actively answering the call for love, compassion, reason, and justice

2018-19
Year in Review

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

Presented prior to the
Annual Meeting
to be held on May 19, 2019
Our Mission
We are a spiritual community actively answering the call for love, compassion, reason, and justice.

Our Vision
Countryside is committed to being a voice of and active presence for liberal religion in the northwest suburbs. Empowered by our Mission Statement, we endeavor to:
- Create a welcoming place of connectedness, compassion, and respect for people of all ages.
- Advance inclusivity and diversity within our congregation and community.
- Care for each other in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Provide for spiritual and intellectual growth and inspire lifelong learning.
- Promote a sustainable future for our community and world by acting with a social, environmental, and global conscience.
- Communicate and spread the message of Unitarian Universalism within and beyond our community.
- Promote peace and justice in our congregation, communities, and the world.
- Engage in thoughtful stewardship of our resources to achieve our mission and carry out our vision.

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.
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.
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Our Staff Team: The Reverend Hilary Landau Krivchenia, Minister; The Reverend Dr. C. Scot Giles, Community Minister; Kathy Underwood, Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education; Laurie Lantz, Congregational Administrator; Alison Vernon, Music Director; Dr. Janice L. Razaq, Staff Pianist; Marisol Vazquez, Religious Education Assistant; Aida Acu-río & Natalie Gerson, Childcare Providers

2018-19 Board of Trustees: Christine Organ, President; duRee Bryant, Vice President; Kathi Hillyer, Secretary; Marcus White, Treasurer; Karen Epps, Chris Hitchcock, Kristin Huston, Jeanie Michalec, Joy Simon. [In March, Maryanne O’Dowd had to step down as President-elect. duRee Bryant was nominated & accepted that role; Kathi Hillyer was moved into the Vice President position, and Karen Epps is serving as Acting Secretary until the new Board term starts July 1.]
As our church year draws to a close, and we look to the upcoming year, there is much to celebrate and look forward to with hope and anticipation. Our ministries continue to provide a diverse array of activities. Our programming needs are expanding and evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the congregation and our communities. We have a dedicated staff and Senior Minister who consistently go above and beyond to meet the needs of the congregation.

We continue to welcome visitors and new members. And we are a congregation of people who generously volunteer their time and energy to do the work of this congregation and our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Over the past year, we hosted UU-based and community events, deepened our relationships with each other at monthly potlucks and other activities, and supported service partners whose values align with our own and are making a difference in the world.

The Board has made an intentional effort to work with you and with our staff to create a sustainable future for our congregation. We strive to: provide transparent and frequent communications about our progress and decision-making at the board level; support ministry work that will enable us to meet the needs of the time; and grow as an environmentally-sustainable congregation. Together with our ministries and staff, we endeavor to create an integrated approach to programming and activities so we can harness our collective energies and use our staff/volunteer capacity more efficiently.

Despite the loss of some large donors this year, this year’s stewardship drive – Pledge To The Possibilities – nearly matched last year’s total with an estimated final pledge amount of approximately $410,000. What’s more, the pledges received in 18-19 are expected to be on target, and we continue to have faith in the pledges received in 19-20. Initial list with deferred expenses is also proposed for those funds remaining at the end of the 2019-20 church year.

Another way in which we hope to more fully live out our values is with respect to the North Property (the house and land adjacent to the church building). For the past few years, the Board has been investigating and considering various possibilities regarding the North Property. Last year, a team was created to evaluate these possibilities and answer some of the outstanding questions regarding issues pertaining to parking, zoning, taxes, and other issues. The Board would like to thank this team -- Ron Vargason, Debbie Lee, George Motto, Steve Black, and Mike Berry -- for their hard work to gather information.

One of our primary goals was to find a way to use this asset in a way that aligns with our mission/vision and supports our long-term sustainability. Currently the Board is in the exploratory phase of a possible partnership with Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants (ICDI) – which is one of our service partners – to provide temporary housing to IDCI clients who are various stages of the asylum process. We are also looking at ways to do this with little to no impact on the budget, including grants, reallocation of OSC funds, external fundraising, and partnerships with other faith groups in the area.

We are very excited about the possibility of using the North Property in a way that enables us to live out our UU values in a tangible and meaningful way, while also meeting a need in the community and the larger world. In addition to considering financial and legal implications of using the property in this way, a critical part of this evaluation will involve a determination of volunteer interest within CCUU. There are a number of ways to get involved, and if you are interested in supporting this effort, please contact me at prez@ccuuu.org as soon as possible. 

2019 Annual Reports
**President’s Report, cont’d**

As you read through this report, you will see the wide range of activities that show how we are making our vision and our mission a reality. If you are looking for a way to connect with others, make a meaningful contribution, or to find a source of support, you can find it in these pages and within this community.

Here we find sustenance, refuge and inspiration. After all, Countryside isn’t just a place; it is a community of people of shared values and deep connections. We are a community of people who support, empower, and respect each other so that we can live out our values and be the change we want to see in the world. I, and the rest of the Board of Trustees, look forward to gathering with you at the Annual Meeting so that we can all be a part of planning our future and reaching for the possibilities.

_In Faith,_

Christine Organ
_President, Board of Trustees_

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**Personnel Committee**

Committee Members: Linda Berry, Linda Kuna, Joy Simon, as well as Reverend Hilary Krivchenia, who as Chief of Staff participates on Personnel Committee

**Personnel Committee Responsibilities**

- Provide support to Minister on Personnel matters.
- Develop and update long range staffing plans to ensure sufficient and talented staff to meet evolving congregational needs.
- Provide guidance and supporting documentation for salary and benefits recommendations for budget.
- Provide guidance and supporting documentation for employment offers to new hires.
- Administer the performance review process for all full and part-time employees in conjunction with the Minister.
- Ensure existing personnel policies are maintained and enforced.
- Ensure that job descriptions are updated for all employees as positions evolve.

**Accomplishments this Year**

- Linda Kuna recruited to join Personnel Committee.
- Provided guidance and documentation for hiring Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education.
- Recruited and facilitated hiring Religious Education Assistant.
- Updated DLRE job description and assisted DLRE Search Committee as needed.
- Developed healthcare proposal for full time staff members, including benchmarking similar congregations. Proposal approved by Board of Directors to be implemented ‘19/’20 fiscal year.
- Developed budget recommendations for existing and new staff salary and benefits. Met with budget subgroup for on-going budgeting process.
- Worked with Reverend Hilary on all personnel matters.

**Goals for Upcoming Year**

- Update long range staffing plan to maximize congregational needs. Meet with each staff person to discuss and document current roles as well as identify needs.
- Finalize Leave of Absence Policy and obtain Board approval.
- Provide support for new hire onboarding process.
- Update record retention policy as needed.
- Develop and implement communication plan to congregation regarding roles of current staff and long term strategic personnel plan.

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**Search Committee for Director of Lifespan Religious Education**

Committee Members: Ann Blymire (chair), Lisa Gilley, Kimberly Tiford Frank, Kathy Motto, Leslie Vaughn, and Reverend Hilary Krivchenia.

In the summer of 2018, the committee tasked with identifying a new Director of Lifespan Religious Education met for the first time. Since then, we have worked diligently to finalize a job description and develop a marketing packet that is available to prospective candidates. These materials were formally posted in December 2018 (to accept applications) on variety of relevant websites including UUA, LREDA and the Meadville Lombard Theological School. A rubric of standard questions addressing the core desired competencies was developed to assure consistency and thoroughness in evaluating potential candidates.

It was also important to the Committee to make sure the opinions of the congregation can be incorporated in any decision making, so, in September of 2018, open forums were held to gather opinions. The feedback from these forums, along with emailed opinions that were also requested, will be used to aid the committee in determining the final candidates.

As of this writing, the Committee is interviewing potential candidates. We are heartened by the interest in our position, at a time that Religious Educators are diminishing in numbers. We will engage in a diligent search until we find the best candidate for our Religious Education Leadership. If we do not find the right candidate, we would, likely, renew Kathy Underwood’s interim contract for one more year.
This was a year of experiments, of transitions, of twists and turns, and great creativity in the congregation. It has been a source of hope when I see so many young families making real connections with one another in our congregation. I see strong new relationships and bright new children. I see the congregation more strongly committed than ever to being a real force for love and justice in the larger world – not only with money but, importantly, with the work of their hearts and hands. I see the sparking of new ideas. And I see the great steadiness and strength – the commitment of long-time members of this congregation. At a time when religious communities are experiencing staggering attrition around the country, Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist is facing these challenges with wisdom and growing creativity. We are seeking to meet the challenges of the present right now and we see our successes, perhaps not in staggeringly high numbers of new members, but in the sense of belonging, the increased participation, the presence of young families, and the sense of nourishment and vitality that fills our meetings and our worship together. We have something very special here – a community of love and compassion, of learning and meaning, of freedom and values, of youth and age – and a religious faith that is the very foundation of the best in the American experiment. We have something to offer and, at the same time are receiving something very special.

I had the pleasure of working in partnership with Kathy Underwood as Our Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education. I benefited from her creativity and experience with our Messages for All Ages. Too often we think of our Message for All Ages as the message we are giving our children, but the truth is that adults, as well, have various learning styles and enjoy and benefit from the many stories that we tell at the start of the service. You can read more about her work in our Religious Education Program in her report. But I ventured into Adult Faith Development, setting in motion the Resistance and Transformation series, gathering the materials, recruiting teachers, and leading two units. Most of the rest were led by members of this congregation. The materials they needed had been prepared for them and the subject matter was fascinating as it helped to lift up the history of Unitarian Universalism, while looking at that history through the lens of social issues in the United States. We will offer that series again because, while many people in our congregation have a sense of Unitarian Universalism, there is so much more to learn. In addition, if someone missed a session, they can pick it up the next time. It is also a wonderful opportunity for members of the congregation to step into a teaching role for adults. Too often our children and young people know more about Unitarian Universalism than the adults do in our congregations. Next year we’ll take a look at theological issues in Unitarian Universalism, also using our history to lift up those ideas and allow all, who attend, to explore their own theologies, beliefs, and doubts. We won’t offer the course on the same Sundays that we did this year because it conflicted with other congregational activities and prevented people who wanted to participate from doing so.

It was also a pleasure to offer some opportunities for members of the congregation to engage in conversation, discussion about current events by offering some sessions that allowed us to look at books that are making a difference, either in our movement or in the larger society. We read and discussed the book White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo. It is a book that ran through this country, at least the progressive communities in this country, like a wildfire. It opened eyes and minds and hearts to the ways in which our culture is pervasively racist and the ways in which even well-meaning people avoid, resist, and even deny the racist air we breathe. We followed that book with a discussion of the book American Immanence by Michael Hogue. This book, written by a professor at Meadville Lombard Theological School here in Chicago, covers the challenges faced in our nation and world at this time and looks at some of the roots of Unitarian Universalism and in which they precisely address those challenges.

I worked extensively with our search committee for the Director of Lifespan Religious Education. As of the writing of this report, this most diligent team is still reviewing the applicants and is committed to taking care with the process so that we hire the person who is the best fit for this congregation at this time, even if this takes longer. It has been a pleasure to work with another thoughtful team at CCUU.

On our Lay Ministry team, we will be welcoming new members in the upcoming year and offering new training to them, as well as presenting them to the congregation, formally the Sunday service in the fall.

During this year, worship has been a pleasure and our Worship Council has grown stronger than ever, as you can read in the Worship Council report. I want to highlight that we welcomed a young adult onto our Worship Council this year, an important accomplishment which, I hope, will usher in a time when we will welcome more young adults and youth into our leadership, so that their voices, so important, will also inform our decisions. I have truly enjoyed working to make our worship more interactive and engaging, exploring possibilities that might become new traditions, and working collaboratively with this team of lay leaders who brings real skills to our worship creation. Together, we explore the ways in which we can deepen and enrich this touchstone time during our week. We did offer another Transgender Service of Remembrance this fall. It is a meaningful service and there were inspiring speakers, though the event was attended only by a few folks. I have truly enjoyed our increased creativity in worship this year and I believe it will make this congregation a place that can speak to people of all ages and provide a meaningful place for people to gather on Sundays and perhaps other days as well to restore their spirits, shore up their courage, build new relationships, and find grounding to live lives that can make a difference in a wounded world.

It was a relief and has been a great experience to begin to volunteer at Partners in Our Community in their language skills rooms. It is a guilty joy, because each week when I go to coach people in English, I learn so much and leave feeling so much enriched myself. I will continue as soon as I am more mobile.

And this year I participated, for the third year, in the interfaith Thanksgiving Worship service at Prince of Peace
in Schaumburg. This service, held yearly on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, is a truly warm and hopeful event, with clergy from Lutheran, Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, and various Christian congregations. Each year there is a great sharing of bread – each congregation brings a loaf of bread (Mark always picks up a giant sourdough boule from the French bakery at the Ogilvie station) and we cut our loaves into small pieces and the crowd moves between the tables with little ceremony, but much warmth.

I participated on an Interfaith Panel on Justice hosted by the Sikh Gurdwara in September – as always, a pleasure to connect with the Sikh community here.

I also began attending meetings of a local organization called Bridging the Black White Divide. It met at Holy Family in Palatine. I look forward to the work and actions that may emerge from this interfaith group.

I have served as support pastoral clergy to the DuPage Unitarian Universalist congregation as they lost their minister this year. It was not time consuming, but enabled me to feel that our congregations really can support one another.

It was a remarkable and challenging year for the Board of Trustees. I have seen many, many years of exemplary board leadership, and this year I saw yet more visionary and concrete leadership on the part of the Board of Trustees. Many hard decisions have needed to be made and, with respectful and deep dialogue while learning from mistakes, I have witnessed truly healthy process. I’ve been proud to be part of exploring our connections in the larger community that would support a possible conversion of the north property into something which will help us to live our values. The north property has been a challenge for the congregation for many years. The purchase of the north property was the result of the generosity and vision of a handful of long-time members of this congregation. Held for a rainy day and for the possibilities that property might hold, over time it became a task that volunteers were uninterested in as a rental property, costs persisted, and it detracted and distracted from our core purposes and mission. There are a million small things that one by one take up the time of staff, and the north property, while bringing in a small share of money, also ate into staff time. A number of times over the past 10 years, members of the congregation have researched to find out what projects might inspire development, volunteerism, and engagement in the north property but, until now, no idea has really sparked a critical mass of people, nor has an idea found concrete support in the larger community and shown the possibility of keeping our budget stable, at the same time. Meeting with a couple of leaders from other congregations, talking with community activists, discussing possibilities with the members of our Outreach Steering Committee, and participating in the thoughtful discussion at the board has been truly heartening and giving hope that something that will truly enrich the life of this faith community will grow carefully and mindfully. I enjoyed reaching out to funding sources and writing the initial draft of a grant proposal – even though, at the time of this writing, I do not know whether we will receive the grant.

The board was also challenged this year. First we faced the sudden health issues of the elderly mother of our current Vice President, duRee Bryant. duRee spent much of her time this year in Oklahoma and yet remained a very active and present leader on the board, dialing in by Zoom, flying back for a critical meeting, working with our Ministry Council, and being always ready with wisdom and leader-

ship. Mary Anne O’Dowd faced sudden health challenges with her back and had to step back from board work. This, too, was a challenge, as Mary Anne was going to be our board president this upcoming year and this challenge, too, the board faced with equanimity, vision, persistence, and great heart. In addition, the whole Board and I undertook the Beloved Conversations workshop, in order to be better leaders and guides for the congregation as we strive, in a process that never ends, to become more and more multi-culturally competent in a world that badly needs people to stretch, mature, and become good allies to people of color and all those who have lived on the margins, as well as being agents of healing and justice making in such a world. The slate of new Board Members for this upcoming year look to bring new depth, commitment, and passion to the Board. And I am grateful to the Board for their guidance and support on attending to my own health issues this year.

My reading this year has been focused in areas of multiculturalism and antiracism but also on aging and saging, contemporary humanism, as well as critical thinking. Robin DiAngelo, Parker Palmer, Joan Halifax, Daniel Kahneman, Michael Hogue, have all been companions on this year’s journey. So have countless poets and the usual Buddhist teachers.

Throughout the year, I worked at a self-study of Spanish. I need so much more study and practice, but it’s brought me closer to many people. Learning a relevant language is a truly bridge building exercise – if you’re willing to sound ignorant on a regular basis.

Over the next year, I look to continue our explorations in worship. I hope that we will be moving farther along in our transformation of the north property. I plan to implement further Adult Faith Development modules and to strengthen our focus on Unitarian Universalist identity for all ages. I plan to be further engaged in the larger community, as my newly rebuilt lower back and nearly new neck will allow and look forward to professional conferences, social justice projects, and continuing education. I felt so grateful to have the 10 years of service in this congregation recognized in September and that inaugurated a year of deepening and growth. And year eleven has been sweet and strong.

Most of all I look forward to the new things we create together in 2019-2020. Seems like a promising year for vision (2020) and forging new paths.

It is an honor for me to serve this faith here with you.

Hilary Landau Krivchenia
INTERIM DIRECTOR OF LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This report is an overview and reflection of the work we have done this year, and includes my hopes for your future. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the entire church for your support, creativity, and dedication to our Lifespan program. It has been an honor to serve as your religious educator this past year.

In particular, I extend my deepest gratitude to the staff team at Countryside Church. It has been an honor to serve this community alongside some of the most talented, dedicated, and gifted, individuals I have ever worked with. Laurie Lantz, CCUU’s Congregational Administrator, holds the key to all aspects of this church, and I could not have served this congregation the way I have without her support. If we could clone her, we should! Alison Vernon, the Director of Music, shares her incredible talent and ability to lift up others. Reverend Hilary exemplifies what true shared ministry is. She is willing to branch out and try new things, and has been supportive of myself, as well as the Lifespan Religious Education program. She is passionate about UUism, Countryside, and to her staff team.

Family Ministry

This was the second year Family Ministry has been learning and growing together. Our Mission, Vision, and Values statement was developed in the first year, and we continue to find ways to embrace what this means for families at CCUU. This year got off to a slow start, mostly due to my focus on getting the Coming of Age program started, as well as making the decision and changes accompanying it to use the Soul Matters resources rather than curricula. My hope for the future of Family Ministry is that we continue to listen to families, to their needs, and how to connect those needs to the vision of CCUU through our RE program, connections to social justice, and the larger faith community. I encourage families to unite, support one another, and to be a voice in the future of CCUU.

Family Ministry Mission

Together, we unite to support and nurture families through education, spiritual development, social engagement, community outreach and connection with the larger church community.

Family Ministry...

Supports families raising children in our Unitarian Universalist values in a rapidly changing world.

Nurtures families through education, spiritual development, social engagement, community outreach and connection with the larger church community.

Fosters parent to parent interaction, support, and sharing of ideas as they face the challenges and celebrate the joys that go along with raising a family.

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 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. My practice of medical hypnosis has three areas of focus, cancer care, weight management (as obesity is a major public health threat) and the enhancement of natural fertility. 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 an extended seminar on mindfulness meditation at a special gathering in Las Vegas. I write a quarterly column for the Journal of Hypnotism and sit on the Board of the National Guild of Hypnotists. My website makes free self-hypnotic recordings, videos and other material available to the public.

I want to thank you all for your kindness and support, and I am happy to be part of Countryside Church.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. C. Scot Giles, D.Min.
DIRECTOR OF LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, cont’d

Develops our children’s sense of community and a shared sense of identity with our church and the values it represents.
Seeks to transform lives, promote justice, and foster universal values of love, respect, and responsibility for children, youth and families.
Celebrates our children’s unique sense of self, their place in our wider Unitarian Universalist movement today, and for generations to come.

Family Ministry Events
September: Ingathering
October: Cupcake Wars
December: Caroling and Crafts Party
March: Selfie Scavenger Hunt
June: Family Fun Day and Potluck

Religious Education Support Staff
Aida Acurio and Natalie Gerson serve as our paid childcare employees, and have been great support to our RE program, and in providing needed childcare for adult RE, membership, choir, and 20/30 Something childcare needs. Natalie will be leaving us in August to attend college, and will be greatly missed. Marisol Vazquez was hired as the RE Assistant in December. She brings a love for interacting with youngsters, artistic creativity, computer savviness, self-direction, and a willingness to learn that has been valuable to the program.

RE Volunteers
Our RE program is a cooperative effort and would not exist without many hours of generous support. We had 55+ volunteers, who served as lead and support teachers, RE Floaters, Coming of Age mentors, and Family Ministry Team members, who made this year’s RE experiences possible. Our RE Coordinators were Cara Duffy, Jen Rotchford, Leslie Vaughn, Chris Smith, Linda Berry, and Kim Tilford. Without their historic memory, their time, energy and spirit, I would have had a much more challenging year. I am especially grateful to Linda Berry, who filled in as the RE Assistant until we hired Marisol Vazquez, and Debbie Lee who helped with many behind-the-scenes tasks. I’m also thankful for Jen and John Alton, Ann Blymire, Leslie Vaughn, and Crystina Smith for their unwavering support of Family Ministry and the RE Library.

In April, I hosted a luncheon for our volunteers, and presented them with gifts made by the young people. We had a conversation about the coming year and new ways to structure things that will make volunteering easier and more fulfilling. My hope is that most of these dedicated volunteers continue next year – whether in the same role or a different one – to provide some continuity in our program.

Children and Youth Religious Education
Nursery (0-2) & Chalice Children (+2 years – Pre-K)
Aida, our nursery care provider, continues to provide a safe, nurturing environment for our youngest UUs to play, nap, and engage while parents attend service.
Natalie, our paid childcare person, works in Chalice Children on Sunday morning with volunteers. The Chalice Children curriculum and activities encourages self-awareness and teaches UU values with stories and celebrations from around the world.

Spirit Play (Kindergarten & Grade 1)
This Montessori-based program focuses on stories from our UU history, social justice, holidays, and world religions with themed-base activities to support individual learning styles.

Soul Matters (Grades 2-3, 4-5, and 6-7)
This year was an experimental one, in that we used the Soul Matters resources for religious education as the basis for our Sunday programming. The lessons and activities focused on the monthly theme. While this required some tweaking and research on my part, it was well-received overall. The staff have decided to continue with the Soul Matters program next year as well.

Coming of Age (Grades 7-9)
This year, 10 youth participated in the Coming of Age program, which culminated on May 5 with a worship service showcasing their affirmations. Chris Smith helped coordinate the program and recruit youth as well as the 10 mentors involved. The youth raised over $1,400 for a trip to Chicago in June, where they will visit some UU sites, attend worship, visit the Holocaust Museum, and provide and serve lunch for The Night Ministry.

Soul Matters (Grades 8-12, Sr High Youth Group)
The Sr. High Youth Group experienced low attendance this year, but had a consistent membership. We averaged 2-3 youth, but at times reached 6-8 in attendance. We had hoped that integrating the 8th graders with the SHYG would bring an infusion of energy to both groups, but a majority of 8th graders were participating in Coming of Age and did not attend
both groups. Additional feedback from the youth indicated that shifting from 11am to 10am for a start time was also a deterrent.

Curriculum

The SHYG followed the Soul Matters monthly themes and activities, 2 Sundays of each month utilized activities from the Soul Matters curriculum and the other 2 Sundays were a combination of open discussion, All Church services, and guest speakers.

Integration into the Larger Congregation

We are working toward more attendance during church services, but are still finding that the youth do not attend on All Church Sundays. The youth group signed up to be greeters, chalice lighting, ushers and to assist with coffee hour several times to encourage their comfort and willingness to be present at service. The Youth Group service was held on Feb. 24th, the kids did a wonderful job with the subject of ‘Home’ and the many things that means to different people.

Activities

• One member of the group attended both Fall and Spring Youth Conferences
• Assisted with Hanukkah celebration
• Assisted with the March 17 Congregational Potluck, along with the Green Sanctuary Committee
• Participated in the Earth Day clean-up at Deer Grove

Young Adult Group

Facilitator: Kim Tilford

This past fall, a small group of young adults began meeting twice a month on Sunday evenings. Several former youth group members from CCUU and North Shore Unitarian Church had returned to the area and expressed a desire to connect outside of Sunday mornings. Our first meeting was Nov. 4. The group is averaging 4 members at each meeting with expressed interest by another few. This group is also following the Soul Matters curriculum. They meet Sunday evenings, 6 until 7:30 or 8:00 pm. Several members have participated in local young adult conferences. The hope for the future of this group is that it will grow, move toward becoming self-led and join in other church activities.

Faith in Action

Faith in Action provides opportunities for young people to experience their power to make a positive difference in the world, experience learning and service as an integral part of our UU beliefs and practices, and cultivate young people’s natural sense of justice, empathy, and compassion. This year, we had four Faith In Action events to support our service partners. We also had a two-week program on anti-racism and white fragility.

Adult Faith Development

• 20/30 Somethings: in addition to meeting twice/month, they had a Halloween party and Friendsgiving potluck, decorated the Christmas tree, set up for the Seder, went to an escape room, and volunteered at Deer Grove.
• Journaling Circle: Writing Together for Self Discovery (new this year!): Facilitated by Susan Auld, the Journaling Circle began to meet last fall and currently has 5-8 attendees for each month’s meeting. In support of our third Principle, the intent of the Circle is to accept one another and encourage spiritual growth by…
  • building relationships in a writing community
  • reflecting-listening-learning-creating-exploring
  • discovering the spiritual practice of writing

Each gathering opens with a short meditation. The members then free write and write from prompts related to our monthly themes. Through sharing our writings, we also share life’s journey and deepen relationships within our community. We plan to continue in 2019-20 and welcome new attendees!

• Buddhist Study Group
• Atheist, Humanist, Agnostic (AHA) Discussion Group
• Open Forum Discussion: weekly discussion on Issues of the Day
• Mary Oliver Poetry Series met through December
• Book Groups- nonfiction, fiction, Great Books & UU common reads
• Resistance and Transformation: UU History related to social justice
• Current Reads with the Minister – books covered were White Fragility and American Immanence
• Stoking Justice: topics were Democracy in America and Capitalism v Socialism

All Church Worship

CCUU continues to create worship opportunities where children, youth, and adults experience the benefits of multigenerational community. These have included:

August: Backpack Blessing
September: Ingathering
November: Thanksgiving/Child Dedication
December: Chalica
Christmas Pageant
Christmas Eve
New Year’s Eve
January: Martin Luther King
February: Senior High Youth Service
April: Earth Day
May: Coming of Age

Summer RE
Last year’s summer RE program focused on world religions for Grades K-8, and was supported solely by volunteers. The programming focused on stories based on the religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. We went outside whenever the weather allowed us to do so. This summer, our focus will be on spiritual practices within the context of world religions, and how they connect to our faith. We will also help with the garden and doing clean up at the park.

Professional Development
• Professional Interim Training Program: In this three-month training, I learned about the different aspects of interim ministry work, especially as it relates to religious education. I am using some of this knowledge in my last few months here by meeting with several groups to listen to their thoughts on the future of faith formation in our denomination and how Countryside can best serve its members in all ages and stages of life. My hope is that this will lead to some new approaches not only in religious education, but in family ministry and the greater congregation as well.
• Family Ministry Renaissance Module: This summer, I will attend this program through the UUA out east. I am looking forward to learning more about family ministry and how it looks and feels in congregations of various sizes.

Although I am possibly leaving at the end of June, I wish the congregation only the best in the future. I know that the board is looking at offering better insurance coverage for future employees and fair compensation to attract and keep the finest level of professional staffing. I hope you continue to support Lifespan Religious Education financially, as well as with your volunteerism and actions. When CCUU fully embraces faith formation as a mission and a value of this congregation, the result will increase life-long connections to Unitarian Universalism and Countryside Church for all ages.

I also hope that the spirit of community will grow deeper as you continue on the journey of making faith formation something that everyone participates in. Encourage one another to support the many programs and events that happen within your doors, as well as in the greater community. We all know that volunteering has many benefits, so take advantage of the opportunities that allow you to connect with each other, so that you can share your stories and grow in relationship. After all, it’s the relationships that make Countryside Church the wonderful place it is.

In Faith ~Kathy Underwood

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
As many of you know, in addition to supporting the Board, Ministries, Staff & Minister in the coordination and administration of programs, my areas of responsibility include:
• Communications, including the weekly e-news, the monthly Focus, orders of worship, pamphlets/brochures, the website, and this Annual Report. New this year: announcement slides for the tv in Atherton Hall and posting to Facebook based on materials provided by the Soul Matters Collaborative as well as posts re. worship services & special event (e.g. Music with a Mission, Choral Fest, congregational potlucks)
• Finance, including all bookkeeping and payroll;
• Managing the church calendar & coordinating scheduling of church programs & building rentals;
• Maintaining church records, files, & databases;
• Overseeing church facilities including the North Property
• Support of the Board, staff, and minister in coordination and administration of church programs

As you well may guess, in a church this size, all of that is time-consuming and could not be done without the assistance of volunteers. I am greatly appreciative of all the support provided by these wonderful people.
• Debbie Lee for several years has been my primary office volunteer.
• Tom Curtis, in addition to being a dependable and welcoming greeter, continues to provide regular office support on Sunday mornings, allowing me to put on my ‘member hat’ for a few hours each week.
• Noel Zak has begun helping this year by putting together the Weekly E-updates for me, which frees up a few hours of my time each week.
• Many thanks to the other volunteers who help regularly in the office: Dan Yokas & Tim Walsh, Pat Rochelle & Art Mayfield, Karen Epps, Lois Phillips.

Though he doesn’t volunteer in the office, I want to be sure to thank David Williams for his gift to the congregation of weekly coffee service. He goes above and beyond hosting coffee hour – emptying recycling bins and cleaning the counters & floors. He is essentially our volunteer kitchen staff. Please be sure to thank him and to help him – maybe provide cream or snacks (no nuts, please) one week or sign up to host coffee hour so he can take a break and just be a congregant.
In appreciation for a supportive and nurturing congregation, Laurie Lantz

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, cont’d

In addition to my regular day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month tasks in those areas, this year included:

- Helping to initiate and coordinate the new monthly congregational potlucks, including purchasing & preparing supplemental food offerings paid for by the Kinship Ministry budget. *It is my hope that these potlucks will continue, as they seem to be well-received – at least based on the level of connection and conversation I’ve witnessed. I also hope that groups within the church will take on the initiating and hosting of the potlucks, rather than staff needing to do so.* In addition to promoting interactions among congregants, it could be a good way to promote church programs, as the Green Sanctuary Committee did during the March potluck, and maybe we could incorporate the monthly themes into the potlucks in some way too...

- Doing an analysis of my current job description with the goal of creating a more specific job description/task list for a team of office volunteers, to free more of my time for policy & procedure writing.

- Beginning some of that policy & procedure writing – document retention policy, guidelines & procedures for the internal audit, which also involves clarifying, consolidating general financial policies & procedures; reviewing the policies & procedures related to operations/ foundations/ facilities. I plan to continue that in the coming year; finalizing them will be in conjunction with the Board and whichever committees are affected.

- Attending the kick-off retreat for Beloved Conversations. I intended to participate in that program with the Board, but the ongoing meetings conflicted with other meetings I needed to attend. I want to continue pursuing racial justice work as it relates to my staff role, following up on a workshop on “Racial Justice in Congregations” that was presented at the 2018 Administrator Professional Days. There are ways to move CCUU administrative practices from “status quo congregation” more toward “anti-racist congregation” – specifically looking at the administration and/or purchasing categories of the Racial Justice in Congregations rubric.

- Continued updating of www.CCUU.org to keep existing pages current and to add new content as needed. I also continue to work toward aligning our website menu structure more closely with the UUA template on which it is based. The UUA menu structure was developed through best practice research and user testing to find the most intuitive way for users (both UU and non-UU) to find what they need on a congregational website. It would be great to have a few more people able to update website content; if this is of interest to you, please let me know.

- Posting regularly to the Countryside Church UU Facebook page, primarily with content provided by the Soul Matters Collaborative as well as posts re. worship services & special events (e.g. Music with a Mission, Choral Fest, congregational potlucks). Jackie Dennison had been our primary social media administrator, but she & her family moved to Vermont. Christine Organ and Michelle Hitchcock help with Facebook posts, as does Rev. Hilary, but Christine & Michelle are both busy with other leadership roles within the congregation. If you have interest in helping with CCUU’s social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, let me know. If you have church-related content you want posted there, please send it through a staff member or ministry coordinator.

**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 – and now this year, for the congregational potlucks. Angelina Huntsha uses sign-up genius for the PADS Meal sign-up, and Kathy Underwood uses it for Religious Education and Family Ministry events. Using Sign-up Genius requires less managerial time on the part of office staff and volunteers. *All of the CCUU sign-ups can be accessed from the front page of the church website (www.ccuu.org) – click on the ‘Opportunities to Serve’ icon/button.*

**Professional Development:** I maintain membership in the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA). This year, I served the first of a three-year term as Secretary on the AUUA Board. In addition, I am one of the AUUA Good Officers, providing support to other administrators when they are experiencing difficulty in their congregation with relationships, role issues, or professional identity. Serving on the AUUA Board has not taken away from time spent on my CCUU work and helps to keep me in touch with issues and concerns related to the national work of our faith; it also raises the profile of our congregation and allows us to be of service to the larger movement. In June, I will travel to Spokane to attend an in-person Board meeting-retreat & Good Officer training in addition to AUUA Professional Days, and I will stay to attend two days of UU General Assembly. 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.

**Areas Where You Might Help** *(this is basically the same list from year-to-year)*

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 – do you know WordPress?
- Social Media – posting on the church Facebook and/or Instagram pages
- 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 share them with me, so we have selections to use for 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 for a supportive and nurturing congregation, Laurie Lantz*
As your Director of Music, I’m grateful for the congregation’s financial support, which enabled the CCUU Choir to continue to grow and expand its ministry in this fiscal year:

- We currently have 35 singers on our roster. Since best practices suggest a church choir contain about 10% of the registered church members, we’re right on target with a healthy, thriving choir. Nevertheless, we continue to invite and welcome new singers to join us.
- The Children’s Choir (first through fourth graders), new in 2018, has a consistent membership of approximately 15 children. The group delighted the congregation by singing at six services this past year. We have our first two “graduates” this year as two of our original children’s choir members “age out”. They’ve requested a choir for older kids but I have yet to decide how to handle that with my limited part time hours. I’m thinking about how to accommodate them as I don’t want to stop the momentum. Our volunteer intern, Jaime McDunn, continued his apprenticing work with the Children’s Choir. He’s working towards music education certification. We’re grateful to have him collecting his required internship hours with us.
- The number of anthems the choir sings at services has increased. We are always glad to work with the Worship Council to support the theme and message for a given service. I’m proud to say, too, that many members of the congregation have expressed their appreciation for the choir’s work directly to me.
- The CCUU Choir also supports fundraising efforts, such as the Community Carol Sing in Wilmette, our own Music With A Mission, and participation in the Western Crescent Choral Festival.

Music Ministry Highlights

- CCUU continued its participation in the “Soul Matters” themed ministry. I try to make a point of providing anthems, hymns, and opening/closing music that reflects each monthly theme. Lois Philips and I have tried to provide a narthex table display reflecting the monthly themes as well as soliciting original art from our congregations members to contribute for the theme of the month.
- The choir takes a vacation from regular rehearsals in the summer months, but they once again sang for the Pride Service in July 2018.
- Lay musicians often perform at summer services and I’m so pleased to work with these talented members of the congregation.
- Tom Dempsey and his merry band once again provided a folk/patriotic song fest for Independence Day.
- The choir gathered for a half-day retreat and potluck in August. We talked about our goals for the year and read through music for the church year that began in September.
- In December, our Religious Education staff and the choir collaborated on our second annual All Ages Caroling Party. It was a huge success, with about 65 participants of all ages caroling, crafting, eating, and socializing. We also collaborated on the annual church Christmas pageant.
- On Dec 18, 15 CCUU choir members joined Music Director Alison Vernon at a Community Carol Sing held in Wilmette. This event brings together people from many different churches to sing music of the holiday season with a 50 -voice choir, 20 brass instruments, and a pipe organ. This is a fundraiser for the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and this year, over $6,000 was raised and then tripled by an anonymous donor.
- We tried something new for Christmas Eve service this year: A Sunset/Candle Light Service beginning at 4:30 pm. The goal is to incorporate our own UU-friendly traditions with more traditional Christmas Eve style services. Sunset, candlelight and carols seemed to be a perfect fit for our church and we have decided to adopt that format for awhile and see how it feels.
- The Peace River Band is CCUU’s “house band” and played at several services under Jeff Phillips’ leadership. Other talented musicians who contributed to services include Karen Noorani on violin and Alan Greenland on cello. And we must not forget the weekly expert piano playing provided by our collaborative pianist, Janice Razaq.
- We were honored to host the Western Crescent Choral Festival on April 7. Seven UU churches from the northwest suburbs participated, with a total of 100+ singers. The final selections featured ALL those voices and the rafters rang in the sanctuary! The Outreach Steering Committee gathered dozens of volunteers to help support this event and the congregation turned out in enthusiastic numbers to attend. Free will offerings from attendees netted $1,277 for CCUU’s Outreach Service Partners.

Staff Development

- I’m so grateful to CCUU for supporting my efforts to achieve the Unitarian Universalist Music Leaders Certification, which includes not only music, but also UU theology and history and personal reflection. After three full years of classes, papers, books, and study, I’m glad to say that I’ve achieved that goal and am now certified.
- I’m grateful, too, for the congregation’s support for my attendance at the annual Unitarian Universalist Music Network conference in late July—this year to be held in Denver, CO.

As the 2018-19 fiscal year draws to a close, it’s exciting to see all the ways in which music ministry is such an important and inspiring part of Countryside Church and the larger UU community. The members of both choirs, our talented church members, and I are grateful for our church’s support and look forward to another year of providing inspiring music.

Respectfully submitted, Alison Vernon
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. This year we moved from a monthly meeting format to 3 Council meetings spread throughout the church year:
• once in the early summer when committee chairs and program leaders met together with the Board of Trustees to talk about goals for the upcoming church year and to ensure that plans will be aligned with these goals;
• an early fall meeting to discuss events/activities that committees were formulating to implement the goals discussed earlier, to work together to get them scheduled on the church calendar, and to talk about how committees could cooperate to greater ensure successful programming;
• and a winter meeting to prepare committee and program budgets, contributing to the church’s annual financial planning.

Having moved from 2 worship services to 1 this year, and because we had heard from many members that you enjoy having social time together, we decided to increase the number of potluck lunches following worship this year. We had very close to one a month and many of these lunches were planned and carried out by committees/programs and their members, who volunteered to take on one of the monthly potlucks - they were joined by other CCUU members who signed up online to help out. We will be looking to see if you would like to keep this going for next church year - this will be demonstrated by whether people sign up to help with set-up and cleanup tasks 😊.

During the annual stewardship campaign, representatives from the Ministries spoke briefly at 3 different worship services, to talk about the work of their committees and how that work brings to life the UUA Principles and our CCUU covenant, mission, and vision. Their statements were inspirational and a true demonstration of the essential work that our committees and their volunteers perform to contribute to the life of our congregation and our community.

Countryside is extremely blessed with strong leaders and talented volunteers, and we know there are more of you out there! So we call on all members to find one or more activities to become involved with - it’s a great way to get to know people better and to feel more connected to our church community. Many thanks to all who have participated in leadership this church year and to all who have contributed as a volunteer - Countryside is richer from your efforts.

….submitted by duRee Bryant
Ministry Council Chair &
Vice President of the Board of Trustees
This was a rich year for the Worship Ministry at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist. We continued our involvement with themed ministry and increased both the visibility of our themes and their connection to worship each month. Rev. Krivchenia wrote different verses to sing the children to their religious education classes each month that were integrated with each theme of the month. The visual images and the music all combined to make our services multilayered, while not being overstimulating or distracting.

We included our service partners in focused worship services three times during the year and invited the Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois to also offer a service on a Sunday. This, we hope, will strengthen our connection with our service partners and our collective understanding of their work and the ways in which supporting their work helps us to live our values – but there will be more about that in the annual report from our Service Ministry.

We continued to explore more participatory and more textured worship services this year. We hid some of the teachings of Jesus in Easter eggs for people to find on Easter Sunday. At our New Year’s service we created a circuit of stations around the sanctuary where people could take part in various activities symbolic of beginning a new year. We introduced more voices participating in the Sunday service, through more varied readers, and by sometimes offering, instead of a sermon, a series of reflections interposed with poetry, music, and video. We brought in sound meditation during a worship service that strengthened the sense of a meditative space in our sanctuary.

We were fortunate to experience the amazing musical gifts of our choir, of course, and our music director. And through the work of our music director, Alison Vernon, we also had our worship deepened by our string players – Alan Greenland and Karen Nooran; by a number of soloists in our choir, including Elizabeth Van Orden and Chaz Ruhl; and by our already beloved Children’s Choir. The Peace River Band also played on the number of Sundays, under the direction of Jeff Phillips, and each time was a delight.

We have also been blessed by Spiritual Journeys this year; services in which members of the congregation share their explorations in the life of the spirit. These personal storytelling opportunities demonstrate so clearly that, despite how different our stories are, and how varied our understandings of the world can be, there is still so much that unites us.

Our worship services are given greater dimension through the use of various media. The screens enable us to share images and visual messages that enhance the verbal messages. This year, we expanded our ability to also visually record our services at high quality. This has led to some challenges, as we now need, in truth, two people at the AV desk – one to monitor and move the camera controls and the other to advance the visual images. We intend to expand our number of audiovisual volunteers in the coming year and to offer training so that anyone who is interested can feel comfortable working the controls. Tony Prettro has been the most consistent AV volunteer, though many others have stepped in as well. And our capacity to offer this dimension in worship is due, in no small degree, to the high quality equipment, time, professional expertise, and guidance provided by Jeff Phillips.

The Worship Council is a small and dynamic group of people who really make interesting worship possible. They support visiting speakers and Guest Ministers. Our Worship Council expanded and strengthened its commitment to supporting our worship services by refreshing our training for our Vergers and improving our communications tools supplied to visiting and lay speakers. And, this year, we have been fortunate to welcome a young adult onto our Worship Council and we hope, with time, to include youth representation on our Worship Council as we strive to offer worship that speaks to people at all ages and in our present day. Increasingly, the dialogue within the Worship Council has become a more dynamic and collaborative process that has supported our experiments in enriching our worship.

The members of the Worship Council corral readers, they support and sometimes offer worship, they work with the Minister to arrange summer worship, set up the chancel for special services (think Child Dedication tables, Flower Communion, candles, chalice oil, flowers, etc.) The Music Director often meets with the Council, thus ensuring further coordination of our worship services.

The Worship Council members work within the worship services, taking turns, every single Sunday of the year. Some of the Worship Council serve as Vergers, a term that was taken from the old Anglican Church – indirectly, through a British situation comedy called The Vicar of Dibley. Some people serve on the Council simply by being readers, helping to set up the sanctuary, and bringing their own wisdom to Sunday services.

Predictability, flexibility, reliability, and quick-thinking make worship smooth and the Worship Council makes that happen weekly. It is with deep gratitude to every member of the Worship Council that the Minister chairs the Worship Council. Members: Martha Blus, Tracy Boland, Kristin Huston, Marjorie Leon, Isobel Peckham, Mari Peckham, Leslie Peet, Lois Phillips (who serves as co-chair), Melanie Terbovic, and Elizabeth Vesto.

To all the people named in this report, and so many others, we give our thanks for making worship at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist richer all the time.

STUDY MINISTRY

Kathy Underwood, Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Please refer to Kathy’s Staff Report
SERVICE MINISTRY

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

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

In addition to our Lay & Care Ministry program, through which we provide Service to one another, the Service Ministry committees - Social Action, Outreach Steering, Green Sanctuary – are all actively 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 church office, as well as in the Service Ministry area in Atherton Hall.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

...is a variety of service-oriented projects that are not specific to other service committees. Its work is dynamic and every changing to reflect the pressing needs of society and our community. Our objectives:

1. Align efforts around social justice strategic priorities/pillars
2. Move toward a team-based approach to program activations
3. Forge/strengthen strategic alliances/partnerships

Major Pillars
- Racial Justice
- Economic Justice
- Immigration Justice
- Voting Rights
- Prison Reform and Restorative Justice
- Humanitarian Action
- Climate and Environmental Justice
- LGBTQ Justice

Highlights 2018-2019:

- **Voter Engagement**: More than 30 individuals were trained as Deputy Registrars and actively worked to register new voters and encourage mail-in ballots for the November 2018 election.
- **Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois**: Members participated in prison visits, letter writing initiatives, and a dedicated Sunday service to Restorative Justice
- **Fair Trade Sales**: Monthly sale of fair trade items. We supply the PADS shelter at Presbyterian Church of Palatine with organic, fair-trade coffee.
- **Fair Trade Bazaar**: Sponsored the annual winter bazaar that features local area fair trade businesses. In June, we will be sponsoring a Sunday Service to educate the congregation on the issues of Fair Trade.
- **Month PADS Meals**: Our committee coordinates the provision of an evening meal the fourth Wednesday of the month for the PADS shelter at Presbyterian Church of Palatine.
- **Kiva Microfunds**: Kiva Microfunds is a non-profit organization that allows people to lend money via the Internet to low-income entrepreneurs and students in over 80 countries. Countryside members have made loans in the amount of $31,000. Social Action Committee members have made numerous loans and have encouraged other members to do the same.
Service Ministry

Photos from 2018-19 Green Sanctuary
Events & Activities

GSC planning for the upcoming year in the summer of 2018.

Earth Day 2019 at Deer Grove East
more than 40 CCUU folks attended

Mark Krivchenia speaking

Tom Dempsey singing with Congressman Sean Casten

Natalie participating in the Arlington Heights 4th of July parade with Interfaith Green Partners. And behind her, a GSC member’s electric car!

Ron Vargason leading an Interfaith Green Partners hike at Deer Grove East

The CCUU gardeners led by Mike Calwas prepare for new season!

Photos from 2018-19 Green Sanctuary
Events & Activities
GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

The Green Sanctuary Program is a UUA accreditation process inspired by our UUA 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. It has been an exciting year for GSC.

This year was a quite year for the GSC. Coming off the successful Green Expo in the Spring of 2018 with Tom Skilling and the solar panels the year before that, we are in a “pondering” time: what should the next focus of our work be?

Our many regular activities continued:

- We had a very successful summer in our church garden led by Mike Calwas. Over 200 lbs. of vegetables were donated to the local food pantry.
- We had a successful fall indoor Farmer’s Market this fall in which we invited vendors from POC to sell their food and crafts.
- In October, we hosted a Listen, Lead and Learn session with Faith in Place and others to get people’s input on how to move forward with the new IL legislation on Clean Energy.
- Leslie Peet again led the winter solstice service for the congregation.
- This spring we had over 40 congregants join us at the Earth Day Celebration at Deer Grove East. The GSS is a co-sponsor of this event, and the event was lead and supported by many in our congregation.
- We continue to work with Interfaith Green Partners (Gail Wisniewski), and participate in monthly hikes in local natural areas.
- We continue to work with Palatine Cool Cities (Alan Greenland). The city agreed to abide by the “Green Region Compact: Collaborating for Sustainable Communities” generated by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. This is a big step for the city of Palatine.
- We got the solar recognition plaque up (Judy Ball), and the information screen up to see the electricity our solar panels generate (Ron Vargason).

It is our aspiration to find and lead the congregation if finding ways to live more sustainably on this earth. Stay tuned!

Yours in love, commitment, and community,

Mark Krivchenia & Don Bussey

LAY & CARE MINISTRY PROGRAMS

We are completing the 32nd 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, Joy Simon, and Chris Smith.

This Lay Ministry Team supports and expands the pastoral care of the called minister, but 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 particular attributes in order to ensure 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.

The Lay Ministry, along with one of the Care Ministry coordinators, meet monthly at the church to check-in with each other, review current Lay and Care Ministry activity, determine availability and write and send cards to members needing support.

Our Care Ministry coordinators, Mary Johnson and Ellen Vinzani, continue to arrange for practical assistance, such as rides for medical treatment, check-in calls and visits, and meals for Countryside members when appropriate. As first year coordinators, Mary and Ellen updated the list of Countryside care ministry volunteers. Arrangements for Care Ministry help are made through Rev. Hilary Krivchenia or myself.

Submitted by Ken Bobbe, Coordinator
Outreach Steering Committee (OSC)
Annual Report April 30, 2019

Vision Statement

The purpose of the OSC is to be a catalyst for channeling the talents and passion of the CCUU community to the human needs of the larger community. By partnering with organizations that address issues important to the CCUU membership and providing resources of both time and money, we hope to manifest our UU principles and make the world a better place. We seek to understand the needs of our partner organizations and work with them toward innovative solutions in a sustainable, successful relationship involving broad member participation. It is our intent that every CCUU member and their children should feel the pride and joy of their effort and become an inspiring example to others.

Committee Members for 2018/2019:
Susan Auld
Pam Frech
Mike Graves
Janet McDonnell
Peyton Bendix
Tom Frech
Maria Martinez
Mari Peckham

Contributions Service Partner for 2018/2019

Partners for Our Communities (POC)
Contribution: $11,754
Liaison: Kathy Millin

Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants (ICDI)
Contribution: $10,264
Liaison: Melanie Schikore

Faith-in-Place (F-I-P)
Contributions: $8,669
Liaison: Dan Huntsha

Total Contributions to our Service Partners $30,687
Funds raised for Countryside Church – Facilities and Capital $1,235
Total Contributions this year from Outreach Activities $31,922
Outreach Steering Committee (OSC) Annual Report (Continued)

Countryside Outreach Fundraising Activities 2018/2019:

Time & Talent
November 17th ‘18
(Chair: Mari Peckham)
Raised: $28,109

Music with a Mission
March 2nd ‘19
(Co-Chairs: Jeff Phillips & Edie Reese)
Raised: $ 2,541

Western Crescent
Music Festival
April 7th ‘19
Raised: $1,275
(Co-Chairs: Alison Vernon & Pam Frech)
Raised: $ 2,541

Countryside Outreach Other Initiatives 2018/2019:

Worship Services with our Service Partners
Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants: Jan 13, ‘19
Partners for our Communities: Feb 17, ‘19
Faith In Place: April 7, ‘19

Service Partner Expo
October 14, ‘18

OSC Goals for 2019/2020:
- Enhance the communications and information shared between our Service Partners and Countryside regarding their activities and achievements.
- Identify volunteer opportunities with our Service Partners that may match the abilities and mission of our members.
- Continue efforts to financially support our Service Partners through Time and Talent and Music with a Mission.

These goals would reflect our principles of:
1. Recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation
4. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are apart
KINSHIP MINISTRY

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—you are all part of Kinship Ministry. 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?"

New this year: we held (almost) monthly Congregation Potlucks after worship to provide opportunities for kinship and connection—of course, through volunteer efforts. Church groups, our board members, and individuals worked to make these potlucks successful, and we hope to continue these next year.

Kinship Ministry groups are both small and all-church encompassing:
- Soul Connections Small Group Ministry (Don Bussey)
- Circle Suppers (Jeanie & Karl Michalec)
- Compassionate Communication for Resolving Conflict-CCRC (Vid Axel)
- Feminine Divine Women's Group (Wendy Ingrassia)
- Membership Committee (Tom MacTavish)
- Pathfinders (John Evans)
- Transitions (Kathy & George Motto) & Memoir Makers (Tom MacTavish)
- Sunday Hospitality: All who participate by Greeting, Ushering, and Hosting Coffee/Fellowship

Kinship activities and groups, like most of Countryside’s programs, thrive because of volunteers. One special volunteer who deserves particular mention is David Williams, who has taken on weekly coffee/fellowship hosting as Raymond Yee did before him. David goes above and beyond each week, and we are grateful for his cheerful, kind, and very efficient service to Countryside.

On behalf of the Kinship Ministry, I only want to say, Thank You.

Juli Cicarelli, Kinship Ministry Coordinator

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Our Membership Team consists of Key Gredell, Siri Laurin, Krista MacTavish, and Tom MacTavish. If you are interested in joining the team, contact Tom MacTavish.

Our two principal contact points with persons considering membership are the monthly "Introduction to CCUU" informational session conducted by Siri Laurin and the "Path to Belonging" class conducted by Tom and Reverend Krivchenia and supported by Kay and Krista with speaker roles by various representatives from our board, staff, and ministries. The Path Class is comprised of two sessions: one session focused on providing information about the UU faith and sharing each participants’ spiritual journey and a second session focused on meeting our Countryside community. We use prepared presentation materials to ensure that our message is well structured, and we augment this with ‘take home’ folders (prepared by office volunteer Debbie Lee) 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. Since our last annual report, we have offered three sessions, however the October 2018 session was cancelled due to no registrants. For the other two sessions (June 2018 and February 2019) a total of 16 persons attended and 12 of those subsequently joined. In addition, one person joined who had attended Path to Belonging classes in the prior year. We will also offer a Path class in June 2019.

Our committee is thankful for the congregation’s on-going role in being positive touch points for those considering membership. ‘We often learn that our visitors’ first contact was with one of you who reached out to them with a friendly smile and expression of interest.

Submitted by Tom MacTavish, Membership Committee Chair, Membership@ccuu.org
PATHFINDERS
Pathfinders is part of the Kinship Ministry’s Membership program. New members are introduced to the initiative during the Path to Belonging class.

GOAL: As in the past year(s), the goal is to initiate 30-45 minute, face-to-face conversations with new members at CCUU or other locations in the community. The objective of those conversations is to gather information about passions and interests in order for connection potentials to be identified and made between the member and a person, program, committee, activity, etc. within the church.

PROCESS: At the last day of the Path To Membership (Belonging) class, a Pathfinder representative provides a 3-minute overview of the Pathfinder’s objective. Once the person has become a member their names are provided to the 6 – 9 trained Pathfinders for subsequent follow-up.

February’s 2019 Path class had 7 members contacted via email/phone offering a face to face meeting. Based on the member’s interests, suggestions for the member’s connection/exploration maybe offered during the conversation. The final step is to have results of the meeting compiled into a pre-existing form and provided to Hilary/Kathy for review.

Note: Prior to February, Susan Auld was ably leading the effort and had the same process executed for new members earlier in the fiscal year.

Submitted by John Evans, Pathfinders Facilitator

SOUL CONNECTIONS SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Don Bussey coordinated our small group ministry again this year. We continued to use the materials provided by the Soul Matters collaborative. There were five groups which included approximately 30 participants; one of the groups disbanded in January. One group rotates facilitation and the other groups were facilitated by Vicki Byrd, Pam Frech, Susan Montgomery, and Chris Smith. Susan Montgomery will be the coordinator of the small group ministry program for 2019-20, and we hope to expand the number of participants.

Small Group Ministry is an opportunity to grow spiritually on a personal level and to build relationships and community. For more information about the program, go to http://ccuu.org/soulconnections, and stay tuned for announcement of registration for the 2019-20 groups.

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION for the RESOLUTION of CONFLICT (CCRC)
The CCRC panel now consists of Vid Axel (chairperson and panelist), duRee Bryant, and Lisa Gilley (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 regarding 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 several 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. More specifically, such support will aim 1) to communicate more effectively within the framework of our congregational 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.
We are grateful for the opportunity we have been given to serve our congregation. We feel strongly that our participation has helped and will continue to help. 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 additional support and education.

Respectfully Submitted by Vid Axel, Chairperson, CCRC

FEMININE DIVINE WOMEN’S GROUP
The Feminine Divine combines kinship, study, and service. We meet the last Saturday of every month, and have been together for over 10 years using varied formats. We have bonded as CCUU individuals through sharing during our check-in with non-judgmental support of each other. We welcome women from the community who are not members of the church as well. We hold a discussion of our current book and chapter within the group each month. For the past several years at our September meeting, we bring suggestions for a book to study and discuss. This year we are reading Men Explain Things to Me by Rebecca Solnit.

We are particularly excited about giving a lay service this summer, developed around the book we have been reading this past year. This will be our 5th lay service created based around book topics such as forgiveness, daring greatly, and feminine divine topics that we have studied.

This year, as always, our group chose to volunteer at Countryside as a group. In January, we volunteered with the Transitions group for an all church potluck on Martin Luther King Sunday. Everyone got served in a timely fashion, and we hope the all church potlucks will continue. It was inspiring to see Countrysiders enjoying one another’s company, from the youngest to the oldest. Often we are all too busy to take the time to sit down for a Sunday afternoon meal together.

The Feminine Divine group supports 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. We provide an important opportunity for members to get to know one another on a more personal level, and when needed provide support, understanding, and encouragement.
TRANSITIONS
The mission of the Transitions group is to provide a forum for adults to explore life transitions with a supportive and educational community during daytime hours.

Program topics are chosen based on participant survey and are presented by invited guests or group members. Sometimes, we organize field trips of interest to the group. This year’s programs were:

- **July**: Water in the Great Lakes, presented by Janet Simmons
- **August**: Traveling in China by Dayle Roberts
- **Sept**: Aging in Place, George Motto
- **Oct**: Rhetoric and Persuasion in Politics, Tom MacTavish
- **Nov**: Travels to Southern India, Barb Sugden & Ron Vargason
- **Dec**: Palatine Opportunity Center & Holiday Caroling Party
- **Jan**: Good News in History: Six Major Areas of Progress in the Past Two Centuries, Jim Simmons
- **Feb**: Geography of Genius, Sheilah Sokeland
- **March**: Organized Complexity and Emergence, Rem Stokes
- **April**: Carrie Nation, portrayed by Jeanmarie Dwyer-Wrigley
- **May**: The Death of Sunday School, Kathy Underwood, Interim Director of Lifespan Relig. Education
- **June**: Music Therapy, Mary Ellen Heelan

We encourage members to invite friends, extending Transitions to the greater community. All are welcome to join us for engaging presentations, lively discussions, and delicious potluck meals. We meet at 10 am, usually on the 4th Thursday of the month.

Many members are very active in all kinds of roles at Countryside, ushering, greeters, program chairs, etc. Transitions is a vital link within the church community. Transitions group members helped host one of the congregational potlucks this year.

Two sub-groups have arisen from Transitions group member interests:
- Memoir Makers meets on the 2nd Friday of the month at 10 am. We share writing by group members and view instructional videos to help improve our writing.
- Great Books Discussion Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, 10am -noon.

For more information about Transitions or to put your name on our email list, please contact our facilitators, Kathy and George Motto, 847-394-0846, george1m@aol.com.

PASSOVER SEDER
This year, the Passover Seder was held on Friday, April 12, and 70 people attended. The service was inspiring, focusing on the fight for freedom and justice throughout history that continues today. The matzo ball soup was wonderful and the music and singing added to the occasion. Those who have worked on this event for years were joined by new folks.

Thanks to all of those who helped make it a success, including those at key points: Carol and Ken Bobbe, Mark and Hilary Krivchenia, Linda and Mike Berry, Karen Epps, Linda and Tom Kuna, Jeff Oremland & Cathy Maraist, Mary Ellen Heelan, Susan Auld, Michelle Hitchcock, and Edie Reese.
OPERATIONS/FOUNDATIONS 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 Operations/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, and 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.

BUILDING & FACILITIES. incl. NORTH PROPERTY & CAPITAL REPAIRS

Steve Black continues to be the primary volunteer expert that advises on what needs to be done to keep things in working order and contacting contractors when needed. Steve also assists the Board with updates to the capital repairs forecast. Chris Hitchcock has taken on the Board member role of liaison for facilities. The Sanctuary & Atherton Hall rooves are still under warranty (with two separate companies). In addition to Steve, the on-call list of church members who are handy and willing to help with minor repairs in the building include Ron Vargason, Jeff Phillips, Ray Holpuch, John Evans, Mike Gilley, Roger Lofstrand, Richard Urban.

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 bi-monthly contract with Smithereen Pest Management and a contract with a janitorial service for building cleanings twice/week plus an extra bathroom clean-restock.

In addition to our annual cleaning of the carpet throughout the building, this year we have paid to have a leaky fridge repaired, had required repairs done to the backflow valve, repaired the sanctuary dimmers, and are in the midst of a rather costly repair & replacement of our sanitary lift station pumps (this will be paid for out of capital reserve funds). We are also in the midst of getting quotes for three water damage abatement projects (flushing, siding, vents & weeps), which will be another project paid from capital reserve funds.

This year at the North Property: the fridge needed to be repaired and the sump pump replaced. We have also had a couple kitchen cabinet doors repaired/re-hung, replaced broken medicine cabinet and broken mailbox and an inoperable smoke detector. After the bi-annual rental license inspection by the Village, we needed to replace the door knob & locking mechanism on the door into the garage. There is a window which broke during the polar vortex which will need to be replaced and the garage door is in need of repair or replacement due to rotting wood. We are also aware that the carpet is quite worn and will need replacing soon.

AUDIO-VISUAL

In August-September, we rolled out the biggest AV upgrade since our building was first commissioned. This upgrade, foretold in last year’s report, added a complete video layer to our robust audio system. I donated a robotic video camera, capable of giving us high-definition video of sanctuary services and events. Currently, the video is captured on to a memory stick each week, and is available to those who request it. Ultimately, the video will be live-streamed to the Internet, where it may be viewed by a wider audience. Managing video requires additional AV volunteers, to assist our stalwart AV hero, Tony Prettto. Thank you also to our other volunteers, especially those who have been tapped on the shoulder, moments before service, and have risen to the occasion.

As some of you have experienced, it is now possible to route video content to Atherton Hall, opening up the possibility of using that space as overflow for the sanctuary. It is also possible to source video from the iMac, lectern and choir floor pockets. We are also now prepared to add a “confidence monitor” for the presenter and choir. To accomplish all this, I have donated an HD video matrix, upgraded the AMX controller, and installed two new touch screens at the AV table.

Laurie Lantz has taken weekly responsibility for preparing slides for our 55” rolling-cart monitor, which keeps us all informed of upcoming CCUU activities during coffee hour. Ron Vargason has donated and mounted another small monitor just outside the office—perhaps you’ve seen it—showing real-time data from the solar array on our roof. It is exciting to see, in real time, how much energy we’re using and producing.

In December, we made a lighting improvement, which shows visible energy reductions on our new monitor. We replaced all the sanctuary naye (seating) lighting with LED retrofit bulbs. We then eliminated the failing dimmer boxes, and dropped our energy usage from 9600 Watts to a mere 420 Watts! We have similar reduction plans for the rest of the
building, which should help CCUU become responsible, carbon-neutral inhabitants of our shared planet! Look for the Board of Trustees to reveal a low-voltage LED lighting plan for CCUU in the near future.

Priority One for this coming fiscal year is to repair our failed hearing loop system. Its vexing failure has been disappointing, and it needs to be addressed. This coming year, we also plan to upgrade our Atherton Hall video delivery system, to make it easier for presenters to route and manage audio and video. …Jeff Phillips, AV Systems Lead

AESTHETICS

Over the years the “Aesthetics committee/task force” has evolved to a “team” of one, with ongoing support from the ever-amazing Laurie Lantz. That’s because, when I was asked to assume this mantle 16 years ago by then-Board President Chris Smith and then-Board member Gloria Kinney, the building was fairly new and there was the idea that someone needed to be in-charge of the on-going overall aesthetic of our church home. This is a task I have been very proud to own. I am as concerned about the aesthetics of Countryside as I am about my own home. That’s why you may see me picking up bits of paper towel in the hallway or constantly straightening chairs in the Sanctuary!

Previous committee/task force members have include Gloria Kinney, Dan Yokas, Lisa Christensen, Larraine Leblond, Beverly Sneddon, Cathleen & Richard Chay, and Tracy Boland. When an aesthetics question required team voting, everyone weighed in thoughtfully. In the past five years or so, the situation has become a little different in that when someone has an aesthetics question, they simply find me and a resolution is determined.

This past year has seen the removal of the once-beloved “Sparkle Balls” from Atherton Hall that were replaced (with very mathematically-gifted help from my husband, Jeff) with the “café” string lights that zig-zag across the ceiling creating a cozy, yet light-hearted, atmosphere in the largest celebration room in our building. The addition of the high-top tables (with removable “spanx” covers!) were the suggestion of Dan Yokas and supplemented with a long-distance gift from former member Larraine Leblond. We know how to make our $300 annual budget stretch as far as possible!

With the introduction of monthly Themes, our Music Director (who is gifted in so many areas) Alison Vernon and I have been designing the themed displays in the Narthex. These displays have been fun and sometimes challenging to create (How do you visual represent Possibility?). We hope you have found them interesting, thought-provoking, pleasing to look at and appropriate to the theme. I am open to ideas for future displays, and am always working one month ahead in my planning – so talk to me as soon as you have an idea!

Aesthetics also worked with the team deciding on the “warmth” of the new LED lighting in the Sanctuary. Not only are we saving money every Sunday, we also have better coverage and consistency of light during all services AND we are now able to dim these lights for important evening services.

New ideas for making aesthetically-pleasing additions to our church building are welcomed. As we move forward with decisions about the North property, there may be more opportunities to utilize our design talent.

Meanwhile, I am always looking at our beloved building through the lens of “best possible” so that it will be the most functional and welcoming space we can offer to the ideals of Unitarian Universalism in our area. Thank you. Thoughtfully submitted, Lois Phillips

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Our land is a garden, and such gardens are not made by saying, ‘Oh how lovely, and sitting in the shade.’ ~ R. Kipling

This year the Grounds Committee was able to replace one of the storage sheds with 2 new sheds. One is a large shed for storage of outdoor ladders and other too-large items belonging to the church and one smaller shed for use by “the gardening folk,” who grow vegetables for the local food pantry.

We again have hired two independent landscapers, one who cuts our grass and another who weeds our landscaped areas, prunes our trees, replaces boulders that this winter’s snow plow displaced, and in general sees to it that what needs to be improved, gets improved. Beth Gerson and Judy Miller continue to fill-in as workers for “the war on weeds” as does Peggy Simonsen and her group who remove the “unwanteds” from the prairie garden on the east side of our property.

The hard winter this year caused many areas of our landscaping to need attention. In general, I place importance on our landscaping fundamentals, not landscaping frills, in an attempt to be prudent with budget spending. We have such a lovely campus that is inspiring to us as well as to guests that visit Countryside Church. So many times visitors have stopped to remark to me, “you have such a beautifully landscaped property.” I always remind people that historically, those who planned our Church placed great value in its environmental setting. We who have inherited their vision, continue the importance of maintaining their inspiration, as it is a reflection of what we value as a Church in our community and in our own everyday lives. …submitted by Judy Miller, Grounds Chairperson

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The CCUU website is a WordPress site, based on a template provided by the UUA and adapted by Cherita Axel. After Jackie Dennison’s move to Vermont, CCUU’s social media presence on Facebook has been administered by Rev. Hila-ry, our Congregational Administrator, Christine Organ, Maryanne O’Dowd. Our Instagram page has not been utilized since Jackie moved. If you have church-related content for Facebook, please send it to a staff member or ministry coordinator. We continue to use MailChimp for weekly e-updates; it is FREE and capable of coordinating with our Breeze church management system if we decide to segment the congregation for more targeted emails. We don’t currently have an active communications team to formulate an overall strategy for publicizing church events and activities; committees & programs take care of that themselves with the help of the Congregational Administrator. If you have interest in helping with communications or social media, please contact the church office.