharing and spiritual growth, and it facilitates a strong connection to the larger church community. I recently spoke to a new member who said, “Being involved with 20/30 Somethings has allowed my husband and I to connect at Countryside Church in a way that we feel like we belong at Countryside Church.” 20/30 Somethings maintains a strong service presence within our community – volunteering for numerous events and projects throughout the year as well as ushering and greeting. We are very fortunate to have such a thriving young adult group in our community. Thank you, Jessica Gardner and Ryan Schaefges, for your coordinating and dedication.
I wish to note that this year, the 20/30 Somethings group has inspired a new group formed under Kinship. We welcome our 40/50s group to Countryside Church.

**Adult Faith Development Offerings**

The Agnosticism, Humanism, Atheism group continues to meet monthly with very engaging topics and conversations. This year, I worked with them to create an AHA covenant to create a more cohesive group dynamic. Our Book Groups have continued strong with excellent titles and deep reflection. The Buddhist Study Group led by Melanie Terbovic and QiGong led by Emmett Sylvester meet regularly connecting participants to body and soul work, meditation, and contemplation. Open Forum Discussion, coordinated by Vid Axel, continues to meet weekly with discussions on world events and engaging topics.

**MULTIGENERATIONAL AND CROSS MINISTRIES WORK**

This year, there has been concerted effort to build bridges not only between the four ministries but between the RE wing and the larger church community. We have made great strides in creating opportunities for families to worship together by expanding the ages of children in service to include Kindergarten and 1st grade. We have increased our multigenerational worship and invited children, youth, and families to play a more active role in the service. This year, we have been more intentional in having children, youth, and families involved not only in the Study Ministry but also in Kinship, Worship, and Service. Families are feeling more engaged and connected with the whole church community, and adults are opening their hearts and minds.

An example of this connection happened just recently. A member of our Family Ministry Team, Jenny Morales, organized a postcard writing event between services. Children, youth, adults, and visitors all sat together writing postcards to individuals and government officials sharing their concerns and support. The postcards used were created by Tracy Boland from Living the Welcoming Congregation; each having a UU Principle and Countryside Church’s information printed on them. Christine Organ invited a family friend, Saima from Masjid Al-Huda Mosque in Schaumburg. Saima’s daughters wrote two postcards to Senator Dick Durbin. Months later, we received an email from a former CCUU member sharing about what had happened during a UUSC Stewardship Council meeting in Chicago. He wrote, “One of the speakers was Senator Dick Durbin. He opened his speech by reading from two postcards he had received recently - from young members (visitors) of Countryside! He mentioned that they were from Countryside and read the 1st Principle on the back of the cards.” What a perfect example of our interconnectedness!

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This year, I have been very active in multiple areas of professional development. I completed two Renaissance Modules - Unitarian Universalist Identity and Adult Faith Development. Both have offered a stronger foundation in building programs centered in our faith and in the development of faith formation for adults at CCUU. I have been actively involved in reenergizing the local chapter of LREDA, building local connections and resources such as Our Whole Lives Training opportunities. I have worked closely with Nancy Combs-Morgan, Regional Congregational Life Consultant, to create the MidAmerica Learning Collaborative and consulted with Bart Frost, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the UUA.

In closing, I wish to thank the entire congregation for embracing me fully as your Director of Lifespan Religious Education. Your love, support, and vision for Countryside Church has made all of this possible. I am so grateful to be a part of the CCUU staff team, and when I say team, I mean TEAM. The support that Lisa Vanderbleek gave to my position and the RE program was outstanding. This RE support position was fundamental in developing and maintaining the entire Study Ministry programing. Laurie Lantz is one of the most talented Congregational Administrators I have ever worked with, and she also holds the history and heart of this church. Alison Vernon’s blessings extend far beyond her gifts with music. She has reached out to our children in the creation of the Children’s Choir and brings joy and laughter to all she touches. Eileen Wiviott’s leadership as our Intern Minster has brought us Beloved Conversations and allowed CCUU to move deeper into our faith and racial justice. She will be deeply missed, and I wish her the best in her new ministry at the Unitarian Church of Evanston. Reverend
Hilary Krivchenia has been an inspiration as our staff has created a new sense of shared ministry at Countryside Church. She is generous and wise and is a gracious leader, and I could not have a better partner in Lifespan Religious Education.

Thank you all and I look forward to all that is before us.
Respectfully submitted in love,
Jules Jaramillo
Director of Lifespan Religious Education

COMMUNITY MINISTER

Community Ministers in the Unitarian Universalist Association are required to be a member of a UU society and to possess a certification in some form of specialized ministry. I remain grateful to Countryside Church for being the Affiliated Congregation for my work. Even though it is no longer required, I believe it is healthy for Community Ministers to stay in relationship with a specific UU congregation.

I am a Board Certified Diplomate of the National Guild of Hypnotists. This is the highest level of professional rank that can be earned. I am also a Certified HeartMath Coach, which allows me the right to use the research results from the HeartMath Institute in California in my hypnotic work. I specialize in working with persons who have life-changing medical problems and help them using an advanced form of medical hypnosis. In the small world of hypnotic practitioners I am well known, and if anyone is interested you will find the details on my web site at www.CSGiles.org

I am not paid by our congregation. The majority of the work I do is with cancer patients, with a sub-specialty in weight management as obesity is a major national health problem. The revenue for my practice comes from patients in my ICAN hospital program at LaGrange Memorial and from private clients who consult me at my office in Wheaton. I maintain free clinics for cancer patients at Wellness House in Hinsdale, Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, Wellness Beyond Walls (hosted by our congregation), and Edward Hospital in Naperville. Between these four clinics I help up to 100 cancer patients each month without charge. I filled our pulpit three times this year.

This year, I taught at the annual convention of the National Guild of Hypnotists and taught the Medical Hypnosis Certification Program at the Post-Convention Institute. I write a quarterly column for the Journal of Hypnotism and sit on the Board of the National Guild of Hypnotists. Apart from that, I am trying to slow down a bit in my 65th year of life and having some success doing that.

I want to thank you all for your kindness and support, and I am happy to be part of Countryside Church. I am also especially grateful to my parish colleague, Rev. Krivchenia, who has been most generous and welcoming to me as the Affiliated Community Minister in her congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. C. Scot Giles, D.Min.
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Music is alive, well and thriving at Countryside! We began July 2016 with a settled collaborative keyboardist. Dr. Janice Razaq had been serving for two years as interim pianist but in July 2016, she accepted the call to be our settled collaborative keyboardist. She plays with such sensitivity for our services and great thoughtfulness and mindfulness in selecting the appropriate keyboard solos for each occasion. It has been glorious having Janice on the music team as she plays for the services, the choir, and soloists. Also, in July, our choir (even though it is on summer hiatus) came together to sing for one of the summer services, and I attended my second UU Musicians Network (UUMN) conference. This one was held in Madison, Wisconsin and was 5 days of education and inspiration. Every 3 years, the conference invites children to audition to be part of a children’s choir and this time, Countryside’s own Raelyn Oremland auditioned, was accepted (not everyone was) and participated for the 5 days and ended the week with a fabulous concert.

In August, Countryside received a 4 octave set of hand chimes generously donated from Memorial gifts, and the chimes would begin to be heard on occasions during the year. The choir once again provided music for a service and kicked off the start of the choir year (Sept-June) with a potluck/choir retreat.

This year, Countryside Church subscribed to Soul Matters which assigns a theme to each month. So, as much as possible, the music was selected with those themes in mind. I, personally, have enjoyed working with the themes although it came with its own set of challenges.

In September, the Countryside band and choir collaborated on Water Communion Sunday. Typically, the band plays about once a month giving the choir a furlough Sunday but this time both band and choir provided music together. By the end of the month, the Countryside band led by volunteer Greg Schultz had an official name—the Peace River Band. They have played approximately once a month for services. We also began a “call for arts” program, inviting church members to provide original works of art that reflect the monthly worship themes. Some months we have had no submissions but a few months we had several relevant submissions that we displayed during our worship services. One of my goals is to continue this program and hopefully more people will choose to participate.

Sadly, we lost a beloved long time choir member Donna Calwas and were honored to provide music for her memorial service. She remains in our hearts.

In October, the music and worship teams collaborated to bring Rev Dr Mark Morrison Reed to Countryside as a guest speaker. He preached both services, collaborating with the choir and after the second service there was a community wide potluck and workshop. Dr Morrison Reed’s specialty is the history of African Americans in the UU history.

November began with Dia de los Muertos service. This time we were honored to offer a liturgical dance during the choir anthem. Our dancer was Mari Peckham. Besides continuing to provide music at most Sunday services, the choir participated in an evening service honoring Diwali by singing a culturally appropriate anthem.

In December, the choir and the RE collaborated on an All Ages Caroling & Craft Party. It was a huge success with about 65 participants. Holiday crafts, snacks and caroling were offered. A week later, about a dozen choir members participated in a Community Carol Sing held in Wilmette and benefiting the Greater Chicago Food Depository. A large, beautiful music filled Christmas Eve service was held this year with an impromptu Many Ages choir. With Christmas Day and New Year’s Day on Sundays this year, special services were of course held.

In February, the choir participated by singing and ringing chimes in the Love Your Neighbor Vigil held at Countryside.

March saw the trial-run of establishing a 1-4th grade children’s choir. About 15 children have participated at least part of the time. There has been lots of enthusiasm and lots of new talent discovered. The Children’s Choir has sung twice this year. The Music with a Mission evening set new records in attendance, participation and donations.
Besides the regular Sunday services, April brought Easter where the choir sang both services and much more music than usual. Another All Generation choir sang on Earth Day too.

In May, Hilary and I and Lois Phillips took part in a week-long worship design workshop offered by Marcia McFee. I first became aware of Marcia’s work at the UUMN conference in Madison last summer.

Finally, June sees the end of my first year of UU Musicians Network 3-year credentialing program – a lot of work but so worth it. June is also the end of my 2nd year at Countryside, where I now feel like part of the family.

In general, the music program at Countryside is healthy with good participation and enthusiasm. The choir sings in every kind of musical style possible from early music to techno pop. Our membership numbers are holding steady as several new members came in while a couple others moved away.

Our facilities are in good shape and we have acquired quite a few new percussion instruments along with the hand chimes. We have a beautiful new hand crafted music stand in the Sanctuary and our pianos are serviced regularly. Our music library is being updated as the need arises. This is particularly important as most of the music in the library is from the standard Christian choral repertory and as UUs, that music, while beautiful, did not always reflect our values.

The staff at Countryside is small in number but large in talent and ability. I describe this staff as a Dream Team. We work well together, practically finishing each other’s sentences. Rev. Hilary Krivchenia, Ministerial Intern Eileen Wiviott, and I work to prepare and execute meaningful services each week, and I feel we have an excellent working relationship. RE director Jules Jaramillo and I are collaborating too, as evidenced by the Christmas Carol party, the Christmas pageant, the new Children’s Choir, and Earth Day. I look forward to even more projects with Jules. Church Administrator Laurie Lantz keeps us all organized and on track. A Dream Team indeed.

The Peace River Band is led by Greg Schultz and often includes Jeff Phillips, Ray Holpuch, Mark Braun, Courtney Blake, Jackie Dennison and occasionally other guests.

Countryside Choir helps lead the congregation in worship, particularly in the singing of hymns and also by singing an anthem or two. The purpose of the choir is to reinforce the worship message while lifting spirits and adding another dimension to the way in which congregants experience worship. The choir at CCUU is, like the rest of the church, a welcoming body that encourages diversity of all kinds and supports UU values through the music it provides in services. The choir seeks to perform a wide range of music from various traditions and cultures with words that further affirm these principles. Membership to the choir is open to anyone willing to make most of the weekly rehearsal commitments. Those interested in joining the choir should contact the choir director (Music.Director@ccuu.org or 847 359 8440, ext. 5).

As we look to the future, I would like to expand the choir membership from our current 33 to about 40 members, ideally with 10 members in each section. I hope to expand music participation to include more children and youth during worship more often. I intend to continue to look for opportunities to broaden our knowledge through local workshops and the UUMN conference. I will seek to provide events that strengthen our spiritual, musical and fellowship relationships.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Vernon
MINISTERIAL INTERN

Dear Countryside Church,

I have spent the last two years learning and growing with you and I am deeply grateful for the space you have provided me. I have felt truly encouraged, supported and loved among you. You have helped prepare me for Unitarian Universalist ministry and I hope to honor you by serving our faith well. I have had the pleasure to work with and get to know many of you although, regretfully, not all of you. This congregation is a generous, warm, vibrant and loving one. I know you will continue to serve our faith well and provide a place of transformation for many who are seeking progressive religious kinship.

I have many to thank specifically, though I can’t name all of you who have touched my heart in numerous ways. I hope you know who you are. I must thank my incredible Internship Committee, led by Larry Frank along with Siri Lauren, Jeff Oremland, Christine Organ, and CarolAnn Shindelar. It has truly been an honor to know you and I can’t thank you enough for the great gift of encouragement and love you have given me.

Working with the staff – Laurie, Alison, and Jules – has been a wonderful gift. I have learned much from the wisdom and experience of all of you. Together we have crafted meaningful worship, created opportunities for deeper spiritual engagement, and lamented over the state of world. Thank you for the many gifts you have shared with me, including regular laughter and welcome distractions. I also want to thank Debbie Lee for the storybooks scanned and countless ways she cares for and nurtures the staff – especially with chocolate!

I am most indebted to Rev. Hilary for making it possible for me to be here and for the years of council, guidance, support and time you have devoted to me and my ministerial formation. You have inspired and amazed me as I’ve watched you lead over the years and you have given me tremendous opportunity to learn and grow. Our regular theological reflections, committee work, and worship planning have honed my skills, and, perhaps more importantly, your support through the challenges of parenting while studying and working have strengthened my capacity for ministry. Thank you for helping me learn to fly.

In my time at Countryside, you have heard me preach about racism, injustice, living our values, letting go, telling our stories, and building coalitions. You’ve given me valuable feedback and insights as I’ve wrestled with these and other topics. We’ve had meaningful conversations one-on-one and in small groups. We’ve had joyful celebrations together and shared sorrows too. You have let me into your hearts and you have found your way into mine, where you will remain. Here are some of the things I’ve done and the experiences we’ve shared this year:

- **Beloved Conversations opening workshop with four other congregations, followed by eight small group sessions exploring race and ethnicity in our congregation and society**
- **Held a Diwali Vespers service, honoring the holiday of light celebrated throughout India**
- **Joined in solidarity, comfort, grief and hope after a difficult election**
- **Co-facilitated a discussion on *The Case For Reparations* after a sermon on using our power and privilege**
- **Worked with the Black Lives Matter team to promote discussions about race and hand out Black Lives Matter buttons**
- **Helped to support a new round of covenant groups using the Soul Matters monthly themes**
- **Officiated at my first wedding**
- **Conducted Hospitality training for our teams**
- **Participated in new member classes and helped to strengthen our membership process**
- **Hosted a Regional Social Justice and Religious Education Workshop**
- **Talked with youth about identity and privilege at the Youth Con**
- **Planned and promoted a multi-cultural all-ages potluck**
- **Met with the Board, Ministry Council, Worship Council, Lay Ministry and Black Lives Matter teams monthly**

It has been a busy year. Amid all this, I prepared for and met with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee which granted me Preliminary Fellowship, based on the completion of my internship and graduation from Meadville Lombard Theological School (May 21st). I also entered the search process to determine where I will serve Unitarian Universalism in the fall. As it turns out, I have accepted a position as the Assistant Minister for Faith in Action and Membership at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, my home congregation and where I have been the
Membership Professional for 10 years. I am overjoyed to be able to continue my work there and to stay in the area.

As I say goodbye over the next few months, know that you will remain with me wherever I go. I hope that you will celebrate my ordination with me at the Unitarian Church of Evanston on Sunday, June 4th at 4pm. My last service with you at Countryside will be June 11th. After that time, and for a period of about one year, I will honor the practice of departing interns and will refrain from reaching out to you. Please know that it is not because I don’t care about you or that I am choosing to permanently cut all ties with you. Being that I will be in the area and working on social justice, I imagine our paths might cross in that time. If we do meet at General or Regional Assembly or at a workshop here and there, it is more than okay for us to say hello and exchange hugs, and as Elphaba and Glinda say,”…now, whatever way our stories end, know you have re-written mine by being my friend.”

Yours in faith, Eileen

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

As I approach the end of my 15th year on staff this coming November, I count my blessings that I work for such a strong congregation. It is a blessing to work with a tightly-bonded, hard-working, enthusiastic, and capable professional staff team—Hilary, Jules, Alison, Eileen, and Lisa Vanderbleek prior to her resignation. Our weekly staff meetings help us stay connected and aware of all that’s going on and to support one another and the congregation—and I’m glad to have at least one time each week to laugh.

I am grateful to work with and to support such conscientious, visionary, and talented lay leadership—in general, the Board members, Ministry coordinators, and committee/program chairs who give their time and talent to our congregation and specifically, those with whom I have worked most closely: Karen Noorani, Sheryl Skifstad, Christine Organ, Mary Johnson, Gary LaBedz. The congregation is well served by the ministry of all these people.

In addition to regular staff meetings, I meet regularly with the Executive Team (Minister, Board President, President-elect, Board Vice President). This monthly meeting facilitates communication and support among the Board, the Ministry Council, and the Staff and ensures that we are all “on the same page” in terms of what is needed in the way of policy, procedures, congregational leadership or development. The DLRE & Board Treasurer attend when relevant agenda items warrant.

Finance. I have appreciated working closely with the outgoing Board Treasurer (Mary Johnson) and with the Controller (Gary LaBedz) in matters financial. I continue to use Quickbooks to record income and expenses and to prepare the month-end reports, which Mary and Gary review prior to presentation to the finance committee and the Board. I also use Quickbooks to process payroll, which enables us to offer direct deposit of paychecks, as well as to make payroll tax payments and to file quarterly payroll tax returns electronically. This is not without cost, which is reflected in the Church Office budget. In addition, I record pledges and contributions in the stewardship module of the church database (ChurchDB), through which I print and send quarterly giving statements to congregants & donors.

Ministry Council. In addition to attendance at monthly finance committee meetings, I also attend Ministry Council each month to serve as a bridge between programs and operations/administration. I continue to assist Sheryl, Eileen, & Kinship Ministry with orienting and supporting the Hospitality Teams and I help the teams communicate via ChurchDB egroups. One of ministry council’s primary areas of focus this year was on streamlining the reporting we ask of committees/programs and on facilitating communication within the congregation and in the larger community.

Communications. Cherita updated the church website last summer to a WordPress format. Currently, Rev. Hilary and I are the primary updaters of content. We are working on getting a few more people the capability to log-in & update content. Christine Organ, Jackie Dennison, and Michelle Hitchcock administer CCUU’s social media presence on Facebook and Instagram; if you have church-related content you want posted there, please send it through a staff member or ministry coordinator. I worked with a small communications team this year to
assemble some resources & processes for committees and programs to get the word out about events (see Foundations Ministry report). In addition to compiling the Annual Report, which you are currently reading, I compile & edit the monthly newsletter, the weekly e-updates, the order of worship & inserts.

Facilities (Building & Grounds) Management – Foundations/Operations Ministry. I continue work on a facilities/operations manual that would include a calendar of the regular maintenance tasks that need to take place. Steve Black and Mark Huston provide much of the expertise and work needed in this area. Thank you to those church members who are handy and willing to do some of the needed tasks – Ron Vargason, Jeff Phillips, Ray Holpuch, John Evans, Judy Miller, Peggy Simonsen come to mind. We are trying to keep Foundations/Operations as a Ministry under the umbrella of Ministry Council to ensure that the volunteers who coordinate the efforts receive support similar to the other program chairs for volunteer recruitment and communications.

Database Implementation. This is the third year using ChurchDB, a subscription church management software (prior to 2014-15, we used a homegrown MS Access membership and pledge database created by a church member more than 10 years ago). This year, I assembled instructions for congregation members on how to access & use ChurchDB. Using professionally-developed church management software helps greatly with insuring that information is in one place – if the religious education program is notified of a family’s contact info or a new family member, I have that information too, and vice versa.

ChurchDB has been an inexpensive answer to our database needs, but it has not been without its drawbacks. There is a newer church database management system that Jules and I heard about from our colleagues which seems to be more user-friendly, particularly with reporting and groups; it costs about the same as ChurchDB, so we will likely look into a switch over the summer.

Professional Development. I maintain membership in the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA). I attended AUUA Professional Days in Columbus, Ohio in June 2016, and I attended UU General Assembly last year—funded through Jules’s generous sharing of her professional expenses and my own personal resources. I will attend Professional Days in New Orleans this June but will not stay for General Assembly, though I have registered as an online participant. AUUA Professional Days is a valuable conference for learning pertinent administrative updates from the UUA and for sharing resources and information with colleagues, as well as being professionally reinvigorating. My ability to regularly attend this important conference is because of the professional expense funds provided by CCUU.

I attended MidAmerica Regional Assembly this spring; useful sessions included the UUA Presidential candidates forum and a stewardship workshop. I am an affiliate member of the local chapter of The Church Network, a group with a lot of knowledge and resources to share; I attend one or two of their workshops each year – this year, one on facilities management.

Though there isn’t currently an active local or regional UU administrators’ group, a few of us try to meet when possible. Most administrators have trouble getting away from work, especially those who are part-time; those of us who have been most successful in meeting regularly are from CCUU, Tree of Life in McHenry, Geneva UU, North Shore in Deerfield, and Prairie Circle in Grayslake.

Volunteers. Many thanks to the volunteers who have helped in the office this year: Debbie Lee, Tom Curtis, Dan Yokas & Tim Walsh, Pat Rochelle & Art Mayfield, Lois Phillips, Karen Epps, Jim Peterson, and Pratik Mamtora. Sign-up Genius: We continue to use this online tool for congregants to sign-up for the essential Sunday volunteer positions of greeter, usher, A/V assistant, and coffee host – it can be accessed from the front page of the church website (www.ccuu.org). Using Sign-up Genius requires less managerial time on the part of office staff and volunteers. The Hospitality Teams help to make sure these roles are filled each week. Angelina Huntsha uses sign-up genius for the PADS Meal sign-up. Jules has a separate sign-up genius account for RE volunteers.

Looking to Next Year. I plan to continue work on the operations/facilities manual, as well as ongoing work on the Office Procedures Manual (among administrators, jokingly called the “hit by a bus” manual). I would like to see a little revision of the website menus to make information easier to find. I still want to pursue updating the Focus newsletter to a more mobile-friendly. Ministry Council will be working toward a different format for this Annual Report – one that is more visually appealing and possibly an online, blog-type document.

Our Sunday hospitality teams play a key role in making all who enter our doors feel welcome and part of this community (are you part of one? if not, contact me or Kinship Coordinator Peggy Simonsen to get connected with a team). I hope that we can enable the teams to feel and act more like teams, that they will gather themselves for socializing and team building. Perhaps members of our congregation will attend the Welcoming All
by All Workshop being offered in mid-May by the Chicago Area UU Council for ideas for expanding our ability to welcome and engage all who are part of our church community.

On a congregational level, it has been encouraging to watch the congregation lean into social justice and figure out how to be of greater service to the community. The energy and emotion present at the Love Your Neighbor Vigil in February was comforting and inspiring. The joyous engagement of everyone at the all-church birthday party in April was invigorating. I hope the congregation’s enthusiasm and action for justice and the efforts to connect with one another continues in the year ahead.

Areas Where You Might Help (this list hasn’t changed since last year’s annual report)
If you see something with which you can help, leave a note in my mailbox or send me an email, office@ccuu.org.

• Facilities on-call list, to be called as needs arise
• Website content updating
• Graphic design interest/experience: helping to refresh the Annual Report format and/or other printed church materials
• Photographers: please take photos at any opportunity - church meetings, events, gatherings, worship - and to share them with me, so we have selections to use for purposes on the Annual Report, website, and other publications.
• Lobby staff – monitoring the doors to give groups access to the building yet keeping the doors locked for safety/security, perhaps while doing some clerical or handyperson work (a few hours one evening/week or month)

In appreciation and faith, Laurie Lantz
THE MINISTRIES

The activities and programs of Countryside Church UU (CCUU) are organized into Ministries. Each Ministry encompasses events, teams, committees, groups, councils, and is led and sustained by staff and lay leadership. The Ministries help people find pathways to become involved in activities of interest and to create connections among our people and programs. Ministries support the work of CCUU and ensure that our work is aligned with the mission, covenant, and seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

Our Ministries are named to represent our congregational covenant, “we unite to strengthen the bonds of Kinship” and to promote our vision through Worship, Study, and Service; and they exist to make that covenant live.

The Ministry Council coordinates the many programs and efforts of these Ministries. It meets monthly and is made up of the Board Vice President and Senior Minister, who act as co-chairs; the Staff Leads and Ministry Coordinators of each of the ministries; and the Congregational Administrator.

This year, with a vision of helping the ministries grow and prosper, the Ministry Council focused on supporting the communications across our ministries and engaging more directly with our ministries. This allowed us to continuing from the work we did aligning to the long-range plans from last year and support the progression into implementation and engagement.

This year’s ministry council members were Tom Curtis and MaryAnn O’Dowd representing the Service Ministry, Peggy Simonsen and Tom MacTavish representing Kinship, Jules Jaramillo representing Study and Rev. Hilary representing Worship.

We see our work aligning to the overall church goals as summarized below
Church Goal: Making social action and community engagement part of the individual spiritual journey
- By aligning the Ministry Council work and the committees to the Long-Range Plan.
- Helping to prioritize new activities in alignment with the Long-Range Plan
- Helping groups to integrate activities across committees
- Build awareness
- Church Goal: Becoming a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages
- Build awareness of activities to build engagement

We kicked off the year with a meeting in the fall where the Ministry leaders and their committee chairs shared vision and worked through a proposed method for simplifying communication throughout the church year. We proposed tools to help them communicate their vision and alignment to the overall church vision as well as building engagement. Throughout the year, we had breakout sessions where the committee chairs joined us or we went to their meetings to increase the engagement between the Ministry Council and the committees. We adopted plan for the Ministry representatives to coordinate an article per month representing specific ministry activities to help build awareness. In the spring, we supported the annual budget prioritization process as usual.

Next year, we hope to build on our initial groundwork and take a deeper look into communications with the committees. We hope to broaden both internal and external communication and we are looking forward to using more of our online media opportunities to share our activities.

It is a great pleasure to serve the board and the Ministry Council and see such success from the hard work of the Ministry Council in support of the vision and the mission of CCUU.

....submitted by Sheryl Skifstad, Ministry Council Chair & Board Vice President
WORSHIP MINISTRY
Reverend Hilary Krivchenia, Minister
Alison Vernon, Music Director
Lois Phillips, Worship Council Co-Chair

Worship has continued to evolve, stretch, and gently experiment this year. Our Worship Council has been exploring ways of creating more dimension and texture in our worship services. The energy in worship has been positive and strong all year. We have truly enjoyed the worship services presented by the Ministerial Intern, Eileen Wiviott. Having watched her worship style develop over the past two years and been uplifted and touched by her services, we will miss her presence in our pulpit, but we can easily see that she is ready for parish ministry.

It has been a joy having Janice Razaq back as our staff collaborative keyboard/piano player. Her great skill on the piano has been long known at CCUU, but this year, she put in additional time, effort, and creativity in expanding the breadth of musical styles to change and vary the tone of the services. From pure classical to new age music to popular melodies her fantastic artistry on the piano has helped weave our services more strongly and allowed us to draw on more of the 6 sources of Unitarian Universalism.

We have expanded our use of the screen on Sundays to encourage more people to look up from the hymnal as well as to share the message through the arts, the spoken word, and the integration of many media on the screen.

This year our Worship Council took on a new format for the 9am service. Our 9 am service has continued to be far less attended than the 11am service. However, it has some loyal followers. In addition, the attendance at 11am is such that, if we eliminated the 9am service we would soon run into overcrowding. In addition, the Worship Council has been concerned that if that service were eliminated, it would be very hard to bring it back when it would be even more needed. Therefore, it has been important to think creatively about how to address concerns about the 9am service. One element has been to reduce the number of volunteers needed for the first service time, in both worship and RE. Another element is that, rather than bewailing the low attendance at the first service, we are capitalizing on the intimacy of the service and offering candle lighting, a more intimate furniture arrangement, and stepping away from the pulpit as much as possible. People who attend still seem interestingly shy of the first few rows – at both services -- and we are experimenting with a variety of motivators over time.

Music has been popping at CCUU. You can read more about the wonderful accomplishments in our Music Program in our Music Director’s Report. The enrichment of our worship has continued this year, thanks to our Music Director, Alison Vernon. Not only has she set her hand at some composing for our Preludes and Postludes, she has brought new energy and enthusiasm after attending the UU Musicians Network conference in the summer of 2016. On her recommendation, Worship Council has been reading Marcia McFee’s materials on worship design and it is inspiring innovation in worship.

The addition of the children’s choir has added a new and delightful dimension to our worship services and we can look forward to many more heart melting Sunday moments with them. Alison Vernon has long experience working with children in music and her expertise has not only resulted in new worship elements – but in giving the children a stronger sense of connection with the worship services.

It’s also added so much to Sunday services that Alison has worked with the talented Greg Schultz to bring a nearly monthly Sunday service with the Peace River Band to our worship. These are enthusiastically received Sunday services. The band allows us to broaden the ways in which we worship. It’s also provided new avenues for musicians and singers to grow and develop here at CCUU – which is one of the best gifts of congregational music. And, throughout this year, our many congregational musicians have continued to be generous with their gifts.

And, for another year, we have been truly fortunate to have the trombone artistry of Charlie Vernon generously shared with us on many Sunday mornings and on high Holy days – such as Easter and Christmas.

Our team of vergers – those who support the worship service every Sunday of the year, continues to be strong and creative. Their tasks include arrangement and rearrangement of chairs in the sanctuary, doing readings and finding readers, doing special sanctuary set up for holidays and special worship services, orienting and assisting visiting preachers, and thinking creatively with the Minister as worship is planned. Special thanks to our vergers: Martha Blus, Tracy Boland, Jackie Dennis, Kristin Huston, Christine Organ, Leslie Peet, Lois Phillips, Elizabeth Vestu, and our new incoming Verger, Pratik Mamora.

And our worship service would be hard to hear and the visuals would not enrich our service without our Audio-visual team. Special thanks go to Jeff Phillips and Art Paton for their training of new AV people. Thanks, as well, go to Tony Pretto who most regularly does the first service, and to all the other AV volunteers: Martha Blus, Don Bussey, Mike Gilley, Karen Greenland, Mike Jeschke, Ken Sepos.
STUDY MINISTRY
Jules Jaramillo, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Please refer to Jules’s Staff Report

SERVICE MINISTRY
Tom Curtis and Mary Anne O’Dowd, Service Ministry Co-coordinators
Rev. Hilary Krivchenia is the staff lead to the Service Ministry

Efforts to make a change for the better are often difficult to do alone. The Countryside Unitarian Universalist Service Committee offers help to overcome this problem. By working together and sometimes with like-minded organizations, we can make a difference, and we did during the past year.

The Service Ministry has a long history with Countryside Church and the efforts of its committees have made a significant contribution to the community at-large and the well-being of the church congregation. It embraces particularly the first two and last two of our Unitarian Universalist principles:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equality and compassion in human relations
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Our committees - Social Action, Outreach Steering, Living the Welcoming Congregation, Green Sanctuary and Animal Friends - have all been active in making a difference. For more information, see each committee’s annual report. If you want to make a difference and put UU values into action, join one of these groups. Any member of the Countryside Church community can participate. If we are to continue as a viable, socially active organization, it’s also important that you do so.

Participation in one or more of the Service Ministry committees is rewarding and invigorating. This time well spent offers opportunities to get to know others who share your interests, to socialize in constructive efforts, and to make a difference. Look for opportunities on the Service Ministry bulletin boards outside of the office, as well as in our area in Atherton Hall or contact us at Service@ccuu.org.

COUNTRYSIDE ANIMAL FRIENDS (CAF)
Countryside Animal Friends (CAF) is a local chapter of the UU Animal Ministry (www.uuam.org) and was co-chaired this year by Sheryl Bass and Pratik Mamtora. CAF supports the UU Animal Ministry’s (UUAM) mission to uphold and honor the UU seventh principle – the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part. We at Animal Friends strive to promote the ideas that all beings on Earth are connected and that social and environmental justice for humans is related to social and environmental justice for all other species. In this sense, CAF can complement and aid the work of other groups at CCUU such as Green Sanctuary and Social Action.

In accordance with both the first and seventh principles, both UUAM and Countryside Animal Friends promote and provide education about adopting a plant-based diet. We feel that a plant-based diet is an effective tool for combating water and soil pollution as well as animal (both domestic and wild) welfare. In the spirit of these UU principles, we:
- hosted the Blessing of the Animals service in July 2016
hosted monthly vegan (plant-based) potlucks in the fall, in conjunction with Suburban Vegetarian Meetup, based in Mundelein IL. We are grateful and blessed to have this relationship with them; some of their members now regularly attend CCUU services as a result of this relationship.

hosted a talk and piano concert by author, pianist, and animal rights activist Dr. William Tuttle in September

held a Vegan Bake Sale in September, the proceeds of which were used to fund Dr. Tuttle’s presentation With Sheryl’s having moved out of the area and low attendance at our events, CAF has disbanded for now. If you are interested in continuing this ministry, please contact Pratik Mamtora or one of the Service Ministry Coordinators.

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

The Green Sanctuary Program is a UUA accreditation process inspired by our UU Seventh Principle of “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part” and has as its purpose encouraging the spread of “green” values to all aspects of church life. We on the Green Sanctuary Committee in cooperation with other committees and programs are working to facilitate that program.

The UUA has made Environmental Justice the focus of the Green Sanctuary Program. This focus means that working with other committees and programs is even more natural. The emphasis on Environmental Justice makes clearer the connection to our other UU Principles such as dignity, equity, and compassion; and incorporates environmental values by promoting such basic human rights as access to clean air and water, healthful food and proper sanitation. UU Principles of peace and justice may be tied to environmental issues such as the availability of essential resources and the effects of climate change.

Since we are a program that has an impact on all aspects of church life and activity we touch other ministries by working to make the congregation as a whole aware of environmental issues through projects led by members of the congregation. Our goal is to create a framework, a focus, for thought and action that is fundamentally environmental so that environmental actions become so ingrained as to be fundamental to who we are as a congregation.

We have continued two ongoing projects this year. The first is to move the church and the members of the congregation toward a carbon neutral life. Toward that end, our major efforts this year centered on the project to fund the installation of solar panels on the roof of the main part of our building, thus allowing us to obtain about 40% of our electrical energy from the sun. The fundraising project was successful and the installation should begin late this spring.

Our second project is to sustain and expand an interfaith group for the northwest suburbs, called Interfaith Green Partners, which focuses on environmental actions. We held the third Climate Change Conference in May of 2016, which was planned jointly with the IGP group. That conference was organized around the theme of community solar. The conference this May 13 is a workshop on Active Hope, which will be led by a colleague of Joanna Macy, who wrote the book Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in Without Going Crazy.

Our committee’s ongoing projects for the past church year also include:

- Participation of several committee members in Lobby Day in Springfield,
- Continuation of the Countryside organic vegetable garden, leading to donations to the Palatine Food Pantry from both the children’s and adult’s garden,
- Hosting a Winter Farmer’s Market (sponsored by Faith in Place) and a November Farmers’ Market that support local, sustainable farming,
- Support for Citizens for Conservation’s environmental education programs,
- Offering a workshop on organic gardening at the Time and Talent Auction, which will be held this spring.

Below are general categories of activities of the Green Sanctuary Committee:

- Work toward an increasingly sustainable approach to church practices, building, and grounds
• Educational programs
• Fun, intergenerational activities
• Restoration opportunities for volunteers
• Environmental justice projects
• Partnerships with local organizations
• The opportunity to appreciate and care for the environment with a group of likeminded people

The Green Sanctuary Program serves the larger community through educational programs, environmental films, donations of fresh produce to the Palatine Food Pantry, support for local sustainable food, and restoration of natural areas.

We partner with the following groups:
• Interfaith Green Partners
• Citizens for Conservation
• Deer Grove Forest Preserve Stewards
• Faith in Place
• Palatine Food Pantry
• Sierra Club

The co-chairs of the Green Sanctuary Committee are Judy Ball and Mark Krivchenia. For more information, contact them at greensanctuary@ccuu.org.

The Green Sanctuary Committee would like to express our appreciation of all the members and staff who have supported Green Sanctuary projects. All our projects are open to volunteers. We encourage anyone with an idea for a project or an interest in working on a project to contact us and to attend our monthly committee meetings on the second Sunday of each month, at 12:15 in classroom 6.

LAY & CARE MINISTRY PROGRAMS

We are completing the 30th year of providing lay/care ministries to the Countryside Church congregation. This year, the Lay Ministry was fortunate to have the following people continue to serve in the program: Ken Bobbe, Karen Greenland, Barbara Griggs, Kathi Hillyer, Melanie Schikore, Joy Simon, Chris Smith, and Kim Tilford.

This Lay Ministry Team supports and expands the pastoral care of the called Minister, and the Team also serves to strengthen the ties among the members of the congregation through the active embodiment of the spirit of mutual care. This is a special Team in the congregation and requires special training (given here at CCUU) as well as particular attributes in order to insure that we are taking the best care within the congregation that is possible.

Over the winter, all lay ministers were involved in calling every member of Countryside to touch base and to take questions regarding lay ministry. We find this to be very helpful for us and for the congregation in general. Lay Ministers support our folks when there are challenges and losses. Please draw on their support. A call is all it takes.

Lay Ministry meets monthly with the Minister at the church to check-in with each other, review current Lay Minister activity, determine availability and write and send cards to members needing support.

Our Care Ministry coordinator, Sheilah Sokeland, continues to arrange for practical assistance, such as rides for medical treatment, check-in calls and visits, and meals for Countryside members when appropriate. These arrangements are made through Rev. Hilary Krivchenia or myself.

Submitted by Ken Bobbe, Coordinator
LIVING THE WELCOMING CONGREGATION (LWC)

In May of 2007, Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist voted to become a Welcoming Congregation. By adopting this UUA designation, our religious community proclaims that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals are not only welcome but affirmed as fully equal members of this congregation. We are a community that practices inclusivity and honors every part of each member’s identity, background, and experience.

During the 2016-2017 church year, the Living The Welcoming Congregation Committee has served as a voice and resource for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning community at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist. Our principal task has been to provide information and support to our members and friends about issues and topics related to the promotion of justice and equality for all individuals. We have also served the Board of Trustees as an advisory group on issues related to the full integration of LGBTQ individuals and families into the life of our faith community and the alignment of our principles and polices consistent with that goal.

In June of 2016, the LWC Committee planned and implemented a Sunday Pride Service that highlighted key LGBTQ individuals, both past and present, who have made significant contributions to the advancement of human rights for all people. In January of 2017, the LWC committee hosted a seminar on the topic of “Understanding Gender” with special emphasis on how to support and engage transgender individuals who enter our doorway or join our community.

In April of this year, the LWC Committee was able to mobilize members and participate in supporting transgender students who attend our local public schools. Many of our members attended school board meetings and public rallies in support of full equality for those gender non-conforming students.

Last Spring, the LWC Committee made a decision to transition from a standing committee to an “at-ready” task force that could convene, as needed, to provide resources and support to our faith community on any issues and topics related to inclusion and equality for all gender non-conforming and sexual minorities. Our members and friends will continue to be a presence at Countryside UU and have pledged to continue working to “strengthen the bonds of kinship among ALL individuals” and to be a welcoming place for those who seek a home that accepts everyone just as they are. If you are interested in being involved with LWC efforts, contact Dan Yokas, danyokas@sbcglobal.net.

OUTREACH STEERING COMMITTEE (OSC)

The Board of Trustees established the Outreach Steering Committee to assist and guide CCUU and its congregants in reaching out and making a difference in our community.

OSC Vision Statement

The OSC is a catalyst for channeling the talents and passion of the CCUU community to the human needs of the larger community. We will do this through understanding the needs of organizations that address issues important to the CCUU membership and providing resources of both time and money to make a transformational difference to these organizations and CCUU members. We will collectively learn as we develop innovative solutions and processes that enable broad member participation in these activities and manage relationships such that success is sustained. The pride and joy of this effort will be felt by every CCUU member and their children, and become an inspiring example to others.

Based on congregational input and an assessment of community needs, Countryside has three service partners in 2016/2017. Each partner had a liaison and we extend special thanks to them for the work they did on behalf of Countryside.

Through your donations, we contributed funds to our partners as noted below.
![Image of a group of people at a social event]

**Congregation Engagement and Communication**

It is our intent to provide an open, transparent, and evolving process for this work. We hope you felt informed about the work of our service partners. We maintain the Outreach web page on CCUU’s website, under the Ministries/Service tab - [http://ccuu.org/osc-2/](http://ccuu.org/osc-2/)

**Fundraising**

Thank you to all who participated in the Time & Talent event in November. We raised approximately $31,800 including $13,375 through bids for the “Raise the Paddle” items. This year, we added the opportunity for raising funds for Countryside and contributed net ticket sales after deducting all fund raising expenses to cover our facility and still increased the amount contributed to our Service Partners over the previous years.

The third annual Music with A Mission event was held in March and netted approximately $1,100. We had record attendance with more than 120 tickets sold. (We had a liquor permit from the Village and the State for this event and purchased insurance)

**OSC Planning for the Future**

As the 2017-18 Committee gets established, here are a few of our ideas and aspirations:

- Working with Director, Lifespan Religious Education, we will continue to deepen Countryside’s relationship with our three Service Partners.
- Based on your input, we know that there is interest in more volunteer opportunities. We are working to expand Countryside’s awareness of volunteer opportunities with our Service Partners through publicity and communications.
- In collaboration with the Social Action Committee, we continue to support and promote Countryside’s Share the Plate contributions.

*Sincerely,*

*Mike Graves, chair; Peyton Bendix, Lisa Christensen, Maria Martinez, Janet McDonnell*

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**SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE (SAC)**

Unitarian Universalists have a long tradition in social action and Countryside Church’s work in this area is well-established. Countryside Church’s Social Action Committee (SAC) tackles head on the overwhelming social justice issues of today and drives a variety of service-oriented projects that reflect the passions of its members and engage the broader congregation. It is where faith is put into action for social good.

SAC’s goals are two-fold:

- make social action and community engagement part of the individual spiritual journey and
- become a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages.
Along with its ongoing schedule of workshops, programs and speakers, SAC helps advance UUA initiatives and builds partnerships through allied organizations with shared values. SAC’s involvement with groups such as UUANI, on behalf of statewide efforts for social justice, and the UU Prison Ministry of Illinois opens doors for new, interesting volunteer activities and helps these organizations accomplish more than possible on the strength of their resources alone.

A long list of activities with social impact – nationally and locally – are embraced by committee members who keep their eyes and ears open to needs and opportunities and thoughtfully consider ways to engage. The Social Action Committee’s accomplishments during church fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017) are highlighted below. These efforts helped generate awareness, support and momentum for social justice throughout the Countryside Church community.

**Responding To Congregants Needs at This Time**

These are difficult times for Unitarian Universalists and for all who seek justice, truth and compassion. After the 2016 national election, SAC experienced an increase in involvement among congregants and began scheduling monthly meetings to respond more quickly to action requests from new and existing participants. Additionally, SAC added a new co-chair. Maryanne O’Dowd joined long-time committee chair Yvette Johnson in March. Our rapid response to pressing issues of the day included:

- Don Bussey coordinated a yard sign sale offering the CCUU community a way to publicly express compassion for all people and stand against hate.
- Hal Snyder organized the Palatine satellite march of the world-wide March for Science in April.
- Distribution of the SAC Action Update, a weekly/bi-weekly e-blast of news, actions and resources related to the many issues facing our country and communities.
- ACLU-IL presentation/discussion on how best to speak out on today’s hot-button issues and what’s covered under the First Amendment (May 2017).

**Deepening Commitment to Racial Justice**

The past year saw renewed energy and attention toward racial justice among members of the SAC. The group’s efforts were echoed by a UUA-driven initiative to support the Black Lives Matter movement and a surge in books, films and media coverage of many racial justice issues plaguing society today.

- Programs developed/organized by CCUU’s Black Lives Matter team in FY 2017 included:
  - Screening/discussion of *Race: The Power of Illusion*, a PBS series (April/May 2016)
  - Book discussion of *Between the World and Me* by Ta’Nehisi Coates (March 2016)
  - UUMPI Prison Workshop (March 2016)
  - Summer service with UUMPI’s Megan Selby and Monica Cosby, a formerly incarcerated woman (July 2016)
  - Black Lives Matter factsheet with FAQs and buttons given out to the congregation in conjunction with Sunday sermons (Summer 2016)
  - Book discussion of UUA Common Read *The Third Reconstruction* by Rev. Dr. Wm. Barber (January 2017)
  - Bus service for CCUU to attend Community Renewal Society’s Faith In Action Assembly for MLK holiday (January 2017)
  - Discussion of *Atlantic* magazine article “A Case for Reparations,” Ta’Nehisi Coates, featuring Cliff Nellis, founder of the Lawndale Christian Legal Center (March 2017)
  - *Day at Stateville*, reader’s play performance (May 2017)

- SAC funded the Beloved Conversations program to raise awareness of racial justice and the many forms of racial struggle. Led by ministerial intern Eileen Wiviott, the eight-session program offered 12 members of CCUU intensive, experiential learning that explored the roles of race and ethnicity in their lives. The program kicked off in fall 2016 with a weekend workshop at Countryside Church including five other UU congregations offering the Beloved Conversations program. Plans are underway to continue conversations at CCUU through listening circles between services and a one-on-one listening campaign in fall 2017.

**Leveraging SAC’s Work Through Key Partnerships**

It takes a village, as the saying goes, and the SAC counts a number of organizations with a shared mission among its partners in advancing social justice. Partner organizations include:

- UU Advocacy Network of Illinois (UUANI) – liaisons: Yvette Johnson and Kristen Wunder
- UU Prison Ministry of Illinois (UUPMI) – members of the Black Lives Matter team
- Palatine Faith in Action (coalition of 12 Christian churches, the Sikh Gurdwara and CCUU) – liaisons: Yvette and Susan Auld
**Countryside’s Passport To Fair Trade Products**

Many who attend CCUU are familiar with the **Monthly Fair Trade** sales booth and enjoy its high-quality fair trade products, from coffee to chocolate to olive oil and much more. Fair trade efforts have a self-sustaining, separate budget within the SAC. Countryside’s fair trade sales ($3,661.78 for 2016) rank in the top 5% of 7,500 churches nationally that participate in the Equal Exchange Co-op, our partnership for sourcing products from small farmers. Nationally, UU church partnerships with Equal Exchange resulted in nearly $11,000 going toward the Unitarian Universalists Service Committee’s small farmer fund in 2016. Lisa and Kevin Christensen lead monthly fair trade sales.

Held annually in December, Countryside’s **Fair Trade Bazaar** brings the world to our doorstep with hundreds of beautifully crafted items sold by outside vendors such as Blossom of Inspiration, Gifts of the World, Global Handmade Hope and Tree of Life Imports as well as CCUU’s own fair trade products. Marsha Balster, Susan Auld, and Kathi Hillyer coordinated the 2016 Fair Trade Bazaar.

**Global Giving Through Kiva**

In many parts of the world, a relatively small sum of money can have a huge impact in improving the lives of an individual, a family or even an entire village. Through Kiva.org, SAC donated $1,500 in church FY 2017 to micro-loan recipients around the world who seek to improve their own futures and the lives of those around them. Kiva.org, a four-star rated, micro-financing portal, curates a number of global micro-financing operations and NGOs and features profiles of individuals seeking loans.

SAC is joined by 33 individual CCUU members who are loaning and re-loaning their own money via separate Kiva.org accounts. Together, the group makes up the “Countryside Team,” which has made more than 1,200 loans in 70 countries since 2010. Kiva.org members make a difference in many people’s lives, near and far, by continuously re-loaning original donations, as small as $25, as funds are repaid by loan recipients. Learn more and join the Countryside Team at Kiva.org.

**Addressing Need Close To Home**

- **PADS Shelter Program**: A number of CCUU volunteers help supply monthly meals for our PADS partner, Presbyterian Church of Palatine, through an efficient and easy sign-up process coordinated by SAC member Angelina Huntsha. Her efforts also make it possible for congregants to learn about and volunteer for the ongoing PADS operation of local non-profit Journeys/The Road Home.

- **Holiday Gift-Giving Program**: For a second year, the SAC enlisted congregants to buy presents or gift cards for 28 area families in need. Linda and Steve Pratt coordinated the effort through Palatine Township.

- **Palatine Faith In Action/Homeless High School Student Support**: Since becoming aware in 2014 of a heart-breaking problem affecting nearly 100 area high school students, SAC has encouraged individuals at CCUU to purchase gift cards for students at Palatine and Fremd High Schools who are officially homeless or in precarious housing situations. CCUU collected a record number of gift cards amounting to $1,135 in 2016. The collective efforts of Palatine Faith In Action’s 12 member houses of worship provided $12,430 in gift cards last year, allowing high school social workers to gift students throughout the year.

**Helping CCUU Extend Its Reach: Share the Plate**

Share the Plate collections are overseen by the SAC and the Outreach Steering Committee. Two Sundays per month, CCUU donates half its cash collection during the offering to a 501C3 non-profit organization recommended by members of the congregation. Every May, nominations are sought for the upcoming church/fiscal year.

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See opportunities to get involved with the Social Action Committee (SAC)?
Have ideas you’d like to see happen? Questions?
Contact SAC co-chairs Yvette Johnson and Maryanne O’Dowd at socialactionchair@ccuu.org
The mission of the Kinship Ministry is to ensure Countryside Church grows and has increasing impact on the religious and social life in the Northwest suburbs by developing an atmosphere that is inclusive, welcoming, connecting, compassionate, and respectful.

We include each and every member of Countryside as partners in this mission. We need your welcoming smiles and willing hands and hearts as we welcome newcomers, host church events like the Seder, and help out with church committees. One of the best ways to get to know others and to become an integral part of our beloved community is just to step up and say, ‘How can I help?’

Key Committees and Programs (Chairs)
- Soul Intentions Covenant Groups, formerly known as Chalice Circles (Lisa Bohné)
- Circle Suppers (Marty Farrington)
- Compassionate Communication for Resolving Conflict-CCRC (Vid Axel)
- Feminine Divine Women's Group (Wendy Ingrassia)
- Membership Committee (Tom MacTavish)
- Transitions (Gloria Kinney, Tom MacTavish)
- Sunday Hospitality Teams (Eileen Wiviott)

Social Events
Volunteers for social events are recruited on an ad-hoc basis.
- September Ingathering Finger-Food Potluck (Team: Krista & Tom MacTavish, Juli Cicarelli, Pat Wydell, Edie Scott, Barbara Griggs)
- Passover Seder (Team organized by Carol Bobbe – see full report below)
- All-Church Birthday Party (team organized by Peggy Simonsen and supported by Family Ministry; Linda Berry, Joel Dennison, Karen Epps, Kay Gredell, Jules Jaramillo, Laurie Lantz)

In addition to the activities of Kinship Ministry committees (see following reports), the ministry conducted an orientation in January for Sunday Hospitality Teams, for both current team members and new volunteers. The hospitality teams are volunteers responsible for greeting, ushering, coffee hour, and A-V for the Sunday services. We encourage all congregants to consider volunteering. Teams are assigned to staff one Sunday each month. Experienced volunteers will help newcomers learn the tasks of each role.

Kinship volunteers also coordinated the ingathering potluck lunch in September and the successful All-church birthday parties for breakfast and lunch on April 23. The intent of the birthday parties was to create an intergenerational social event to celebrate all the birthdays past of some of our senior members as well as to generate discussion amongst all ages. Kinship also collaborated with Worship and Study ministries for the annual Passover Seder and for this year’s Caroling and Craft Party in December.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE
This year’s committee included Key Gredell, Siri Laurin, Krista MacTavish, and Tom MacTavish. We continued to emphasize flexibility, availability, and consistency in serving potential members in their quest to find and connect with our community. The Path Class (now formally named “Path to Belonging”) is comprised of two sessions: one session focused on providing information about the UU faith and sharing the participants’ spiritual journey’s and a second session focused on meeting our Countryside community through dialogue with representatives from our board, staff, and ministries. We use prepared presentation materials to ensure that our message is well structured and we augment this with a ‘take home’ folder containing materials describing the UUA, our church, our ministries, and a request for participating in the life of the church through active personal engagement and financial support. This year, we held three sessions (Fall, Winter, and Spring) where a total of 18 persons attended and 17 of those subsequently joined.

A special ‘thank you’ to Siri Laurin for being a steadfast champion of the monthly “Introduction to CCUU” informational session. Our congregation has done well this year as ambassadors for our faith community and I am often pleased to learn that our visitors’ first contact was with one of you who reached out to them with a friendly smile and expression of interest.
SOUL INTENTIONS COVENANT GROUPS
Our active facilitators this year are Cheryl Stephanopoulos, Peggie Graves, Karen Greenland, and Lisa Bohne. Our initial group of facilitators started at 8, and our registration included 36 participants, which we had expected would allow for four covenant groups. However, due to schedule challenges and participants who later opted out, we ended up with only two active groups this year, our smallest number.

Feedback from active participants has generally been very positive. However, overall participation has waned over the years and we lack a formal leader for the program. We are enthusiastic about the Soul Matters materials that are provided for the monthly congregational ministry topics, and we appreciate the connection between the sermons, Focus newsletters, and our discussion groups.

We often hear from our group members that their involvement in Covenant Groups was instrumental in engaging them in the congregation and encouraging them to join when they were first visiting Countryside Church. This is very gratifying as the purpose of covenant groups is to strengthen the bond of kinship and to foster a sense of community.

Without a new leader and a surge in participation, the covenant groups may need a rest. While we have historically had sufficient numbers of group facilitators, we are seeking an energetic leader who will breathe new life into our publicity and registration process.

Although we have not publicized our covenant groups outside of Countryside Church, given the political climate, the topics might appeal more broadly to people outside of church.

Submitted by Lisa Bohne

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION for the RESOLUTION of CONFLICT (CCRC)
The CCRC (Compassionate Communication for Resolution of Conflict panel) now consists of Vid Axel (chairperson and panelist), duRee Bryant and Lisa Bohne (panelists).

The CCRC stands ready to assist those within the CCUU family who might encounter conflicts with others within our congregational circle, but who encounter difficulty engaging constructively with these conflicts, on their own.

All panelists have received training regarding the kinds of support that we can offer, how to offer it, and with respect to the limits of CCRC activity.

When the panel's support is sought, the more experienced members of the panel make judgments about what kinds of support our less experienced panelists might need to offer the most effective help in specific, conflict situations.

For those who would like assistance, the CCRC can offer different forms of confidential support. Support can range from the rudimentary to the more actively involved.

CCRC panelists may offer advice which a person can then apply when striving on one's own to deal more constructively with a conflict. When more support is wished, the CCRC can also offer intermediate forms of help.

In its most advanced form, when a given situation warrants, and both parties are willing, one or more CCRC panelist(s) can even assist with facilitated dialogue or mediation.

The CCRC does not take sides or dictate solutions. The CCRC does not seek to act as some kind of "conflict police."

Rather, the aim of the CCRC is to offer confidential and safe support that will assist CCUU community participants who find themselves in conflict, and who request assistance, to 1) communicate more effectively within the framework of our Covenant of Right Relationship; 2) to more deeply understand one another; and 3) together, to craft their own, constructive solutions.
The CCRC may also, at times, make educational presentations in which we draw attention to the existence and purpose of the CCRC, as well as teach skills in more effective communication and conflict resolution.

When the CCRC has been sought for support, we have provided it. Because of the confidentiality involved in such support, further details cannot be provided in this annual report of our activity.

Those who have sought our assistance have reported that we have helped and have lived up to our aspirations. Even so, we continue to learn from experience and to improve our work.

We look forward to future opportunities to offer support.

Respectfully Submitted by Vid Axel, Chairperson, CCRC

FEMININE DIVINE WOMEN’S GROUP

Countyside’s Feminine Divine Women’s Group started in 2008 as a study group for the UU curriculum “Rise Up and Call Her Name,” continuing in subsequent years with the program “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.” These two programs were the result of a 1977 UU General Assembly Resolution calling on all UUs and UU organizations to examine and put aside sexist assumptions, attitudes, and language and to explore and eliminate religious roots of sexism in myths, traditions, and religious beliefs. After completing these programs, the group felt strongly that they wanted to continue meeting, but in a slightly different format. That led to a new structure, which uses a different book each year as a focus for exploring areas of feminine spirituality.

We have bonded as CCUU individuals through sharing during our check-in with non-judgmental support of each other. We have discussion and feedback of our current book and chapter within the group each month. This year we are reading “Daring Greatly.” There have been 13 participants in the group this year: Wendy Ingrassia, facilitator; Juli Cicarelli, Jeanmarie Dwyer-Wrigley, Barbara Griggs, Joanne Lagattolla, Krista MacTavish, Carol Paton, Chelsie Scoggin-Chang, Sheilah Sokeland, Cheryl Stephanopoulos, Lori Ward, Sue Wendt, Pat Wydell.

The Feminine Divine group supports the covenant of Countryside Church UU by offering women members connectedness and engagement. We support social justice by working with “Music with a Mission” each year to provide food for the event, manage the food table during the evening, and help out where needed (sell raffle tickets, count cash, man the entry table).

We support the kinship ministry by providing a welcoming sacred space for CCUU women to form a bond with each other and the feminine divine. We strive to be inclusive, compassionate, and understanding of women and their challenges and joys, their spiritual history.

For more information, please contact Wendy Ingrassia, 815-528-8736 or WendyIngrassia@yahoo.com.

Submitted by Wendy Ingrassia

SEDER DINNER

We organize and hold an annual Seder dinner that corresponds to the Jewish Seder observance. This year, it was held on Friday, April 14. We learn about one of the major Jewish Holidays. We bring whole families including some from outside the church together for this observance. This UU Seder is focused on freedom and gratitude with many stories from history including UU history.
Our Seder this year was very well-attended (about 100). We had about 50% more people than last year. Since the people mentioned above have done the same event numerous times, it gets easier and easier. Hilary improves the program each year and expects to have a new Haggadah for us to work from next year.

This year’s Seder Team was:
- Carol Bobbe, lead
- Linda and Michael Berry
- Ken Bobbe
- Karen Epps
- Linda and Tom Kuna
- Mark Krivchenia
- George and Kathy Motto
- Lois and Jeff Phillips
- Members of the 20-30s group, coordinated by Jessica Gardner
- Rev. Hilary Krivchenia, Jules Jaramillo, Laurie Lantz (CCUU Minister & Staff)

How does this program support the covenant of CCUU, the ongoing work of social justice, the thriving and strength of our congregation, and the promotion and affirmation of our UU values?
Social justice and especially ‘freedom’ are the themes of the service and of the event in general. We are also learning about another religion – Judaism. It’s a multigenerational event where everyone can participate.

How does this program help to support the Ministries of CCUU?
This event supports the work of Kinship, Worship, and Study ministries.
- Kinship – we bring all ages together for a social evening including a service and dinner.
- Worship – the Seder service is a form of worship, complete with music
- Study – reading the Haggadah is a study of the history of Jews and other persecuted people

How might volunteers help with this program and what might they derive from helping with it?
All of the work involved is open to volunteers – setting up for the event, advertising the event, taking reservations, preparing in the kitchen, and cleaning up after the event. Volunteers can also help by making the foods that we provide – Charoses and Matzo ball soup. The Phillipses contact folks who play instruments and/or sing to perform the songs and music at the event. Helping with the Seder brings more meaning to the event for the volunteer. It’s an opportunity to contemplate our freedoms and their value. You meet new members and people of all ages.

How does your program serve the larger community beyond Countryside Church?
Many who are not church members attend the Seder. The number seems to be increasing.

What would you like to accomplish next year?
We would like to increase our attendance – the room can hold about 140 maximum. That’s our limit now. We would like to bring in new people to help – you never know when one of our regular helpers might drop out and we would need to replace them.

TRANSITIONS
Transitions is a Kinship Ministry program of activities, lectures, discussion, and gatherings for adult members and friends of CCUU. We are now completing our third year of operation. The Transitions program grew out of a leadership training program, “Coming Alive”, conducted in the spring four years ago by Dan Wiseman and Rev. Hilary Krivchenia.

Transitions activities are held during the daytime and are planned by an Advisory Group (Gloria Kinney, Chair; Krista and Tom MacTavish; Barbara Griggs; and Kathy and George Motto). They are based on participants' interests, and their willingness to lead a group session. An Interest Survey is taken each year to guide Transitions programming.

Transitions Thursday Program
The group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of each month at 10:00 am until about 1:00 pm. All adults are welcome. Attendance is about 25-30 each month. The program addresses a wide variety of topics usually presented by a member of the Transitions group. A Questions and Answers session follows the presentation and then we enjoy a potluck lunch.
This last year, we have invited members of other community organizations to present Transitions Thursday programs. In the future, we envision reaching out to an increasing number of local community organizations as opportunities are presented for both participants and presenters.

Transitions Thursday meetings for the 2016-2017 Church year were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Getting Serious About Strokes</td>
<td>Tom MacTavish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Scottish Music</td>
<td>Kathy Motto</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Humanism: A Change of Focus</td>
<td>Drs. Lloyd Miller, Dr. George Motto, Art Paton</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Jackie Dennison &amp; Tom MacTavish</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Senior Housing Options</td>
<td>Ellen Vinzani</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Cancelled due to cold weather</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Your Legacy</td>
<td>Eileen Considine Boggins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Music and the Brain: Using Music to Enhance One’s Mind, Body, &amp; Spirit</td>
<td>Mary Helen Ekstam</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>End of Life Planning</td>
<td>Rev. Hilary Krivchenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Returning to Cuba After 56 Years</td>
<td>Clara Stone</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Isadora Duncan and the Art of Dance</td>
<td>Barbara Griggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Aspects of U.S. History</td>
<td>Jim Simmons</td>
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</tbody>
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Other Transitions Activities:

- Share information on programs and resources available from other community organizations (e.g. Northwest Community Hospital Newsletter, Roosevelt University's Institute for Continued Learning) which might be of interest to Transitions participants.
- Organize field trips to nearby places of interest. In past years, we have visited sites such as the Buddhist Temple in Woodstock, the Japanese Garden in Rockford, the Hindu Temple in Bartlett, and the Bahai Temple in Wilmette.
- To respond to the expressed interests of Transitions participants, we have organized two additional groups:
  - Memoir Makers: This year, the group has continued their exploration of writing memoirs and creative nonfiction by viewing lectures offered by Hannah B. Harvey, PhD on the topic of “The Art of Storytelling: From Parents to Professionals.” Each month, we share new works, conduct gentle critiques, and discuss new approaches and methods from our Great Courses video. The group's membership has continued to grow with the addition of new members who have shared their stories through different genre such as essays, poems, descriptive narratives, and travelogues.
  - Great Books Discussion Group: In the third year of the Transitions Great Books group, we continued the reading and discussion of the anthology of short stories The Seven Deadly Sins. In January we began its sequel, Even Deadlier. Our group meets twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 10:00 am until noon. The number of participants continues to grow and is 14 at present. Our discussions follow the philosophy of “Shared Inquiry” advocated by the Great Books Foundation, and discussion leadership is rotated among group participant volunteers. A new book of short stories or essays will be chosen by the group and will be started in September. All are welcome.

All of the Transitions programs and activities contribute to the mission of the Kinship Ministry by enhancing camaraderie among CCUU members, understanding our own life’s experiences by reviewing the experiences and relationships of others in literature, personal storytelling, and examining our values and the values of others in other cultures and other times. Potluck lunches, field trips, and writing and telling family stories serve to deepen our friendships and provide a basis for authentic and compassionate communication among us.

For more information about Transitions or to put your name on our email list, please contact:

- Gloria Kinney, 847-397-8114, gloriakinney@comcast.net
- Tom MacTavish, 847-934-7636 tmactavish@gmail.com;

or the 2017-18 facilitators: Kathy and George Motto, 847-394-0846, george1m@aol.com.
FOUNDATIONS/OPERATIONS MINISTRY

The care and running of our congregational home resides increasingly with staff but depends on the involvement, skills, and time of our congregants.

The Foundations Ministry includes all things pertaining to maintaining and operating our building and grounds, the equipment, the use of our building, as well as our means of communication — with each other and the broader community. Much of that is overseen by Laurie Lantz, our Congregational Administrator, with the support of a few of our members and friends. Budgetary items fall primarily in the Buildings/Grounds section of the budget, with “operations committees” being Aesthetics, AV, Historian, IT/Tech, Leadership Development, Marketing & Communications, Safe Congregation (background checks for those working with children & youth).

Most of us take for granted that our building is always here ready to receive us on Sundays and during the week. We take for granted that the heat will turn on, the AV equipment will be available, equipment and materials will be available, our gathering spaces will be attractive and ready for our use. We don’t think about what is involved in producing and sharing information or how the larger community can find out about what is happening within our walls. In a business with a building our size and with the number of people using it, there would be a team of paid staff to cover all of this. At Countryside, we have one staff person plus a small group of volunteers who give of their time and talent quietly and behind the scenes.

AESTHETICS
Lois Phillips & her team continue to keep us organized & looking spiffy. Lois is working with Alison to freshen the paint in the music rehearsal room. Lois and Jessica Gardner are working to de-clutter and reorganize our storage spaces, which is an ongoing effort - please don’t leave items in a closet or storeroom without first checking with the office.

AUDIO-VISUAL
Jeff Phillips continues to maintain all the AV equipment and helps regularly on Sunday mornings. We are thankful to all members of the hospitality team who help with the AV system for worship services.

HISTORIAN
Our church historian is Kay Gredell. Her job is to keep the historical records of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist organized, easily accessible, and up-to-date by adding information as it occurs. She has received some help with these efforts from Gayle Shampine Barr. Kay has said that this will be her last in this volunteer position. If you have interest in helping to maintain the church’s historical record, please let us know!

Congregation members can help by watching their local newspapers and magazines for any mention of Countryside Church UU and then clipping out the article, making sure to include date and source, and putting it in the Historian mailbox in the church office. Also appreciated are photographs of church events that have been annotated with event, date, and names of people in the photo; they also can be left in the Historian box.

IT/TECH
We have Voice Over Internet Phones (VOIP) through 8x8, which includes 911 service, and means we no longer rely on outdated onsite voice mail equipment. We continue to have internet service through AT&T. Karen Greenland helps maintain our internet router & modem; the staff has a separate WiFi network from the public.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Last summer, Cherita Axel moved the CCUU website to WordPress, based on a template provided by the UUA. Christine Organ, Jackie Dennison, and Michelle Hitchcock administer CCUU’s social media presence on Facebook and Instagram; if you have church-related content you want posted there, please send it to a staff member or ministry coordinator. We pay a monthly fee for Constant Contact to be able to easily send and archive e-news, such as the weekly e-updates. A small communications team (Jackie Dennison; Kathi Hillyer, as Board liaison; and Maryanne O’Dowd, as part of ministry council) provided valuable input to the ministry council and the congregational administrator this year in assembling some resources & processes for committees and programs to use in getting the word out about events. Jackie and Don Bussey are working on getting podcasts of the
sermons onto the website. Efforts are still needed to help create and post church photos & videos and to create a cohesive look for our publications.

**LAWNCARE/GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

During the last gardening season, we hired Luis Flores to help our volunteer workers maintain our landscaping. Luis is an accomplished gardener who works for us in the evening on most week days during the growing season. Having his assistance greatly reduces the amount of time and effort that volunteers have had to provide in order to maintain our landscaping. Our primary volunteers are Judy Miller and Beth Gerson; thank you, also, to Siri Laurin, who has been helping with weeding this spring. It is important to say that the amount of money that is allotted for others to cut our lawn and maintain our plantings greatly reduces our ability to provide for materials needed to renew and replace existing landscaping.

Finally, it should be noted that our landscape’s beauty is appreciated not only by we of Countryside but also by other landscaping professionals. I am extremely gratified when I walk our campus with career horticulturists and hear their praises for the beauty of our landscaping. We members of this church are always experiencing the renewal of this seasonal beauty when we arrive at our church home. Throughout the growing season, our landscaping heralds the fact that our gardens are as alive and growing as are we the people of Countryside Church UU.

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…submitted by Judy Miller, Grounds Chairperson

**BUILDING & FACILITIES. incl. NORTH PROPERTY & CAPITAL REPAIRS**

In August, many people came together for a church potluck & work day – to wash windows & clean screens, vacuum under the grates inside the entrances and under furniture that rarely gets moved, clean up classrooms, reorganize kitchen drawers & cabinets, clean the chancel (sanctuary “stage”), clear cobwebs, replace lightbulbs. This kind of event helps with the upkeep of our building and helps promote a greater sense of ownership in the congregation – and hopefully, helps develop bonds of kinship through working together. We’ll hope it’s something we can organize at least annually.

Steve Black and Mark Huston are the primary volunteer experts that advise on what needs to be done to keep things in working order and contacting contractors when needed. Last spring-summer-fall, needed masonry work was done on the east side of the building; this work was paid for out of the capital reserve account. While the masonry work was being done, we became aware of a flashing issue that needs attention outside the sanctuary, and we are obtaining quotes & getting that work done as soon as possible. Many thanks to Ray Holpuch, who repaired a large pothole in the parking lot this winter. We recently had the three 24-year old toilets in the ladies’ bathroom replaced with new, Kohler ADA toilets; it was more cost-efficient than having them repaired and we got a good price.

In addition to Steve and Mark, we are fortunate to have church members who are handy and willing to do help with minor repairs in the building – Ron Vargason, Jeff Phillips, Ray Holpuch, John Evans, Judy Miller, Peggy Simonsen are some of the names that come to mind.

Ongoing facilities work for which we have contracts with outside contractors includes quarterly preventive maintenance of the HVAC system and annual inspections of the fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, emergency lights & exit signs, and sprinkler system. We also have a contract with Smithereen Pest Management; this year, we cut back to bi-monthly inspections to save some.

This year at the North Property: we had nine dead trees taken down, had a shower faucet and the sump pump repaired, replaced a smoke detector, had the hot water heater gas line hard piped. The last two items were required by the Village during their bi-annual inspection to renew our rental license. The Village also noted some kitchen cabinet doors that need to be repaired/re-hung. Ron Vargason helps coordinate the Village’s bi-annual inspection; in addition to the three items the Village cited during this year’s inspection, Ron noted that the carpet might need replacing soon.