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

Annual Meeting Packet ~ May 2020

This packet is full of materials to help you get up to speed and to understand as much as is possible in preparation for our Annual Meeting on May 31. Whether you receive this as paper pages by post, because you do not have access to the Internet, or if you receive this as an on-line packet, it represents the dedicated work of your Board of Trustees, your Stewardship Team, your Finance Committee, Outreach Steering Committee, Nominations Team, your minister, and your staff. It is a packet of information that demonstrates the human capacity to adapt and be creative at the same time. It demonstrates the capacity, on the part of the members of our community, to think strategically, with fiscal responsibility, and with a focus on our principles, the values of our faith, and the covenant that we share as a congregation. I have watched this work, proud of so many people in this congregation who have faced this pandemic demonstrating the best of the human spirit. Please study these materials carefully. They represent hours of conscientious time and a profound desire on the part of the congregational leadership to ensure -- in spite of our current limitations on meeting in person -- a democratic process that can include as many voices as possible, provide thorough background, allow for the exchange of ideas, and enable of voting process that allows every member of countryside church to be known and to be part of the process. After you have studied these materials, please engage in this process this year mindful of how much those to whom you have entrusted the well-being of this congregation have worked to ensure that well-being. This is your opportunity to contribute to the remarkable accomplishments of this most unusual time.

As the minister of this congregation, I have been inspired by this work. ...Rev. Hilary

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

Through the looking glass, 
down the rabbit hole, 
into the wardrobe and out 
into the enchanted forest 
where animals talk 
and danger lurks and nothing 
works quite the way it did before, 
you have fallen into a new story. 
It is possible that you 
are much bigger—or smaller— 
than you thought. 
It is possible to drown 
in the ocean of your own tears. 
It is possible that mysterious friends 
have armed you with magical weapons 
you don’t yet understand, 
but which you will need 
to save your own life and the world. 
Everything here is foreign. 
Nothing quite makes sense. 
That’s how it works. 
Do not confuse the beginning 
of the story with the end.

We have definitely “fallen into a new story.” It’s a story of learning new ways of connecting with one another in a time of physical distancing and stay-at-home orders, and it’s a story of learning new ways to ‘do church.’ In addition to our Annual Meeting needing to be in a different format, we are presenting what would have been Annual Reports in a different format. This packet is not so much an Annual Report as it is a State of the Congregation Report or a Ministry Highlights Report—a summary of the ministry that was in place pre-COVID19 and how we are adapting to our new story. It is our plan to present a more complete Year in Review in the fall, when we have a little more perspective on the 2019-20 church year and a better idea of what our goals for the 2020-21 church year can be.
Table of Contents

Our Mission, Vision, Aspirations of Membership, Covenant of Right Relations.........PG 4
Annual Meeting Agenda .................................................................................................................. PG 5
President’s Report .......................................................................................................................... PG 6
Senior Minister’s Report ................................................................................................................ PG 7
Leadership Slate for 2020-21 ......................................................................................................... PG 8
Chalice House Report ...................................................................................................................... PG 9
Outreach Steering Committee Report ............................................................................................. PG 11
Personnel Committee Report .......................................................................................................... PG 12
Behind the Scenes: Our Staff
Endowment Committee Report ....................................................................................................... PG 15
Treasurer’s Report ................................................................................................................................ PG 15
  2019-20 Overview/Highlights
  2020-21 Stewardship Report
  2020-21 Provisional 6-month Budget Overview
  2020-21 Pie Charts: Expenses by Ministry, Income by Source, Expenses by Category
Board Request for Congregational Approval .................................................................................... PG 18

Our Staff Team: The Reverend Hilary Landau Krivchenia, Minister; The Reverend Dr. C. Scot Giles, Community Minister; Dr. Mary Lamb Shelden, 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 & Audrey Bezella, Childcare Providers

2019-20 Board of Trustees: duRee Bryant, President; Kathi Hillyer, Vice President; CarolAnn Shindelar, Secretary; Marcus White, Treasurer; Karen Epps, Chris Hitchcock, Joy Simon, Vince Unger, Leslie Vaughn.
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.
ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Opening/Introduction
  a. Explanation of this year’s process & rationale
  b. Context of Congregational life in a time of uncertainty
  c. Staff/Congregational Vision
  d. Introduction to what “reentry” might look like

Presentation by Committees
  a. Endowment Committee
  b. Chalice House
  c. Outreach Steering Council

Operating Budget Presentation
  a. 2019-20 Overview
  b. 2020-21 Stewardship Report
  c. 2020-21 6-month provisional budget

Announcement of Leadership Slate

Recognition of Outgoing Leadership

Explanation of the rest of the process - small group discussions, voting process

Closing Reading, Extinguish Chalice, Adjourn
In writing a summary of the 2019-20 church year from the perspective of your Board of Trustees, it is difficult not to think in terms of "before" and "after:" before Zoom meetings and masks, after the transition to virtual worship and a remote annual meeting. At least one thing has remained constant throughout - we are still "doing church," one way and another. I am so proud of our minister and staff, our volunteer leadership, and the entire congregation in our ongoing commitment to the work of Countryside Church and to keeping it going in new and creative ways. I know for me, it has been a source of comfort and grounding in the midst of uncertainty and change; I hope it has been for you, too.

In summarizing some of the pre-pandemic Board highlights (July 2019 - March 2020), here are a few that come to mind:

- we welcomed Dr. Mary Lamb Shelden as our new Director of Lifetime Religious Education and have been benefiting from her creativity, compassion, and commitment to communal connection ever since her arrival.
- our second year of monthly potlucks hosted by various groups within the church was very successful and I know we look forward to being able to break bread together again in the future.
- thanks to Steve Black, we became aware of a Com Ed program for not-for-profits and were able to obtain new energy-efficient LED lighting for both our indoor and outdoor areas at an extremely reasonable price.
- the Board has worked closely with the Chalice House team in exploring the feasibility of utilizing the home on our North Property for a mission-driven purpose; building a coalition of other churches interested in bringing this vision to fruition; assuring economic stability; and keeping the congregation informed through town hall meetings, emails, and Focus articles.
- with the help of Yvette Johnson, Countryside became a member of the Community Renewal Society, a faith-based organization that has worked to eliminate race and class barriers in Chicago and throughout Illinois.
- the Board worked together with the Endowment Committee to develop an investment policy that maintains fiscal responsibility, achieves diversification while managing risk, and supports socially responsible investing.
- the Foundations team updated the long-term capital projects spreadsheet, with projections for the timing and cost of facility and equipment maintenance and replacement for the next 10+ years.
- Board member Karen Epps successfully chaired our annual stewardship campaign, “2020: CCUU Pledging with Vision.”

As the above activities and more were cruising along, little did we know the world would change and change rapidly. And despite the abruptness, Countryside has adapted amazingly quickly. Minister, staff, and volunteers leaped into action, converting in-house worship, programming, and committee meetings to a virtual format. Connection Clusters were developed so that needs could be communicated and responded to. Opportunities for community such as "Lunch with the Staff," "Tea Time with Hilary," and "Brunch with the Board" were offered. Resources were shared and new skills were learned and are still being learned. Church has always been more than a building, and never has that been more evident.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my fellow Board members. They are a multi-talented bunch who consistently have the best interest of the congregation at heart. A shout out to Karen Epps and Vince Unger whose terms on the Board are ending; we will miss your critical thinking skills and your persistence at problem-solving. I am confident that new Trustees Denise Sepos and Tim Reuter-Bowers and President-elect Tom Dempsey will step up and make their own valuable contributions to our work together. Next, my hat goes off to our minister and staff who have all demonstrated new depths to their abilities and who have risen to the moment we find ourselves in - how very fortunate we are to have them! A special thanks to Laurie who has my back on almost a daily basis - you are a true treasure. And kudos to all our committee chairs and program leaders - such a trove of talented volunteers we are blessed with!

While the jury is still out on when we will be able to return to 1025 N. Smith Road, what is certain is that we will continue to place a priority on the health and safety of our members and visitors. The UUA has been extremely helpful in providing resources and guidance to our congregations, including criteria, developed in consultation with multiple public health officials, to use in considering an eventual return to in-person gatherings. In the meantime, we will continue to let our creative juices flow and grow. There is much we can learn from this time and new opportunities continue to be available to us if we only stay open to them.

Stay well - stay connected!

duRee
SENIOR MINISTER

Well, it's been one hell of a year, my beloved community at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist. The death of my beloved Aunt JoAnn left a hole in my life and, as you all know, grief takes time for healing. Mark and I put our house on the market in October, sold it, moved into a temporary apartment and – we're still there. Gearing up to support our principle of the democratic process in our congregations and in society at large, drew me into the UU the Vote process. I looked forward to taking the Living Legacy Unitarian Universalist Civil Rights Tour this spring, and saddened when we realized it needed to be cancelled. I geared up to take a UU spiritual and justice focused retreat in Colombia in July – ready to practice my Spanish, get to know the geopolitics of a country that really calls me, spend time with other UUs, and bring back experience to share – and saddened when that was cancelled. I was excited to attend General Assembly in Providence, RI and watch Dr. Mary Shelden receive her UU Religious Education Certification, and now that will be a remote experience.

It was a joy to have Mary start with us this year and it has certainly been a strange first year for any person – and she has met that, as well, with grace and strength.

It has been a year of reframing, reorienting, working to appreciate what is, grieve what is lost, and move forward with purpose. And it has been a year of watching a spirit of phenomenal leadership thrive in this congregation.

I preached about liminal time on May 17, and I realized that setting absolute goals and having blueprints engraved in stone is a terrible idea in a time such as this. However, I want to share with you some things that have been affirmed for me by what I have seen over the last couple of months. Over the last few months I've watched our staff – both full and part time -- truly rise to meet an unprecedented challenge. None of us were asked, when interviewed, what experience we had in conducting worship services when the sanctuary could not be used and people could not gather, for producing music without sophisticated equipment or platforms that deliver excellent quality for music, or in conducting religious education for Unitarian Universalists of all ages when the building was closed, keeping strong a spirit of pastoral care and genuine kinship when people are separated, how to fundraise in a time of economic uncertainty, how to maintain the touchstones of congregational life and that people need when no congregational building should be used. Yet, all of the staff have risen to meet the challenge of this moment -- not only with personal inventiveness and genuine creativity -- but with every inner resource that we could bring to bear and sources of innovation from the larger community of Unitarian Universalists and congregational consultants. You have had a chance to learn a little more about what the staff have done, because of the kind words of the board of trustees that have been published in the series called "Behind the Scenes." The staff stretched to such an excellent extent that we've been called upon by other congregations for our expertise.

For all of us, this has meant considerably longer hours, fresh learning, sensing the needs of a real community in an entirely new context, as well as practicing self-care. I believe that this entire staff and, for once, I will be unafraid to include myself, have met this unprecedented challenge in a way that benefits the congregation right now as well as ensuring, over time, the flourishing of this congregation into the future.

I say that we are ensuring the future because, in the future, when it is truly safe to return to large group gatherings and CCUU, there will be a staff infrastructure, with history and experience, in place. There will be programs that will have been ongoing that will encourage people to come back together for kinship, for learning, for spiritual growth, for service to the larger community, for worship, and for the sheer joy of connecting in person with the people with whom they have made real connections on line. If we saw our programs and staff as non-essential, the process of re-entry would be quite similar to starting out from close to scratch.

When the world ground to a halt, we recognized that the need for our faith community did not also stop. Quite the contrary. The need has been deeper than ever. And the strength of our worship services has meant that people around the country (and even in other nations) have begun attending our services and supporting our work. In the long term, this may mean an expanded on-line presence. That expanded presence is, certainly, a desire shared in the staff. This means that we will be continuing to work on and evolve our programs, our worship, and all that we do so that we remain strong, agile, and grow to incorporate new methods that will increasingly engage people and enrich their lives.

We are ensuring the future, because the degree of volun- teerism in this moment is unparalleled. Energy levels are high, new relationships are being forged, and the sense of kinship and teamwork is higher than I have seen in a long time.

We are ensuring the future because we are focused on engagement for people of all ages – on line and at home -- as we plant and plan for future generations of committed Unitarian Universalists through worship, study, and service.

That said – these are tough times. The pandemic, the political climate, the social isolation, the economic uncertainties all weigh on our members and our staff as well. These factors also call me forth with a spirit of adventure, inventiveness and discovery that is magnetic. But we know that this is, as they say, a marathon and not a sprint. This will require care for the whole of our congregation while also practicing and allowing good self-care for our staff as well. It will require study time, time for brainstorming, learning, planning, collaboration, assessment, and even, rest.

I look forward to our new congregational year. Challenges abound, yes. I have watched a prodigious degree of generosity, commitment, skill, and hope this year. I have ample evidence of our will and capacity to meet our challenges, evolve, adapt, and flourish. We have a strong staff team, broad, deep, wise, and excellent lay leadership. And we have a faith tradition that teaches us that wisdom and creativity are not final – but always expanding and deepening. We say that "revelation" – which means – profound meaning – is not sealed and our tradition has always known that evolution, growth, learning and change are our inheritance – we were made for these times.
2020-21 LEADERSHIP SLATE

Listed here is the slate of candidates put forth by the Nominating Committee for the upcoming church year. It was originally announced in an email on April 16.

The church membership will vote at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 31 at 11 am. The nominees, if elected, will assume their positions on July 1. These candidates were thoughtfully selected and recruited by our Nominating Committee, and we are confident that they will serve our church well, with both skill and compassion.

From the By-Laws, Article X-3: Additional nominations for all elected positions may be made by petition of at least ten percent (10%) of CCUU membership. Petitions shall be filed with the Secretary of the Board at least ten (10) days prior to the business meeting convened for their election.

Board of Trustees
Nominees for the Board of Trustees:

- President-elect: Tom Dempsey [1-yr term as Pres-elect, will then serve a 2-year term as President]
- Vice President: Kathi Hillyer [1st year of second 2-year term as VP]
- Trustee: Chris Hitchcock [1st year of second 2-year term]
- Trustee: Tim Reuter-Bowers [1st year of 2-year term]
- Trustee: Denise Sepos [1st year of 2-year term]

Continuing on the Board of Trustees:

- President: duRee Bryant [2nd year of 2-yr term]
- Secretary: CarolAnn Shindelar [2nd year of 2-yr term]
- Treasurer: Marcus White [2nd year of second 2-year term]
- Trustee: Joy Simon [2nd year of third 2-year term]
- Trustee: Leslie Vaughn [2nd year of 2-year term]

Endowment Committee

from the By-Laws, Article VII, Sec.5: The Endowment Committee shall consist of five voting members, members of the Congregation, elected at an Annual Meeting of the Congregation for five-year (5) staggered terms such that one member is elected each year and no member shall serve more than two consecutive terms. Nominations to the Committee shall be made in the same manner as for members of the Board of Trustees. The Parish Minister and President of the Board of Trustees shall be nonvoting members of the Committee. In the event of a vacancy, the Board of Trustees shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy until the next Annual Meeting.

Nominee for the Endowment Committee:
1. Craig Wydell (1st year of 5-year term)

Continuing on the Endowment Committee:
2. Rem Stokes (2nd year of 5-year term)
3. Laura Corrigan (3rd year of 5-year term)
4. Mike Berry (4th year of 5-year term)
5. Tony Pretto (5th year of 5-year term)

Nominating Committee

From the ByLaws, Article X-4 (as revised by congregational vote on 5-19-19): The Nominating Committee shall consist of five (5) to seven (7) members. Between four (4) and six (6) members shall be elected to serve for a term of two (2) years. Each shall be eligible for re-election to one (1) additional term. One member shall be appointed each year by the Board of Trustees to serve for a one-year term. No Nominating Committee member may serve more than four years of continuous service. Elections shall be held at the Annual Congregational Meeting each year. The Convener of the Nominating Committee shall be selected by the President from those directly elected by the Congregation to the Nominating Committee.

Nominee for the Nominating Committee:
1. Cheryl Murray [1st year of second 2-year term]

Continuing on the Nominating Committee:
1. John Alton [2nd year of 2-year term]
2. Barrie Burr [2nd year of 2-year term]
3. John Evans [2nd year of 2-year term]

Those Completing Terms ~ Thank you!

We would like to thank those members who are completing their service for their commitment to the work of Countryside Church:

- Karen Epps – Board Member
- Vince Unger – Board Member
- Lois Phillips – Endowment Committee
- Karen Noorani – Nominating Committee
- Jeff Phillips – Nominating Committee
- Elizabeth Vesto – Board appointee to Nominating Committee
Chalice House Report

In the span of one year, Countryside and a coalition of partners has brought Chalice House from vision to reality: the home on the north side of our property is being converted from a rental property into housing for immigrants moving through the asylum process.

The bottom line:

- We are now prepared to use the North Property in a way that aligns with our mission, vision and values, while also preserving (and even improving) the value of the property.
- This project inspired an outpouring of support from community partners and individuals who donated money, time and furnishings to Chalice House.
- The project is in a financially stable position, posing no risk to Countryside’s budget in fiscal year 2020/2021. We have done our best to keep the congregation apprised of progress via Town Hall meetings and Focus articles along the way, but following are some of the highlights and current status.

Financial Planning

The Chalice House team began fundraising to cover housing costs in the fall. (Social services costs are funded by ICDI and its partners.) The results were staggering and inspiring. By late December, estimated and confirmed donations totaled over $70,000. The funds will offset housing costs including replacement of lost rental income, repairs, and property taxes, all of which is estimated to be approximately $63,500 over a 27-month period (April 2020 – June 2022.)

Ins and Outs - Comparison

Inflows and outflows reported, side by side, for comparison

Analysis indicates we will be able to cover costs

- 68% of inflows are estimated, while 25% of outflows are estimated
- Any surplus funding will go to ICDI for the cost of providing social services

Side by Side Comparison

Funding sources include:

1. Eight community partners from seven faith groups, including:
   - St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, Barrington
   - Great Plains Zen Center
   - North Shore Unitarian Church
   - First Presbytery Church of Arlington Heights
   - Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Arlington Heights
   - First Congregational Church, Crystal Lake
   - St. John United Church of Christ, Arlington Heights
   - Unitarian Church of Evanston
2. Nearly 20 individual donors from outside our congregation who learned about the project through our UUA partners (UUANI and CAUCC), a Faithify fundraising campaign, and personal outreach conducted by the Chalice House team
3. A $9,000 grant from the UU Funding program: $6,000 for repairs and $3,000 for general use.
4. Countryside fundraisers (Time & Talent and Music with a Mission) and individual donations from congregants
With this financial backdrop, the Board of Trustees voted to proceed with a Memorandum of Understanding for the project, and this was executed by CCUU and our partner, Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants (ICDI) in December 2019.

Financial Status for Fiscal Year 2020/2021
Thanks to the generosity and follow-through of our financial donors, and a good head start at the Time and Talent Auction last fall, we are currently financially prepared to house a family in Chalice House for at least one year. In other words, the project poses no risk to Countryside’s budget because we have nearly $24,000 cash on hand.

Additionally, we have commitments of financial support for a second year, and will continue fundraising over the coming months.
Chalice House Report, cont’d

Home Preparation
Our tenant moved out in early April and the repairs team was able to do a full assessment of the home, inside and out. The punch list extended into hundreds of items.
We reassessed our work plan in order to implement social distancing protocols and safety measures due to Covid-19. Alan Johnson coordinated the assessment, bidding, and installation of new flooring throughout the house. A three-person team -- Jeff Phillips, Andrew Sinclair-Georges and Lois Phillips – made dozens of other home improvements including: subfloor, wall and ceiling repairs; a new door; a custom-built breakfast bar; weatherproofed windows; electrical and lighting upgrades; new blinds; and a myriad of other repairs from fixing the doorbell and installing doorknobs to re-finishing the kitchen cabinets and installing closet shelves.

Expenses related to the repairs totaled $6,027, the vast majority of which was covered by the grant from the UU Funding Program.
The value of the labor that this crew provided is much more than that.
In addition:

- Judy Ball headed up a landscaping crew which is making significant improvements to the outdoor space. The team includes several volunteers from the Interfaith Green Partners.
- Several paint crews are working in shifts to paint the inside of the house, including John Evans and Julie Zydema; and Janet, Jerome and Owen McDonnell. Two more crews are expected.
- Furniture and supplies have been donated by several dozen people from within and outside of Countryside. It will be delivered at the end of May, and finishing touches will take place in early June.
- Matt Myren is currently drafting the Donation Lease with ICDI.

We expect to be ready to welcome residents by sometime in June. Hospitality will be provided by a small trained team, and social services will be provided by ICDI.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported the transition over the past year.
Christine Organ and Laura Mandell, Co-Chairs

Outreach Steering Committee (OSC)

Committee Members: Janet McDonnell, chair; Mari Peckham, Pam Frech, Tom Frech, Linda Kuna, Peyton Bendix, Bob Dow

The OSC was formed to address “the human needs of the larger community”...and to “manifest our UU principles and make the world a better place.” We maintain that even in these difficult economic times, we must commit to this mission, to be faith in action.

Our Service Partners:

- Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants (ICDI)
- Partners for Our Communities (POC)
- Faith in Place

Our Fundraising activities for 2019-20:

- Time & Talent Auction: held on October 26, 2019; raised $29,824
- Music with a Mission: held on March 7, 2020; raised $2,194

Total donated to our Service Partners: $27,845
Total raised for CCUU: $4,173 (through raise-the-paddle for Capital Reserve & ticket proceeds to Operating Budget)

OSC Goals for 2020-21:

- Reverse the order of our fundraiser, holding Time & Talent Auction in the Spring
- Strengthen the connections between our Service Partners and the congregation
- Continue to offer financial support to our Service Partners
Personal Committee Report

1. Personnel Budget for 2020-21 Basically Flat
   a. Increase in health insurance expenses due to corrected deductions.
   b. Decreased RE Assistant hours to 15 from 20.
   c. Eliminated teen childcare expenses as on-site care not needed.
   d. Staff voluntarily keeping salaries flat for the 6-month budget as well as postponing expenses such as professional development.

2. Staff Working Harder than Ever
   a. Staff has learned new skills and become more proficient in others to bring online worship up to the quality the congregation has come to expect. From zoom meetings to calling trees, from navigating the federal Payroll Protection Plan to learning Garageband, their days are busier than before.
   b. To make sure that members stay connected during shelter-in-place additional communication channels were developed, including weekly vespers service, lunch with the staff, and a virtual coffee hour to name but a few. This could not have been accomplished without heightened coordination of volunteers and newly created teams such as the "Tech Team."

3. Planning for Future
   a. The Senior Staff along with the Board are participating in visioning meetings for future congregational life.

Behind the Scenes
To make the congregation aware of the extra efforts that Rev. Hilary and our staff are putting into maintaining connections among our church community and adapting worship, programming, and leadership to an online format, the Board of Trustees asked the Personnel Committee to "interview" our minister, congregational administrator, director of lifetime religious education, and music director in regards to their work during this challenging time. Each week for four weeks, beginning May 7, the Board is sending out a "Behind the Scenes" email to the congregation. As of publication of this report, we have featured our congregational administrator, our director of lifespan religious education, and our music director; the final behind the scenes will feature our minister and will go out May 26. We are including those Behind the Scenes write-ups in this document so we have a record of them with annual meeting materials for the church historical files.

Our Congregational Administrator
Laurie Lantz, our ever reliable, over-achieving, computer user par excellence, and person who answers all our questions, continues to be the glue in our midst. Since health distancing took effect, Laurie’s work has increased in amount, content, and time. While she has continued to go into the office at least once a week, her skilled management from her home office of our calendar and communications has allowed for a smooth migration to virtual church. Now, as ever, her efforts help us all through organizing, disseminating information, and handling countless behind the scenes incidental and important aspects and needs of an active, vital church.

She assists the Board and staff in a myriad of ways, provides the congregation information about meetings, gives us general and special updates, as well as handling operational needs and office responsibilities.

Most of the Zoom meeting arrangements and reduced prices were obtained through Laurie’s research. Additionally, Laurie communicated with all those who use our building, working out arrangements as the facts on the ground changed rapidly.

The Minister wanted to initiate a calling tree process through Lay Ministry, so Laurie set up cluster groups based on zip codes, enabling the newly recruited cluster callers to call every CCUU member and frequent visitors. This helped us communicate with caring and solidarity, strengthening our community bond.

Laurie has provided repeated and constantly updated spreadsheets, expense projections, and numerous other resources to assist the Board in planning for the new budget year and our annual meeting. She compiled the documentation and worked with the Board leadership to submit an application for a Payroll Protection Plan loan for CCUU the first week they were available.

The work of planning for a positive, fair, and democratic annual meeting in a time of separation has involved much work from board leadership and also much research on the part of the minister and the Congregational Administrator, who also reached out to colleagues and researched the strengths and weaknesses of various platforms.

Laurie serves on the Board of the Association of UU Administrators and is constantly in learning as well as leading mode. She sped up as soon as the COVID crisis hit and garnered resources from across the country. She attends numerous Zoom webinars by the UUA, MidAmerica Region, UU Religious Professionals, Church Law & Tax, and The Church Network to learn about new legislation and its impact on the congregation and to learn "how to do church" during this unusual time.

On top of it all, she is friendly, caring, and hardly one to 'toot her own horn,' but then we can do it for her. Laurie Lantz has adapted and enabled us to adapt, and she has been there for us all, every step – with skill, grace, and consistency.
Behind the Scenes, cont’d

Our Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Dr. Mary Lamb Shelden provides the message for all ages each Sunday, selecting a story or other message on-theme with worship, then preparing, with the help of her assistant Marisol, scripts and slides, and recruiting talent as needed, with some additional steps required now to bring the story to life and broadcast it. In the wake of the pandemic, Mary has worked closely with Rev. Hilary, other staff, and the newly launched tech team to explore, establish, and troubleshoot technologies and best practices for online worship.

These days, Mary and Marisol also lead online Children’s Chapel for grades 5 and younger on each Sunday that isn’t an all-church worship. For Children’s Chapel, Mary develops each week’s session plan for worship and activities on-theme with the Soul Matters curriculum and with general worship, with an emphasis on songs, spiritual practices, discussions, games, and other activities to help young people adopt habits that will help ground them, calm their anxieties, and develop compassion for these challenging times. Dr. Mary also helps coordinate curricula, logistics, and RE teachers and advisors for junior and senior high sessions, which are ongoing.

Mary and Marisol also work to keep people connected during our sheltering in, with daily posts to the CCUU Family Ministry Facebook page, weekly story time on Tuesday nights, weekly Soul Matters packets for home-based spiritual practice sent to families, and weekly issues of the LRE Update sent to all members.

Mary’s focus philosophically, as ever, is on building relationships and communal connection while offering opportunities to learn about UU history and develop identification with the UU faith over the lifespans. She continuously oversees what is needed to stay current along with what is working and what changes may be indicated for families already spending unprecedented amounts of time onscreen. Goals are to find the best programming for our current circumstances, and to instill interest and participation in CCUU’s RE program at all age levels. Recent projects include working with Lisa Gilley to develop a program for the Journeys retreat (postponed), with Kim Frank to establish a regional zoom worship series for UU youth (launching Fri May 15), with Matt Reuter-Bowers and Kim Cecil to institute a Soul Connections group for LGBTQ congregants (launching Mon May 18), and with Mike Gilley to organize a young adult presentation and panel at the upcoming Chicago Area UU Council conference (on May 23). Mary will soon be establishing a team to develop summer RE for young people.

Mary has just successfully completed a three-years-long credentialing process, having completed five Renaissance Modules, a regional RE retreat, Professional Days at General Assembly, a portfolio of work with essays and reflections on over thirty RE resources, and an interview with the LREDA Credentialing Committee where she conducted a worship, presented on teaching philosophies and methods, and responded to committee members’ questions.

Mary offers experience, caring, commitment and inspiration to the CCUU community.

Our Music Director

Music is central to the heart of worship and to the life of a faith community, and in this exceptional time, Alison Vernon has focused on sustaining that heart and life for us. That has taken creative thinking, constant adaptive learning, and hours of additional work - and while the Minister, Director of Lifespan Education, and Congregational Administrator are full time, our Music Director and Pianist are part time.

There is truth in the statement, “Choirs are a community within a community.” To that end, Alison added a weekly choir meeting after the Vespers service to keep the connections going, to keep the choir strong for the future, and to foster creative musicianship in a time of new technology. Alison’s commitment and dedication to her position and to the congregation is highlighted by the fact that when we learned that we would be discontinuing in-person meetings for the foreseeable future, she called every person on the choir roster to let them know and to check in with them, and she continues regular communication with choir members throughout the pandemic.

Alison is fully occupied finding, practicing, playing, and recording music for our worship services with the added need to adapt to unfamiliar technology that was not needed when people could play and sing together safely. To record the music, to learn Garageband and other programs, to email and share online storage, and to plan remotely has proven to be a challenge requiring time and patience. Where an ensemble could meet, practice, and play together, the use of layering recording technology is now needed. So with every new instrument, new computer, new piece of music, it becomes more complicated. And, even then, the Zoom platform – so positive for creating warmth and building community – distorts and mishandles music. We opted for Zoom to sustain community, but we lack the state of the art recording equipment or bandwidth that allows high quality recording results. Behind every piece of music our Pianist and Music Director have more work than before. As Alison said, “I work twice as hard with half the results.” Nonetheless, Alison and staff pianist Janice Razaq have each devoted the extra time in a spirit of love to deliver beautiful music.

Prior to the pandemic, Alison spent time this church year planning and coordinating the Western Crescent Choral Fest, which was to be held at CCUU the end of April. It was, of course, cancelled, and we look forward to its resurrection next spring.

Alison, having just been awarded her UUA Music Leader Certification a year ago, has now been tapped by the UUA to serve on the board of AUUMM’s Music Leader Certification Program. She is also acting as a consultant to many other UU churches as they build their church music programs both before and during this time of pandemic.

Besides honing new-found recording and programming skills, Alison is already preparing for summer services and planning for our September ingathering. She may be more out of sight, but her work and Janice’s are always in our ears and hearts.
Our Minister

You probably won’t be surprised to hear that Rev. Hilary acted quickly and proactively to best serve the congregation when the pandemic led to the need to shelter-in-place. One of the first decisions to be made in partnership with the staff was the best way to present the worship service. As the options were weighed — recording the services in advance, filming or streaming from the sanctuary (which would look familiar, but would expose the staff to greater risk) with a group to record, it was clear that people would need to see each others faces in real time. The Zoom platform provides for the physical health of our staff, while also offering members, friends, families, and even dispersed members of this congregation, as well as new friends of this congregation the ability to see one another’s faces, if they so choose, even during the service. While it may not be “the next best thing to being there”, it has provided significant warmth in a rather chilly time.

Worship on a screen also requires engaging people in new ways – ensuring that people can absorb the message, derive nourishment, and feel supported. This has required developing some new skills and has taken significant time in order to coordinate a far larger number of volunteers than are usually needed for a Sunday service. The technology requires many hands. There are two rehearsals for every Sunday service, in addition to consultations needed to ensure that we’re ready for those rehearsals. We need a team: (Techno Verger/director, Vergers and readers, usher/monitors, coffee tech host) who ensure that people can get into the service, that no one disrupts the service and needs to be removed, to create and hold a backup if someone’s Internet goes down in the midst of what they’re saying - well, the list goes on. Most of these positions are staffed by volunteers, but that means that our staff needs to recruit, organize, and sustain them in order to provide a predictable worship service that happens every Sunday. Rev. Hilary recruited the teams and hosts regular Tech to Connect Team meetings to refine processes, iron out kinks, and explore new possibilities while the process of new recruitment and technical adaptations continues.

One interesting fact about our Sunday services: our attendance is greater now that we are online. This doesn’t mean that those same numbers will necessarily translate when we return but it does mean that more people are experiencing our Sunday worship, even in this strange and new form, than ever before. At our lowest screen attendance (Mother’s Day), we had 114 screens and at our highest we had 163. We average about 145 -- until we break out for our religious education gatherings for young people.

Rev. Hilary added a Thursday evening vespers service focused on meditation, healing, and peaceful time. The bulk of this service is usually provided by her. This new service was chosen to offer stress relief, another venue for connection, and is followed by a weekly meeting of the choir (created and organized by our Music Director) The set up for the Thursday service is less complicated than Sundays, but has required music as well as the spoken word to be prepared.

Another action initiated by Rev. Hilary was to set up calling clusters which are intended, during this time of separation and beyond, to ensure that no one falls through the cracks, that needs in our congregation are discovered and met, and that the bonds of kinship are strengthened as never before. Leadership was contributed by the Lay Ministry Team with resources from our Congregational Administrator. Rev. Hilary believed that there needed to be a heightened focus on Pastoral Care – as people are affected by the virus, by the ongoing joys and sorrows of life (made more complicated by safe distancing and safety issues), by hospitalizations, deaths, job losses, financial struggles, by the stresses and isolation of sheltering in place and working from home, and facing anxieties about their own health and the well-being of others. Rev. Hilary reached out to potential new Lay Ministers to strengthen our care of the congregation now and into the future.

Recognizing that all the normal losses in life continue as well as potential losses due to the virus, Rev. Hilary assembled grief kits to deliver to people who experience close losses during this time of separation. Support is still needed even when distance is kept, and care for the health of both congregation and minister has to be sustained. In addition, she has encouraged public times for Zoom spaces to hang out with people in the congregation, to create access to the Board and the staff, and has sustained a steady meeting schedule to allow folks to “drop in” and visit.

The Board has had significant work to do during this time – facing a budget funded by generous people but also impacted by the loss of some members due to moves and changes of financial status. Rev. Hilary has worked closely with the Trustees to grapple with tough decisions that need to be made without losing our sense of principled leadership, spiritual community, and moral core. Reaching out to colleagues and consultants, thinking creatively, and looking at congregational well-being from the balcony view rather than the dance floor in a new and unique time has been a rewarding, if time-devouring adventure.

Above all, Rev. Hilary has worked to ensure that, through the crisis, we would weather this new world with adaptive skill, creativity, and energy while growing stronger as a faith community tested by challenge; and, that we would be poised to emerge from the crisis in the future, not needing to dig our way back to the surface, but more relevant and accessible than ever.

Rev. Hilary asked that we include the following statement from her to conclude the information we have shared here with you about her work during this time:

“There is so much to be said about the other staff who have all given over and above of their time and creativity. Each one has provided wisdom and resources to help the life of this congregation to continue powerfully and deeply. This has been and will continue to be a time of intensified work for our staff and they have met this challenge with a spirit of love and dedication. We would be floundering without this remarkable team. Other congregations are reaching out to us for advice and support.

At the root, we’ve wanted to think about whether we want to be relevant in this time of social, economic, personal, and spiritual crisis for our community. Our staff have a profound sense of commitment to this congregation and this faith and consequently have wanted to ensure that Countryside and Unitarian Universalism don’t slip out of sight and become irrelevant by stopping our work and failing to make the connections that are needed. The work that we are doing now is fundamental for the present and foundational for the future. Our staff infrastructure has performed above and beyond so that, while we are separate, we are still connected and our kinship can grow stronger, so that all people at all ages can be nurtured and supported, so that our faith serves us during a time of crisis, and so that when we return we are more vital than ever and ready to step up and flourish.”
TREASURER’S REPORT

2019-20 Overview/Highlights
As of April 30, our cash on hand was in good shape.
• Operating Checking Account balance was $106,078, of which $38,591 are program special purpose funds, such as the Chalice House Project funds and the balance of the Solar Panel Project which will be due seven years after installation.
• Operating Reserve account balance was $46,416
• Capital Reserve account balance was $67,302
• See above report from the Endowment Committee re. those funds

For the month of April, expenses were $1,790 more than income for the month, but the year-to-date budget showed net income of $33,826. Our best guesses in projecting income & expenses for May and June show that both months will have shortfalls of $8,000-9,000, and yet we still project that we will finish the fiscal year with a positive variance of about $15,000—again, this is based on our best guesstimates.

2020-21 Stewardship Report
As of May 13, we have received pledges from 192 households totaling $399,128.

Continued....
Treasurer’s Report, cont’d

2020-21 Provisional 6-month Budget Overview

The provisional 6-month budget is not strictly 50% of what might be our 12-month budget. We have found over the years that our income & expenses do not come in equally over the 12-months, so the last few years, we have budgeted each month based on an average of previous 5 years’ distribution (unless otherwise noted).

Our 6-month provisional budget includes these sources of income:
- Net Pledges received as of May 13 less 5% to account for payments that are inevitably not received…
- Pledges have been evenly distributed because, while contributions tend to come in more in the first half of the year than the last, we don’t want to rely on that or spend it in the first half and not have it for the second half
- Plate Cash
- North Property/Chalice House net income (rent less utilities)
- No facility use income has been included at this time because of the uncertainty of when groups can/will begin meeting.

Some notes re. Expenses:
- Insurance – our insurance coverage is from May to May; we ‘book’ the payments that we make in May & June as prepaid expenses which hit the books on July 1. In the past, we have opted for 1 or 2-payment plans and have paid most of the insurance by October. This year, to spread the cost out a little more, we are opting for a monthly plan (which is actually a 10-payment plan, with the first payment being larger than the rest) to – the bulk of it still hits in July.
- Safety/Security: this covers the required annual inspections of fire hydrant, sprinkler, and emergency exit signs & lights – all of which happen in October, November, December. Also included are our quarterly payments (Sept, Dec) to Johnson Controls for fire alarm monitoring & maintenance, burglar alarm monitoring & maintenance, closed circuit tv maintenance, and the access control (keyless entry) system maintenance.
- Our garbage-recycling cost has been significantly reduced by using a different service
- Ministries/Programs: while ministries have been holding down spending during the pandemic and will continue to do so if possible; there are expenses in maintaining and creating online programming and in developing programming for the fall
- Mortgage Expense: we’ve been told by our banker that we can defer mortgage payments for 2 months without penalty, so we will likely opt to do that in July & August
- We have not budgeted any contributions to the UUA, MidAmerica Region, or Chicago Area UU Council. We hope to be able to budget those contributions in the second half of the 2020-21 fiscal year.

2020-21 Expenses by Ministry
(6-month provisional budget)

- **Operations-Foundations: 16.3%**
  to cultivate a vital future for the congregation through thoughtful stewardship of financial resources, personnel, and environment

- **Kinship: 13.6%**
  to develop an atmosphere that is welcoming, connecting, compassionate, and respectful, to have an increasing impact on religious & social life in our community

- **Service, incl. Outreach donations: 11.7%**
  to make a positive difference in the broader community, to support fellow congregants, to help do the justice work of the church

- **Worship: 31.8%**
  to unite us as a faith community, to discover new forms of spiritual practice, to develop words & music which inspire & nourish us

- **Study: 26.7%**
  to nurture, challenge, and inspire us on our journey of personal development & spiritual growth
2020-21 6-MONTH PROVISIONAL BUDGET
INCOME SOURCES

- Pledges, 84.8%
- North Property net, 3.6%
- Plate cash net-of-outreach, 5.3%
- Operating Reserve, 6.0%
- Event Proceeds & Misc Income, 0.3%
- Outreach Funds incl. share-the-plate, 0.0%
- Facility Use, 0.0%

2020-21 6-MONTH PROVISIONAL BUDGET
EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

- Programming (ministries & staff), 77.3%
- Mortgage, 4.4%
- Building & Grounds, 14.4%
- Outreach donations incl. plate cash shared, 0%
- Denominational Dues, 0%
- Church Office + Bank-CrdCdFees, 3.9%

Church Office budget includes telephone & internet, copier expenses, postage, ofc supplies

Building & Grounds includes utilities, janitorial svc, bldg. maintenance, grounds maintenance
Board Request for Congregational Approval

Many of you may have heard about the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) made available through the federal government to small businesses (including churches) during the pandemic. The purpose of this program was to help businesses retain staff and avoid layoffs during a time of economic uncertainty. Since the Board of Trustees at Countryside made a decision early on during this crisis that we would strive to maintain ongoing programming for the congregation while also realizing that some of our dependable sources of income would now be eliminated (such as rental income from outside groups) or reduced (due to job losses of some members impacting their pledge), we felt it was our fiscal responsibility to at least apply for a PPP loan, not knowing whether we would receive one or not. Contributing heavily to this decision was the fact that, if at least 75% of the loan is applied to staff salary and wages, health care and retirement benefits, and housing, the recipient qualifies to apply for forgiveness of the loan, thus making it a grant which does not have to be repaid. Many other UU churches across the country including most in the Chicago area also applied for the PPP. The time frame for application was extremely limited so a decision had to be made and acted on quickly. While CCUU was not granted a loan in the first round of the federal stimulus package, all remaining applications were automatically carried over into the second round, and on May 8th we found out that we received the loan. The amount of $52,000 was based on 2.5 months of average monthly payroll from 2019, which was the maximum allowed under the program.

One of the stipulations of the loan is that it must be spent on staffing expenses (at least 75% of the funds) and mortgage/Utilities (not to exceed 25% of the funds) within 8 weeks of receipt of the funds. So the plan is to utilize the funds to cover May and June payroll. At the time we had to make the decision to apply for the PPP funds, we did not know what our financial situation would be for the current fiscal year. As it turns out, we have been able to do a good job of balancing income with expenses thus far, so using the loan within the prescribed time frame will likely result in a positive balance of income vs. expense at the conclusion of this fiscal year. We can then move any excess income remaining at the end of FY19-20 into the operating reserve fund for 2020-21. This will enable us to do one of 2 things: use that amount in operating reserve toward payroll in FY20-21 when the time comes that we need to do that, or use that amount to repay the loan if it ends up not being forgiven (while we are confident that we will be able to meet the criteria for forgiveness, the outcome of our request for forgiveness will probably not be known until sometime this fall). Another option that the congregation could choose to avail themselves of, should the loan not be forgiven, is to keep the funds to offset any deficits in 20-21 and pay them back within 2 years at 1% interest (the 2-year period begins 6 months from the day we received the funds on May 11).

Technically the funds we have received from the PPP are at this time considered a loan, therefore, the congregation will be asked for their approval of this on the ballot you will receive in June to vote on the leadership slate and the 6-month provisional budget. Under Article V 1g in our church bylaws, it states that the congregation must approve any "purchase, sell, mortgage, or refinance which incurs more than 10% additional debt". While the intention and hope is that the PPP loan will be forgiven and we will not be required to pay it back, at this time it is still considered a loan. Should the result of the vote be that the loan is not approved, then we will return the funds.

At the risk of this matter sounding very complicated, we believe it is important for the congregation to be fully informed about all of this. Information about the PPP will be included in the presentation at the annual meeting on May 31 following worship, and any questions you have may be asked at one of the zoom sessions that will be offered during the week following the annual meeting. Thank you for taking the time to become acquainted with the details as we strive to make responsible financial decisions for CCUU.

duRee Bryant
President, CCUU Board of Trustees