

**Unity Church-Unitarian  
2011–2012 Annual Report  
Prepared by the Executive Team**

November 17, 2012

Dear Members and Friends of Unity Church-Unitarian,

We are pleased to present this Annual Report to the Unity Church-Unitarian congregation at the 2012 Annual Meeting. This report seeks to capture many highlights of the exciting and nourishing 2011-2012 church year. To completely assess and recapture such a watershed year would take volumes, but this report should provide you with some helpful reminders of where we've been and where we're heading.

The report is organized according to program area, with the three Ends Statements of Unity Church's Governing Policies as a preface. The Ends Statements guide the Unity Church Board of Trustees and the Executive Team in the day-to-day and long-term decision-making processes in the church's life.

The current Ends Statements (2009-2013) were written in the fall of 2008 by the Board of Trustees in response to their conversations with members. Copies of the Governing Policies may be obtained on the church's website or by contacting the church office.

We hope you find this information helpful and hope that you won't hesitate to contact us with ideas, questions, and comments.

In faith,  
Janne Eller-Isaacs  
Rob Eller-Isaacs  
Barbara Hubbard  
Lisa Friedman

The Executive Team of Unity Church-Unitarian

# **The Mission and Ends of Unity Church**

## **Mission**

The mission of Unity Church-Unitarian is to engage people in a free and inclusive religious community that encourages lives of integrity, service, and joy.

## **Ends Statements (2009-2013)**

### **Within**

1. The people of Unity Church-Unitarian have a deeply meaningful, transforming, liberal religious experience which includes:
  - a. A rich and diverse worship life that nurtures, challenges and inspires;
  - b. Compassionate pastoral care in times of joy, sorrow and transition;
  - c. Spiritual and theological deepening through both personal and family-based religious practice and ritual;
  - d. Lifelong opportunities for growth, learning, engagement and racial healing;
  - e. Knowledge of Unity Church-Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist history.

### **Among**

2. Unity Church-Unitarian is a radically hospitable, spiritually vital, and supportive community where:
  - a. People of all ages feel welcome and connected across identities including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, politics, and education;
  - b. People are generous with their time, talent, and resources;
  - c. Shared ministry is actively encouraged and the circles of power, opportunity, and access are intentionally widened;
  - d. The resources and facilities of the church are well managed and maintained, and appropriate to the needs of the church and the community.

### **Beyond**

3. Unity Church-Unitarian is a visible leader and partner, making a positive impact in our neighborhood and in the world through:
  - a. A commitment to anti-racism and racial healing in covenant with people and communities of color;
  - b. Advocating in the public arena for liberal religious values in response to prejudice, injustice, and oppression;
  - c. Proclaiming the transforming power of our faith;
  - d. Working with congregations and institutions around shared values;
  - e. Full and active participation in the larger Unitarian Universalist community;
  - f. Acting and investing in environmentally responsible and sustainable ways.

## Annual Report Reflection by the Executive Team

From *To Be of Use* by Marge Piercy

*I want to be with people who submerge  
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest  
and work in a row and pass the bags along,  
who stand in the line and haul in their places,  
who are not parlor generals and field deserters  
but move in a common rhythm  
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.  
The work of the world is common as mud.  
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.  
But the thing worth doing well done  
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
but you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry  
and a person for work that is real.*

Here at Unity, in ordinary times and in extraordinary times, we weave a rich tapestry of community and ministry. Committed to the practice of shared ministry, the Executive Team oversees the implementation of the ends through the day-to-day operations of the church. Hundreds of volunteers work in partnership with staff to live out our collective values and aspirations within, among and beyond us.

All the ministries we will highlight are the fruits of collaboration between staff and volunteers. These partnerships spring from the deliberative relationship between the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team.

It is hard to image all the people who contribute to the abundant and varied ministries that occur here at Unity. The monthly spiritual themes for the church year were hospitality, reverence, grace, waiting, authority, God, suffering, compassion, transcendence, and awakening. These themes informed many aspects of congregational life and were used by our religious education program, small groups, community outreach teams, writing groups, and the Afterthoughts reflection group.

We seek to provide inspiring worship services, and we do so in partnership with Ruth Palmer and the worship associates, who help us craft the content of each service. That quality is carried on by the talented volunteers who conduct our summer services, our earth-based seasonal rituals, and our annual Black Friday community worship service. We are blessed to have an extraordinary music program. The chancel choir, Unity Singers, Children's Choir, the Youth Music Ensemble, and other volunteer and professional guest musicians all contribute to the

totality of the worship services. The annual children's musical, a tradition here at Unity, requiring many hours from dedicated volunteers, enriches the lives of everyone involved.

The Ministry with Children and Youth continues to grow and flourish. The parent orientation and enrollment process has continued to be refined, and the program continues to create a sense of shared ministry and vision. More than a hundred and twenty parents and other volunteers act as journey guides, teachers, substitutes, RE support people, and mentors, who all work to provide the kind of consistency and care that contributes to making our religious education program one of the most admired in our association. Kerri Meyer, Luke Stevens-Royer, Drew Danielson, Christy Randall, and Robin MacKenzie all helped make this an outstanding program.

The Community Outreach Teams have been active and engaged. Mano a Mano, Evergreen Quilters, Green Sanctuary, Restorative Justice, Literacy and Education, Affordable Housing, the Partner Church Ministry Team, and the Generosity Ministry Team have continued to work to take our ministry out into the world. In addition to these teams our annual New Orleans crew again traveled to build and restore faith and hope in partnership with residents there.

The Pastoral Care Team continues to be responsive to the needs of those in crisis, transition, grief, and loss. In addition to the pastoral associates, a caring circle of volunteers have made themselves available to help with meals, rides to appointments, and other needs that arise. The pastoral care program is supported by the work of many hands and literally depends on the work of the Uknitarians, who have created caring shawls that are delivered to folks in the community in need. A monthly caregiver's support group and a grief group, newer offerings of the pastoral care program, have grown in depth and commitment.

Unity Church's Ends Statements make our vision for an anti-racist, anti-oppressive institution clear. The Anti-Racism Leadership Team has been focused on every aspect of church life in an effort to move forward the work of making Unity Church an anti-racist institution. The Racial Justice Community Outreach Team is living out its commitment to racial healing and justice making. The Rainbow Chalice Alliance Ministry Team continues to advocate for GLBTQ issues here and in the community. In collaboration with Pat Haff and others, they were responsible for the initial efforts to defeat the marriage amendment, which Unity Church voted to oppose as a faith community at the spring congregational meeting.

A group of dedicated lay leaders continue the work of creating a Unity literary journal. The team that created this remarkable journal, called Cairns, shared their creativity in editing, graphics, layout, and all the demands of publishing. In addition to Cairns, our library and book stall ministry team have continued to enlarge our collection and to sponsor well-received public readings during the year. Their commitment and creativity have enriched us all.

The adult religious education offerings continued to challenge and inspire. Often led by volunteers, these small groups and classes serve to create opportunities for connection and conversation. Our monthly bridge group, book groups, writing groups, yoga, weekly meditation

group, and two meditation workshops helped address a growing need for community and instruction in spiritual practice.

Pilgrimages continue to be an engaging and educational dimension of our ministry here at Unity. Connections to our partner church in Transylvania, the youth and adult trips to Boston, and the annual trips to New Orleans and Bolivia continue to enrich church life.

Our hospitality ministry operates on many different levels. From the daily front desk volunteers, and the dedicated members of the Welcome Teams to the teams that create delicious meals *twice* a week during the formal church year, literally hundreds of folks contribute to this vital ministry. The Pathways Series continues to welcome and inform newcomers about our liberal faith tradition and Unity Church. Volunteers lead tours, assemble packets, and help with set up, all making this experience as welcoming as possible.

A report of our many ministries here wouldn't be complete without mentioning the folks who work to ensure the ongoing financial stability and strength of congregational life. Working closely with the Executive Team, the Canvass Team and all the canvassers and the Capital Campaign Team contribute to this vitally important ministry.

We also want to remember the work of all the gardeners who sought to enhance the visible beauty of our grounds. In addition to the beauty created outside our walls by adults and children, we also acknowledge the work of the art committee who select artists whose work inspires us every time we enter the Parish Hall.

There are many other acts both visible and invisible that contribute to the life we create here together. We have tried to name many of them. Creating the list every year is inspiring. So many hands, so many hours of dedicated service and ministry are part of the life we make here together.

We end with these words of the poet Derek Mann: "We are the custodians of a lone light, a shared light, a blossoming light." May our light continue to shine.

## **Worship Life**

Worship is the center of our congregational life, and attendance at all three services remained healthy. We continued to balance the varying desires around musical selection, and to live with the inherent tension between maintaining a contemplative rhythm and needing to communicate with the congregation, particularly around Unity Tomorrow updates.

The Worship Associates program continued to generate deep reflection and to foster the full integration of the monthly worship themes into Sunday services. Wellspring Wednesday worship in the Ames Chapel also made use of the themes and drew solid multigenerational attendance.

The fourth annual all-congregation service was held in September 2011 at the park one block north of the church and attracted some 700 people, many of whom stayed for a picnic afterward.

## **Congregational Life**

### **Membership and Hospitality**

#### ***Welcome Teams***

Unity Church's ministry of hospitality is embodied each Sunday in the 12 Welcome Teams who ensure that Sunday services run smoothly from the moment people arrive through the doors to the coffee hour conversations in the Parish Hall. We offer our deep gratitude to the over 60 members who greet, usher, ring the bell, receive and count the offering, take attendance, make and serve coffee, and staff the Welcome Table every week with dedication and friendliness.

#### ***Pathway to Membership Classes***

Leon Dunkley offered Pathway to Membership Classes throughout the church year. Welcome to Unity, an introductory session for visitors, was offered 15 times. Finding Yourself at Unity, a class that goes more in depth into the programs and ministry of the congregation, was offered five times. Committing to Unity, the class that formally welcomes people into membership, was offered five times. New Member Recognition ceremonies were celebrated on December 11, February 12, April 22 and June 3. Thank you to the many volunteers, led by Ona Lentz, who prepared the New Member Receptions on those Sundays. Unity was honored to welcome the following new members this past year:

#### ***New Members from Dec. 10, 2011 to May 19, 2012***

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Beth Black             | 12. Jim Davnie         |
| 2. Neil Claxton Bray      | 13. Jane D. Eastwood   |
| 3. Jacki Bremer           | 14. Sigred Ellis       |
| 4. Christopher H. Buck    | 15. Meagan Foley       |
| 5. Josh Capistrant        | 16. Dan Fretland       |
| 6. Laura Capistrant       | 17. Mary Fretland      |
| 7. Joan Carrier           | 18. Amy Geisler        |
| 8. Lloyd Lentz Cledwyn    | 19. Karl Geisler       |
| 9. Sarah Cledwyn          | 20. Jessica Goff       |
| 10. Lindsay Cochran       | 21. Jennifer C. Heaton |
| 11. Steven Kenneth Dahlke | 22. Layo Hernandez     |

23. Mary Hernandez
24. Katherine Sherman-Hoehn
25. Frederick Hoehn
26. Heidi Lena Johnson
27. Cara Letofsky
28. Deborah Cartet McCoy
29. Suzanne Quinn-McDonald
30. Stephanie O'Neill
31. Christie Farris Oberg
32. Johan Oberg
33. Kendall Price
34. Zane Redfern-Hall
35. Kimberlee J. Remus
36. Cathy Rucci

37. Sherry Nail-Sadowski
38. John W. Sadowski
39. Julie Shortridge
40. Becky Steeber
41. Patrick Steeber
42. Jeffrey Swanson
43. Barbara A. Taylor
44. Douglas H. Taylor
45. Rob van Alstyne
46. Susan van Alstyne
47. Sandra Vataserey
48. Kevin Ward
49. Barbara Grace Washburn

### **Wellspring Wednesday**

Wellspring Wednesdays continued to thrive from September through May. Dedicated cooking teams prepared delicious meals, and ministerial interns Rachel Lonberg and Jim Foti led weekly chapel services. Wellspring Wednesday programming offered a wide range of topics for the spiritual growth of Unity members and friends with ongoing opportunities in yoga, knitting, the laughter group, and classes for children and youth, among others. Thematic topics included series on the Civil Rights movement, parenting, homelessness, adoption, Seeing the Cultural World, discussion of Gordon Parks' films, and much more. Wellspring Wednesdays also welcomed many guest presenters and performers, such as the Artaria Quartet, One Voice Mixed Chorus, Peter Mayer, and others, as well as Unity's annual Talent Show. Thank you to the many Unity members who shared their areas of expertise and passion in leading sessions throughout the year.

### **Adult Spiritual Development**

Unity staff and members provided various opportunities for Adult Spiritual Development, including classes on writing with clarity, force, and grace and as spiritual practice, UU history and the skeletons in our closet, spiritual practice for IT professionals and for teachers, integrating your Catholic past, a committed couples class, a film series on Standing Up for Human Rights, and more. The monthly elders group offered opportunities for community, learning, and spiritual reflection. The annual Women's Gathering and the Men's Retreat continued to build community and offer time for spiritual reflection. The Black Friday service, led by the Black Friday planning team, lifted up new ways to think about the traditions of consumption and sharing gifts in the holiday season.

## Pastoral Care

The pastoral care program seeks to serve people in times of need, crisis, transition, grief, and loss. Overseen by Janne Eller-Isaacs, a team of remarkable pastoral care associates provide a caring ministry of presence for our members and friends.

The pastoral care team meets monthly throughout the year to support one another, to share ideas, and to ensure that everyone in need is served adequately. Monthly meetings often focus on a particular theme or pastoral issue. This past year the pastoral care team participated in informational meetings or trainings on these issues:

- Challenges to listening, presented by Rev. Cary Eustis
- Alzheimer's and dementia, presented by a staff member of the Alzheimer's Association
- Living with a family member with mental illness, presented by a volunteer from the National Association on Mental Illness
- Gender differences in the grieving process, presented by Tom Ellis
- Happiness and Stress
- Depression in Elders
- Hospitality and Pastoral Care

This year we suffered some tremendous losses in the congregation, and the pastoral care program served the extended families with skill and dedication.

Janne Eller-Isaacs and Cynthia Orange continue to co-facilitate a monthly support group for caregivers that has provided a place of mutual support and encouragement for the caretakers who attend. This group continues to grow in numbers and commitment.

The grief group continued but suffered from the beginnings of the construction project and didn't meet in the summer of 2012.

Each year we expand the care provided by those who join our caring circle. The caring circle seeks to provide one-time services, which include things like rides, meal preparation and delivery, child care, respite care, shopping and errand running and house projects.

The pastoral care team is looking to expand its program. If you are interested in knowing more about the program, please contact Janne at the church office.

## Faithful Words Literary Ministry

Unity Church's three-year literary ministry project, funded by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism and several individual donors, concluded in the fall of 2011 with monthly writing sessions and written reflections on the last monthly worship themes of the calendar year. Starting in October, a weekly session of *Lectio Divina* (meditative reading of

poetry in small groups) was offered between the morning worship services, led by a cohort of lay facilitators trained by consulting literary minister Karen Hering. Karen's literary programming was launched as a community ministry at the end of 2011 and now continues off-site but still with a taproot at Unity Church.

## **Affiliated Community Minister — Rev. Cary Eustis**

I am proud to be a part of Unity Church-Unitarian as an Affiliated Community Minister. It is a privilege to spread the congregation's values of integrity, service, and joy into the world beyond the walls of the church. Thank you for your ongoing nurture and support of my ministry. I continue to serve at the University of Minnesota Medical Center-Fairview. I am serving as a chaplain and clinical pastoral educator. As a chaplain I serve on the Adult Acute Behavioral Health unit. There I conduct weekly spiritual health groups and respond to patient referrals for chaplain support. In addition, I am sometimes part of the chaplain on-call rotation for the wider hospital medicine units. I also visit Unity congregation members hospitalized at the medical center.

As a pastoral educator I am in a certification process as I supervise clinical pastoral education (CPE) student interns learning in the hospital. The students I work with are seminarians and congregational lay people from diverse backgrounds. Many students are taking CPE as a requirement for their Master of Divinity degrees or their denominational requirements for ordination. In this learning process students reflect about their pastoral ministry personally and theologically. They learn to understand more about their own responses and beliefs as they meet with patients in the hospital. I work with them to expand their knowledge and understanding of cultures, faiths, and people different from themselves as they deepen their self-understanding. I am currently supervising my sixth unit of CPE interns. This supervisory work is part of a certification process I began in 2008 to become a "full" ACPE supervisor.

This certification process normally takes between 4-7 years. This process includes: the direct supervised supervision of CPE interns described above, writing theology, education and human/personality development theory papers, and passing four certification committees. These committees are equivalent to our Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Fellowship Committee appearances required for ministers to be accepted into fellowship in our denomination. My last paper passed this September 2012, allowing me to declare for an Associate Committee appearance in Atlanta this November 2012.

I was glad to meet with the Unity pastoral care team earlier this year to talk about grief and loss. I look forward to more opportunities to be with Unity congregants as I complete my certification process. You can be confident that I am upholding Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes as a witness and voice for justice for marginalized and voiceless persons, both as an educator and as I work directly with patients providing pastoral care as a chaplain. One way I do this is by facilitating rituals for people. It is not uncommon that I have the honor to advocate for and facilitate a set of rituals for a patient on a locked unit. For instance, one patient, who

had been quiet and reserved, shed tears in the private ritual space we created as she received and used her own, ritual “instruments.” She said she appreciated being treated with dignity and respect as her spiritual needs were being met.

## **Music Ministry**

Music in our worship services is continually appreciated and wonderfully challenged to meet both the needs and endless possibilities within our community’s talents. Along with our choirs, we have had many varied guests and groups from classical to folk to Central European and other cultural traditions. Groups such as Artaria String Quartet, Once Voice Mixed Chorus, Light of the Moon, Stealin’ Home, and Mila have been present in our services.

Our Children’s Choir continues to grow and offer outstanding experiences to some 30 to 40 children under the direction of Kathleen Radspinner. They are to be particularly congratulated for their work during construction, which required their rehearsals to take place with several restrictions.

Children’s experiences in 5th and 6th grades continue to be augmented by participation in our over-twenty-year-old, highly successful Children’s Musical directed by Sandy Waterman and Mary Blouin-Auffert. The Youth Ensemble for 6th through 8th grades continues to be part of the music program.

A very special Concerts With a Cause Series enabled us to contribute over \$2,000 to Unity Church’s efforts in working with community organizations to help defeat the marriage amendment. This grant was matched by UUA funds.

Unity Church volunteer musicians continue to enrich our services throughout the year and, in particular, during our summer services under the direction of Kathleen Bartholomay. Their commitment and generosity are a huge gift to all.

Efforts to more specifically organize and develop a Unity Players Percussion Group are underway, and plans for a regularly rehearsing Women’s Ensemble have been announced and will begin in December 2012.

Our choir program continues to be not just an opportunity for involvement but also an entrance into this community. Our members include parents with young children to retirees involved in many life activities. Many people establish their relationship with Unity Church through participation in one of our choirs before becoming members.

All of these experiences mentioned above offer community, connection, participation and the opportunity to deepen within, enrich experience among all people in our community and to share beyond our own walls.

There is such potential in this community, far beyond the capacity of our present staff. Plans for continued growth in program offerings is always underway.

## **Ministry with Children and Youth**

The 2011-12 church year has been one of both transition and opportunity in Unity's Ministry with Children and Youth. In spite of changes in leadership and in the building, together our leaders and volunteers created meaningful religious experience with and for our Unity families. Every monthly New Family Orientation welcomed four or five new families into our shared ministry. All three services boasted solid enrollment numbers, though the 4:30 service struggled with a low ratio of attending adults to enrolled children (which makes teacher recruitment unusually challenging). During the 12-month period, we dedicated ourselves to the nurture of a dozen infants and 15 "big kids."

Fall of 2011 was a busy and exciting season, as always. Tower Club was active in the early marriage amendment efforts. Luke Stevens-Royer and Kerri Meyer took 11 youth on Pilgrimage to Boston in late October. The holiday season was once again family-focused, with highlights including Black Friday at Church and an evening of beautiful Christmas Eve traditions. In January 2012, Kerri Meyer, Unity's Director of Religious Education, left on a four-month study leave, taking a course at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, CA. The ministry was left in the capable hands of Christy Randall, R.E. Program Assistant, and Mary Blouin-Auffert, Temporary Assistant Director of Religious Education.

Social justice was in clear focus this past year. Deborah McCoy led a well-attended Tween Social Justice youth group on Wednesday evenings, partnering with Mano a Mano again and other outreach teams. In Children's Chapel, we implemented a new Generosity Ministry process that mirrors the adult process of nominating and sharing the plate. Youth participated once again in the annual Interfaith Youth Day of Service and in Night on the Streets.

Throughout the 2011-2012 year, thematic subtopics framed our theological exploration of the five Big Questions. Our elementary students shared their own thoughts and enjoyed participatory learning related to these topics:

- September-October – God is knowable
- November-December – UUs affirm people of all racial identities
- January-February – Compassion connects us to the divine in us all
- February-April – UUs affirm all loving families
- April-May – Death is an inevitable reality for all of us

Our junior high youth enjoyed two different semesters of comparative religions and religious history, with classes on High Feasts and Holy Days, Unitarian Universalist history and identity, and fundamentalism and cults. Jeffrey Hess led a wonderful year of Youth Music Ensemble.

Many of our junior high and high school youth also chose to serve the church by caring for young children in the nursery under the auspices of Christy Randall and Robin MacKenzie, allowing parents to participate fully in the life of the congregation.

On April 28, 2012, Unity youth participated in Coming of Age, sharing some of the most theologically complex, emotionally daring and life-affirming credos our congregation has heard. A stellar teaching team and clear leadership can be credited with the successful crossing of this threshold for these youth and their mentors:

**Youth**

Lance Auffert  
Alix Bellus  
Laura Christenson  
Julia Connly  
Claire Cooke  
Margaret Flynn Sapia  
Jian Kettunen  
Jenna Krivit  
Mirabeau Laing-Geisert  
Samantha Lewis  
Max Marckel  
Emma Mathews-Lingen  
Lydia McComas  
Sophia Morrisette  
Claire Newhouse  
Benjamin Pettee  
Zane Redfern Hall  
Elena Renken  
Joel Seabury-Kolod  
David Sherman  
Erica Spies  
Fletcher Todd  
Allie Utke  
Aidan Vellenga  
Jack Welsh  
Lucy West  
Ava Williams

**Mentor**

Tom Eckstein  
Amy Bellus  
Julie Schmid  
Karen Lewis  
Louise Wolfgramm  
Tom Sherman  
Nancy Wagner  
Meg Arnosti  
Kevin Roberg-Perez  
Rene Meyer-Grimberg  
Collin Rust  
Shannon Flannery  
Laura Park  
Jackie Smith  
Cathy Crosby-Schmidt  
Taylor Burr  
Robyn Mathews-Lingen  
Maggie Wirth-Johnson  
Dan Huelster  
Sheila Flynn  
Beth Stenglein  
Ann Mathews-Lingen  
Michelle West  
Dan Thompson  
Bob Lies  
Mary Beth Elchert  
Sharon Morrisette

Coming of Age facilitators were Terri Burnor, Karin Hogen, Bryan Kujawski, and Kelley Loughrey.

Over the summer, construction prevented us from offering Chalice Camp. On Sundays, children and volunteers played in the park across Grotto Street from the church. Attendance over the summer was comparable to that of years past, which was encouraging.

In July, we said goodbye to our former Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries, the now-Reverend Luke Stevens-Royer. We welcomed his competent, passionate and committed successor, Drew Danielson.

It has been a year of transition and some upheaval, but in the end, the ministry will enjoy a return on our investment of time, treasure and talent and on our dedication. Families have been flexible and supportive of one another and the ministry leadership. We look forward to another year of blessing the world with and through our extraordinary family of families.

## **Community Outreach Ministry**

- The annual Community Outreach Fair took place in Parish Hall on Oct. 30, 2011, with thirteen ministry teams and projects presenting their work to the congregation.
- Many veteran ministry teams have moved to a shared leadership model in organizing their work, which tends to give greater ownership to all team members.
- Many teams worked with the Unity Church “Tween” Social Justice group to provide meaningful service projects for youth during the past year.
- Due to the church construction, many outreach teams met in member homes starting in the spring of 2012, giving team members opportunities to know and connect with each other in more personal settings.

### **Unity Church Marriage Equality Committee to Defeat the MN Marriage Amendment**

#### ***Community Partner: Minnesotans United for All Families***

The most significant activity this past year in this ministry area has been the organizing work to defeat the Minnesota Marriage Amendment that would define marriage in the state constitution as between one man and one woman. The Unity Church organizing began in May 2011 and continued through the defeat of the amendment on Nov. 6, 2012. The organizing started with more than 100 congregants volunteering to serve on several smaller committees addressing training, programming, fundraising, supporting the congregation and developing an interfaith group. Eventually these five groups merged into one committee, Unity United for All Families, with about ten people continuing to meet and guide the organizing efforts throughout the entire campaign. Unity Church initiated and participated in the Greater St. Paul Interfaith United for Justice group, which was formed to block the marriage amendment and consisted of about 25-30 people representing 10 different denominations that met every three weeks to organize collaborative campaign activities. Unity Church received a \$1500 matching grant from the UUA Standing on the Side of Love funding program that was matched with proceeds from three “Concerts With a Cause” at Unity in January, February, and March. On April 7, 2012, the congregation passed a unanimous resolution to defeat the amendment. The Unity Church campaign coordinated its activities with the Minnesota UU Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA), and it raised over \$4,100 at a church fundraising party in June 2012, with the proceeds going to the faith-related efforts of the statewide umbrella group, Minnesotans United for All Families. More than 100 congregants volunteered to call the entire congregation to urge them to have

conversations about why marriage matters to all. Many conversation training sessions were offered at the church duplex during the campaign.

### **Outreach Ministry Teams**

#### **Affordable Housing Ministry Team**

##### ***Community Partner: Portico Inc.***

The Affordable Housing team sponsored three Wellspring Wednesday programs on “Homelessness: The Community Response” in January, February, and March. Representatives from government agencies, community organizations and area churches presented their work to end homelessness in Minnesota. Each session was attended by about 30-35 people and generated many ideas for the team to consider in developing a better interfaith response to the enormous growth in homelessness in our communities in recent years. As an outcome, the team decided to partner with Portico Interfaith Housing Collaborative (formerly the Plymouth Church Neighborhood Foundation) in their St. Paul efforts to address the critical need for homeless youth shelters. For the next two years, the Affordable Housing team will join with House of Hope Presbyterian Church (the lead church), the Wilder Foundation, Portico, and other area St. Paul churches to build a facility on University and Prior Ave. that will house homeless youth and provide needed support services. The team also sponsored volunteer opportunities through “Homeless Connect” and the St. Paul Faith Builders Habitat for Humanity build in June of 2012.

##### **St. Paul Council of Churches Project Home**

Due to the church construction, Unity Church was not able to host Project Home in the month of May this past year.

#### **Evergreen Projects and Quilters Ministry team**

##### ***Community Partners: Jeremiah Program, Sharing Korners Food Shelf and Family Place***

The Evergreen project group continued to provide a monthly evening meal for families at the Jeremiah Program, a residential program for single low-income women who are working at part-time jobs and attending college or post-secondary training. The Evergreen Projects group coordinated the monthly collection and delivery of donated food for the Sharing Korners Food Shelf in Frogtown. The Evergreen Quilters produced another very successful quilt sale and raffle in April and raised \$4,297, which was donated to the Sharing Korners Food Shelf, the Jeremiah Program, and the Family Place, all of which are dedicated to improving the lives of women and children. For each child dedication Sunday at Unity Church throughout the year, a handmade quilt made by members of the Evergreen Quilters is displayed in the sanctuary and then donated to homeless families staying at the Family Place.

#### **Generosity Ministry Team**

##### ***Community partners: non-profit community organizations***

On September 25, eleven community non-profit organizations were present in the Parish Hall coffee hours for the first “Share the Plate: See Where the Offering Goes.” This day was organized by the Generosity Team and provided an opportunity for the congregation to meet and learn more about some of the organizations that have received an offering in the past few

years. During the fiscal year of 2011, the congregation donated \$70,593 to 51 community non-profit organizations.

### **Mano a Mano Ministry Team**

#### ***Community partner: Mano a Mano International Partners***

The team's annual Holiday Bolivian craft sale at Unity Church took in \$3,300 (a larger amount than the previous year) to benefit Mano a Mano International Partners. The team also sponsored the Latin Dance party in Parish Hall in January with many people in attendance once again. In January, 35 people attended the team sponsorship of a viewing and discussion of the film "Tambien La Lluvia (Even the Rain)." In preparation for a pilgrimage to Bolivia in March, travelers met with Paul Dosh, an expert in Latin American politics and a professor of Political Science and Latin Studies at Macalester College to learn about the current political climate in Bolivia. Eleven people from Unity Church participated in the two-week March pilgrimage to Bolivia and shared their experiences at the April meeting of the ministry team. Members of this team continue to collect Spanish Language books from US schools to be delivered to schools in Bolivia. About 20 Unity members attended the annual Mano a Mano International Partner annual summer picnic.

### **Partner Church Ministry Team**

#### ***Community partner: Unitarian Church and village in Homorodszepter, Transylvania***

November 20, 2011 was the annual Partner Church Sunday at Unity Church, with songs and stories from our sister church and village in Homorodszepter, Transylvania. At one of their quarterly meetings, team members participated in a lively and enlightening reflection on excerpts from an address given by Rev. Kinga Reka Szekely titled "Living the Faith in Oppression" about the challenges faced by Unitarians under communist rule. About 35 people attend the Balazs Scholar potluck lunch in February to hear Rev. Zoltan Kopandi-Benczedi talk about his experiences as a Unitarian minister in Transylvania. Eight Duluth UU congregants were also present for the luncheon and reported on their trip to Transylvania in the summer of 2011. The annual Partner Church spring plant sale took place in March with a total of \$900 in sales that will go towards supporting village projects and the travel expenses of Rev. Kinga and her husband, Csaba, in their journey to the US in the fall of 2012.

### **Rainbow Chalice Alliance Ministry Team**

#### ***Community partners: Minnesota School Outreach Coalition***

In October 2011, in their preparation to become an outreach ministry team, the former Interweave group changed its name to the Rainbow Chalice Alliance as way for people to more readily identify this team as working with LGBTQ justice issues. The new focus of this team is on justice issues facing LGBTQ youth. The Rainbow Chalice Alliance Ministry Team investiture with the congregation took place on Nov. 13, 2011, with team members participating in all three services. Many members of the team volunteered their time at the Minnesota School Outreach Coalition's (MnSOC) seventh annual Q-Quest Youth Fest in Minneapolis with a record attendance of LGBTQ youth from around the state. Some team members served as an adult presence at the first Twin Cities LGBTQ prom in June. Members also helped organize a large

metrowide UU contingent at the Pride Parade in June this year with three Unity members providing a drumming cadence throughout the entire parade route.

### **Racial Justice Ministry Team**

#### ***Community partners: St. Paul interfaith and community organizations***

Some members of the Unity Tomorrow Two group joined forces with the Racial Justice team in the fall of 2011 as the goals of the two are closely aligned. In partnership with the Unity Library team and to celebrate Black History month, the team sponsored the second all-congregation read of the book "Devil In a Blue Dress" by Walter Mosely. Team members facilitated two lively discussions with about 40-50 people in attendance. Another dozen people from Unity attended the panel discussion of Walter Mosely's books at the Rondo Library that was sponsored by the Givens Foundation for African American Literature. Many team members and other Unity congregants attended the annual Martin Luther King Breakfast sponsored by the St. Paul Council of Churches at Redeemer Lutheran Church in January. Twelve people from Unity attended the world premiere production and discussion of "Buzzer" at Pillsbury House Theater in March. The other major team activity of this year was to work towards defeating the MN Photo ID Amendment. In collaboration with other Unity Outreach ministry teams and the Anti-Racism Leadership team, members wrote newsletter articles and developed an ongoing coffee hour presence with information about conversation training opportunities and other ways to get involved in defeating the amendment. Some members also joined forces with like-minded community groups by participating in conversation trainings, phone banking and getting out the vote. The amendment was defeated on Nov. 6, 2012.

### **Restorative Justice Ministry Team**

#### ***Community partner: Amicus***

The team participated and recruited members of the congregation to participate in the annual Second Chance Day on the Hill in January 2012. Thirty-five people from Unity (the largest attendance by church members thus far) participated in this day of advocacy for policies affecting people who've been incarcerated. After a large rotunda rally with people from 50 other nonprofit and faith groups, attendees met with legislators to encourage their support for the Juvenile Records Privacy Bill and the MN Hiring and Advantage Rights legislation. The winter warm-up clothing drive sponsored by the team collected over 1,600 items for participants in Amicus. Members of the team along with other congregants continue to support the weekly meetings at Unity Church of the neighborhood Circle of Peace by providing a meal once a month, and some team members also sit in as circle participants. There are about ten Unity people who now participate in the Pen Friends project initiated by the Unity Church Restorative Justice team at Amicus. Members of the team also helped make plans for a future Family Circle project for Unity Church families.

### **Anti-Racism Leadership Team**

The Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT) is pleased to present this summary of its annual report to the Unity Church Congregation. The report, which will be published by the end of

calendar year 2012, is intended to share the efforts and to assess the progress of the ARLT and the Unity Church community over the past year toward becoming an actively anti-racist organization.

In summary, the actions and accomplishments that occurred during the past year lead us to feel a strengthened sense of optimism about Unity's collective commitment to anti-racism. We see the beginnings of a culture change that integrates anti-racism within the life and activities of the church.

During the past year we recognize that there has been considerable effort on the part of Unity's leaders to establish regular, authentic, active connections with the ARLT. ARLT members have attended Board of Trustees meetings and have both proposed new governing policies and weighed in on policy issues under consideration. Co-minister Rob Eller-Isaacs has become the staff liaison to the ARLT. Working relationships with Board Chair Bob Peskin and other board members have been established. The board has taken its governance responsibilities related to the ARLT more seriously, in particular having helped to identify and interview potential candidates for appointment to the ARLT.

But while these improvements to Unity's processes are important, we are most energized and encouraged by several key actions taken during the past year that apply our anti-racist values in real and meaningful ways for the benefit of the broader community. The Board of Trustees adopted recommendations related to establishing a minority hiring policy in the context of the major capital construction project begun in spring 2012. This policy change has ensured that the contractors on the project employed people of color and women in numbers that represent the demographic makeup of our region. Broader policy changes were also proposed by the ARLT and adopted by the Board that have the promise of leading to similar concrete actions that would infuse Unity's budget and operations with purposeful attention to anti-racism.

Another recommendation of the ARLT that was implemented this year was a two-day anti-racism retreat for a wide array of Unity's volunteer leaders and staff. We expect that not only will the outcomes of the planning at this retreat inform Unity's strategic direction and work plan, the retreat attendees emerged more sensitized to issues of race and racism and with a shared sense of commitment to realizing the vision of an anti-racist organization.

Looking beyond this progress report and toward the year ahead, the results of an ARLT-developed survey of Unity's key volunteer leaders and staff, conducted in October 2012, will be compiled and analyzed. The results appear to suggest a wide variety of potential activities that the ARLT or other Unity groups could take on. We anticipate including recommendations in our full report, to be published in December 2012, for strategic direction and specific implementation steps based on what has been learned.

Thank you for taking the time to review this summary and for making anti-racism a priority in your life and in the life of this faith community.

## Unity Tomorrow

*Here we restore our parent's dreams  
Enshrined in floor and wall and beam,  
A monument wherein we build  
That their high purpose be fulfilled  
A tool to help our children prove  
An earth of promise and of love.*

— Kenneth Patton

We knew the planning process was good. We counted the more than 450 people who took time to gather in small groups to consider what core values should govern the planning process. We watched those core values emerge. Our confidence in our professional team took hold as we saw those values woven into the early iterations of schematic design. Now we see the *Unity Tomorrow* dream coming true.

You said you wanted a unified, accessible central entrance, and very soon we will all be able to come into the new main lobby, then turn left to enter the Parish Hall or to take the stairs down into the Whitman Lobby, which opens out to the new nursery and the completely refurbished religious education facilities. If you turn right at the main door you'll be swept along a wide curved glass wall of light, through a beautiful stone arch and into the sanctuary.

More than 65% of the project will be hard to see. New state-of-the-art highly efficient heating and air conditioning systems have been installed. Wiring and plumbing have been replaced and upgraded. A fire suppression system including sprinklers and alarms will help to keep us safe. Insulation has been added to the Eliot Wing roof. Every window in the building has either been restored or replaced. A new commercial quality kitchen will open after Thanksgiving.

It's all coming together.

We knew our architects, contractors, and engineers had listened carefully. We knew they had complied with and in fact exceeded our requirements concerning minority hiring and green values. But we didn't know the building would be so beautiful. More than six hundred households have already contributed to *Unity Tomorrow*, and church leaders will be working in the coming months to raise enough additional money to complete the project with no long-term debt.

In the end the building, beautiful as it is, is as Patton reminds us, a tool. It is a house for the spirit. It is a home for the ministry we share. "*Let us,*" in the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, "*live in a way that is worthy to receive it.*"

(See the November 2012 *Unity Tomorrow* Newsletter for complete information)

## Resource Development

2011 and 2012 have been dynamic years for Unity Church in the area of resource development. Following the quiet phase of the Capital Campaign, we conducted a fall canvass that combined the public phase of the Capital Campaign with the 2013 Operating Pledge drive. Our Operating Pledge Team (Lia Rivamonte, Chris Crosby-Schmidt, and Mary Baremore) teamed up with Kit Brady, Lee Carey, Peggy Lin, and Charlie Vanek from the Capital Campaign Team to run this consolidated drive.

The theme was **“It Takes a Community”** and we invited church members and friends to make three-year operating pledges and capital campaign commitments for 2012, 2013, and 2014, with a suggested increase of 3% each year. People were invited to attend a variety of fundraising events; one of three Unity Café events with music and program, a dinner at Mai Village, and a family event at the church with Open Eye Theater. The children of the church participated by illustrating their dreams for the church in pictures and words.

The **Operating Pledge** drive fell short of projections, resulting in the need to revise the 2012 Operating Budget that was approved by the congregation in November 2011. Our 2012 pledges total \$1,110,000 from 630 households, a 5.0% decrease in pledge dollars from 2011. There are 64 new pledges, and 152 pledges were not renewed from the previous year. The average 2012 pledge is \$1,762, and the median pledge is \$1,200.

The disappointment about the drop in pledging households was offset by the success of our request for Sustaining Pledges. Over 300 households made sustaining pledges for 2013 and 2014, for a total in excess of \$700,000 each year.

Our **Capital Campaign** has raised \$6.2 million in commitments from 600 households, the largest base of support for any capital campaign in the history of the church. People’s commitments are scheduled to be paid over a six-year period (2011-2016). The Capital Campaign Team continues to work toward raising our goal of \$8 million.

In April 2012, the congregation was asked to approve a **financing package** that would provide short-term construction financing and a long-term note, should we need it. At its meeting, the congregation passed the following resolution, with 91% of the voting members in support:

*NOW THEREFORE THE BOARD RECOMMENDS that the Congregation authorize:*

*That the Phase One Unity Tomorrow renovations proceed as a single project at a total cost not to exceed \$8 million, excluding financing costs, and*

*THAT soil disturbed in the courtyard where cremains were placed be carefully removed and replaced in a designated memorial garden, and*

*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.*

In May 2012, Unity Church signed a loan agreement with Western Bank, our own community bank.

In the interest of financial integrity and transparency, Unity Church engaged Schechter, Dokken, Kanter - Certified Public Accountants to perform a full financial audit of our December 31, 2010 financial statements, and a review of our **December 31, 2011 financial statements**. The December 31, 2011 Balance Sheet and the related Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets are included in this report. Full reports are available upon request.

The **Heritage Society** dinner was on May 4, 2012. Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, senior minister of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was our keynote speaker. We welcomed six new members into the Heritage Society and remembered the one member who died in the past year.

**Facility Reserve Fund:** In September 2012 a significant gift was made to The Saint Paul Foundation, establishing an endowment fund for the benefit of Unity Church. Unity Church will receive annual distributions from the fund. Beginning in 2016, distributions will be directed into Unity Church's temporarily restricted "Facility Reserve Fund" and may be used for a) upgrading the facilities, including a new sanctuary, b) replacing major appliances and equipment, and c) major redecorating projects.

## Unity Consulting

Unity Consulting is a wholly owned subsidiary 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 articulate the difference they seek to make in the world and then align their work and ministries to enable them to make that difference. Our primary tool is Policy Governance® as we've learned to adapt it for congregations.

Highlights from this past year include that the consulting team:

- Expanded our client base, including many more Unitarian Universalist congregations and several congregations and institutions outside our denomination as well.
- Increased revenue 50% over last year. 5% of all consulting fees go to support Unity Church's operating budget.

- Worked with the UUA Board on a deeply meaningful project to identify the theological and theoretical underpinnings of their non-congregational Sources of Authority and Accountability.
- Provided pro-bono services to the denomination, through presentations at District conferences, governance consulting with key denominational leaders, and facilitation of the UUA Board's Gathered Here process.

## **Administration, Operations, and Facilities**

Behind the scenes at Unity Church is a hard-working, seasoned group of administrative and facilities staff members. The average tenure of these individuals is 7.5 years, which speaks to the quality of the relationship between the staff and the church. The staff's dedication to the mission and to our standard of excellence is amazing.

Our Administrative and Facilities Staff provide the foundation for the church's operations including (but certainly not limited to) program support, office and front desk management, wedding and memorial service coordination, communications via print and electronic media, database and financial functions, scheduling, set up, clean up, maintenance and security of our facilities, and grounds work. Over the past two years, the facilities and administrative staff have also been managing, supporting and informing the *Unity Tomorrow* capital campaign and construction project.

In June 2012, the entire staff moved across the parking lot to the church-owned duplex at 722 Holly Avenue. The duplex provided temporary offices during construction, and although it was "cozy," it allowed us to continue our program and operations.