

# Unity Church – Unitarian

## Annual Report: July 2021- June 2022

### Table of Contents

Board of Trustees and Staff List .....	1-2
In Memoriam .....	3
Introduction to 2021-2022 Annual Report .....	4-5
Executive Team Interpretation of Ends .....	6-14
Monitoring Report – Policy J.....	15-17
Board of Trustees: Year in Review .....	18-19
Interim Minister Report .....	20
Ministerial Search Team .....	21-33
Congregational Survey Results .....	34
Administration .....	35
Archives Team.....	36
Art Team.....	37-38
Beloved Community Staff Team .....	39-40
Congregational and Community Engagement.....	41-43
Community Outreach.....	44
Denominational Affairs.....	45
Facilities.....	46-47
Literary Ministries.....	48
Music Ministry .....	49-50
Ministry with Children and Youth.....	51
Ministerial Intern .....	52
Pastoral Care .....	53
Sanctuary Congregation .....	54
Unity Consulting.....	55
Worship Life .....	56
Finance and Resource Development .....	57-59

#### Attachments

MST Attachments.....	request a printed copy or see links on 21-33
Congregational Survey Results .....	request a printed copy or see links on 34
Finance Attachments... ..	request a printed copy or see links on 57-59



## Unity Church-Unitarian

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### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Alex Askew, Secretary

Debbie Cushman

Clover Earl

Kevin Ely

Kevin Harris

Mary Hernandez

Louise Livesay-Al, Chair

Jess Landgraf

Jennifer Tong

### EXECUTIVE TEAM

Rev. K.P. Hong

Barbara Hubbard

Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt

Minister of Faith Formation

Executive Director

Interim Senior Minister

### CHURCH STAFF

#### Program Staff

Ahmed Anzaldúa

Drew Danielson

Mark Dietrich

Vladimir Garrido

Rev. Karen Hering

Ray Hommeyer

Micaela Kivel

Kathleen Kraulik

Rev. Shay MacKay

Michelle Mecey

Nico Munoz

Laura Park

Laura Potratz

Kathleen Radspinner

Shahzore Shah

Madeline Summers

Teresa Tierney

KrisAnne Weiss

Director of Music Ministries

Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

Unity Choir Bass Section Leader

Sound Technician

Associate Minister

Youth Ministry & Nursery Supervisor

Nursery Coordinator

Choir Accompanist

Coordinator of Community Outreach Ministries

Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Sound Technician

Acting Director of Membership and Hospitality

Organist & Youth Music Coordinator

Children's Choir Director

Unity Choir Tenor Section Leader

Hospitality Coordinator & Program Assistant

Unity Choir Soprano Section Leader

Unity Choir Alto Section Leader

**Administrative/Facilities Staff**

Heidi Birkholz	Facilities Maintenance Coordinator
Olendta Bryant	Facilities Specialist
Teresa Connor	Facilities Operations Coordinator
Delaney Daly	Facilities Specialist
Keenan Rust	Facilities Specialist
Song Thao	Financial Assistant
Martha Tilton	Director of Communications

**MINISTER EMERITA / EMERITUS**

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs	Minister Emerita
Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs	Minister Emeritus

**STAFF EMERITA**

Ruth Palmer	Director of Music Ministries Emerita
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## **In Memoriam**

### **Donna Gustafson**

November 9, 1928-November 4, 2022

### **Murray King Reed**

February 14, 1927-November 9, 2022

### **Ariel Dickerman**

October 5, 1934-October 27, 2022

### **Bill E. Webb**

September 23, 1950-September 26, 2022

### **Richard Fousheé**

March 2, 1938-September 4, 2022

### **Garl Rieke**

June 30, 1942-July 21, 2022

### **Joseph L. Lewis**

March 30, 1929-August 11, 2022

### **Rev. Robert Lewis Eller-Isaacs**

November 7, 1951-July 23, 2022

### **Diane Volkenant**

June 3, 1929-July 12, 2022

### **James Hugh Hogan**

December 11, 1929-June 1, 2022

### **Martha Eaves**

November 5, 1945-May 12, 2022

### **Constance Waterous**

October 8, 1931-April 14, 2022

### **Robert Michaels**

November 28, 1921-April 14, 2022

### **Bob Doffing**

June 25, 1943-March 7, 2022

### **Jim Neher**

December 4, 1935-February 15, 2022

### **Gretchen Kreuter**

May 7, 1934-February 1, 2022

### **Ruth Stryker-Gordon**

August 20, 1925-December 17, 2021

## Introduction to the 2021-2022 Annual Report

If the one inexorable force in the universe is Change, then a theory of change – indeed a theology and spirituality of change – remains the profound and encompassing task for a faith community. “*All that you touch you change. All that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is Change. Shape God.*” (Octavia Butler) As the church reopened for in-person ministry with the annual Merging of Waters service, with children and choirs and congregants finding their way back into the sanctuary, we began the interim year with Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt as our interim senior minister, entering into the ever-diversifying creating, destroying, renewing force of change in the reciprocity of shaping and being shaped by God whose name is Change.

We were challenged as a faith community to see, learn, and work to shape both the struggles and possibilities of change, reimagining the *means* and the *meaning* of change in our own being and becoming, not *whether* the direction of church will change but *whither* they will change. As example, there was unsurprisingly no uniform agreement nor single approach to the complexities surrounding Covid protocols in a diverse liberal faith community as ours, with complexities inherent in each of the domains of science, ethics, and theology; each with their respective truths complicating ethical decision-making and no simple perfect guideline for all. Given the complexities and ambiguities, where even the remarkable vaccine itself was finally not a silver bullet given breakthrough cases, we had to rely on each other for those indispensable and complementary behavioral practices including masking, distancing, monitoring symptoms, contact tracing, testing, and quarantining. But our very diversity of thought and feelings pointed to what is best and foundational in our faith tradition: that we are a community of covenantal faith, and that its *raison d’être* of being in “right relations” is precisely for moments of complexity and conflict, where multiple perspectives, values, and interests are contested. We remembered that covenants move relationally, rooted in risk and faith in one another and in sources of authority like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the Saint Paul Public Schools. We were learning to shape change *covenantally*.

Our concerns about change tend to cluster around its *pace* (is it not/fast enough?), its *predictability* (can we tell what will happen and bring us what we want?), and its *purpose* (why and for what are we doing this?). It seems natural, given our usual vocabulary of change, to evaluate change primarily in terms of rapidity and results, an outcome-oriented understanding of change. But at the core of shaping change is an inquiry into the configuration of values, intentions, and the relational unfolding of who we are as a faith community, of discerning our way between “the permanent and the transient” in our liberal faith tradition.

And so the ministerial search process took shape and schedule, from listening sessions to the search team extensively documenting and compiling a remarkable congregational record, asking of us collectively an extraordinarily high-resolution attention to change as a relational unfolding of who we are and aspire to become. A demanding process for all of us – and especially so for the dedicated members of the Ministerial Search Team – during the

convergence of an ongoing pandemic, economic distress, political polarization, and particularly complicated by the heartbreaking news and grief over the cancer diagnosis of Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister emeritus. While the ministerial search did not eventuate in a called senior minister, the ever-diversifying creating, destroying, renewing force of Change now surely calls us to a deeper wonder, a greater practice of covenant, and deeper faith capable of embracing “the ambiguity and uncertainty in the search for greater truth, meaning, and equity.”

This report highlights some of the many and generous ways staff and volunteers found to provide worship, programs, inspiration, generous care, and strength in our shared ministry in shaping and being shaped by Change. And when competing voices rise to push at our anxiety, and faith is stretched thin, to find practices of faith that ground change in our covenantal core, to clarify what matters most, and to keep us choosing that.

The Unity Church Executive Team

Rev. K.P. Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director

Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt, Interim Minister

**Unity Church Unitarian  
Executive Team Interpretation of the 2019-2023 Ends  
with Strategic Priorities for 2021-2022**

*Written in August, 2021*

**Introduction**

Every August, your Executive Leadership meets in retreat to plan for the coming church year. We consider each end statement in turn, tweak the interpretation if necessary, and outline the strategic priorities we plan to undertake to advance the ends.

**Ends Statements (2019-2023)**

**Working within ourselves, among our church community, and beyond in the larger world, we the people of Unity Church-Unitarian:**

*Note: We have not offered an interpretation of this overarching statement in the past and considered whether to offer one now, particularly of the phrase “we the people of Unity Church-Unitarian.” We decided to hold off on that interpretation, knowing that the interim year will ask us to deeply explore the question of who are “we the people.” We will use the insights of this year about the meaning of membership and moral owners to offer an interpretation at a later date, unless the board decides to clarify this in its own policies.*



## 1. Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.

### **Interpretation:**

*The Beloved Community is inherently multicultural and always aspirational. It grows from holy relatedness and requires deep humility. We acknowledge that we need help navigating what, for us, is uncharted territory. Authentic relationships begin when we recognize and root out our assumptions and deepen through active curiosity and growing friendship. This work asks us to confront systems of oppression, disrupt white privilege and fragility, build bridges across differences, and embrace an ever-growing repertoire in every dimension of our ministry. We promise to stay engaged despite discomfort and inevitable failures.*

### **Strategic Priorities:**

In close consultation with Team Dynamics, we will:

- a) Promote and curate an expanding multicultural experience of worship, particularly in our music ministries, focusing on the *Minimization Orientation's* developmental task of deepening cultural self-awareness as necessary groundwork for recognizing and appreciating wider cultural differences. As we both return to the building and look toward the change that comes in ministerial transition, we will incorporate new elements into the worship service while attending to the need for constancy.
- b) Expand on iterations of the IDI work, scaling it to greater number of congregants and ministry areas, integrating learning from group feedback sessions into current programs and augmenting its impact through accountability structures.
- c) Evaluate and implement new Religious Education curricula that situates our Unitarian Universalist faith within a multicultural framework. Continue curriculum review across all RE programs, with next focus on Year 2 of Rotation curricula with a racial justice and multicultural lens as guide.
- d) Strengthen chalice circles and small group ministry with a deeper emphasis on cultural self-awareness as necessary work in building authentic relationships.
- e) Coordinate Year 3 contractual resources with Team Dynamics, building on areas where coaching, facilitating, and training remain both critical and effective, including: consulting in the ministerial search process, shaping how we think about values and finances, and translating the individual practices of antiracism-multiculturalism toward what an anti-racist, multicultural congregation as an institution looks, sounds, and feels like.
- f) Clarify and strengthen the covenant between Unity and Above Every Name around shared program planning and regularly scheduled leadership gatherings.
- g) Recognizing the importance of holy relationship and proximity to people of color, support the efforts of the Ministerial Search Team to link with members and friends of color within Unity Church, and support the efforts of the Board of Trustees to link with moral owners in communities of color beyond the church.
- h) Incorporate the DNA double-helix map interweaving faith formation and anti-racism-multiculturalism throughout the ministries of the church.

**2. Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.**

***Interpretation:***

*Both personal practice and congregational worship ground us in our relationship to the holy, inspire reverence, and prepare us to engage change as it comes. Individual spiritual practice and communal worship are essential expectations of church involvement. Consistent practice expands our capacity for wonder and fosters spiritual development. When we bring our full selves into the worship experience, our particular stories, practices, and insights enrich communal worship, awaken the welcoming spirit among us, and help us realize holy relatedness.*

***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a) Structure faith formation as an overarching priority across existing programs and emerging initiatives, facilitating lifespan faith formation and intergenerational opportunities.
  - a. Structure Wellspring Wednesdays into greater alignment with faith formation, increasingly shaping an intergenerational worship service, with involvement from youth and families.
  - b. Review and winnow the wide array of WW programming typically offered, while exploring creative initiatives towards adult faith formation.
- b) Continue to advance the work of the faith formation team, particularly attentive to nurturing spiritual practice.
- c) Continue a short-term Chalice Circle experience for newcomers to introduce them to the experience and expectation of spiritual practice in membership.
- d) Ground newcomers quickly in the art and expectation of spiritual practice and develop a process by which they can grow in this practice as they become members.

**3. Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.**

***Interpretation:***

*We know and feel part of the unfolding story of liberal religion and use our stated principles as tools for self-reflection and action in the world. We understand teaching as a spiritual practice and cultivate the salvific potential of learning together as a multigenerational community. Together, we disciple ourselves to our living tradition through ritual and worship, in stories and by example. We confidently claim our faith and testify to its transforming power.*

***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a) Structure faith formation as an overarching priority across existing programs and emerging initiatives, facilitating lifespan faith formation and intergenerational opportunities.
- b) Develop year 3 and a new class of year 1 of the Teaching Associates program, deploying associates who will integrate spiritual-theological reflection and attend to faith formation across strategic ministry areas.
- c) Advance the work of the faith formation team in mapping faith formation across adult programming—from membership to meaning to ministry to mission of the church in the greater world—and implementing it in congregational life.
- d) Strengthen growing opportunities for intergenerational faith formation within existing RE structures and practices, including: the UU Families Initiative’s family covenant workshop embedded into the COA curriculum, and strengthening parental involvement in seminal programs from Our Whole Lives and Coming of Age to the Boston pilgrimage and Tower Club parent council.
- e) Convene a History Teaching Team to connect our current Unitarian Universalist practices to our historical roots.
- f) Renew the connection between Unitarian Universalist faith and courageous action of the Community Outreach Ministry teams in the world.

#### **4. Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people**

##### ***Interpretation:***

*We acknowledge the fullness of being human by embracing the messiness, complexity, and beauty of our existence. Our hearts contain the capacity for good and evil and all that lies between. Religious community helps us align ourselves toward the good, welcoming both gifts and wounds across a diversity of human experience. We claim a faith that breaks past fear and leads toward Beloved Community.*

##### ***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a) Lift up the importance of radical hospitality and increase our capacity to nurture mutual belonging
  - i. Continue the work with the Welcome Teams to cultivate radical hospitality and their understanding of and commitment to this work.
  - ii. Determine the meaning and place of an on-line ministry that's part of our commitment to radical hospitality and allows us to know and belong to one another.
- b) Increase our use of the administrative capacity the database offers to support connections with visitors and members and guide their pathway to involvement.
- c) Enhance the redesigned website with additional dynamic content to foster greater connection with the church's ministry.
- d) Explore and clarify the role and processes of Fellowship Groups in the congregation, particularly as it relates to antiracism and multiculturalism.
- e) Explore opportunities for group lament and confession and rituals of reconciliation.
- f) Explore the meaning and purpose of retreats and pilgrimages in deepening relationships in congregational life.
- g) Strengthen and build small groups and other connections between people to bridge their isolation, Includes:
  - i. Strengthen Chalice Circles: Continue on-line and in-person chalice circles and a cadre of committed facilitators equipped to lead the circles in theologically deep ways. Grow the leadership capacity of the facilitators.
  - ii. Re-imagine the Mentoring Program: find ways to nurture an organic connection between the mentor/mentee matches

**5. Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow and transition.**

***Interpretation:***

*Our pastoral ministry reflects a growing understanding of relational theology and its ability to transform lives. We accompany one another during threshold moments and times of transition. We are eager to be present in joyful times and able to stay present in the face of suffering. The Holy reveals itself in a tangible way in our mutual care for one another.*

***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a) Create a Pastoral Care Ministry Team to consider the program at depth, including its programs and theological underpinnings. Team members will also have pastoral responsibilities.
- b) Re-imagine the Pastoral Care Associates program:
  - a. Honor long-tenured associates while bringing on new team members with greater capacity.
  - b. Expand the capacity of teams who support an individual or family in need and explore the potential of systematic care structures for people without family support.
  - c. Enlarge the capacity of Caring Circles who provide direct services to congregants in need (meals, rides, etc.)
- c) Strengthen the role that music ministries plays in pastoral care.
- d) Incorporate pastoral care information at every level of congregational life and create channels for people to express their care for one another.

**6. Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people and our Earth and all life on it.**

***Interpretation:***

*We encourage and challenge ourselves and one another to live out our faith in the world with a personal and collective commitment to justice, equity and healing. We invite the power of this commitment, deepened by our spiritual practices, to change our hearts and lives and to help us discern what we need to let go of in order to make room for what needs to grow. We will linger in the discomfort of not knowing long enough to find our place, personally and congregationally in the wider movements seeking justice, equity and ecological wellness in the world.*

***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a)** Continue the renewal process in our Community Outreach Ministry Teams which will further develop their capacity to connect spiritual reflection with justice work.
- b)** Establish a formal Sanctuary Community Outreach Ministry team.
- c)** Support the Act for the Earth team's educational, practical, activist, and spiritual approach to protecting our world,
- d)** Sustain and re-imagine our relationship with multifaith justice efforts, in particular supporting the efforts of the Minnesota Multifaith Network and Interfaith Action's program Opportunity St. Paul.
- e)** Make best and highest use of worship and the arts to open us as individuals and a community to the possibilities for seeking justice.

## 7. Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.

### **Interpretation:**

*As an expression of covenant, brave space invites us into authentic relationships that allow us to imagine and experience new ways of being and help to heal old wounds. Informed by the history of racism and patriarchy, we learn to confront racist behavior in ourselves and in others, make mistakes, and enter into accountable relationships that lead to change. In brave space we turn down the volume of the dominant culture and amplify voices that fight to be heard.\* We will learn to be together in new ways, practice sharing power, sing new songs, pray new prayers. \*This sentence drawn from the work of Micky ScottBey Jones.*

### **Strategic Priorities:**

We will:

- a) Continue the IDI/IDP accountability structures and the programs that enable that accountability (e.g. Anti-Racist Literary Partners).
- b) Invite ministry teams to complete the double helix map of accountability to faith formation and anti-racist-multicultural work.
  - i. Support the efforts of the Board of Trustees to complete their own double helix map and live into accountability to it.
  - ii. Support the efforts of the Ministerial Search Team to invite us to imagine new ways of seeing and of being.
- c) Consider how staffing for future ministry can dismantle dominant culture and inform a comprehensive staffing plan (see end #8).
- d) Coordinate Year 3 contractual resources with Team Dynamics to help us build institutional practices that create brave space for prophetic ministry that dismantles dominant culture.
- e) Continue the renewal process to align the work of the Community Outreach Ministry Teams with Unity's antiracist and multicultural ends, especially attentive to community organizations led by people of color and prospective proximity in the work of racial justice.
  - i. Revitalize the work of the Racial and Restorative Justice Team and their community partnerships.
- f) Continue and sustain the use of restorative circles for surfacing and managing conflict and for sharing power.
- g) Explore opportunities for group lament and confession, and rituals of reconciliation.
- h) Strengthen the work and authority of the BCST as it works to embed the double helix of faith formation and anti-racism-multiculturalism across all ministries of Unity Church.

**8. Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.**

***Interpretation:***

*Gratitude rests at the heart of our faith. When we embrace the gifts of the church and put them to work in the world, we understand the significance of the church in new ways. As disciples to our faith and its teachings, we hold the church in trust, testify by example, and steward its resources as an expression of the promises we make to each other and the world. Our gratitude extends to and undergirds our commitment to the larger Unitarian Universalist movement and our shared mission in the world.*

***Strategic Priorities:***

We will:

- a) Re-establish the Development Ministry Team to advise the Executive Director on how the assets of the church can boldly and courageously express the church's core values and its antiracist, multicultural ends. The team will consider issues of canvass, investments, budget, facilities management, long-term debt, and future planning in light of these values and ends. They will help the Executive Director and through her the Executive Leadership:
  - i. Ensure the future of the physical church, including the duplex, by creating a life cycling system and by improving IT systems,
  - ii. Expand the congregation's capacity to embody generosity as a central expression of their faith.
  - iii. Sustain the strength~~en~~ of financial giving through a compelling message and accessible means, with a focus on better use of technology,
  - iv. Align existing financial, investment and endowment policies and practices with our values and ends, and with the goal of ongoing financial strength.
  - v. Conduct an assessment of the pledge-based model for funding the church and consider alternatives.
- b) Clarify and strengthen the financial management structure, particularly in light of the future retirement of the Executive Director.
- c) Prepare a comprehensive staffing plan in preparation for settled ministry.
- d) Help the board deepen its board nomination process, board wholeness, ~~and~~ discipleship, and linkage.
- e) By fully engaging with the interim year process, we will clarify our relationship with the larger UU movement.
- f) Work in collaboration with Twin Cities Unitarian Universalist congregations, recognizing that Unity and White Bear UU are in transition periods.



## Policy J: Antiracism and Racial Healing Commitment

The Executive Team shall not take actions or otherwise conduct the affairs of Unity Church-Unitarian in any manner that does not comport with its commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist institution. The Executive Team shall not:

1. Engage vendors in an amount greater than \$2,500 annually without assessing and educating any such vendor using a matrix of values which includes, but is not limited to anti-racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism and class inclusion.

*The ET’s plan in response to this limitation has been to:*

1. *Develop and implement a matrix of criteria that expresses the church’s stated values and ends.*
2. *Survey current contractors and vendors to evaluate their compliance with our criteria.*
3. *Create required goals for our current vendors and contractors who are not in compliance, thus challenging and educating them;*
4. *Apply the criteria to all future processes for the selection of contracted services and vendors.*
5. *Report results to the Board of Trustees and the congregation annually in an effort to be accountable and transparent.*

*We have developed criteria (see below) but we have not surveyed current contractors as proposed. We do, however, apply these values and criteria with new contracts that are above \$2,500.00.*

<b>Matrix of Criteria for contracts and vendors (weighted):</b>
1. Minority hiring practices - resulting in a 31%* employment of people of color and women. <b>(25%)</b>
2. Sustainability practices – demonstration of a commitment to healing the earth. <b>(15%)</b>
3. Local engagement – demonstration of a commitment to the community’s overall health and well-being. <b>(15%)</b>
4. Worker’s Equity in fair compensation, inclusive benefits and healthy work environment. <b>(20%)</b>
5. Competitive fees for goods and services <b>(25%)</b>
*Keyed to Ramsey County requirements.

2. Allow the Board to be uninformed about diversity of staff on payroll, including the percentage of positions and salary paid to people of color.

*As of June, 2022 our staff was comprised of 21.1% people of color (4 of 19), and 24.2% of salaries were assigned to people of color (\$220,007 of \$910,529).*

3. Allow staff members to be uninformed about how to conduct their duties in alignment with the anti-racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism and class inclusion values of Unity Church-Unitarian.

*In 2016, the Beloved Community Staff Team was formed at Unity Church to strengthen and coordinate Unity's anti-racism and multi-cultural work, and to share the stories of this journey with the wider community. The BCST has members from the Executive Leadership, program staff and the laity.*

*In conjunction with Team Dynamics, we offered opportunities for staff members to participate in the Equity + Justice workshop in September 2021. Some, but not all staff have completed the IDI, participated in the group feedback session with a Qualified Administrator, have had an individual session, and have created an Intercultural Development Plan.*

*We recognize that new learnings and growth call us to develop new ways of integrating our learnings into our staff dynamics and the church culture. We are taking steps to create venues for this integration.*

4. Interpret the Ends statements without consideration of the anti-racism commitment of Unity Church-Unitarian and how that commitment is implemented in covenant with local communities of color.

*As you can see from the ET's Interpretation of the Ends, our commitment to anti-racism is woven throughout the ministries and programs of the church.*

5. Allow the congregation to be uninformed about the work being done to live out the anti-racism, anti-oppression, multicultural and class inclusive values of Unity Church-Unitarian, and the measurable outcomes of that work, including the percentage of Sunday Offerings that go to organizations with an anti-racist agenda and/or that serve communities of color.

*The Beloved Community Staff Team has a Communications Team that reports on the work being done to live out the values of the church in the area. Our Annual Report to the congregation in November will include a summary report.*

*From July of 2021 through June of 2022, 76% of the organizations that received a Sunday offering serve communities of color and 34% of the organizations include an explicit commitment to an antiracist agenda in their mission.*

## **Policy J**

### **Offering Recipient Analysis**

<b>Church Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b># Serve Comm of Color</b>	<b>%</b>	<b># With A-R Mission</b>	<b>%</b>
2014-2015	51	37	72.5%	23	45.1%
2015-2016	49	39	79.6%	35	71.4%
2016-2017	47	39	83.0%	24	51.1%
2017-2018	44	32	72.7%	21	47.7%
2018-2019	48	36	75.0%	20	41.7%
2019-2020	46	37	80.4%	22	47.8%
2020-2021	49	45	91.8%	24	49.0%
2021-2022	50	38	76.0%	17	34.0%

## **Board of Trustees: 2021-2022 Year in Review**

This church year has been one with many unexpected twists and turns, and opportunities to practice reflection, resilience, and endurance as a Board.

When the church year began, we welcomed Interim Senior Minister Kathy Hurt. The Ministerial Search Team (MST) was already in place and well underway in their work to assemble a Congregational Record, hold cottage meetings. In the early part of 2022, the MST began the Settled Minister application review process. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, we learned that our Minister Emeritus Rob Eller-Isaacs had been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

During the year, the Board's Capacity Committee worked to develop a process to more systematically bring new trustees on-board to help them become grounded in Policy Governance and how the Board does it work. This fall will be the trial run of the newly developed curriculum and resources for incoming Board members.

While the Board continued to do the annual work of board recruitment, this year we spent time working with the book, *Hiring Revolution*, by Team Dynamics to further assist us in developing a more transparent and informative application process. The Board also continued to monitor and evaluate the Executive Team's progress on the Ends through the Congregational Survey; administered the staff and volunteer surveys; link with stakeholders; and monitor itself in its work.

In May when the Congregational vote did not meet the threshold to call a new Senior Minister, the Board had to quickly pivot and determine next steps. The first decision was to extend the interim period an additional two years. The Board and Executive Team had conversations with the UUA about our options, and when it was clear that Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt would not be able to extend her interim ministry at Unity we learned through the UUA Transitions Office that we had an interested candidate. The Board interviewed and extended an offer to Rev. Kathleen Rolenz to be Unity's next Interim Sr. Minister; she began her work with us in August. We were impressed with Kathleen's record on working with congregations in crisis, her knowledge of Unity, and ability to assist us at this critical time in our congregational life.

The Board also worked with the Executive Team to gather information from what we have identified as the five sources: congregant's direct communications about the impact of the Congregational vote; a summary from Rev. Hurt of her takeaways and observations ; we met with David Pyle from the UUA Mid-America District to gain perspective about what happened and what resources are available to us going forward; Rev. KP's notes on the theme's that emerged from the Circle conversations held over the summer; and the MST report to the Board that was received late August. Our work has continued with Rev. Rolenz to provide guidance and discussion about where we go from here with the information we have gathered.

At the time of writing this report, the Board is in the process of compiling the key takeaways and action items we have identified from these sources. These lessons learned will guide the work

of the ET, Board, and congregation as we prepare for our next search. The Board and Executive Team will communicate opportunities for engagement of church members in the coming months.

This fall the Board voted to release the first phase of funds collected for Rob and Janne's retirement. The money was given so they could purchase a teardrop trailer, which they had to decline because of Rob's diagnosis. The money will be given directly to the family to support in-home assistance for Janne that is not covered by insurance.

This has been a full year tending to the regular ongoing Board work and additional work which came unexpectedly. The Board has much work to do ahead of us and we are grateful for the input we have received and the trust and patience we have received to do things thoughtfully and deliberately. Please stay engaged in the year ahead.

Louise Livesay-Al, Chair

## **Interim Minister Report**

Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt

Dear Members and Friends of Unity Church,

What a beautiful, tender, loving farewell you gave me on my last Sunday with you! Flowers from the Board of Trustees, a bounty of Minnesota-themed gifts to make sure I do not forget you (as if I ever could), cards and notes that will accompany me wherever I go all my days.

Yet such a farewell was in keeping with how I have experienced you throughout these many months, as a congregation that despite the struggles of re-opening, of hearing Rob's difficult news, of working your way through a search that reached a disconcerting conclusion, you came to church again and again ready to walk further into a transitional year. Now that you know your transition will continue, I felt in your goodbyes a wonderful sense of openness to what your journey will bring, as you bid me farewell and turn to welcome your next interim minister.

And the goodbye you gave me is testimony to your capacity to care for your ministers, to embrace them, to follow their leadership, to wrestle with them but always with a willingness to hear what is being said. That is a great strength you have: hold fast to it, for it will ensure that future ministers find in you a wonderful ministerial partner.

I am grateful for this year with you, for all we walked through together even when that walk became difficult and unsteady. Know that your gifts, your faces, your words are embedded in my heart, where I will carry you always.

With abiding love,

Kathy

## **Ministerial Search Team**

### **Report from Unity Church-Unitarian's Ministerial Search Team (MST)**

**September 1, 2022**

This is a final report from the Ministerial Search Team (MST), summarizing its work during 2021-2022 in search of a senior settled minister to replace the Revs. Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs. It is essentially a record of actions taken, substantive areas of discussion, and major accomplishments. Several attachments provide additional detail. The report does not include interpretation of events or recommendations to the Board of Trustees (BOT).

While our search did not result in a call, much of what we accomplished and learned may prove useful to the Board of Trustees and to the next MST.

## **GETTING STARTED**

### **Initial meetings, structures, and process**

The MST was drawn from a broad pool of Unity members who indicated interest by formally applying. The Board of Trustees narrowed that very large group to a list of 20 who represented various demographics and were engaged in different areas of church life. A congregational vote chose five from that list, and the Board selected the remaining four. Due to the pandemic postponing the retirement of the Eller-Isaacs for a full year, the MST's selection was postponed as well. One result was that the team was formed in March 2021, a couple months before the end of the church year. This was helpful in light of our having a one-year interim, rather than the typical two.

Members of the team were: Mary Baremore, Pauline Eichten, Morgan France-Ramirez, Betsy Hearn (co-chair), Dan Huelster, Lia Rivamonte, Jake Rueter, Avi Viswanathan (co-chair) and Marg Walker. As a group, we reflected the diversity of Unity Church by gender, sexual orientation, race, and age. We also represented both long-time and newer members, and single and married members. Most of us either had raised or were currently raising our children in the church.

Our opening retreat (March 5-6, 2021) was led by Rev. Jen Crow, Senior Minister at First Universalist Church in Minneapolis. As our Ministerial Transitions coach, Rev. Crow's role was to facilitate the retreat, review the congregational record when it was developed in the fall, and support the MST's work throughout the search process. The coach role also entailed being a liaison to the UUA Transitions Office, and supporting Unity's Board of Trustees and its Transitions Team.

The major accomplishments of the retreat were to get to know each other, to begin drafting a covenant, to preview the array of roles and tasks necessary for our work, and to volunteer to

fulfill those roles. The UUA Settlement Handbook was the source of detailed information and essential guidance during the retreat and throughout the search process.

The MST put several structures in place during our initial weeks together. Among the first was the selection of the online project management tool *Asana*, which enabled us to communicate between meetings, and to work efficiently and collaboratively on all shared tasks. We also created meeting rituals, including a team covenant that we read at the opening of each meeting, along with the values and mission of Unity Church ([Attachment 1](#)). We established budget categories, procedures, and confidentiality protections (see [Attachment 2](#) for final accounting); created member profiles and videos to post on the church's website, where we also set up an email address; established procedures for documents retention; and created a general work plan including dates for pre-candidating weekends and the candidating week, still nearly a year away. We established a pattern of meeting for two hours every other week. This changed in August 2021 to meeting weekly for three hours, with few exceptions.

Just a note about the constraints which, perhaps uniquely, shaped our work. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic demanded adaptability, often requiring us to meet remotely and to create Plan B scenarios for meetings and interviews. Emotional factors were more intense than anticipated, including the news of Rob Eller-Isaacs' illness, the generalized grief and uncertainty of COVID, and the pandemic-amplified desire to help the church move forward into a new era. The one-year interim pressurized the already overwhelming amount of work to be accomplished within the UUA's tight timeline. Finally, the need for confidentiality created the condition for us to operate in virtual isolation. We had minimal interface with the Board, the ET, our interim minister, our UUA coach, or the UUA Transitions Office. Sometimes we identified the need for input, but simply had no time, nor established relationships on which to base a request.

### **Antiracism and Multiculturalism**

Unity's commitment to antiracism and multiculturalism was reflected in how the MST conceived of and carried out our work. We believed this to be foundational. Unity's Ends Statements include commitments to create a multicultural spiritual home, to create an ever-widening circle of belonging, to collectively advance justice and equity for all, and to create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture. Members of the MST had served on the Anti-Racism Leadership Team, Beloved Community Staff Team, Antiracism Literacy Partners, and other initiatives. Several of us had been engaging with the newly developed Double Helix Model of Faith Formation and Antiracist Multicultural Work. One member is a qualified administrator of the IDI and has provided those services for Unity in an external consultant role. We included in our team covenant a commitment to "seek equity, justice, and inclusion throughout the search process, mindful of our own personal, cultural, and social biases and assumptions so that, to the best of our ability, they are not a barrier to a fair and fruitful outcome."

As our work together began, members of the team who had not recently taken the Intercultural Development Inventory completed that assessment tool and debriefed with a coach. As a group



we participated in an IDI group debrief with a qualified administrator (not the MST member). During our check-ins for each meeting over the next several months, we took turns reporting on new insights or progress on our Individual Development Plans. This practice kept us mindful of our own areas for personal growth and transformation, alongside those of our church.

Team Dynamics, a local firm engaged in 2019 to help Unity develop greater cross-cultural competence, assisted us in several ways. We arranged for their input on congregational survey questions, listening sessions and focus group questions and processes, and for coaching sessions with the team. We attended the Team Dynamics presentation for all Unity Church members on faith formation and multiculturalism. Most (perhaps all) of us had also participated in Team Dynamics' seven-part Equity and Justice series attended by nearly 200 people in the fall of 2020. As a team, we purchased and read portions of Team Dynamics' newly published book "Hiring Revolution: a Guide to Disrupt Racism and Sexism in Hiring," and worked with Alfonso Wenker to "name, notice, and navigate" bias at all stages of the hiring process.

In light of all of this, we wondered whether the UUA's required workshop on diversity, "Beyond Categorical Thinking," would contribute meaningfully to our work. We found that it did not. Our perception, and those of some members of the Board and congregation who participated, was that the workshop as implemented was shallow and not at all challenging. It had been a time-consuming and complex process to fill out the application and make arrangements, not to mention attend. Especially given all the other work we had to do, the unsatisfactory experience was especially frustrating.

### **Website Review**

As part of the preparation for search, the settlement handbook recommends asking outsiders to look at the congregation's website to identify what the website might express, intentionally and unintentionally, to prospective ministers. Per the handbook, much of this work happens in the first six months of the search process and even before the search committee is formed. At the time, Martha Tilton, Unity's communications director, was in the middle of revamping the website, work that was not completed until June 2021. At that time, the MST asked three people to view Unity's website through the eyes of a searching minister and share their feedback: Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt, the interim minister; Rev. Melissa Carvill Ziemer, Director of Ministries for Collegial Care at the UU Ministers Association; and Julica Hermann de la Fuente, Director of Liberation and Transformation Ministries at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis.

The MST reviewed the feedback and identified several areas that we believed were priorities for addressing. These included opening up a text-heavy site with more pictures and videos; clarifying how children are welcomed in church life; the need to flesh out the staff page to better introduce staff members and their role; information on the Executive Team (ET) and how it functions; more information on the church's accessibility and efforts to improve it; and directions to the church that addressed multiple ways of traveling. Our recommendations were reviewed by the ET and many were sent on to Martha Tilton.

The updating of the site was ongoing. For example, in the fall of 2021, Martha Tilton was contacted about the minimal information on the site about the BOT. She responded that she relied on teams to manage the content on their pages. She forwarded the email to the BOT chair. As a result, the trustees supplied short bios and pictures for the site.

There was also the need to create a special section on the congregation's website specific to the search, including information about the MST, the survey results when available, a calendar overview of the timing of the search, etc. Communications from the MST about the search were posted there as well as information about the candidate, once identified.

## **CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

### **Congregational Survey (September 2021)**

Planning for the congregational survey began over the summer. We reviewed the sample survey provided in the Settlement Handbook as well as the survey used by Unity's prior MST in 1999. To avoid asking congregants to complete two surveys, we conferred with the Board and agreed that our survey would replace the annual BOT survey assessing progress on the Ends. Bill Etter and Laura Park reviewed the 35-question survey for clarity and reliability.

We did not know what to expect in terms of congregational response, given the long-term separation from the church building during the pandemic. Parish Hall tabling, newsletter columns, and other announcements helped us spread the word. The survey's main purpose was to help us understand what congregants were looking for in the next settled minister. But we also were aware that the very act of filling it out would be a way to re-engage with deep thinking about the future as many began to return in person to church events and imagine a life post pandemic. We were gratified that 371 people participated in the online survey during the two weeks it was open.

A summary of key findings ([Attachment 3](#)) was made available in print form to congregants, including a QR code that could be used to view all results online. The full survey results ([Attachment 4](#)) also were posted on the church's website. The MST used the findings to answer many of the questions on the Congregational Record, and they became a frequent and useful reference as we navigated next steps in interviewing and discernment.

### **Listening Sessions (September-October, 2021)**

Planning for Listening Sessions (what the UUA refers to as "cottage meetings") began in early summer. Because these involved people coming together to dialogue about the church's future, and given ongoing restrictions and concerns for health and safety, we offered a variety of in-person and online options. In total, 239 people participated.

We conducted 21 Listening Sessions, 12 in person and nine via Zoom. Eleven Listening Sessions were open to all, and 10 others were offered to focus groups within the church. These included groups whose work is most directly related to ministry and the ministerial role: Worship

Associates, Teaching Associates, Congregational Care, Religious Education, Community Outreach, and former Board Chairs. Others were affinity groups of LGBTQ and BIPOC members. Following these sessions, we conducted Listening Sessions with the youth of the church, and with five staff groups: ET, program staff, facilities, religious education, and administration/development. A planned session with music staff was canceled for health reasons. Sessions followed the same general format, but questions for focus groups were tailored to their areas of interest and expertise.

Conducting the Listening Sessions took a lot of person power over just a few weeks. One or two MST members facilitated each session (depending on its size). We recruited 12 “co-pilots” from the congregation, people skilled in facilitation whose primary role was to take notes and assist with other matters as needed. We created a facilitator and co-pilot training document and hosted a Zoom session for co-pilots so they could participate as congregants while also helping to field test our process. The volume and complexity of these sessions required a great deal of logistical and technical support from staff members, and they were exceptional.

As we planned for these gatherings, we were mindful of the tender and tentative time we were going through in the wake of our prolonged pandemic isolation. To get our finger on this pulse, we posed this in-gathering question in our Listening Sessions: “The building was closed, but church was open. What mattered to you most during this time of separation?” Their answers were profound and illuminating, and we believed they deserved special attention for this ministerial search. We prepared a summary ([Attachment 5](#)) and included it in the Documents Packet so that it would be available to searching ministers. We also prepared a summary of findings from the staff Listening Sessions ([Attachment 6](#)). Our column for the February *CommUnity* newsletter ([Attachment 7](#)) highlighted what we learned about the staff’s pandemic experiences, and offered special thanks for their hard work and devotion.

The Listening Sessions generated a large amount of data. MST facilitators entered data into a detailed spreadsheet in Google Docs ([Attachment 8](#)). This became the basis of a fall retreat (Friday night and Saturday) to review and synthesize the information. We engaged facilitator Carole Burton of Radiance Resources to lead us in this process.

Together with the survey results, themes from the Listening Sessions helped us formulate the four priorities that guided us in the search:

- spiritual leadership
- antiracism/social justice work
- pastoral care
- organizational agility/strategic vision

## CONGREGATIONAL RECORD AND DOCUMENTS PACKET (October-December 2021)

The Congregational Record is the extensive document an MST produces to provide the UUA and searching ministers with information about the searching church. Prescribed sections include history and operations; mission, Ends, and values; congregational life; governing structure and leadership; finances, budgeting and stewardship; facilities and staffing; skills and traits sought in the new minister; and duties, responsibilities, and expectations the congregation has for a minister. These and many other sections constituted the job description for the senior settled minister; no separate job description was required or expected by the UUA.

The 52 questions presented a daunting scope of information to be assembled and written. They could not be answered in full without the information gained through the Listening Sessions and congregational survey, which meant the schedule for completing them was very tight. MST members divided the questions among ourselves, sought background information as needed, and wrote essay responses. We posted and responded to each other's drafts via Google Docs, and spent many hours of meeting time coming to agreement on the elements that involved value judgments and interpretation.

The entire draft document was reviewed by Jen Crow, Rev. David Pyle, and Unity's Interim Minister Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt in late November. Comments from our reviewers challenged us to do a better job of telling the story of Unity Church and necessitated expanded content. After an intensive weekend of writing and editing, the final document was submitted to the UUA on December 1. It was posted on the UUA website, where it was accessible only to UUA ministers in search. Some of the content was fuel for our *CommUnity* newsletter columns in the ensuing months. We considered when and how to make the entire 69-page document – cumbersome and detailed – available to the congregation. Ultimately, it was posted on the church website just prior to Candidating Week in May. The Congregational Record is on file with the UUA Transitions Office and at Unity.

The Documents Packet is a set of supplementary documents to be submitted to the UUA by the end of November. Required documents included the proposed contract (crafted by the Negotiations Team), church policies and by-laws, staff job descriptions, annual reports, and sample orders of service, newsletters, email blasts, and more. Barbara Hubbard and Martha Tilton provided significant assistance in assembling many of the requested documents. We also included about a dozen optional documents, for a total of 119 documents in the packet. This packet also is on file with the UUA's Transitions Office and at Unity.

Assembling the Documents Packet happened simultaneously with writing the Congregational Record and conducting and analyzing data from the congregational survey and the Listening Sessions. It was a very busy fall.

## **APPLICATIONS AND DECISION MAKING (Jan–Mar 21)**

### **Team roles**

At this point in the search we shifted from a position of frequent and public communications with the congregation to one that was more confidential in nature. We suspended our Parish Hall tabling between Sunday services, but continued to write monthly columns for *CommUnity*. Messaging about our need to maintain discretion had begun weeks earlier, including at November's annual meeting, a separate email to the congregation, and other communications. Because our work now involved screening applicants, interviewing, and making selections, the specifics about who was applying remained, and will remain, confidential. Throughout the search, we continued to weigh the competing values of transparency and confidentiality.

At this juncture we formed three sub-teams: applicant/pre-candidate screening and interview design; interview facilitation and discernment/decision making; and pre-candidating weekend logistics. Each sub-team worked on their tasks in between our weekly meetings, then brought decision items to the full team for discussion.

### **Substantive Areas of Discussion**

As we dove more deeply into this phase of work, we became aware of gaps in our information and sought counsel from others. Kathy Hurt attended one of our meetings to discuss the implications of the ET structure and Policy Governance on the search process, plans for contracting with an assistant minister, and considerations for the applicant screening process. Laura Park, Managing Director of Unity Consulting, provided an in-service on Policy Governance, how it works at Unity and elsewhere in the UUA, and recent national conversations naming that while policy governance is not inherently a tool of white supremacy, its implementation must be carefully tailored so that it does not perpetuate oppressive culture. Team Dynamics' Alfonso Wenker guided us in a discussion of potential biases and "hidden criteria" to be watchful about when interviewing and checking references.

We also learned more about the Executive Team. It is a distinguishing feature of Unity Church, requiring our called minister to be a collaborative team member as distinct from a sole executive. The listening session we held with Barbara Hubbard and KP Hong was extremely informative about how the ET functions, and what qualities of character and approach are necessary to make it work. Appreciative and mindful of ET members' deep knowledge and the close working relationship they would have with the called minister, we struggled to define their role in our next steps. Ultimately, we invited their participation in a portion of each pre-candidating weekend. They wrote and asked their own questions for approximately an hour of the five-hour interview, and joined us for the lunch that followed. Barbara also hosted a building tour for each pre-candidate. We did not provide the ET with our full interview protocol or the pre-candidates' ministerial records. We did not invite their participation in any post-interview discussion of the pre-candidates, but asked that they provide written responses to reflection questions that we posed. In taking this approach, we were trying to balance our need for their input with the need to have decision making remain in the sole purview of the team.

Also during this period, we realized we wanted to know more about the national UUA picture. We had been told there were three ministers in settled search for every congregation searching (totaling 63 and 21, respectively). But among the things we didn't know were what trends the UUA was seeing in the profiles of searching ministers, issues being debated on the national scene, the reputation of Unity among potential applicants, what professional development resources the UUA could provide to a new minister, or lessons the UUA had learned about differences in the ministerial role when serving small versus large churches. We had limited knowledge of the many affinity groups that might have influenced the careers of our applicants, nor of the denominational leadership roles we might look for on their resumes. One of our members learned from Janne Eller-Isaacs about the UUA's Dreaming Big Program, which identified and equipped ministers for leadership in large churches. A product of that program was a list of Core Competencies for Ministers of Large Congregations. We used this as one tool to assess our pre-candidates, formatting the list of eleven competencies to include a rating scale ([Attachment 9](#)).

We learned later that Rev. David Pyle and Christine Purcell, perhaps among others, might have provided information and helpful counsel on some of the more complex and thorny issues. We did consult with Jen Crow a few times, but because of time pressures and sometimes lack of awareness, the team did not take full advantage of UUA resource people.

During this period the team began to consider several foundational questions ([Attachment 10](#)). We hoped to probe them before reviewing applications, so that our thinking would be based on our own and the congregation's expressed desires, rather than be influenced by the particular ministers applying to Unity. The questions we discussed were:

- What do we mean by good preaching? How do we define it beyond personal preference? What are the elements of spiritual leadership that go beyond good preaching? How ready is the congregation to adapt to changes in worship that may have meaning for a wider spectrum of beliefs/cultures?
- What kind of leadership are we looking for in antiracism and social justice work?
- Which of our four priorities must be in the called minister's portfolio (spiritual leadership, organizational agility/strategic vision, pastoral care, antiracism/social justice work), and which could be fulfilled by an associate minister?

Additional foundational questions we did not find time to discuss were:

- Given that we are a "flagship" church within the UUA, what value do we place on denominational engagement and/or leadership by our settled minister?
- What process will we use to make our decisions?

And finally, in hindsight we realize that the meaning and tradition of the vote to call a settled minister should have been more fully explained and explored with the congregation; not only the sacredness of the call, and how it differs from a hire, but also the role of the MST in

selecting a candidate, and the responsibility of voting congregation members for the ultimate decision.

### **Application review**

On January 2, 2022 we received applications from ten ministers. They had indicated their interest through the UUA's Application Portal, where they had had the chance to learn about us through our Congregational Record. On that same secure website, we now had access to their Ministerial Records.

In a December meeting with Christine Purcell, Transitions Program Manager at the UUA, we were told that spending 15-30 minutes with each Ministerial Record should give us the information we needed to determine whether to invite them for a Zoom interview. Kathy Hurt counseled differently, and we agreed with her approach. Every MST member read materials on every applicant, with one of us agreeing to do research as deeply as possible in order to be the "sponsor" of subsequent discussion on that applicant. We read their Ministerial Records, listened to sermons, looked at their personal and church websites, and checked out their social media presence. We each spent at least two hours researching each applicant, often much more. Since we needed to keep pace with the UUA timeline, this work was accomplished in eight days.

To prepare for our group discernment, we used three tools. First, we developed an Applicant Screening Tool based on our four priority criteria, with sub points corresponding to sections of the Ministerial Record ([Attachment 11](#)). For example, for our criteria of Spiritual Leadership we included places to jot notes on how each applicant had described their ministerial presence, leadership style, theology, personal definition of ministry, and so on – questions they had answered in their Ministerial Record. We ranked each element along a continuum of degree of qualification, from one to seven. And for each section we made notes on what stood out, and what questions we still had. This tool helped us focus on our priorities rather than get lost in the morass of documentation, to come up with a numeric ranking that was suggestive rather than determinative, and to surface questions for the next steps in the process.

Second, we individually summarized our thinking about an applicant by writing answers to four reflection questions ([Attachment 12](#)):

1. Can this person meet our congregation's worship needs now, and guide our spiritual development into the future?
2. Do they have the willingness and skill to operate within our Policy Governance system, and in accordance with our value on shared leadership at the ET and congregational level? Will our staff thrive under this person's leadership?
3. Have they demonstrated through their actions a robust commitment to anti-racism/anti-oppression and social justice work?
4. What is this person's unique "value-add" that can meet us where we are, and inspire us on the path toward fulfilling our highest aspirations?

Finally, we independently ranked the applicants in terms of whom we favored most to least. These three tools provided some structure for our two-part discussion on a Sunday and Monday night. We discussed the applicants one by one, and reached a decision on whom to invite for one-hour Zoom interviews scheduled for the following week. The meeting left us feeling, individually and as a group, uneasy with a bit of rawness and rancor from the discernment process. This underscored the need for the team to attend more to our group process and we added some reflection and deeper spiritual rituals to our meetings. These additions were beneficial to the team's work and progress.

### **Zoom Interviews**

The Zoom interviews consisted of a set of six standard questions with possible follow-ups, along with two questions tailored to each applicant ([Attachment 13](#)). The interviews were about an hour in length, including 15 minutes for the applicant to ask us questions. We held a mock interview with Kathy Hurt to practice our roles and receive her feedback on the questions and the process itself. We had scheduled six interviews, but one applicant canceled so we interviewed five. All MST members were present for all interviews, and we each had responsibility for the same question and its follow-ups in each interview. We created a note-taking form for use during the interviews ([Attachment 14](#)), and ranked the various factors at the interview's conclusion.

Two days following our final Zoom interview, we met to discuss each person and come to a decision on which of them to invite for a pre-candidating weekend. These dates and neutral pulpits had been arranged weeks earlier, along with an alternate plan in case changes in COVID conditions forced us to pivot. We also had made substantial progress on the scheduling of the weekend, interview questions, and off-site arrangements needed to preserve confidentiality. Now we completed the process by matching our pre-candidate choices with the dates and pulpits that had been previously arranged.

We selected three pre-candidates, remarkably different from one another. After contacting all our interviewees with our decision, one of the pre-candidates withdrew without explanation and we were left with two pre-candidates.

We conducted reference checks via phone call, with one MST member serving as lead and a second participating on the call.

### **Pre-candidating Weekends**

The pre-candidating weekends were held in February, two weeks apart. They began on Friday afternoon with a tour of Unity's building, hosted by Barbara Hubbard and scheduled to avoid undue contact with staff or parishioners. The team and pre-candidate then gathered for a mostly social dinner at one of our homes. We had all taken COVID tests in anticipation, and the first pre-candidating weekend was also the first time in nearly eleven months of working together that the team had the chance to see each other's faces maskless and to break bread together.



The Saturday interview (9:00 – 2:00) was held off site. (The interview protocol is [Attachment 15](#).) As stated earlier, the Executive Team joined us for a portion of this time. The interview was followed by two more events that were designed to include the pre-candidate's spouse and child(ren): a driving tour of the cities, and an evening meal at a different MST member's home. We adjourned mid-evening so the pre-candidate could be well rested and prepared for Sunday morning. All team members attended the Sunday worship service(s) at the guest pulpits (Minnetonka and White Bear Lake). The final lunch, held at yet a third team member's home, was a chance to wrap up any final issues or questions. These meals at members' homes were mostly catered, and had been arranged to avoid possible COVID restrictions on restaurant dining, as well as to preserve our pre-candidates' anonymity. While extra work for us, we found these meals to be a personal and meaningful way to extend hospitality.

### **Substantive Areas of Discussion**

It was on the very afternoon that we bid farewell to our second pre-candidate that we learned of Rob Eller-Isaacs' serious illness. We were cleaning up the kitchen and gathering our belongings when we all received a text message from the ET asking that we attend a Zoom call with them and the Trustees later that night to discuss something that might have a bearing on the search. It was, of course, emotionally charged news at an emotionally charged time. The following Wednesday we met with Kathy Hurt in one of our homes to process the news. We discussed the option of suspending the search. How would this new development affect the team's ability to focus on the transition? How would it affect the congregation's readiness to envision the future and welcome a new spiritual leader? We decided that the vital questions we were posing through the search were themselves a part of the Eller-Isaacs' legacy, and in that spirit we would continue to move forward. We immediately put out a special communication to the congregation to that effect.

Of course the most substantive discussion during this time revolved around the two pre-candidates themselves. We began the process of discernment several days after the meeting with Rev. Hurt. When it became clear that our assessments of the candidates varied substantially, we discussed our options. Should we enter into the UUA's "second offer" process, an abbreviated continuation of the search that would allow us to look at additional candidates? Should we again consider a subject that one of us raised weeks earlier, that of researching and soliciting a candidate outside of the normal UUA process? We felt it was too late in the game to accomplish either, and continued with our intense discussions.

We held our final meeting the night before we were to announce our decision to the UUA. One of the questions that still eluded us was how to define consensus. We had been urged to reach a minimum threshold of "everyone can enthusiastically support." By this point, we realized that was not possible. Would it be better to conclude that the search had not resulted in a match?

After extended discussion and two votes, seven of the nine members of the team supported the selected candidate. The two members not in support indicated that, despite their opposition, they would stand aside and provide assistance to the extent they felt able.

Following the selection, we were urged by Kathy Hurt, in consultation with Keith Kron of the Transitions Office, to keep the team's divided vote confidential. The team agreed that, if asked about consensus, we would simply respond that "the team reached the decision" and would encourage church members to learn as much as they could about the candidate and, when she came for the week, to get to know her themselves. All of us held to this pledge for the duration of her candidacy.

We then embarked on an intense period of planning, arranging events, writing communications to the congregation, coordinating logistics with the candidate, and hosting Q&A meetings for the congregation. While each team member contributed to these efforts, the split decision meant that some experienced significant internal conflict, while others engaged excitedly in the buildup. During this interval we met one time each with Kathy Hurt and Jen Crow to address the feelings caused by our division and attempt to re-build team cohesion.

### **CANDIDATING WEEK and CONGREGATIONAL VOTE (May 15-22)**

Early in our planning we established protocols for receiving and responding to communication from congregants, tracking "tough questions" the team received and sharing our responses, and tracking feedback received during candidating week. This preparation assured that the full team and the candidate were aware of any concerns when they arose.

Candidating week began with a Saturday night dinner with MST, Board, ET and spouses. The next morning the candidate preached at both services, met with Tower Club/COA grads, and in the afternoon attended a reception with current and former MST members, listening session co-pilots, and spouses. The week's schedule included meetings the candidate arranged with staff groups, the ET, and community ministers. The MST scheduled and hosted meetings with the congregational care team, members working on antiracism/anti-oppression initiatives, the Beloved Community Staff Team, music program participants, worship associates, and former board chairs. We arranged special meetings with BIPOC, LGBTQ and elders groups. A dinner brought the Board and ET together mid-week. We hosted open invitation Q&A sessions via Zoom and in person on Wellspring Wednesday. On Saturday we hosted a picnic with a special invitation to RE families. The following day, the candidate again preached both services, after which she went to lunch off site with one of the team members.

The Congregational Meeting had 471 people registered, with approximately 170 on Zoom and the others in the sanctuary. Because of the large turn-out and the need to register upon entry, the meeting's start time of 1:00 was delayed about a half an hour. At the start of the meeting, four members of the Team addressed the congregation to advocate for the candidate. Meeting participants could offer comments through the Zoom chat function, or at microphones set up in

the sanctuary. Many did, both in favor of and opposed to the call. As the meeting grew lengthy, and with people still lined up to speak at the microphones, the question was called two times. The second succeeded, and the vote on the motion to call the candidate as our next settled minister was taken at around 4:15. Unity's by-laws required that voters be in the sanctuary or present on Zoom in order to vote. At the time the vote was taken, 440 people remained. Ballots were collected by MST members and counted in the DeCramer Room. A board member assisted with the tabulation. The final tally was 63.4% in favor of the call. Unity's by-laws require 75%; therefore, the call was not successful.

## CONCLUSION

No one on the MST expected this outcome. Team members each have their own interpretation of events and assumptions about why the vote turned out the way it did. Within the congregation, some of the candidate's supporters are heartbroken, some conflicted, some angry. Some others who were satisfied with the outcome are nevertheless dismayed by the difficult meeting. Irrespective of their votes, many congregants have expressed confusion and concern, both about the process and what its aftermath may portend. The trauma, especially for the candidate, but also for the church and even the UUA, is real.

In the immediate aftermath, Unity has begun to offer facilitated conversations in the form of listening circles. These are an opportunity to begin reflecting on the congregational meeting and vote, the divisions that have become apparent, and what lies ahead for our church. At this writing, the work of those circles is ongoing.

On June 21, 2022 the Board announced it had hired Unity's next interim minister, Rev. Kathleen Rolenz. Her experience includes ministering to congregations and staff through what can be identified as congregational trauma. Rev. Karen Gustafson will also join Unity as interim minister of pastoral care. Both will begin in mid-August. With their guidance, we hope to navigate the aftermath of a divided vote and the challenges ahead.

### Ministerial Search Team Attachments

Printed copies are available.

- Attachment 16: [Congregational Record](#)
- Attachment 17: [Former Interim Minister Rev. Kathy Hurt's Outline](#)
- Attachment 18: [Summary Reflections of Board and ET Meeting with Rev. David Pyle](#)
- Attachment 19: [Themes from Circle Conversations provided by Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation](#)

## Congregational Survey Results

### Congregational Survey Results Attachments

Printed copies are available.

- Attachment 20: [Congregational Survey Results](#)
- [Church Lady Chat](#): A brief overview of key points in the results (this is a video, no printed copy available)

## **Administration**

The 2021-2022 church year held many unique challenges for our administrative staff as we supported the re-opening of the building, welcoming congregants, tenants and community groups after being closed for over a year. Our church programming shifted from exclusively online offerings to a combination of in-person and online, and we added multi-platform offerings.

The administrative staff, particularly our Director of Communications, supported the MST's work through its different phases. Martha Tilton built and launched a new website in the late summer / fall of 2021, improving the look and structure, navigation and content of our website. The congregational survey and opportunities for listening groups were created and managed. Data for our congregational record was gathered and made available to the MST. Once the MST had conducted their search and was ready to present a candidate in the spring of 2022, communications went into full gear again, disseminating information about the candidate and opportunities to engage during candidating week in May of 2022.

Live streaming our Sunday services and memorials was a critical addition during the pandemic. Martha Tilton became the executive producer of the live stream, with technical sound assistance from Vladimir Garrido and Nico Munoz. Once we re-opened to in-person worship, we continued to live stream the 9:00 a.m. services, most memorials, summer services and other events. Thank you, too to Merrill Aldrich and Heidi Birkholz for their support.

The administrative staff in the area of finance and resource development are Barbara Hubbard, Executive Director and Song Thao, Financial Assistant. In the fall of 2021, we began outsourcing our level II accounting work in an effort to maintain separation of duties and to make more manageable the financial responsibilities of the Executive Director. The Board engaged with Schechter, Dokken, Kanter CPA to conduct a review of our 12/31/2021 financial position, which happened in the spring of 2022. (See financial report section.)

We held an unusually high number of memorial services in the 2021-2022 church year. Our memorial service reception team, led by Barbara Ford, was slow to return because our mask mandate disallowed food and beverages. The mask mandate was lifted in April of 2022, and we were grateful to have the reception team back!

Our paid staff is grateful for the generous support of our dedicated and hard-working front desk volunteers, led by Peter Heege. We missed their help and friendly interactions during the time that we were closed, and were happy to welcome them back to the front desk in the summer of 2021. Front desk volunteers in 2021-2022 were Peter Heege, Marty Rossmann, Sharon Merritt, Betsy Moore, Daphne Thompson, Ariel Dickerman, Leah Doherty, Rob Fulton, Mary Ashmore, Colleen Zuro-White, Bob Albrecht and Jo Lucas.

## **Archives Team**

Louise Merriam, Susan Foote, Carol Miller, Patt Kelly, Pauline Eichten

Since 2013, the Archives Team has been working through many years' worth of materials -- documents, photographs, various media -- that record some of the history of Unity's church life. Without adequate space on site to store most of this material, the team has been sorting and inventorying the material in order to transfer it to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). This material will be added to the existing Unity Church collection at MHS, making it available to any interested party.

This past year, after our pandemic hiatus, the team continued processing of material that was sent to the Minnesota Historical Society in two shipments. The first shipment of fourteen boxes contained primarily videotapes and other media related to the Wider Ministry program, the Culver Lecture series, and UNIVISION/ST. PAUL. Many of the videotapes are of a size used in broadcasting and not playable on personal video players.

Wider Ministry began in 1974 with a grant from the Furness Fund of the St. Paul Foundation. Its purpose was to offer programs about "the concerns of everyday life that have within them a deeper religious dimension." It brought in a variety of speakers from May Sarton to Claudia Schmidt. Many of the audience members were not members of Unity.

UNIVISION, an outgrowth of the success of the Wider Ministry program, began in early 1983 to extend Unity's reach into the larger community. Church services, Wider Ministry speakers, and church activities were videotaped for broadcast on cable TV.

The Culver Memorial Lecture series began around 1974 with an endowment from Bertha Culver. The gift designated the funds to bring a visiting theologian to Unity for an annual lecture.

The second shipment of seven records boxes included documents related to the end of Roy Phillip's tenure and the selection of Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs as co-ministers. The transferred materials also included transcriptions and audio tapes of sermons by Arthur Foote and Roy Phillips, items related to publicizing the annual canvass (1986-1994), extensive materials relating to the Partnership Church program from its beginnings, and Unity annual reports and related financial statements (1987-2001).

As a team, we are still hoping for a dedicated, secure, climate-controlled space for archives work. It would provide a clean workspace where the team could sort and document materials to be added to the Historical Society's collection of Unity Church records and also allow for some items and artifacts to remain on site. A space similar to the RE storage space would be a very workable archives space.

## **Art Team**

Submitted by Paul Rogne, Chairperson

2021-22 began under COVID restrictions that shut down in-person attendance at Unity and finished with a successful season for the Art Team's activities. When six months of scheduled art exhibits in the Parish Hall were cancelled (from April 2020 – September 2020) we were not sure what was to come for Unity Church, the Art Team and the artists left out.

During the time of the Pandemic, a highly successful Art in Bloom – Zoom exhibit was accomplished. Several Unity members created floral designs to match selected featured pieces of art from the Unity permanent collection. These were photographed and shown via Zoom to the congregation -- it was lovely! Some time was also spent during the pandemic rearranging several pieces of art on display throughout the church rooms, halls, and offices. This is an ongoing process that will continue through coming years.

When Unity finally reopened its doors, the Art Team scrambled to have exhibits ready for the congregation to see in the Parish Hall. The first of these was in September 2021 when several beautiful works of art from Unity's permanent art collection were hung in the Parish Hall. That was followed by a spectacular exhibit of works by more than fifty members of the congregation. This Congregational Art Show was so well received that the Art Team hopes to repeat this sometime in the future.

All the artists whose exhibits had been cancelled during COVID, were happy to reschedule for the opportunity to showcase their work. The Art Team also continued its annual recruitment of artists to exhibit. The results of that effort have been on display since November 2021. Each month since has featured a wonderful array of art in the Parish Hall. Included in that was an exhibit and fundraiser of the textile works by the Evergreen Quilters – Unity's own group who raise money for several local charities. It was gratifying to have them back on track with another show.

Now the monthly exhibits are scheduled through October 2023. These include several unique genres that have not been shown at Unity before. Church members will find the variety and exceptional quality of work by the upcoming artists stimulating to view.

In 2019, the Art Team commissioned a local artist, Mica Anders, to create a mural for the north wall of the Foote Room. Like most everything else, this project had to be put on hold during the pandemic. But now, nearly three years later, this project is underway with an intended completion in November 2022. The objective of this large project is to reflect some of the important values and goals of Unity Church, in particular to create a welcoming multicultural community. Mica will create the design and lead the project, with Unity youth and adults volunteering to help paint the mural.

Over the course of the past two years, membership on the Art Team has decreased. Recent efforts have added new members bringing with them their added energy and ideas. The Art

Team is always open to anyone with an interest in art and a willingness to help the team with its activities.

The leadership of the Art Team has recently evolved into a three-person team rather than a single chairperson model. These three leaders are Colleen Zuro-White, Pam Satre and Paul Rogne (past chairperson). Each has separate roles to manage, in addition to working together as a leadership team to coordinate all aspects of the Art Team's activities.



## Beloved Community Staff Team 2021-22

Submitted by K.P. Hong

When Watson and Crick published their findings in a one-page paper in the British scientific weekly *Nature* in 1953 – complete with a schematic drawing of the twisted-ladder structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by Crick’s wife, Odile – the discovery of the double helix marked a milestone in the history of science and gave rise to modern molecular biology. The double helix structure was sufficiently complex and elegantly simple enough to be the master genetic molecule of life. The model offered a coherent picture of genetic transfer, clarifying how genetic information was stored, copied with very few errors, and transmitted from generation to generation, informing our cells in the construction of bodies and shaping human development from a single-celled zygote to a fully formed adult.

That same year, the case *Brown v. Board of Education* questioned how our society replicates itself with a hierarchy of race remaining almost exactly the same from generation to generation. From the wealth gap to employment to healthcare to housing to education to equal treatment in the criminal justice system and more, how is it that these strands are shaped by a master racialized helix that encodes and perpetuates white supremacy, from slavery to Jim Crow to “separate but equal”? What mechanisms will decode the racist sociogenetic structures by which white dominant culture perpetuates itself? What practices can recode our sociocultural relations, structures, and knowledges with bonds that can constitute the beloved community?

In September of 2021, over 55 participants gathered for a program *SoulWork at the Intersection of Racial Justice and Faith Formation* with Alfonso Wenker (Team Dynamics) to take up an alternative heuristic: a double helix model that entwines *faith formation* and *antiracist multiculturalism*, parallel helices bearing on each other to encode the foundational character of our ministry. Embedding and expanding that work became an overarching priority across ministry teams and programs, with Laura Park and Angela Wilcox designing curriculum and resources to support ministry teams and individuals practice a greater accountability “among” ourselves (in the threefold “within-among-beyond” commitments of congregational life).

The double helix model expanded upon a growing repertoire of antiracist multicultural tools and practices that attend to the diverse and complex dimensions of antiracist work, including the *Intercultural Development Inventory and Plan* (IDI/IDP), *White Supremacy Culture Characteristics and Antidotes* (Tema Okun), *House of Intersectionality*, *Intercultural Conflict Styles*, and more from our collaboration with Team Dynamics. And increasingly, along multiple fronts of our antiracist multicultural work, the importance of complicating the narrative and reviving complexity amid false simplicities became axiomatically clear, with examples including:

- The Communications Team of the BCST exploring criteria for finding topics for blogs and newsletters, developing a set of writer’s guidelines and carefully calibrated antiracist rubrics for editorial review of submitted writings.
- The first Gender + Faith retreat sharing gender journeys and exploring what speaks at the intersection of gender and faith beyond the thin language of binaries.

- The Artist in Residence Team shifting toward an “open call” approach to the program, widening our exposure to the broader metropolitan community with a request for proposals from artists interested in collaborating with Unity Church. Three artists were selected for the coming year, not to deliver one-off art performances but to serve as drivers and collaborators with ministry areas in various aspects of congregational life toward culture change: Lester Mayers, poet; Paul Kruse, podcaster; and Geno Okko, visual artist.
- Stepping into a more expansive and critical multiculturalism attentive to the *differential racialization* of Blacks, Asians, Latinxs, Native Americans, and others. “Is Yellow Black or white?” (Gary Okihiro). How do we practice the tensive position of being anchored in the paradigmatic Black-white binary that does significant interpretive work for understanding white supremacy while at the same time not obscuring others?

Significantly, the deepening *complexity* amid compounded *change* during a ministerial search process revealed nascent *conflict* in our politics of identity: of how analytical tools and perspectives designed to help us grapple with white dominant culture can also be weaponized as instruments of shame, blame, and accusation that perpetuate disconnection; and so our need to practice conflict well. What is/not tokenization? Is affirmative action about preferences? How are considerations of race and gender weighed among intersectional identities, perspectives, and expertise in assessing ministerial or other applicants? And as conflict spirals toward false simplicities and polarization, how do we revive a truer complexity? How do make complexity more interesting, more contagious?

Complexity shaped ongoing conversations around values and money, with reparations gaining momentum in public discourse. H.R. 40 waits to be brought to a full vote in the House, the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission plans to launch a reparations pilot program, and our own congregational accountability to repair the widening wealth gap between Black and white Americans considered a range of possibilities in a portfolio of reparations. Furthermore, issuing from our land acknowledgement and honest storytelling about injustices committed against the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations, the overlapping yet distinct form of reparations for stolen land, sovereignty, and other Indigenous claims continued to shape our accountability to healing the history of settler-colonialism’s removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples.

As we discern next steps in enlarging our prophetic imagination in the work of antiracist multiculturalism, more and more of us are taking further steps into antiracist practices and expanding intercultural capacities. We are becoming more fluent in how liberal theology and spiritual practice frame our antiracist and multicultural ends “within-among-beyond,” as the double helix model generates new perspective and new conversations for reimagining the work of building the beloved community.

**Members of the Beloved Community Staff Team:** Drew Danielson, Pauline Eichten, Karen Hering, K.P. Hong, Barbara Hubbard, Kathy Hurt, Shay MacKay, Laura Park, Erika Sanders, Angela Wilcox.



## Congregational and Community Engagement

### Membership

In February 2022, Unity Church certified 851 voting members with the Unitarian Universalist Association. From July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022, Unity welcomed 48 new members and their families. Finding Yourself at Unity continued as a year-round, drop-in weekly Sunday class, led by congregant facilitators with staff information presenters.

These are the people who joined Unity Church July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

1. Will Aldrich
2. Louis Asher
3. Mary Ashmore
4. Susan Austin
5. Milo Bergen
6. Emmett Bergen
7. Jenni Bubke
8. Zach Burr
9. Theo Burr
10. Justin Ciletti
11. Jane Crosby-Schmidt
12. Atticus Danielson
13. Harper Danielson
14. Gabi Deifelt Streese
15. Patsy Egan
16. Orla Gotthelf
17. Cyndi Gritzmacher
18. Bill Gritzmacher
19. Lauren Gunderson
20. Grant Hammond
21. Sylvia Hegeman
22. Nancy Jambor
23. Kate Jennings
24. Tad Jennings
25. Nancy Kerestes
26. Paul Kerestes
27. Diane McDanel
28. Terry McDanel
29. Pamela McInnes
30. Jeff Miersch
31. Jane Newman
32. Marjorie Otto
33. Linda Pozen
34. Grace Robertson
35. Laura Schlatter
36. Ron Schlatter
37. finn schneider
38. John Simmelink
39. Kathy Simmelink
40. Sarah Stevenson
41. Justin Taylor
42. Michael Thell
43. Mary Wawro
44. George Wawro
45. Lisa Wersal
46. Ian Wold
47. Dudley Younkin
48. Sandi Younkin

### Welcome Teams

Unity's Welcome Teams create a vital ministry of hospitality at every worship service held throughout the year. In preparation for the building re-opening in September 2021, we held a Welcome Team training on the new mission to Nurture Mutual Belonging attended by 38 Welcome Team members. This training accompanied a complete overhaul of the Welcome Team Handbook to support this new mission. We followed up with a February 2022 training on improvisation, our Double Helix Metaphor, and other skills that make it easier to welcome across difference.

The new mission of Nurturing Mutual Belonging has infused the work of the Welcome Teams throughout the time of navigating the transition back to being in person. In particular, we've instituted a morning meeting with Welcome Teams to ground in spiritual practice that grounds team members in their own belonging so that they can belong to the congregation as a whole. These weekly meetings also provide an opportunity for ongoing training.

As we opened our doors, we had 45 people serving on a Welcome Team, fewer than we had before the pandemic because some could not return due to Covid concerns. 10 people joined the Welcome Team throughout the year.

### **Adult Religious Education and Programming**

Adult Religious Education opportunities at Unity Church continued to span a wide range, from one-time offerings to 10-month commitments, inviting church members and friends to strengthen their spiritual practices and faith, deepen their relationship with one another, and to share the fruits of both in the larger world. Toward the end of the church year, as the pandemic eased, Unity's adult programming transitioned from primarily online to more in-person and hybrid offerings.

In its fifth year, the Chalice Circles program engaged 73 participants in small groups meeting monthly online to reflect on the month's worship theme and to experience fellowship through the spiritual practice of conversation. Led by a core of trained facilitators and supported by monthly packets focused on the theme, the Chalice Circles served as an important antidote to the pandemic's isolation with their deepening of relationship and reflection. This year saw the launch of a team of gleaners to compile the extensive Practice Packets focused on the monthly themes. Our gratitude to Mike Funck, Shelley Butler, Merrill Aldrich, Lia Rivamonte, Andrea Anastos, and Erika Sanders for the amazing resources they find each month.

Wellspring Wednesday, Unity's multi-generational weekly evening of meals, chapel service and programming, continued pandemic adaptations. Chapel services started in-person in September 2021, but programming remained on-line until weekly dinners returned April 13, 2022. The Wednesday evening online adult programming offered the largest variety and number of the church's adult RE opportunities, each week during the church year and once a month during the summer presenting 1-3 programs attended by groups large and small. Engaging spiritual practices and inviting participants into the personal and shared work required for racial justice and healing, the Wednesday evening programs were attended by over 2000 participants throughout the year. Because the programs were online, they reached our usual local participants and also a growing number of members and friends logging in from across the nation and sometimes internationally.

A two-fold emphasis on spiritual practice and antiracism infused the programs with Unity's commitment to the interrelated nature of spiritual growth and our capacity for the work of anti-racism. Some of the spiritual practices specifically highlighted in programming included: pilgrimage, lectio divina, writing, meditation, Qigong/tai ji, Kung fu, and sustainable living. Some programs focused explicitly on Unitarian Universalist heritage and history. The antiracism

emphasis included programs on community safety and policing, environmental justice, indigenous justice (including a presentation with water protectors and the photographer whose exhibit of their pictures we hosted and a showing of the film *Singing Water* from One Voice choir), the All-Congregation Book Read (featuring Diane Wilson's book, *The Seed Keeper*), a four-session discussion series "The Black Film Canon," and the bi-monthly Anti-racism Literacy Partners program, pairing participants up to discuss books, articles, films, podcasts and other resources and find what actions these resources call them to take.

Several series spanned a longer arc of time including the 10-month UU Wellspring Program engaging participants in spiritual deepening rooted in our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, and the Thresholds Group, for participants living through significant personal change. In addition, the Teaching Associates program entered its third year, with its first cohort of 12 congregants entering its third year and a second cohort beginning its first year of meeting monthly for minister-led education and practice developing the group as "lay theologians-in-residence" equipped to support the collective faith life of the congregation.

Deep appreciation goes out to the many Unity teams, including Community Outreach, Library/Bookstall, Beloved Community Staff Team, Art Team, and other members who help make this rich and diverse learning possible.

### **Food Ministry**

We were able to restart food ministry in April 2022, soon after the mask mandate was lifted. We held 7 Wellspring Wednesdays, including one in June, adding up to about 450 meals. Dedicated volunteers of all ages chopped, cooked, served and cleaned on both Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Thank you to all who participated in restarting Unity's food ministry!

## Community Outreach Ministry

Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams (COMT) invite church members and friends into the rich and challenging work of education, advocacy and service related to particular issues and community needs. Each team partners with one or more organizations addressing the team's focus area and the teams, in turn, engage the congregation in joining action with spiritual reflection to support transformation in the heart and in the world. This year's teams and the work they do continued to be impacted by the pandemic, while also being creative in how to keep going despite the uncertainty and changes both in the world around us and in the staff at Unity.

Many of the teams completed the renewal process that they started in the winter of 2021 with Rev. Karen Hering, and six of the teams successfully applied for renewal and were granted such by the Executive Team. The rest of the teams continue to work towards renewal. In addition, through the work of the renewal process, most of the teams began and/or continued IDI work, moving deeper into questions of equity, diversity, and cultural awareness.

- **Affordable Housing Ministry Team**

*Community Partners: Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, Project Home, and Faith Builders Habitat for Humanity Collaboration.*

- **Evergreen Projects Ministry**

*Community Partners: The Family Place, Hallie Q. Brown Food shelf, Jeremiah Transitional Housing Program, Obama School*

- **Gun Sense Ministry Team**

*Community Partner: Protect Minnesota*

- **Mano a Mano Ministry Team ("Hand to Hand" in Spanish)**

*Community Partner: Mano a Mano International Partners*

- **Obama School Ministry Team**

*Community Partner: Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary School*

- **Partner Church Ministry Team**

- **Racial and Restorative Justice Ministry Team**

*Community Partners: Amicus (Second Chance Coalition), Rondo Circle of Peace, and Minnesota Second Chance Coalition*

- **Act for the Earth Ministry Team**

*Community Partners: Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light*

- **Indigenous Justice Ministry Team**

## Denominational Affairs

Unity Church continued to deepen its covenantal relationship with the larger Unitarian Universalist Association in a year of interim ministry and ministerial search. Unity once again increased its financial support on the path to becoming an Honor Congregation.

The staff and members of Unity Church volunteer for the larger movement and association in a variety of ways. Don Brunnquell served on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee through June, 2021. Lia Rivamonte completed her service on the board of MUUSJA (the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance). Unity Church's program of Unity Consulting, while not a volunteer contribution, continued to support UU congregations throughout the country in their governance practice.

In its journey toward new ministerial leadership, Rev. Jen Crow, a UUA Ministerial Settlement Representative, helped guide us through the process. The UUA's Transition Office provided guidance to our Board of Trustees and our Ministerial Search Team as it searched for new senior ministerial leadership. We will continue to deepen and expand our connection with these and other denominational resources as we continue in interim and begin a new search so that we call on them throughout the process and particularly as we encounter challenges.

In the spring of 2022, the UUA launched a salary survey of all UU churches to begin the process of re-crafting their salary recommendations. The original UUA Salary Recommendations were introduced in 1995. They have served many congregations well for over a quarter-century, although Unity Church has not been using them as a standard for multiple reasons. One reason is that the UUA's recommendations did not address the variety and breadth of Unity's staff positions. A second is that the UUA's recommendations were aspirational and unreachable for our level of resources. We have instead used the National Association of Church Business Administrator's (NACBA) survey, which gathers salary data from churches all over the country.

With the retirement of the Eller-Isaacs' and the contracting of interim and called ministers, Unity found itself using a double standard – UUA guidelines for the interim ministers and NACBA for all other staff, a position that forced us to re-evaluate how we set salaries. As such, the advent of the UUA's new salary survey is well timed for us. The UUA is making some changes to improve the recommendations. They are putting a greater emphasis on equity and transparency in decision-making and implementation related to pay. They are reworking the church size categories and creating job levels, rather than making recommendations on individual positions.

The new recommendations will be released by the end of 2022. We are committed to establishing a multi-year plan to move all staff to these recommended levels, establishing a single standard again.

## Facilities

We offer thanks to our facilities team members in the 2021-2022 church year: Teresa Connor, Heidi Birkholz, Olentda Bryant, and Delaney Daly. The level of care and hospitality displayed by our facilities staff has garnered many compliments and expressions of gratitude by congregants, tenants and visitors.

In the 15 months that the building was closed because of the Covid pandemic, the staff worked through a punch list of projects that addressed perennial issues, deep cleaning and deferred maintenance. In June of 2021, we re-opened our doors to individuals, for small group gatherings and memorial services.

In September of 2021, we re-opened for in-person worship with our Merging of Waters service. Throughout the time that we were closed, we were saying that “the church is not the building,” but time and time again after we re-opened, congregants would feel moved upon entering the sanctuary, that sacred space that held so much over the years, the rituals, prayers, songs, sermons, tears of grief and gratitude...

Our Covid policies included a mask mandate, so food ministry was not made available again until April of 2022. Building tenants and community groups began to come back slowly and cautiously at first. We purchased air purifiers and optimized our HVAC filtration system. We had considered adding bi-polar ionization, but the research about its efficacy didn't support spending the money.

Many groups who came back to the building wanted and needed multiplatform options to accommodate those who weren't yet able to return. We began the task of upgrading our technology. We installed dedicated computers and cameras in the Robbins Parlor and Gannett Room to accommodate Zoom meetings, and outfitted two mobile carts with multiplatform equipment. We creatively cobbled together tech equipment in the Parish Hall to accommodate larger groups in a multiplatform setting. As the needs and expectations grow around multiplatform options, so does the need for more training and hours for our facilities staff.

Our facilities staff played an important role in supporting the MST and the search process. They managed room reservations for listening circles, many gatherings and meetings, and the multiple events during candidating week in May, 2022.

### **Facilities maintenance and upgrades in 2021-2022**

We put capital pledge dollars to work on the following acquisitions and repairs.

- We replaced the original roof ridge at the peak of the sanctuary, which was the cause of some blooming mold on the sanctuary ceiling. A second vendor was engaged to very carefully assemble scaffolding amongst the pews to reach the forty foot heights and remove this mold.
- We upgraded the lighting in the chancel area of the church.



- We removed and replaced the concrete in the “chancel apron” that had been degrading for many years.
- We replaced the fifteen year old carpet in the Sanctuary with funds from the Dickerman Building Endowment reserve.
- We purchased a new coffee brewing machine and six high top tables.
- In the fall of 2021 when we were still under a mask mandate, we rented a large outdoor tent at the request of the Spears family for Marv Spear’s memorial service reception. The tent was such a huge benefit for outdoor gatherings that we considered purchasing a tent. The Spears family gave us a generous donation, and in the spring of 2022 we gathered a crew to pitch “Marv’s Big Tent” on the green space at Unity. Thank you to Sara Ford, Layo Hernandez, Becky Rose, Mike Schwab, Alan Birkholz and Dale Howey, who assisted Heidi Birkholz!

### **Gardening**

A special thank you to our Unity Garden Team, led by Sharon Merritt. These dedicated volunteers gathered most Thursdays from spring to fall to plant, tend and care for the incredibly beautiful gardens and grounds around the church. Such a gift to our church community and to our neighborhood!

### **Building Tenants and community groups**

One Voice Mixed Chorus maintained their offices during the building closure, with an occasional visit in-person. They resumed rehearsals in January, 2022. Other tenants who returned were Medley Village Preschool, the New Century Club, the Minnesota Hungarians and some Twelve Step groups. We’ve had growing requests from other community groups, some of which have now settled into Unity Church, too. We continue to provide space for Red Cross blood drives and as a polling site.

### **Emergency Preparedness Team**

The EPT renewed its efforts by updating our Emergency Action Plan with edits and additions, including a pandemic response.

## Literary Ministries

The Library-Bookstall Team (LBT) was happy to serve the church in person again in the fall of 2021, led by Shelley Butler, Barb Foss, and our new Bookstall co-team leader, Vicki Kappus, who helped bring the inventory and sales records online. Unity Church thanks outgoing Janice Gestner for her many years of excellent service to the Unity Bookstall.

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Cafe Unity: Poetry and Music Salon returned in hybrid form in spring, with both in-person and Zoom options to attend. With the help of the Book Read Committee, the LBT sponsored the 2022 Unity Church Congregation Book Read and produced the discussion guide, which featured *The Seedkeeper* by Diane Wilson. In addition, the team was honored to sponsor the well-attended book launch of Karen Hering's new book, *Trusting Change: Finding Our Way Through Personal and Global Transformation*, as well as a reading by Jen Crow of her new book *Take What You Need: Life Lessons after Losing Everything*; both of which were held in person with the option to attend on Zoom.

Working remotely, the Cairns staff produced *Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts*, Vol. 13, 2021, published by Unity's publishing house, Reredos Press.

Work continued the Unity Justice Database, which began in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd as a joint Next Right Action project of the Racial and Restorative Justice Team and the Library-Bookstall Team.

Proceeds from the Bookstall fund book purchases for the Anderson Library, LBT book events, the Unity Congregation Book Read, Cafe Unity, the Antiracism Literacy Partners program, Chalice Circles, and supports Unity ministries and authors upon request.

In addition, literary minister Karen Hering's monthly Open Page writing sessions, now offered online, expanded their participation to a larger and national and sometimes international audience.

## Music Ministry

Submitted by Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

The period of June 2021-22 was one of reawakening and rebuilding for the Music Ministries at Unity Church. Music plays a central part in the life of this church, and the return to in-person music-making was highly anticipated by many in our congregation. Unlike the previous year, most of our musical offerings this year were carried out in person. However, the online activities, such as Zoom rehearsals for Unity Choir and the bi-weekly Zoom gatherings to sing and study hymns have remained for those that are still not able to attend in person.

The beginning of the 2021-22 church year involved figuring out a balance between masked singing, vaccine requirements, and rehearsal lengths, as well as being able to maintain flexibility when faced with constantly changing guidelines. The added difficulty of this occurring during an interim time required the entire music staff and community at Unity to stay flexible and constantly change gears.

Some musical highlights of the past year include the following:

- Unity Church served as the recording venue for Border CrosSing's debut album, "Un milagro de fe – A Miracle of Faith" during August of 2021, now on the ballot for the 2023 GRAMMY awards.
- The Unity Singers ensemble grew in size, recruiting new members in several of the sections. This ensemble will continue to represent UU music nationally with a professional level of performance and preparation. Unity Singers was selected by Chorus America to premiere a work commissioned from composer Carol Barnett, in honor of Brian Newhouse as he steps down from his work for this organization.
- The Twin Cities Threshold Choir has now launched officially, housed at Unity Church. This ensemble sings at bedsides for people on the various thresholds of life and death.
- We were able to return to in-person versions of beloved Unity Church musical traditions such as the Christmas Carol Shout, the Christmas Candlelight Choir, the Tolling of Bells Service, the Children's Musical, and Foote Music Sunday.
- Unity maintains its community partnerships with OneVoice Choir, Mila Vocal Ensemble, Border CrosSing, and the Saint Paul Conservatory. In 2022 we have also begun a new partnership with Walker West Academy of Music.
- Works co-commissioned by Unity Church from composers Linda Kachelmeier and Nico Gutierrez were premiered in February of 2022 at Unity Church, and will be performed by the choirs at Unity at next year's Foote Music Sunday.

- This year's Foote Music Sunday included an orchestra and performances of the Durufle and Faure Requiems, in a reflection on change and mortality.
- The Youth Choir, led by Laura Potratz, had its first performances at worship services and is now part of Unity's regular schedule, providing an avenue for youth to participate in music after Children's Choir and during the off-season of the Youth Musical.
- "We Give Thanks" by Elizabeth Alexander, commissioned and premiered at Unity Church, is quickly becoming a standard of Unitarian Universalist music across congregations, receiving multiple performances around the country. It was sung as part of the year's General Assembly.
- The Artist in Residency program received more than thirty applications in its first open call for submissions, and three new artists were selected for the 2022-23 church year.
- Musical collaborations with beloved Unity Church musical partners (such as Peter Mayer, Laura Sewell, and Jeffrey Van) as well as with musical guests new to our community such as Clara Osowski and Jared Miller.
- The band Barrel Flash, led by Unity Singers member Julia Brown, has become an increasingly frequent presence at worship services, integrating a folk and pop element into Unity's musical culture.
- A weekly free drop-in violin class has been added to Wellspring Wednesdays, attracting new folks from around the community who want to take advantage of this opportunity.

I am grateful to be part of a community that so values music. As we transition into a new era of ministry at this church, I am confident that the musical community in this place will provide a solid spiritual foundation of joy and creativity for these times of transition. My third year at Unity Church was one of renewal and reawakening, and I continue to trust and value this community that constantly lifts me and my family up.

## **Ministry with Children and Families 2021-22**

Submitted by K.P. Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

As families returned for in-person church, an overriding focus for the 2021-22 year sought to reorient and reground children in the rituals and practices at the heart of Religious Education. From services in Ames Chapel and remembering rituals of sharing joys and sorrows, to chalice lightings and singing songs together that children knew by heart, the patterns of church, paused and suspended over the course of online programming, gradually returned with both great enthusiasm and ongoing challenge. Moving in parallel with the Saint Paul Public Schools as our source of authority for Covid protocols, religious education monitored and tracked Covid exposures, followed contact tracing and quarantine protocols, maintained ventilated classrooms, masking, and vaccination for all volunteer teachers working with children and youth. Teachers, strained and challenged on many fronts, faithfully served as spiritual directors of children, filling in when fellow teachers were quarantined, and generously giving of themselves to support our in-person ministry with children and youth. As with public schools, we all learned that online learning diminished in value with our younger children, and as useful as technologically mediated presence was during the previous year, our older youth were thrilled for the chance to make their pilgrimage to Boston together.

So grounding ourselves in relationships and rebuilding community remained a constant throughout the year, with structural and logistical changes made to the Sunday RE program, creatively making the most of the time between and after the 9am and 11am service times. Children and youth were encouraged to participate in outdoor activities/indoor games following classes, with new volunteer roles created to chaperone these activities, or to participate in the Children's Choir or the newly formed Youth Choir. These activities importantly allowed time for teachers to meet after classes for debrief and reflection on "teaching as spiritual practice."

To that end, members of the Religious Education Ministry Team (REMT) focused attention to deepening our commitment to and understanding of "teaching as spiritual practice." Teacher trainings offered each semester tapped into wisdom on adult-child communication from the book *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen... And Listen So Kids Will Talk* (Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish). Eileen Galvin, Nate Schultz, Joel Krogstad, and Ray Hommeyer offered teachers and parents greater perspective on the classroom experience and ways to deepen connection, relationship, and presence in our shared ministry with children. How can we create a learning environment where every child is seen and feels belonging? How does teaching in religious education impact the teacher's own faith formation?

Gratitude abounds for our families, teachers, and children who gathered for spiritual practice week after week, throughout the complexities of the year. This considerable undertaking was only made possible through practiced collaboration between RE staff and dedicated volunteers who make real our covenant with children, and who remain clear about what matters most in the faith formation of our children in a rapidly changing world.

## **Ministerial Intern**

Unity Church values its role as a teaching congregation to future UU ministers. During the Eller-Isaacs' tenure, Unity had one, and sometimes two, ministerial interns each year. Each intern was supervised by Revs. Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, and each has had a Ministerial Intern Support Team (MIST) made up of members of the church.

In the last year of the Eller-Isaac's ministry (2020-2021), and in the first year of interim ministry with the Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt (2021-2022), we chose not to invite ministerial interns. We will resume the ministerial intern program when we have new senior minister capacity.

## Pastoral Care

The Congregational Care Team stepped up generously and beautifully in a year of many-faceted congregational loss to provide and encourage a caring culture in a time of deep grief. This was huge — through Rob Eller-Isaac's, and later Janne Eller-Isaac's news of cancer diagnosis, through the tumult of the candidating process and through more ministerial transition, as well as continued personal losses of congregants and their loved ones. The Congregational Care Team provided the ongoing care of visits, calls, cards, shawls, meals and rides. While the team did this challenging and deep work of care, they also participated in a renewal of their team's structure and processes that included the following highlights:

- The lay Pastoral Care Team was renamed the "Congregational Care Team," led and supported by the Rev. Karen Hering, our Interim Associate of Pastoral Care and the Care Associates Leadership Ministry (CALM)
- We created the CALM team, which includes a new congregational care coordinator (Ann Haley) to support the team's communications and logistics.
- The role and responsibilities of congregational care team were redefined, as was the application process for joining the team.
- Twenty-four members, including new and longtime folks, pledged to serve on the team for a two-year renewable term. This team was commissioned on April 3, 2022.
- The congregation thanked and honored the legacy members of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Development opportunities were provided for team members.
- There were lots of comfort shawls knitted and delivered, and many cards sent.
- The Team continued to provide "helping hands" services, including meals and rides, while still exploring how to redesign how those services are organized and delivered.

## **Sanctuary Congregation**

In December of 2017, the Board of Trustees made a decision to become an official Sanctuary Congregation. We converted space on the lower level of the church to accommodate this commitment, and housed three individual or families between June of 2018 and January of 2021.

In January of 2021, a request came from the St Paul Sanctuary Coalition to house a Ghanaian family facing homelessness and deportation. Our new guests are an extended family from Ghana. Sherifatu and Gawusu are a married couple. They have two sons, an eight year old who is attending school in Shoreview, and a four year old. The family welcomed a new baby girl in June, 2021. In addition, their friend Sani is extended family. Given that the building was closed, we created extra sanctuary space for them on our lower level, and when the church opened for religious education in September of 2021, they moved into our duplex.

Our staff members and our sanctuary team have been supporting the family's journey with help in learning English, navigating the health care system and working with an immigration attorney. We have been providing rides to grocery stores, doctor appointments, and to St Paul league soccer games. Gawusu has learned to drive and both Gawusu and Sani are now working. It is the shared goal that the family will be able to support themselves in an apartment beginning in the summer of 2023.

This commitment is funded by individual contributions, by other sanctuary support congregations, and through occasional Unity Sunday offerings.

A hearty thank you to our sanctuary team members, Scott Charlesworth, Libby Arnosti, Andrea Bond, Pat Haff, Molly Flattum, Jill van Koolwijk and Susie and Rick Macpherson. Teresa Connor and Barbara Hubbard from the staff have been integral to these efforts, as well.



## Unity Consulting

Unity Consulting is a program of Unity Church whose mission is to liberate and empower the leadership of progressive religious congregations and institutions to awaken compassion, transform lives, and bless the world. We help congregations understand their purpose, the difference they make in people's lives, and then we help them organize to deliver on that promise. Our primary tool is Policy Governance® as we've learned to adapt it for congregations.

Five percent of Unity Consulting's fees go to support Unity Church's operating budget. Unity Consulting also provides some pro-bono services to the denomination through governance consulting with denominational and congregational leaders.

Highlights from this past year's work include:

- Provided virtual consulting services, retreats and hourly coaching, to 10 congregations over the course of the year (July 2021-June 2022), fewer than last year. Two congregations were new clients.
- Continued Spirit Map development work. Spirit Map, a proprietary product of Unity Church and Unity Consulting, is a tool that helps individuals, groups and institutions explore their spiritual landscape, focus their spiritual practice, grow their spiritual presence, and deepen their spiritual well-being.
  - 10 individuals completed the Spirit Map inventory July 2021 through June 2020
  - Worked to identify and name spiritual "types," people who had areas within Spirit Map that were more and less true of them, and more and less important. This work continues.
- Continued sales of *The Nested Bowls: The Promise and Practice of Good Governance*, the first in an anticipated series of books on Unity Consulting practices. InSpirit, the UUA Bookstore, carries the book and it is also available on Amazon. Sales have been small but steady.
- \$2,118 went to the Unity Church operating budget from Unity Consulting and Spirit Map fees and book royalties July 2021 through June 2022.

## **Worship Life**

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt

The congregation was invited to return for in-person worship on the September Sunday when we do our annual Merging of the Waters, a factor which made this homecoming Sunday especially poignant: congregants could gather once more, but the return was marked by the beginning of a ministerial transition and an unfamiliar minister was leading the service. Throughout the fall attendance waxed and waned reflecting the ongoing uncertainties around COVID variants and individual comfort levels with gathering in person. Services continued to be livestreamed, allowing congregants a choice of how to participate in worship. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most prefer to gather in person, though some have discovered remote participation to be preferable. Attendance began to increase when first coffee hour, then coffee hour with donuts, resumed.

Because this was a transitional year, most services included reflection on some aspect of being in transition, both as a congregation and as we all, in our lives, go through transitions. Congregants began to notice this particular theme and took it to heart. The nature of the transition required ongoing adaptation as special services were resumed but often in a changed form: instead of the customary 5 services on Christmas Eve, two were offered and there was no presentation of the Christmas pageant.

With the news of the Minister Emeritus Rob Eller-Isaacs' cancer diagnosis, worship services were refocused on offering support and reflection on grief and loss, providing the congregation with ongoing support as it grappled with the prospect of Rob's impending death. Services led by Reverend Karen Hering were particularly important as a means of pastoral care through months of change, loss, uncertainty, and grief.

The team of Worship Associates, headed by Rich Lau and Rebecca Flood, brought consistent personal reflections on the monthly themes and served as a kind of familiar anchor for the congregation in the midst of a ministerial transition.

## **Finance and Resource Development**

This annual report to the congregation includes highlights and accomplishments of the 2021-2022 church year. Reports in the area of finances/resource development cross two fiscal years because the church's fiscal year is a calendar year. We are including a written overview of the December 31, 2021, financials, the statements from the review of the December 31, 2021, financial position as prepared by Schechter, Dokken, Kanter CPAs and an update of 2022 finances.

### **Overview of 12/31/21 Financial Statements**

The Board of Trustees engaged Schechter, Dokken, Kanter CPAs to review the church's financial position as of December 31, 2021, with comparisons to the prior year. The field work was done in March and April of 2022, and the report was presented to our trustees at their May 2022 board meeting. There were no findings and a "clean" management letter.

In addition to the SDK financial statements that are included in this annual report, the SDK report includes important notes about the nature of our business, significant accounting policies, liquidity, pledges, investment income, property and equipment, funds held by others, long term debt, endowment funds and more. Full copies of the December 31, 2021, SDK audit report are available (electronically or in hard copy) upon request.

There were a number of factors that impacted our financial landscape in 2021. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March of 2020, we closed the building, moved worship and programs online. We re-opened the building to in-person small groups in June of 2021, just after saying good-bye to our long-tenured senior co-ministers, Janne and Rob Eller Isaacs. We began a ministerial search and a new church year while we were just beginning to re-emerge from our places of isolation. The mask mandate lasted into the spring of 2022.

We were amazed and grateful that you, our congregation continued to support the church through your pledges (coming just short of our \$1.35M pledge goal), Sunday offerings, unrestricted gifts, and donations to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. We received many expressions of thanks for the church's presence in your lives through a very challenging year.

In 2021, we received a final distribution from the estate Helener Currier in the amount of \$49,832. This gift was allocated to our multicultural Initiative Program.

### **Legacy Giving**

The Heritage Society is made up of members and friends who have remembered Unity Church in their estate plans. These legacy gifts ensure the future of the church. There are over 200 people who have informed us of their intention to support the church into the future through their estate plans.

On May 6, 2022, we gathered members of the Heritage Society for a delicious meal and a program called "Creating Our Legacy: Stories from Unity's First 150 Years," presented by Kirsten

Fischer, researched by Shelley Butler and Krista Finstad Hanson. It was with great pleasure that Kirsten shared some of Unity's history: church members who have gifted us with their time, talents, and generosity, and whose lasting memory we remember in a room with a beautiful window (Charles Wilberforce Ames), a resonant bell (Henny Johnsen), beautiful flower arrangements (Ruth Tanbara), and our ongoing efforts to make the world a more just and loving place (Helener Currier).

### **Pledge Drive**

Our annual canvass' theme in the fall of 2021 was "Trust the River." Lee Carey once again led the effort with grace and competence. Our goal for the 2022 Operating budget was \$1,350,000. Here are a few of the words that were written.

"Last year, Unity Church's appeal for stewardship focused on taking shelter in a brave harbor. During the difficulties of the pandemic and the political and racial unrest, Unity was a place that gave us strength and comfort, as we found mooring in calm and trusted waters.

Today we are keenly aware of what lies outside that protective cove — the river beyond, with all of its change and possibility. As we enter a liminal time in the 150-year history of the church with a search for new ministerial leadership, we find ourselves looking upstream to our origins and downstream toward our future, seeking direction and fortitude.

We know we must venture out from the harbor and into the river and be brave, together.

And to do that, we must Trust the River — the theme for this year's pledge drive. Like the river, we are always in transition, always moving from the past to the present to the future. We must trust that even when we're not sure where we'll end up, the river's currents will take us where we need to be."

### **Unity Tomorrow Capital Campaign / Long Term Debt**

We have been enjoying our newly renovated building since the Unity Tomorrow capital project was completed in 2012. Through the generous contributions of Unity Church members and friends, we were able to integrate and modernize our infrastructure, upgrade the kitchen, add restrooms and create a beautiful and welcoming main entrance.

In November of 2011, the congregation voted to move forward with the Unity Tomorrow capital project with the goal of attaining \$8 million in pledges. At a special meeting of the congregation in April, 2012 a resolution was passed that the "debt in the project be limited to the cost of short-term construction financing and long term financing such that scheduled repayments shall not exceed more than 10% of the annual operating budget of the church, and authorize such encumbrances as are necessary to secure such financing and such liens as are customary industry practice."

The Unity Tomorrow project cost \$8 million. Total Unity Tomorrow commitments from 2011 – 2016 were \$6,874,342 and by the end of December 2016 we had collected \$6,653,734 or 96.8% of the amount promised.

After paying principal and interest on the short term construction loan for 4.5 years, we converted the remaining \$1,950,000 to a long term note on January 1, 2017. This was a five year note with Western Bank based on a 20 year amortization schedule. Interest was fixed at 4.0% and debt service payments were \$142,512 per year from 2017-2021. Our capital pledges were adequate to cover this debt service without impact to programming.

In addition to debt service payments, we are allowed to pre-pay up to 20% of the principal balance each year without penalty. Since 2017, we made additional loan principal payments of \$690,937 from individual gifts for this purpose and through the application of unrestricted bequests. After five years of debt service and additional gifts toward the principal, the balance was \$860,772 on December 15 of 2021 when we renegotiated the terms. The new note is amortized over 7 years with a fixed 3.70% interest rate. We expect to be able to pay the loan in full by the end of December, 2026 through debt service payments and additional gifts, two years prior to its maturity date. Annual debt service payments beginning in 2022 are \$140,018 representing 7.7% of the operating budget.

## **2022 Financial Update**

The congregation approved the 2022 operating and Capital budgets at the November 20, 2021, annual meeting. We were assuming that we would be able to re-open to full programming and worship for the whole year, but as it turned out, the pandemic lingered on with new variants, stunting our ability to provide full programming. We fell short of our pledge goal, and cancelled our spring fundraiser after receiving the news of Rob Eller-Isaac's terminal cancer diagnosis. In April, we launched a mid-year appeal for additional funds to close the gap, and the congregation generously responded. Program and facility income has been under budget, with investment income, Sunday offering income on track. We are continuing to draw down the bequest funds that were dedicated to our Multicultural Initiatives Program, which will extend into 2023.

Salary and benefit expenses are on track, while program expenses are under budget and administration/ facilities expenses are running over budget due to the rising costs of utilities, insurance and supplies. We are projecting a fiscal year-end shortfall of ~ \$32k, which represents 1.7% of the total 2022 budget.

## **Finance and Resource Development Attachments**

Printed copies are available.

- Attachment 21: [Financial Statements prepared by Schechter Dokken Kanter](#)