

# Unity Church Unitarian Congregational Record

Saint Paul, Minnesota | MidAmerica Region

## About Unity Church Unitarian

## Contact Methods

**Website:** <http://www.unityunitarian.org>

### Meeting Address

733 Portland Ave  
Saint Paul, MN 55104-7146

### Mailing Address

732 Holly Ave  
Saint Paul, MN 55104

This Congregation **has** a 501(c)(3) status of its own

## Congregation Life

### Describe your Congregation and its culture:

"...Any church...must command and receive the positive loyalty of its constituent members... [T]here must be a core of wholeheartedly devoted members, whose loyalty has been built up through many years of disinterested service, surviving the test of many a clash of opinion and many a time of stress. They care so much for their church that it has become part of their very selves, as they have become part of the 'self' of the church. They believe in their church with deep and abiding conviction. They are 'living stones' in its edifice."

— Frederick May Eliot, *An Anthology*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, 88

Unity Church Unitarian (Unity) is a vibrant, active, and ever-evolving liberal religious community of about 870 adults, and 215 children and youth. Located in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on Dakota and Ojibwe land and founded in 1872, the congregation boasts a rich history with inspired ministers including William

Channing Gannett, Frederick May Eliot, Wallace Robbins, and Arthur Foote—recognized as significant leaders in the Unitarian and then, the Unitarian Universalist traditions.

In the last 50 years, Unity has had only three called ministers, two of whom were a married couple, the Reverends Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, who served Unity from 2000 to 2021. The longevity of these ministers can be seen as testament to the sustaining nature of the congregation. Especially during the Eller-Isaacs' time, the church has nurtured the growth and development of congregants' individual spiritual lives, fortified the community as a whole, and urged us to stretch beyond our walls to make a positive impact in the broader community. This framework—within, among, and beyond—provides us with an invaluable foundation for how we choose to exist in the world, and Unity's Ends Statements have been conceived with the idea that each of us must grow our spiritual selves (within), build and deepen our relationships among one another (among), and take our values out into the world to make a difference in the lives of others (beyond).

The primary source of sustenance for Unity's congregational life is Sunday worship. It is usually the first point of contact for any visitor, and especially during the pandemic lockdown virtual worship has been the most vital and consistent experience of the church for many. Even as Sunday worship in the physical sanctuary has been restored in September 2021, the church has continued to broadcast worship for all of those who are still unable to attend in-person services. Congregants have said the consistency of worship and the rites, words, and amazing music have been the glue that has held their days, weeks, and months together. For individuals, and families locally, and nation-wide, Sunday worship has not skipped a beat—worship leaders and staff have grown adept at producing moving and beautiful services that are captured on YouTube for anyone to view at any time.

Virtual productions of worship services cannot fully convey the beauty of the physical space however, and the sanctuary holds an important place in the hearts of congregants—the big open space with skylight, the thick, dark beams contrasting with the light wood of the meditative reredos behind the chancel contribute to a deep sense of sacred space. In fact, Unity's entire building has been a source of pride for the congregation, especially since its renovation in 2012 that included an award-winning reconstruction of the entrance to the sanctuary allowing folks passing through the neighborhood to glimpse the inside of the church. No longer was it a fortress keeping non-church goers out, but rather, it invites all comers into the building.

Most days and long into the nights (pre-pandemic), every room in the building is occupied by multiple church groups, and sometimes outside groups. It is difficult to schedule meetings because the calendar is so full of activities and events. The commercial kitchen is the heart of a robust food ministry; the parish hall with its revolving art exhibitions is a gathering place for meals, lectures, and celebrations. The basement is cheery and welcoming with special spaces for babies, children and youth; the library is well stocked with contemporary literature, theology and history from diverse sources. The new entrance together with new signage transformed the physical building; however, Unity is still working out how to make the congregation more welcoming to the broader community.

Unity's culture was once reflective of a Minnesota that no longer exists, if it ever did. That Minnesota was perceived as somewhat progressive—well-educated, white, upper- and middle class, somewhat repressed, but “civilized,” tolerant, and well-intended. While, as was stated earlier, Unity has the capacity to sustain for the long haul its ministers and congregation alike, it also means that change is slow. It is not that the congregation is unwilling to change—on the contrary—change is seen as absolutely essential for the health and wellbeing of our bodies, our spiritual lives, our church community, and the larger community. It is the thoughtful, well-considered change that is yearned for by Unity congregants.

In 2000, when the Reverends Eller-Isaacs came to Unity, they brought with them an urgent sense of the need for racial reckoning. Coming from Oakland, CA, a city teeming with racial and ethnic diversity, Unity represented a challenge and a culture shock to them. While the Twin Cities could no longer be considered a haven for whites—besides sizable Black, Latinx, and indigenous populations, it boasts the largest Somali, Oromo and Karen communities, and the second largest Hmong community in the US. As stated elsewhere in this document, Saint Paul is now a predominantly multicultural city and as much as we would wish it, Unity no longer reflects its community in that way.

For the last 20 years, antiracism (mostly focusing on Black antiracism) has been at the core of much “within, among and beyond” energy and activism. Programs, outreach ministry teams, activities, and pilgrimages have advanced this work. Team Dynamics, a consulting group, was hired in 2019 to audit policies and help train folks to recognize their own biases, and be effective social and racial justice leaders. Over 350 congregants have taken the IDI and participated in follow-up programming. The Ends Statements established by the congregation in 2018 focuses on creating a multicultural, inclusive community. More recently the Beloved Community Staff Team has arrived at a double-helix model that integrates antiracism with spirituality that they hope will serve as an important visual and

conceptual tool for furthering antiracism work. Despite our slow progress, the Unity congregation is still a community of hope, eager to establish Unity to be a place of radical welcome, and inclusion.

Unity has a culture of caring. A large congregation has many moving parts and in this multigenerational community, birth, sickness, death and all of life's transitions are duly and appropriately recognized. Celebration and mourning go hand in hand. Unity has been known for its moving memorial services, rites of passage for our children and youth, weddings and other celebratory occasions. The ministers have been outstanding models of caregiving; the Pastoral Care Ministry has been critical in this unrelenting time of grief and trauma—including the onslaught of COVID, and the isolation caused by the pandemic lockdown, as well as the murder of George Floyd and uprisings that followed.

Unity Church is, in sum, a place in which shared values allow individuals and a community to grow and live lives of integrity, joy, and service. The dream of the Beloved Community is fiercely held, and even in the knowledge that this journey is often arduous and heartbreaking, we are confident that Unity has the capacity to hold it all.

### **Your Congregation's mission:**

#### **Mission**

Unity Church-Unitarian fosters transformation through a free and inclusive religious community that encourages lives of integrity, service, and joy.

#### **Values**

Unity Church-Unitarian honors the ambiguity and uncertainty in the search for greater truth, meaning, and equity. In all we do, we strive to embody:

- Wonder
- Open-hearted engagement
- Courageous action

#### **Ends Statements 2018-2023**

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

- Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
- Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.

- Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.
- Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.
- Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.
- Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.
- Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

The Board of Trustees conducts a renewal process every five years, engaging with the congregation to discern its aspirations and updating the Ends Statements accordingly. The next renewal would update from 2023 forward.

### **Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:**

**Wonder:** This value is built into our worship life and opportunities for learning. It is embodied in the first of what we call the three expectations of membership: to "develop personal spiritual practice to help you find and keep your balance." We explore multiple faith traditions and derive inspiration and a deep sense of grounding in the natural world. Our film series, book discussions, community forums, workshops, pilgrimages, and other programs and events engage our minds in exploration of new ideas and new partnerships.

**Open-hearted engagement:** This value is an integral part of the second expectation for membership, to "develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers." We are a large congregation, with many "strangers" here among us. We try to build in opportunities for meaningful relationships in our social gatherings; classes and workshops; and longer term commitments such as Chalice Circles and participation on shared ministry teams. This value also drives our work with community partners to build authentic relationships and collaborate on justice-making projects.

**Courageous action:** The third expectation of membership at Unity is to "Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world." Among the many ways we try to live this value is through personal engagement in social action, from work projects to protests to structured opportunities for deep on-going commitment to social justice and racial healing. We have adapted institutional policies and offered our building for a variety of uses, even when it has required sacrifice and the hard work of personal accountability.

### **Link to your Safe Congregation policy:**

We have a Safe Congregation policy, but it is not available online.

### **Worship service schedule:**

In response to the pandemic and in accordance with the instructions of the State of Minnesota, the Unity Church building was closed in March 2020.

We started doing a phased reopening of our building and spaces in September 2021. We are asking everyone to mask the entire time they are in the building and to sign in as they enter, in the event the church needs to contact trace for COVID-19 illness.

Sunday services are held in-person at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and via livestream at 9:00 a.m. only. Most attendees dress in business casual. Drop-in nursery care is available for little ones ages six months (and sitting up) to three years. There is religious education programming for children ages 3 and up through 12th grade.

In the summer there is only one service at 10:00 am, conducted by lay leaders.

Regular messages about worship and education opportunities are shared via email, video posts, and on our website.

## **Personnel**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Paid Hours per Week</b>	<b>Year Started</b>
The Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt	Interim Minister	40	2021
Rev. Ann Romanczuk	Affiliated Community Minister		2008
Rev. Caroline Eustis	Chaplain		2009

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Paid Hours per Week</b>	<b>Year Started</b>
Rev. Karen Hering	Associate Minister	40	2009
Barbara Hubbard	Executive Director	40	1998
Rev. K.P. Hong	Minister of Faith Formation	40	2013
Rev. Shay MacKay	Coordinator of Community Outreach Ministries	20	2021
Martha Tilton	Director of Communications	40	2004
Song Thao	Financial Assistant	40	1995
Madeline Summers	Hospitality Coordinator and Program Assistant	40	2014
Laura Park	Acting Director of Hospitality and Membership	40	2006
Michele Mecey	Coordinator of Children's Ministries	25	2014
Ray Hommeyer	Nursery Coordinator & Youth Ministry Assistant	25	2017
Drew Danielson	Coordinator of Youth & Campus Ministries	30	2012
Delaney Daly	Facilities Specialist	20	2021
Teresa Connor	Facilities Operations Coordinator	30	2018
Olentda Bryant	Facilities Specialist	25	2018
Heidi Birkholz	Facilities Maintenance Coordinator	35	2018
Ahmed Anzaldua, DMA	Director of Music Ministries	40	2019

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Paid Hours per Week</b>	<b>Year Started</b>
Vladimir Garrido	Sound Technician	3	2020
Nico Munoz	Sound Technician	3	2021

**Additional personnel notes:**

Unity Consulting ([www.unityconsulting.org](http://www.unityconsulting.org)) 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. Ten percent of Unity Consulting's fees go into a development fund to support the program's operational expenses. Unity Consulting also provides occasional pro-bono services to the denomination through governance consulting with denominational and congregational leaders.

Laura Park has been Managing Director of Unity Consulting for thirteen years and does most of the consulting work. Unity Church's minister emerita and emeritus, Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, continue peripheral involvement in Unity Consulting. They each have one or two clients they coach, and very occasionally Rob will join Laura for an on-site retreat with a client. Rev. Roger Bertschausen also occasionally consults with clients using Unity Consulting materials. Congregant Bill Etter works extensively with Laura to develop and implement the Spirit Map product ([spiritmap.org](http://spiritmap.org)). Unity Consulting has worked in one form or another with most of the large congregations in the Unitarian Universalist Association, and with many congregations in other liberal religious denominations.

Our newly called minister, in collaboration with the rest of the Executive Team and Laura, will determine how involved they will be with Unity Consulting. Certainly, our new minister will provide theological and operational oversight of the program in their role on the church's Executive Team, but whether they serve as a consultant will depend on their interest in governance as a ministry and their sense of whether their participation would help the congregation further its ends in relation to the larger denomination.

# Congregation History

## **Provide your Congregation's founding history:**

Unity Church was officially founded on February 25, 1872, after twenty years of sporadic Unitarian services. Interested parties had taken up a subscription to maintain a minister for one year. John R. Effinger preached his first sermon on February 11, 1872 and two weeks later, fifty members signed Articles of Association. In 1873 the church was incorporated as “Unity Church of St. Paul.”

**Date founded:** 2/25/1872

## **Describe important events in your Congregation's history:**

After meeting in various rented spaces, in the fall of 1875 the growing membership moved into the vacant Universalist church. Rev. Effinger left in the spring of 1876, due to ill-health. During the summer of 1876 Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Unitarian minister and secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, came to St. Paul, met with the St. Paul Unitarians and informed them that he could put them in touch with “exactly the right man” for them ... William Channing Gannett of Boston.

Gannett wrote this “bond of fellowship” for his ordination at Unity Church:

*As those who believe in Religion,*

*As those who believe in Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion,*

*As those who believe that the religious life means the thankful, trustful, loyal and helpful life*

*And as those who believe that a church is a brotherhood of helpers where it is made easier to lead such a life,*

*We join ourselves together, name, hand and heart, as members of Unity Church.*

It is still recited today as part of the Ingathering of New Members, adapted only in the replacement of “brotherhood of helpers” with “community of helpers.”

Please refer to the [Church History](#) tab of our website for important dates and events up to 2007. The online history needs to be updated to bring it up to the present.

# Ministerial History

<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
2021	Now	Interim	The Rev. Dr. Kathy Hurt	Interim Minister
2013	Now	Other	Rev. K.P. Hong	Minister of Faith Formation
2009	Now	Contract	Rev. Karen Hering	Associate Minister
2009	Now	Affiliated	Rev. Caroline Eustis	Chaplain
2008	Now	Affiliated	Rev. Ann Romanczuk	Affiliated Community Minister
2000	2021	Called	Robert Eller-Isaacs	Senior Co-Minister
2000	2021	Called	Janne Eller-Isaacs	Senior Co-Minister
2012	2020	Contract	Lisa Friedman	Minister of Congregational & Community Engagement
2012	2012	Contract	K. P. Hong	Minister of Faith Formation
1999	2000	Interim	Davidson Loehr	Interim Minister
1995	1998	Contract	Gretchen Thompson	Minister
1971	1998	Called	Roy Phillips	Minister
1945	1970	Called	Arthur Foote	Minister
1966	1970	Called	Fred Rutledge	Associate Minister
1963	1964	Interim	Lon Ray Call	Interim Minister
1955	1959	Contract	Ronald J. Walrath	Assistant Minister
1938	1944	Called	Wallace W. Robbins	Called Minister

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
1917	1937	Called	Frederick May Eliot	Called Minister
1908	1917	Called	John Dumont Reid	Called Minister
1900	1907	Called	Richard Wilson Boynton	Called Minister
1898	1900	Called	Clarence L. Diven	Called Minister
1895	1897	Called	William R. Lord	Called Minister
1886	1894	Called	Samuel McChord Crothers	Called Minister
1884	1886	Called	Clay MacCauley	Called Minister
1877	1883	Called	William Channing Gannett	Called Minister
1872	1876	Called	John R. Effinger	Called Minister

## Ministers Emeritus/a

Name	Date Voted Emeritus/a	Year Deceased
Robert Eller-Isaacs	4/18/2021	
Janne Eller-Isaacs	4/18/2021	
Arthur Foote	5/1/1970	1999

### Additional ministerial history notes:

1852 first Unitarian sermon in St. Paul — Rev. George Woodward

1858-1859 Frederick R. Newell, an inactive Unitarian preacher, came to St. Paul with his wife to establish a business. He agreed to preach at regular Sunday services if he could use his collection of old sermons. After ten months, the services ended.

1861-1866 occasional services with various preachers

The history of Unity Church by Elinor Otto talks about renewing contracts so it's unclear with some of the early ministers whether they were called or on contract. When in doubt, we opted to use Called.

The specific start and end dates of some ministries are not known. The form requires entering the full month/day/year so we used the approximate month/day of the known year.

Clarence Diven died unexpectedly of peritonitis.

Kathy Fuson Hurt served as the pre-interim minister from March-June 1999.

### **Describe any important Lay Leaders:**

Unity Church has a strong commitment to shared ministry. The Board of Trustees provides vision, direction and accountability. There are many lay leaders who are or have been involved in a variety of ministry teams. These teams include worship associates, pastoral care associates, teaching associates, community outreach ministry teams, religious education ministry team, Sunday welcome teams, and the Beloved Community Staff Team.

Because of Unity's focus on lay involvement in shared ministry, there is a very long list of leaders who have contributed in a variety of ways. To name a few would be a disservice to the many. The various ministry teams offer a means of leadership development that often leads to greater involvement in other areas, such as governance or fundraising.

Beyond these shared ministry teams, church members have been active with MUUSJA, led denominational affairs committees, offered historical perspective on UU history, advised on investment strategy, served as general counsel to the church, organized interfaith activities, planned and offered Sunday services in the summer, and served on ministerial intern support teams. These are just some examples of how and where lay leaders lend their time and talent to support the work of the church.

# Membership & Finances

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

Year	Total Pledge Income	Total Operating Expenses	Membership	Youth Enrollment	Avg. Attendance
2021*	\$1,354,064	\$1,468,056	871	155	
2020*	\$1,298,527	\$1,660,422	900	377	612
2019	\$1,292,845	\$1,518,750	850	403	666
2018	\$1,310,739	\$1,477,919	908	447	702
2017	\$1,266,699	\$1,453,271	904	510	681
2016	\$1,216,607	\$1,448,288	870	545	670
2015	\$1,221,149	\$1,396,037	826	531	686
2014	\$1,134,153	\$1,351,884	864	446	732
2013*	\$1,110,785	\$1,291,823	790	413	697
2012*	\$1,168,175	\$1,352,679	818	408	752



The following notes and/or explanations have been offered by the congregation:

Year	Note/Explanation
2021	Sunday and memorial services, ministers' messages, religious education, youth and adult programming all online. Overall, averaging 700 views across all offerings.
2020	All in-person activities stopped as of March 2020, took some time to gear up for robust online presence. George Floyd murder and related uprising were a significant focus.

Year	Note/Explanation
2013	Back in building after major renovation in 2012. Members/friends being asked for capital campaign contributions to reduce amount to be borrowed as well as ongoing capital and operating pledges.
2012	Out of building for 7 months for a major renovation. Members/friends being asked for commitments to the \$8 million capital campaign at the same time as being asked for annual pledge toward operating expense.

## Demographics

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

1-4%

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?**

10-24%

**Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation**

Unity's 2020 Congregational Survey found that 58.9% of respondents identified as female, 26.6% as male, 2.5% as other responses including but not limited to non-binary, gender fluid, transgender, and questioning, and 12% who offered no response.

**What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?**

6

**What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?**

9

**What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?**

1

## **What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?**

There has been an intentional priority of BIPOC inclusion in programs, groups and staff (e.g., Board, Worship Associates, new hires, etc.). Team Dynamics, a consultant on diversity, equity and inclusion, has advised and guided hiring processes and has offered training to individuals and groups. Work around the Intercultural Development Inventory has become more robust.

The Board has incorporated a matrix of identity, expertise, and perspective into trustee recruitment and application, as well as in the formation of the Ministerial Search Team.

## **Accessibility**

### **Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible? Yes**

#### **Wheelchair accessibility details:**

There are three entrances to the building, of which one to the sanctuary entrance at 733 Portland Avenue and one to the program entrance on the east side of the church are wheelchair accessible. The program entrance is directly connected to an elevator and the sanctuary entrance can give you access to the part of the building where the elevator is located.

Most of the building is physically accessible to those of all abilities. Exceptions are the choir loft, bell tower, a second level office, and the chancel, all of which are accessed via stairs. Modifications can be made to the chancel to allow for wheelchair access. The Sanctuary has wheelchair cut-out spaces in the regular pews so that all people can engage in the congregational space.

### **Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes**

#### **Assisted listening system details:**

The sanctuary is equipped with an assisted listening system. We also provide ASL and Closed Captioning upon request.

#### **Describe other ways your congregation has dealt with accessibility:**

With the reopening of the building and the increased video streaming integrated into the church, new access will be provided allowing increased online participation in many church programs and activities.

## Resources & Programs

**List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:**

The last year involved some paring back of programs and resources due to COVID, but many things continued through the church year via online access. After the building closed in early March 2020, ministers and staff worked to offer online worship services with barely adequate equipment and resources. After upgrading equipment, the quality of the online offerings improved significantly.

Livestreaming Sunday services brought many to church who had not been able to attend previously because of distance or mobility. One church friend commented on how online access allowed her to attend her own church service as well as Unity's, where she found the Story for All Ages especially meaningful.

Fairly quickly, the ministerial staff started offering short videotaped messages of hope and connection on a daily basis. The Pastoral Care Team initiated a program called Congregational Connectors, congregants who volunteered to make regular contact with other members to address the isolation of the pandemic. Church services and the minister's messages were available through the Unity YouTube channel. Wellspring Wednesday services and programs continued as well.

There are a number of Fellowship Groups, like the Dine with Nine monthly dinner get-together, various men's groups, support groups for caregivers or those experiencing grief, LGBTQ+ affinity group, etc. These groups provide ways for people to come together to form a "community of communities." There are also many resources for Adult Faith Formation, addressing how to develop a more loving and effective life. Using the framework of Within, Among and Beyond, the website offers resources for developing a personal spiritual practice, like a Chalice Circle; places to engage in small group interactions, such as the Antiracism Literacy Partners; and opportunities to "bless the world" through a Community Outreach Ministry Team.

Where possible, many of these opportunities were still available through online access, facilitated by the many Zoom accounts that Unity made available to groups. We are slowly opening up the church building while keeping a careful eye on the rate of COVID infection and hospitalizations. Masks are required and everyone is asked to sign in to facilitate contact tracing, if needed.

Since reopening to in-person Sunday worship services on September 12, 2021, attendance has averaged 205 people, which allows for sufficient distancing. Over the same time period, the average number of views on Youtube is 350.

### **Describe your religious educational programs:**

We have complete lifespan education from Spirit Play for preschool and Kindergarten through Adult Education and everything in between. We offer something for every age group as our children develop.

Our nursery is both a safe, nurturing place for babies and toddlers as well as a place for our teens to contribute and earn money they can use towards future youth trips if they choose to. We have Spirit Play preschool programming for 3 - 5 year olds that explores our values and history with a focus on wonder. Our 1st - 6th graders experience programming based on multiple intelligences with rotational lessons in science, drama, body, art and music.

Our Jr High programming explores various topics such as the Heroes Journey, Theology of StarTrek, Earth Based Religions, and many others.

### **Describe your youth and campus ministry programs:**

We have a very well regarded human relationships curriculum using the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum for primarily 8th graders and our 9th grade Coming of Age program runs September - April and involves the youth and many adults as mentors and class leaders. Our youth group, Tower Club, involves 20-30 youth from 10 - 12th grade with an important pilgrimage trip to Boston to learn about our UU roots the third week of October. We don't currently have an active campus ministry program.

Youth programming can be explored at our [Religious Education for Children and Youth](#) page.

# Surrounding Community

**Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:**

Saint Paul, rightly or wrongly, is often considered the stodgier, less exciting sibling of the Twin Cities, and Minneapolis, the “hipper” of the two. However, there exists a wonderful balance of rich cultural opportunities: the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Ordway Theater, MN Opera, Schubert Club, The Saint’s (Minor League) baseball stadium, and Lowertown artist lofts are located in downtown, perhaps a mile from Unity. On University Avenue to the north you can explore Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Cambodian, and Thai food, wares, and services. There, too, you can hop onto the light rail that runs west through the University of Minnesota’s east and west bank campuses and through the center of downtown Minneapolis, ending at the Twin’s major league baseball stadium.

A number of nearby colleges also add to the variety of event and activity opportunities: Macalester College and Concordia University St. Paul, Hamline University, the University of St. Thomas and University of St Catherine in addition to the aforementioned University of Minnesota are all within five miles of the church. Add to this the Mississippi River—still a working river—replete with barges, and other boat traffic, a railroad bridge, and Harriet Island, a large green recreation area. On the other side of Harriet Island, in the neighborhood known as the West Side (a misnomer), the highest concentration of first and second generation Mexican and other Latinx immigrants reside and operate businesses.

Saint Paul has miles of bike and hiking trails, regional parks and a state park nearby. Because these opportunities are such a short distance away, commuting by bike is possible; buses and the light rail will accommodate bikes and wheelchairs.

The 2020 U.S. Census shows a growing racial and ethnic diversity in Minnesota. The state also has some of the largest achievement and opportunity gaps in the nation. According to the census, St. Paul is 48.8% white, 16.5% Black, 9.7% Hispanic, 19.2% Asian, 0.7% American Indian, and 4.7% Multiracial. Saint Paul is one of a handful of Minnesota cities where residents of color are now the majority. Melvin Carter, Saint Paul’s first Black mayor, was recently re-elected to a second term.

The Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Mohican) has lead tours of local indigenous sacred sites revealing the vital history of the tribes whose lands were confiscated by the white settlers. A number of Unity members have participated in this learning which

has been foundational to the formation of Unity's Indigenous Justice Team. Unity Church sits on land once belonging to the Dakota and Ojibwe people.

Unity Church is located in the Summit-University neighborhood, situated near Summit Avenue where, historically, the wealthy resided. Designated a historic preservation district because of the diversity of architectural styles from 1870 to 1930, Summit Avenue features the longest stretch of Gilded Age mansions in the country. Running from the Mississippi River on the west, and winding around past the front of the Saint Paul Cathedral, the Avenue, if not having been bifurcated by the I-94, would end at the doors to the Capitol building itself.

A few short blocks to the north of Unity sits the historically African-American Rondo neighborhood. Construction in the 1950's and 60's of the same I-94 mentioned above caused the destruction of numerous homes and businesses and the dislocation of what was a thriving community. Residents and others interested in reclaiming the vitality of Rondo are currently engaged in efforts to physically reconnect the neighborhood, making the area whole again, and restoring its viability as a desirable place to live. Unity sits at the intersection of the history and evolution of these two very different parts of St. Paul.

The Obama School, a grade school across the street from Unity, has a diverse population of students, with 85% of the students receiving free and reduced lunch. Several Unity members volunteer there tutoring reading and math.

There are several houses of worship within blocks of Unity from various denominations including River of Life Christian Church, House of Hope Presbyterian, St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Vertical Church of St. Paul, Mt. Zion Temple, and Saint Thomas More Catholic Church, to name just a few.

Unity Church and the White Bear UU Church in suburban St. Paul, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis and First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis (Humanist) along with smaller congregations in suburban communities provide dynamic liberal religious alternatives. Collegiality between the ministerial staffs of these congregations is strong. Unity, as a teaching congregation over the past 20 years, has had numerous interns move into their ministries within these churches. Minneapolis is also home to Rev. Meg Riley, current Co-Moderator of the UUA and Rev. Ashley Horan, Organizing Strategy Director of the UUA.

**Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:**

Unity has been in the St. Paul community for over 150 years. We are known, yet like many Unitarian-Universalist congregations, are not always understood. We have community partners directly in our neighborhood and in the larger Twin Cities. We have shared our building for several years with a non-denominational, Christian and primarily African-American congregation as they explored where to plant their roots.

Our recent building renovation created a more open and inviting entry, in keeping with the way we have expanded the use of our space by community groups. In non-COVID times, a brief list of organizations who use our facilities included recovery groups, community cultural groups, a pre-school, an LGBTQ Choir, and other musical entities. Additionally, we host election voting, and provide Sanctuary housing for individuals and families who are experiencing uncertain immigration status.

**Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.**

Our current Ends Statements drive our actions moving forward. They are also written out of our history of action and inaction. We are constantly looking at our context, are learning as a community and individuals to achieve our Ends and to work towards building Beloved Community.

# Questionnaire

## **Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff**

Unity Church operates under policy governance, and the minister serves as part of the Executive Team operating consistent with the policies adopted by the Board.

The minister, as part of the Executive Team, has primary responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the mission, values, and Ends of Unity Church. The Executive Team is responsible for the administration of the programs of Unity Church and is expected to foster a collaborative environment among staff. If there are other ministers serving Unity Church, the senior minister will serve as lead of the ministerial team. Other ministers will report to the senior minister.

During the Eller-Isaacs' tenure, the ET was generally composed of the two Senior Ministers and the Executive Director. At times over the years it has included other ministers, as approved by the Board, in order to expand the scope of ministry areas represented on the ET. The ET operates in covenant, strives for consensus, and speaks with one voice to the other bodies of the church.

ET ministers have specific oversight and authority over worship, pastoral care, and other aspects that are clearly the purview of clergy, while the Executive Director holds the financial, HR, board liaison, and other institutional aspects of church life.

Informally, the Executive Director acts as chief of staff when there are all-staff communications that go out. Each ET member works with those who report directly to them.

The ET as a whole is responsible for hiring, evaluating, and firing all non-ET staff, with the ET member who has primary responsibility for that area taking the lead. For example, the Executive Director takes the lead on hiring administrative and

facilities staff, with input and participation from other ET members. When we searched for a new music director, the senior co-ministers took the lead, formed a search committee to help, and the ET made the final decision.

All members of the ET report to the Board as the Executive Leadership, and are not evaluated as individuals. The ET's performance as a team is monitored by the Board on a structured, monthly basis to assure it is operating within the limitations of board policy and working toward Unity's stated Ends.

More about the ET's history and functioning can be found below, in response to the question about our governing structure.

### **Primary areas of focus for the minister**

Reflecting on what the Search Team has heard from the congregation, primary areas of focus for the minister can be broken down into four broad categories: spiritual leadership, congregational management, community engagement and justice work, and pastoral care. The amount of energy and focus on each of these areas will vary depending on the needs of the congregation and of the surrounding community.

#### **Spiritual Leadership**

- Providing historical and theological perspective
- Serving as a leader in developing spiritual practice
- Contributing to and delivering meaningful, moving services
- Taking overall responsibility for the worship life of Unity Church and is accountable for all worship services
- Working with the congregation and staff to identify next steps for work towards becoming a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships
- Conducting rites of passage, including weddings, child dedications, Coming of Age and memorial services as well as providing pastoral care services, including crisis intervention and visitation of the homebound, sick, dying, and bereaved, both directly and in conjunction with Unity Church's pastoral care program

#### **Congregational Management**

- Working in collaboration as part of the Executive Leadership to implement Unity Church's programs, lead the staff team, and administer Unity Church's business

operations

- Taking an active role in service to the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.

### **Community Engagement and Justice Work**

- Working to advance social justice, both among the people within the congregation and beyond the congregation in the broader community.
- Addressing systemic prejudices and biases found within all parts of society. This will include both an inward-facing examination of the ways that bias is manifested within Unity, and also in Unity's relationships with community partners.

### **Pastoral Care**

- Providing pastoral care to members of the congregation to share in times of joy or in moments of need.
- Coordinating and identifying effective ways to administer additional pastoral care.

### **Desired strengths of the minister**

Unity's Ends statements chart the course for where the congregation hopes to be in the near future, and also guides what the congregation will be looking for in a new minister. The church's current Ends include:

1. Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.
2. Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.
3. Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.
4. Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.
5. Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
6. Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.
7. Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.
8. Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

The Ministerial Search Team (MST)'s survey found that the congregation believes that the three most important Ends are:

6. Discovering and pursuing our individual and collective work to advance justice....,

2. Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship..., and
5. Generously give and openly receive compassionate care.

(Full results can be found in the congregational survey summary in the Documents Packet.)

The congregation indicated through the survey that the following traits are the most important in a new minister:

1. Preaching ability/presence

The ideal minister will be able to inspire from the pulpit while communicating a clear message that aligns with the mission, values, and ends of Unity Church.

2. Administration/staff relationship skills

The ideal minister will have a clear vision for the future, and be able to work collaboratively with staff to create and implement strategies to effectively realize that vision. In so doing, the minister will understand the culture of the congregation and the importance of good policy, practice, and procedure. The minister will be able to assess the strengths and limitations of others and delegate accordingly. In working with staff, the minister will simultaneously foster personal responsibility and a relationship of belonging.

3. Spiritual leadership skills

The ideal minister will be spiritually grounded and have a developed personal spiritual practice that enables them to preach from experience and lead by example. The minister will also nurture and instill a rich spiritual life in the members of Unity Church and will seek the wisdom of appropriate mentors to continue their own spiritual growth.

4. Committing to anti-racism work

The ideal minister will recognize the critical importance of taking UU principles beyond the pulpit by taking action to advance social justice and anti-racism. The minister will recognize that this requires not only impassioned sermons and individual outreach by the minister, but also demands the engagement and accountability of the congregation to dismantle dominant culture within, among, and beyond Unity Church.

5. Building a multicultural spiritual home

The ideal minister will understand what it means to be a minority in a majority space and will work to foster true community for members of color, LGBTQ members, members with disabilities, and members with other cultural or personal identities. The minister will recognize that this requires creating community both

within and among these identities at Unity, and also requires seeing and hearing members as they are, working to dismantle exclusionary habits of belonging, valuing all member contributions, and creating multicultural leadership.

### **Ongoing momentum we would like to continue**

Unity has an ongoing relationship with Team Dynamics, a consultancy focused on helping leaders and workplaces live up to their potential through intentional and meaningful culture change. Unity's Beloved Community Staff Team is advancing work around antiracism and multiculturalism. This work has considerable recent momentum, including widely attended programmatic offerings in recent months. The congregation will look to the new minister to help maintain that momentum.

In addition, there is a wide-reaching engagement with the Intercultural Development Inventory. Roughly 350 congregants have participated in the IDI, receiving feedback and processing and pursuing their Intercultural Development Plan in the context of a ministry team they are involved with.

Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams have been in a period of renewal, with a focus on spiritual work, building authentic relationships within the team, and creating strong community partnerships for education, service, and advocacy. A new minister will be expected to continue to support Unity members in the work to establish and nurture connections with organizations, people, and partners in the broader community.

### **Programs and traditions we want to maintain**

A number of themes emerged from the congregational survey and listening sessions regarding programs and traditions that should be maintained.

#### **1. Social Justice Work and Community Outreach Ministry Teams**

A strong response from the congregation revolved around the church's commitment to social justice work, some of this coming through community outreach ministry teams. Respondents indicated in numerous parts of the survey that they feel strongly about continuing Unity's community outreach work, and it also came through in the responses to what potential changes would be challenging.

#### **2. Religious Education**

Nurturing our youth and providing them with a spiritual foundation and Unitarian-Universalist faith identity is a fundamental cornerstone of Unity Church and the

minister would be expected to maintain and expand that program through work with other ministerial and lay staff. The excellence of the religious education programming draws in many new families that stay and become life-long members.

### 3. Shared Leadership / Ministry

Unity has a long history of shared leadership and ministry between the ministers and members of the congregation. This includes the worship associates program, which brings members of the congregation into the worship planning and delivery process, and the pastoral care associates program that shares in the offering of pastoral care to the community. Shared leadership is also a critical component of the nine Community Outreach Ministry Teams. Lay members of the congregation lead the work in partnership with ministers or staff within the church.

### 4. Music Program

Much more is said about the music program in other parts of the Congregational Record. The music ministry of Unity Church has a long history of outstanding music as an integral part of Sunday worship and for creating connections within, among, and beyond our community. Currently, there are three adult choirs and a children's choir.

### 5. Christmas Pageant

Unity Church's Christmas Pageant was started during the ministry of Frederick May Eliot and has been celebrated for over 100 years. The Nativity story is told from a variety of traditional texts, while the children and youth of the church create a series of tableaux. The choir, and for the past many years, the children's choir, sing hymns and carols to advance the narrative. This tradition holds deep meaning for many community members who have a fervent desire for it to continue.

## **Participation of children in the worship service, and the frequency of inter-generational services**

Unity has a thriving community of families with children of all ages. Every month of the church year, there is one Sunday that is either a Story Sunday or a Family Sunday. Family Sundays are generally centered around major celebrations, both traditional (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter) and UU-focused (Merging of Waters, Flower Communion). There is a story for all ages told by a member of the Religious Education ministry team and an activity book provided to children. No RE classes take place on these Sundays and children stay in the sanctuary with their families. Story Sundays occur in the months without a major holiday. On those Sundays, the children go to their RE classes after the story. The website does a good job of describing Family and Story Sundays as well as other aspects of our RE program.

Infants and toddlers and children who for some reason are not going to RE classes may sit in the service with their parents. Another way in which children participate in the worship service would be through the Children's choir.

There is 30-minute intergenerational service every Wednesday evening as part of our Wellspring Wednesday programming. In non-COVID times, we had a communal meal on Wednesdays, followed by an intergenerational service, and then adult faith formation programming and programming for children. During COVID the intergenerational service is still happening on Wednesdays, but there is no meal and the service is poorly attended.

Unity has had a culture over the years of a Sunday service that is designed to serve adults. Children should be 'seen but not heard' if they are in the service at all. This is of course different on Family and Story Sunday services. Although the congregation has come a long way in loosening up and not being so stuffy about this, it is still a part of our culture. We do not have an informal feeling in the service where a squirmy child or a chatty toddler is just part of the experience. If a toddler is being noisy, it is considered appropriate for a family to move to the Family Room next to our nursery. There they can watch the service on a TV screen and hear it without bothering anyone else in the pews. This concerns some members as an unwelcoming experience for families, especially visiting families. If they are visiting to determine if they feel a connection with the church as a whole, they are less likely to have their children join the children's programming.

For many years the first-to sixth-grade children would join their families attending the second service and be sung out to go to their class after the first ten - fifteen minutes. This tradition was eliminated prior to COVID by our RE Director in favor of the children at all services having a consistent experience of children's chapel.

Our RE curriculum centers around five major theological questions (What does it mean to be human and alive? What is the nature of a higher power? How will we strive to create Beloved Community? How do we live in the face of grief and loss? What is sacred in our everyday lives?) We also reference the children's version of the 7 Principles (Each person is important, Be kind in all you do, etc.).

Our church year uses monthly themes to center the services, the focus of the monthly newsletter, and adult programming. There is a desire among lay leaders of the RE program to see these organizing themes come together with the RE curriculum. If the themes had some carryover, parents and children could discuss the overlap between the service and the youth's class content as another way for there to be intergenerational connection, even if it is outside of the service itself.

Our RE Ministry Team expressed a strong desire to see a more vibrant integration of the youth into the service, whether it means their direct participation, or the incorporation of their voices into the service in creative ways. One good example of this is the collage of voices that is shared on Coming of Age Sunday, with portions of the 9th graders' credo statements read by the ministers during a section of the service. In listening sessions, we heard a desire to do more of this and to bring the children and youth more into the Sunday service, both indirectly and directly.

### **Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning**

Pre-pandemic, these are the holiday services that have been celebrated outside of Sunday morning. It's possible that not all of them will be continued.

Maundy Thursday Service, a service of ritual and community, sharing in traditional holy week practices of Eucharist and Foot Washing. In the Memorialist tradition, we join to remember the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, which include welcoming all people to a meal of love, giving thanks for the gifts of life, and serving each other in humility.

Good Friday Service of Tenebrae, or "shadows/ darkness," is based on a twelfth century liturgy of solemn observance and extended meditation on the passion of Christ. With candles extinguished after each reading and silent reflection, the increasing darkness on the evening of Good Friday invites worshipers to enter into the dramatic narrative of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion, and to reflect on God's steadfast love.

The day after Thanksgiving, the 'Black Friday at Church' service is an alternative to the shopping frenzy associated with the day. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, there is some question as to whether this will continue in future years.

A winter solstice celebration, a Celtic-inspired family friendly ritual, marks the turning of the year toward light.

About a week before Christmas, an evening 'Blue Holidays' service for those for whom the holidays are not merry.

On Christmas Eve there are multiple services: a contemplative service in the morning; the annual Christmas pageant performed twice in late afternoon; and a family 'lessons and carols' service in the early evening, and another one in late evening.

Unity has recognized Día de Los Muertos as part of a Sunday service. In past years, an ofrenda has been created in the sanctuary vestibule and congregants are encouraged to bring mementoes of those they have lost. Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra, our first artist in residence in 2017-2018, offered a workshop on the meaning of ofrendas and how to make one. She also provided music at a Sunday service that integrated Latinx and indigenous perspectives to reference and honor values of the Día de los Muertos celebration.

### **Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation**

Unity Church became a Welcoming Congregation in 2007.

### **Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation**

Unity is not yet certified as a Green Sanctuary. Act for the Earth, one of Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams, works to engage the congregation through education, action, and advocacy. Achieving Green Sanctuary status has been among its goals for a few years, and its leadership believes the current team, well-organized and effective, will get us to the finish line.

Act for the Earth's action teams are working on initiatives to lower emissions, foster healthy food choices, promote habitat and sustainable agriculture, and ensure justice. A 2022 initiative is a partnership with a local solar co-op to engage the congregation's members in learning about solar technology and financing, and to sign up if they are homeowners.

When Unity undertook major renovations in 2012, it placed a priority on sustainable building and practices. We tied together a campus that had been built in five stages, put in new HVAC systems with high tech efficiency (which has been a blessing in the pandemic), added high efficiency boilers, replaced many windows, installed lights with energy savings features, sprinkled the entire building (including the bell tower), abated hazardous material, and insulated the roof on the Eliot Wing.

### **Other ways in which the congregation lives its values**

Engagement in the opportunities for learning and social action are a primary way we live our values. Advancing justice and racial healing have been a prominent and evolving emphasis over the past two decades. Starting in 2014, Unity's ministers

and members participated in Black Lives Matter protests. By 2015 there was a BLM banner posted on the exterior of the building. Unity has hosted film series, book discussions, and community forums on race.

In 2016 the Beloved Community Staff Team was formed to strengthen and coordinate Unity's antiracism and multicultural work. In 2019 Unity engaged Team Dynamics, a locally owned company centered on racial equity leadership development, to help us investigate Unity's culture and find ways to bridge the "differences that make a difference" as we develop greater cross-cultural competence. Unity's contract with Team Dynamics continues into the first year of settled ministry.

Another tool at Unity is the Intercultural Development Inventory, which is incorporated into the formation and operation of Unity's various teams, and is available to all church members. Since 2019, about 350 church members have taken the inventory and participated in follow-up conversations and personal development plans.

Following the murder of George Floyd, Unity initiated a program called Finding Our Next Right Action which encompasses the Antiracism Literacy Partners, a Unity Justice Database and antiracism collections in our libraries. A new effort at Unity is SoulWork, which created the "Double Helix" model to describe and examine how our spiritual development is inextricably linked with our work toward the goal of a multicultural antiracist community. More information on these initiatives can be found in other parts of the Congregational Record.

Additional avenues to learning and social action include Wellspring Wednesday programs, film discussions, library acquisitions, book club discussions, lecture series, workshops, and organized participation in protests and marches. More organized, sustained efforts include Community Ministry Outreach Teams, currently nine in number, that work in partnership with local nonprofits.

Other examples are pilgrimages to Transylvania, Boston, New Orleans, Bolivia, India, Selma, and here in the Twin Cities, to the Fort Snelling site at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers to learn about the detention of Dakota peoples in 1862-63.

The congregational survey, just completed as part of the Search Team's work, showed strong support from respondents on the value placed on social justice work, and a desire to place more emphasis on anti-racism, multiculturalism, and community/neighborhood engagement.

Second, our values are expressed in institutional structures and arrangements. A prominent example is that Unity is a teaching congregation. The endowed Hallman Ministerial Intern Fund honors the Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman, a former member and church administrator, and helps support a full-time ministerial intern each year.

A second example is a partnership with Above Every Name (AEN) Ministries, a small Black church that had lost its space to meet and worship. Several years ago, Unity arranged for AEN to use the sanctuary for weekly services and share occasional worship experiences; its minister engaged in a multi-year mentoring relationship with our senior ministers. This arrangement was suspended at the start of the pandemic and is being re-evaluated.

A third example is the Circle of Peace Movement, a group that provides a safe space for racial healing and the building of peaceful communities. The Circle has met at Unity since 2003. It was started by a couple from the Summit-University community who were concerned about youth violence in the neighborhood that had touched their family. They found a welcome space at Unity and later became members of the church. Other church members help with providing meals for the weekly Circle gatherings.

The church building also has been put to use in other ways in keeping with our values. Our building is accessible. There are all-gender bathrooms on every level. Unity has provided office, rehearsal, and meeting space for many community groups over the years. We became a sanctuary church in 2017, and since then have hosted four individuals or families. Currently, we are hosting a Ghanaian family of six, including three children. More details are available in the response to a later question about the building and grounds.

An example of values expressed through institutional policy is the Anti-Racism Leadership Team, commissioned in 2003 to conduct an audit of the history of race relations and Unity Church, as part of its work to lead Unity to become an actively anti-racist institution. Over the years the ARLT has monitored progress toward anti-racism ends in both policy and operations, working with the Board of Trustees to codify and improve practices. Policy J of Unity's Governing Policies was adopted in 2012, outlining ways in which executive leadership will take actions to support racial healing and anti-racism. It includes a vendor audit to evaluate, educate, and choose vendors based on Unity's values and commitment to our anti-racism and anti-oppression agenda.

Finally, many of our values are embedded in ordinary congregational life. From our weekly offering, for example, 70% goes to support a community non-profit partner, and 30% supports the Community Outreach Ministry Teams. Wellspring

Wednesday programs offer opportunities for sharing in food ministry, and teaching and learning about contemporary issues. Our strong value on shared leadership and ministry is exemplified by Worship Associates, Pastoral Care Associates, and other teams. This is described in more detail in a later response to the question of work that is shared by the congregation and the minister.

### **Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation**

Unity Church is currently not an Honor Congregation. Over several years the Board has been adding 5% to our Annual Program Fund dues each year, and in 2022 we have budgeted \$70,540 to the UUA and MidAmerica Region. This is about 76% of full dues.

### **Lessons the congregation has learned about nurturing ministers and ministry**

When the Eller-Isaacs arrived at Unity, they saw that its role as a teaching congregation was reestablished. Historically, Unity Church had offered ministerial internships, but by the middle of Roy Phillip's tenure, this had waned. Starting in the 2001-02 church year, the Hallman Ministerial Internship was begun. Open to ministerial interns who plan to serve large congregations, the Hallman Internship has been highly sought after and successful in terms of its participants moving on to parish ministry. It gave many budding ministers the experience of working with an engaged congregation that took its role as a teaching congregation seriously. Paused after the 2018-19 church year, due to the planned retirement of Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, it is hoped that the Hallman Internship will restart after the settlement of a new senior minister.

Unity Church has also had numerous additional ministerial interns during the past nearly twenty years. Many have arrived from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, doing either full year residencies, or half-time two-year internships. Others have used Unity as a home base to do community ministerial internships, primarily in correctional institutions. Most, though, have worked within the congregation. They have been woven into the fabric of who we are and become an integral part of who our congregation is. The farewell, after internships are completed, is bittersweet.

A worship associate program was explored by Roy Phillips, but it was the Eller-Isaacs who brought a viable model from their ministry at First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California, to Unity. This program gives the ministers the benefit of

multiple perspectives and worldviews from the participating lay members. It enriches them, both as ministers and as individuals. From a Worship Associate Listening Session it was stated that this program ...[g]ives [the] congregation a way of entry, [a] greater intimacy and engagement in the life of the church. It lets people crack into [Unity Church - Unitarian]. It's of value to have [t]he chance to help shape the service, even to help shape the minister's own sermon.

Senior ministers at Unity Church have taken sabbaticals, which have given them time for reflection and restoration. The congregation has benefited from the perspectives and learning brought back by the ministers from their sabbaticals.

During their ministries, both Roy Phillips and the Eller-Isaacs had children diagnosed with cancers. The congregation rose to meet the minister's needs, whether it was covering the pulpit on a Sunday, acknowledging their needs to be away from active ministry at Unity, and to providing them what the Pastoral Care Team offers to all congregants. When the health of Janne Eller-Isaacs' parents went into decline, she needed to be in California monthly to see to their care. After her father's death, Janne arranged for her mother to move to Minnesota. Once here, the Pastoral Care Team added the elder Ms. Eller to its rolls.

### **How the congregation has evaluated its ministry and its history with ministers**

Unity's leadership is structured not as a CEO model but as an Executive Team (ET), comprised of the called minister(s) and executive director, and in certain circumstances other ministers on staff. The Board evaluates its ministers and ministry on an on-going basis, through the ET's monthly reports to the Board on progress toward achieving Unity's stated Ends. Another evaluation mechanism is the annual congregational survey, which documents members' perceptions about progress toward our Ends.

The Board put these processes in place following the ministry of Roy Phillips, which ended in 1998 after a prolonged period of conflict. Phillips' ministry was polarizing, and included behavior that was unethical and abusive. Board and staff members who were actively involved in the 1990's report a persistent pattern of verbal abuse toward staff, failures to disclose the church's problematic finances to the Board, and an autocratic style of relationships with staff that amounted to emotional abuse and bullying.

Attempts by the Board to design a disciplinary policy to hold him accountable were not successful. When 13 staff members left in a single year, including the resignation of the much-loved associate minister, there was an outcry and congregational pressure to remove Roy. The decision was made to “counsel him out.” The separation agreement concerned many, as it allowed him to retire with honors and to continue in ministry.

In 2006, Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs invited Roy to preach from the pulpit at Unity. The outcry that followed revealed to them for the first time many details of his abuses, including sexual affairs with parishioners. The invitation was withdrawn. It was a highly charged conflict within the church at that time -- many parishioners being completely unaware of the history, and at least a few still living with the deep pain and anger that his ministry had caused.

This account is lengthy, but important, as it was this dysfunction that led to the decision to operate under an Executive Team rather than a CEO model at the start of the Eller-Isaacs' ministry. This shared leadership at the “top” of the organizational chart has demonstrated its value in the years since then. The events of 2006 also brought into stark relief the importance of transparency in decision making, of shared leadership, and of addressing conflicts so that healing may take place. These values are now deeply embedded at all levels of Unity's culture.

On occasion in the past two decades, other evaluation processes have been undertaken; for example, conducting an end-of-year assessment with called ministers in which they identified goals related to their personal and professional development. At other times the Board has filled out a survey assessing the ministers' performance, and hosted a conversation with them based on those findings. However, the Board has judged these processes to be both awkward and not particularly meaningful. In recent years the Board has undertaken discussions about how to gain more clarity on the way forward, to ensure full transparency and accountability concerning the performance of the Executive Team, including the called minister.

For details on Unity's formal procedures, see Governing Policy IV, which outlines the relationship between the Board and Executive Leadership; specifies the Executive Team's job contribution; how performance is monitored, and the process for disciplinary action. Unity's Governing Policies can be found in the Documents Packet.

**What cottage meetings and surveys tell about the congregation**

In September and October 2021, the Ministerial Search Team conducted a congregational survey and hosted a series of Listening Sessions. We did not know what to expect in terms of congregational response, given the long-term separation from the church building during the pandemic and ongoing restrictions and concerns for health and safety. We were gratified that 371 people participated in the on-line survey. Its results are incorporated into many of the answers to these Congregational Record questions. A report on the survey results is included in the Documents Packet.

We conducted 21 Listening Sessions, 12 in person and nine via Zoom. Eleven Listening Sessions were open to all, and 10 others were directed to specific groups within the church. These included groups whose work is most directly related to ministry and the ministerial role: Worship Associates, Teaching Associates, Pastoral Care, Religious Education, Community Outreach, and former Board Chairs. Others were affinity groups of LGBTQ and BIPOC members. In total, 239 people participated. At this writing we are conducting Listening Sessions with staff, and arranging for Listening Sessions with the youth of the church. As with the survey, what we learned from these rich conversations has been incorporated into the answers to many of these questions. A more thematic summary of the sessions was prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, and can be found in the Documents Packet.

As we planned for these gatherings, we were mindful of the tender and tentative time we are all 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 deserve special attention at this time of transition. A summary of what we found is included in the Documents Packet.

### **The work that the minister(s) is expected to do on their own**

The minister serves as a member of the Executive Team and works in collaboration with that group to ensure successful implementation of all Unity programs and policies, and to delineate responsibilities of each member of the Executive Team. The minister, however, has sole accountability for all worship services and is the leader of the ministerial team.

In addition, the minister is expected to be the primary driver of the following work:

- Ongoing spiritual exploration and development, including a full and ongoing awareness of how the congregation is challenged to grow and develop spiritually.

- Participate in UUA-related activities, both locally and nationally.
- Stay current with community issues and spiritual development to ensure services are relevant and meaningful to the congregation.
- Cultivate meaningful relationships with people who attend or visit the church.
- Provide pastoral care
- Provide leadership to advance social justice within and beyond the church.

### **The work that the congregation is expected to do on their own**

Members are strongly encouraged to participate in the life of the church. They have the responsibility to read, understand, and live out the Mission and Ends of Unity Church-Unitarian. The minister looks to members of the congregation to demonstrate effective leadership, be open to change and broaden the meaning of community. Congregants should communicate issues or concerns in a respectful manner through established communication channels.

Unity offers a pathway to membership through the “[Finding Yourself at Unity](#)” series. It consists of eight sessions to help seekers better understand how Unity Church supports their faith journeys, the church’s work to build Beloved Community, and its efforts to bless the world. The final session, “Committing to Unity,” explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. It offers time to reflect on the meaning of generosity and how a person can discover the places in their life where the world’s need meets the gifts and joy they have to offer.

Three stated expectations of members include:

- Develop personal practice to help you find and keep your balance.
- Develop the skills of intimacy that let you go deep quickly with strangers.
- Take the compassion that rises from doing the first two and use it to bless the world.

These elements of faith formation have recently been aligned with antiracist multicultural practices working within ourselves, among our church community, and beyond in the larger world. This is intended to strengthen our capacity to become

an antiracist multicultural spiritual community built on authentic relationships. Unity offers resources to aid members in faith formation and antiracist practices, but it is up to each member to make use of these resources.

Members are also strongly encouraged to make an identifiable financial commitment in the form of a yearly annual pledge. Pledging members are voting members and have the right to participate in all congregational votes, including the calling of ministers to the church. Voting members are also eligible to apply to serve on the Board of Trustees and the Worship Associates Team.

We are aware that requiring pledging in order to be a full voting member is something many churches have eliminated or are reevaluating.

### **The work of the congregation and minister(s) that is shared by both**

Unity Church has a long history of shared leadership and shared ministry. There are ministry teams that work with ministers, other staff, and congregants to offer pastoral care, engage in community outreach/social justice work, manage and provide direction for religious education, and develop and participate in conducting worship services. These forms of ministry empower lay people, significantly strengthen congregational life, and further the impact of the church in the world.

Pastoral Care work is shared by ministers and pastoral care team members who are specially trained members of the congregation. They lend support to congregants in moments of challenge, crisis, or celebration. Interactions are confidential, and no information is shared unless a congregant indicates that they would like others in the congregation to be involved or informed. Pastoral care work can include checking in, offering support, providing respite, and providing connections to services.

Unity's Community Outreach Ministry Teams provide the foundation for the church's community outreach and social justice work. Each team has a focus (sustainability, racial justice, affordable housing, etc.) and partners with one or more organizations in the community to engage in education, service, and advocacy within the context of our spiritual development and lives. Teams include Act for the Earth, Affordable Housing, Evergreen Projects, Gun Sense, Indigenous Justice, Mano a Mano, Obama School, Partner Church (Transylvania), and Racial and Restorative Justice. Congregants form the core of these teams and receive support and guidance from a minister or staff.

The congregation and ministers share responsibilities for developing worship content and themes for the church year through partnership in the Worship Associates program. The minister has overall responsibility for worship, including monthly themes and overall structure. Worship Associates meet as a group three times a year with the ministers and some staff to discuss and plan the specific elements of upcoming worship services. Each associate works with a service leader (minister or other) to develop and conduct three to four services during the church year, including selecting readings, recommending music, drafting a call to worship, and potentially offering a reflection on the worship topic. Experienced associates also have the opportunity to lead Sunday services during the summer.

The Religious Education Ministry Team works with the Minister of Faith Formation to coordinate and guide the programming for children and youth. Working with parent volunteers, the program goal is to cultivate and sustain in our young people a love of the spiritual life, a foundation for a personal theology and a confidence in their ability to be stewards of their own souls.

### **Work of the congregation done by other staff**

Membership and outreach staff offer the Finding Yourself at Unity series for newcomers, coordinate the welcome teams, support the community outreach teams, and provide increasing technological support for online gatherings.

Communications staff produce the monthly newsletter, the weekly order of service and inserts. This area also manages the website, sends out regular e-mail broadcasts to the congregation, and operates the sound and video technology for livestreamed events.

Facilities staff do the set up and take down of spaces for Sunday “coffee hour” and for all meetings and events that take place in the church space. They are also responsible for cleaning and maintaining the building and grounds. There is a garden team that works with facilities staff to tend the plantings around the building.

Financial / Development staff manage the finances and investments, develop the annual budget, and provide regular financial reports to the Board of Trustees.

These staff members also work with the lay-led Pledge Team to support the annual pledge drive that provides the operating funds for the year.

## **Description of a typical Sunday at the congregation, including a typical Sunday worship service**

Currently, the 9:00 am service is both in person and livestreamed and the 11:00 am service is in person only. The typical Sunday service is based on the in-person version. It includes people being greeted by members of the service's welcome team at entrances to the church building and sanctuary. There is music (soloist, guest musician, choir, etc.) while people settle into the sanctuary.

Upon the start of the service the worship leader shares a welcome from the reading desk, noting items that are of key importance in that week's order of service insert and any other special recognitions of note. The church bell is rung, symbolically beginning the worship service.

A piece of music follows the ringing of the bell. At the conclusion of the opening music, the worship associate reads the service's call to worship. This often provides some connection between the theme of the service and the worship associate's lived experience or the life of the congregation. The chalice is then lit, and the congregation joins in an opening hymn. This is often followed by a responsive affirmational reading, led by the worship associate.

Following the responsive reading, the congregation shares a moment of silence before the minister begins an embracing meditation. This lifts up joys and sorrows that span people and events within, among, and beyond the congregation and the people participating in the service. This is followed by a prayer.

The remaining elements of the service often occur in a variable order, but typically have included the following: readings (picked by both the worship associate and minister), music, an offering (of which 70% is given to a congregation-nominated community partner), a reflection from the worship associate, and sermon. Services close with a benediction and a postlude.

Religious education for children is offered in several classrooms in the basement while the main service is going on. Children experience a chapel service, conducted by RE staff, as part of their program. Some Sundays are identified as Family or Story Sundays and on those days the children are in the sanctuary for part of the service.

Teams of congregants welcome people to the service, provide orders of service, assist with finding seating and take and count the Sunday offering. Pre-pandemic we offered refreshments in the Parish Hall and that day's Welcome Team would

manage this. A virtual coffee hour, started when the church building was closed, is still ongoing. One of the 'Finding Yourself at Unity' sessions is offered every Sunday.

## **Religious education and exploration in the congregation for children, youth, and adults**

Unity offers a wide variety of opportunities for learning and growing through education and exploration. These and other experiences are [well documented on the website](#). Some of the ways this is offered include:

### **Children & Youth**

- RE classes for Spirit Play (3-Kindergarten); RE Rotations (1st - 6th grades); Jr High Classes (6th - 8th grades)
- Children's Musical (6th - 8th grade)
- Our Whole Lives (OWL) (8th grade)
- Coming of Age (COA) (9th grade)
- Tower Club youth group (10th - 12th grade)
- Boston Pilgrimage Trip (11th graders)
- Youth Cons
- Chalice Camp, a few weeks every summer, a wide range of ages

It's important to know that many of our families join for the religious education offerings and become life-long members. Our congregational survey showed that 82% of respondents first attended for the Religious Education programming for children and youth. Our programming for children and youth is highly valued and, in normal times, serves between two and three hundred children. These numbers are currently fewer but still significant.

Adult faith formation takes place through a number of opportunities that are [well described on our website](#). A framework that Unity uses is Within-Among-Beyond. This describes how we work on our own faith from the perspective of within ourselves in spiritual practice and personal exploration; among our congregation in small group fellowship with one another; and beyond into leadership of the church and in partnership and involvement in the broader community outside of the Unity congregation.

### **Some Adult Faith Formation Offerings**

- Chalice Circles: a year-long program in which participants can explore their connection to the monthly worship themes, deepen their spiritual repertoire and

expand their set of spiritual resources

- Wellspring: a year-long program of spiritual deepening that meets twice a month
- Teaching Associates: strong core of teachers and facilitators who work to strengthen areas of adult faith formation in Unity's congregational life
- Worship Associates: Help craft the worship experience and share their own spiritual journey as an invitation to others to deepen their own.
- Spiritual development classes (including Working Toward Prayer, Death and Dying, End-of-Life Conversations, and Thresholds): Targeting a particular aspect of spiritual growth and development, these classes help a person spend focused time developing practice to meet particular needs.

In addition, Wellspring Wednesday programming offers the opportunity to learn from internal and external speakers about a wide array of topics.

### **How the congregation defines good preaching and worship**

Worship is at the heart of our congregational life. The number one characteristic that congregants are looking for in ministerial leadership is good preaching. It's what draws us together. Congregants come to church on Sundays to be inspired and led, spiritually and intellectually, relying on the worship service to help us draw connections between our daily living, multiple traditions, and universal truths of the human experience and life itself.

A good preacher ministers to us in our vulnerable times, whether that centers around global, national, or local events like 9/11, changes in presidential administration which led to periods of instability among many in the church, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senator Paul Wellstone plane crash, or whether it's personal moments of deep pain and tenderness. Sometimes good preaching comes to us through lessons from literature and art, as well as from various theological, historical, and philosophical texts. Other times it comes directly from the minister's own lived experience and includes touchstone moments of pain and vulnerability (one minister's own history and hard work around personal issues of homophobia, or another's long-ago story of losing a partner to suicide during a sermon which included matters related to mental health). Sometimes a sermon includes lessons which call upon the congregation to participate in unexpected ways, such as Yom Kippur service, which includes the Litany of Atonement (Singing the Living Tradition #637) spoken by the congregation, a service centered around the #MeToo movement where those who had experienced sexual assault came forward in a ritual of remembering and proclamation, or an invitation to stand and identify oneself an adherent to one of the myriad religious and theological traditions represented at Unity.

Good preaching also helps us to find joy, to be the light, to be together as a community, now whether in the pews or online, and taking our learnings and message beyond the walls. It helps us center our hearts on values and perspectives around social issues, particularly the church's focus on anti-racism and anti-oppression and our work of becoming a multi-cultural spiritual home.

The weekly church service has been conducted for many years in a patterned, orderly way, and with high expectations for the quality of speaking, reading, and musical performance. For many, high expectations and order bring the comfort of familiarity, but for others they can bring a sense of rigidity and formality. It is not surprising that introducing new service elements will lead to complaints by some. What is problematic is when "performances" (by guest musicians, youth, or others) don't meet this unspoken high standard, and hurtful judgment swiftly follows. Since worship is at the heart of our life together, we need leadership that will center us on the path toward unconditional, nonjudgmental love for one another, helping us work toward our Ends statement to "know each other in all our fullness"—differences and flaws included—and "to create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people."

For the last (approximately) 12 years, Unity has operated on a schedule of monthly theological themes which cycle through every four years. These themes were chosen to follow the Judeo-Christian liturgy, as well as cycles in nature. The ministers added themes that are not in the UU thematic cycle, for example, sin, bringing out into the sunlight topics that are difficult for some people, giving them a fresh look and consideration. Themes are seen as an entry point to worship, and the enhancement of creativity and theological depth. This thematic schedule has served to strengthen participation in the Worship Associate program, where discussion of themes and worship planning are baked in.

Poetry and short readings from literary texts are vital to the crafting of good preaching and worship. Poetry is evocative and, whether spoken in unison by those attending the service or read from the reading desk by a single individual, offers a unifying moment to those in the service. It is especially important that readings that come from the lectern and pulpit include voices of marginalized or non-dominant cultures. Our congregation is predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class, well educated. Dedicated efforts have been made in recent years to include other voices and perspectives. Our expectation is that this work will continue.

Prayer and silence allow congregants to experience an intensive presence with one another during worship. Ministers have shared that time for this type of reflection within the service is highly valued.

Music is paramount to good worship and the minister's message. Music gathers the congregation into the service, inviting congregants to center and ground themselves. It translates the preacher's message into spiritual moments that are connected to mystery, magic, and passion. The minister's message is only part of the service; music is connective. The interpersonal connection music provides makes a difference. The congregation maintains a steadfast expectation that the music ministry of the church will remain a strong part of worship.

The worship service itself is crafted by a collaborative effort between the scheduled minister and a Worship Associate. Connections between the minister and congregation are enhanced by this special addition of the Worship Associates. During the service they share personal, relatable stories and demonstrate how to make connections between our lived experiences and spiritual growth.

Congregants and both current and former Worship Associates place a high value on the work of the Worship Associates and would like the program to continue under new leadership.

Finally, one part of good preaching moves us from a cerebral experience of the holy to a more affect-oriented expression of the spirit that connects us to each other. It invites us to take the love we find within our walls out into the world. To many, Unity has this quality of affect-oriented experience in a smaller measure than the cerebral experience. Growing it is desirable.

### **Things a prospective minister should know about the theologies of the congregation, including where to find inspiration, comfort, and conflict**

We come from a multitude of traditions and lean toward a more eclectic orientation of religious belief and practice (approximately 47% of the congregation). However, people are attracted to Unity who come from many other traditions as well, including those practicing agnosticism, earth-centered spirituality, ethical religion, naturalistic theism, mysticism and others. Given this robust variety of religious beliefs and expressions of faith, the new minister might expect that we are attracted to many sources of inspiration. That would be correct.

In worship, we gather inspiration from poetry, readings, personal reflections, Story Sunday stories (intended for times when the children and youth are in the sanctuary), and an occasional collage of voices (usually from within the congregation centered around a topic or event - like Coming of Age credos).

Almost universally agreed upon within the congregation is the value of music in being a force of inspiration, comfort and joy, in the service and during times of special event performances, like holidays and memorials. Music ministry comes to the congregation through a variety of means, including congregational singing, sung responses, and performed music, such as outside professional musicians or through Unity's own annual children's musical.

Familiarity with the selections played and/or sung during worship helps the congregation connect in different ways that bring solace. We saw this especially clearly during the COVID-19 pandemic when one hymn, played and sung weekly in online services, anchored viewers and grounded them in our community.

We recognize challenges that emerge as we consider White dominant traditional liturgical culture and its role in how worship is crafted. How does the church serve the needs of those who call Unity their spiritual home but come from or practice different faith traditions? Are we attending to the different theologies housed under one roof? Are we all ministered to in a way that ensures authentic welcome and a true sense of belonging by all? Would a visitor have a sense of the theological nature of Unity?

### **Ways the congregation handles conflicted situations**

Survey responses describe a church that is somewhat open to change and has a flexible enough structure to implement new ideas easily (56 and 59 on a scale of 100, respectively). Respondents also believed that the church focuses on mission, our Ends, and the greater good, rather than the strong preference of some individuals (71/100). Of particular relevance to this question, respondents thought that the church does a good job of having difficult conversations and staying in relationship (69/100).

Listening Sessions shed further light on the subject of conflict. Comments on effective leadership highlighted being open to other points of view and encouraging those views to be shared from the pulpit; holding the church to its stated values even when doing so was unpopular; and being able to apologize and admit missteps, make amends and move forward. Some participants mentioned the practice of hosting meetings with an open mic, whether during our annual meeting or a specially called congregational meeting.

A prominent example of this process occurred during the time of the church's renovation in 2011-12, when some aspects of the new design and financing were controversial. During a series of congregational meetings to consider design options, opposing views were passionately expressed. Several people were extremely upset about the plan to remove the courtyard, as members had been permitted to place cremated remains there. It was proposed that the soil from the courtyard would be conserved and incorporated into a small memorial area in the new church entrance area. The board and senior co-ministers held a special ceremony open to all, in which the soil was removed and blessed. This solution was not acceptable to some of the people concerned, however, and they either left the church or pulled back from their involvement.

There also were people who were unhappy about the \$8 million price tag. A fundraising consultant had advised that \$6 million was doable without incurring long-term debt. At an April 2012 congregational meeting, the congregation was asked to approve a financing package that would provide short-term construction financing and a long-term note, if needed.

Ultimately, the congregation passed the following resolution, with 91% of the voting members in support:

- 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.

This period of the church's life was difficult, and painful for some. To work through it, the conflicts were acknowledged, discussed in multiple meetings, and resolved in an open and balanced way, so that all points of view could be aired and submitted to congregational votes.

Other conflicts and concerns have a lower profile, but are on-going, sometimes beneath the surface. Some members of the congregation are asking questions about and wanting to see more anti-oppression efforts made around LGBTQ

people, people with disabilities, and people of lower socioeconomic status. We know there are also instances of exclusivity and misogyny that have gone unexpressed or unresolved.

These are some questions and issues the congregation will ask the new senior minister to wrestle with, to work with the entire church community in our ongoing efforts to explore who we are, individually and collectively, and to see and appreciate one another in all our differences.

For conflicts that arise from working relationships or conditions, several policies are in place. Unity's governing policies (included in the Documents Packet) include a complaint procedure to be followed when a matter or board policy is brought to the board's attention. For details see Policy III:G. Unity's Disciplinary Policy regarding its called minister and non-called executive staff can be found in Policy IV:D.

Unity staff and volunteers fill out an annual survey that includes questions about working conditions. The survey is confidential and submitted to the board committee, through which any needed follow-up is conducted.

### **Role of music and the arts in the life of the congregation**

Unity Church has a long history of outstanding choral singing as an integral part of Sunday worship and for creating connections. The congregation has become much more engaged in singing during services. All newcomers are welcome and encouraged to join an adult choir at Unity Church; currently, there are three:

- Unity Choir is a large choral ensemble (typically between 60 and 80 voices) and is the strong component on which Unity's choral program is built.
- The Women's Ensemble is a continually growing and evolving group (typically between 40 and 60 voices) that emerged organically at a Women's retreat.
- Unity Singers is an auditioned, chamber choral ensemble (typically between 20 and 28 voices.)

The growth and development of the program has been fostered by a succession of capable and visionary music directors, most recently Dr. Ahmed Anzaldúa. Dr. Anzaldúa started in the fall of 2019 and had to quickly pivot in March 2020 with the pandemic shutdown. While the building was closed, choir rehearsals were being held on Zoom and several virtual choir offerings were produced to add to the

livestreamed Sunday services. In the fall of 2021, the choir is rehearsing at the church, wearing masks and maintaining space between people. To date, only small groups of singers have performed during a Sunday service.

The Children's choir is open to children from grades one through five. In addition to singing, the children experience music through movement, games, playing instruments, reading music and learning about the elements of music. No prior experience is required. Pre-pandemic, the Children's Choir sang at services approximately one Sunday each month.

In fall 2021, Unity is launching a Youth Choir for grades 6-9, offering an opportunity to engage in music making to older youth. Youth Choir is a primarily-vocal group, but welcomes instrumentalists to join.

Every year in May, the music program presents a music Sunday in honor of Arthur Foote II, minister at Unity Church from 1945-1970. Upon his death in 1999, the Arthur Foote Music Fund was created as a permanent endowment to provide an annual music Sunday in his memory. All the choirs participate and, depending on the musical selections, additional musicians are brought in.

Unity has an active Art Team that cultivates relationships with local artists and offers opportunities to display and sell their work in the church's Parish Hall. In recent years Unity's Art Team has made great strides to ensure that Unity's permanent art collection reflects the values of the congregation in addition to honoring the diversity of the surrounding community. In recent years, the Art Team has hosted immersive programming, including an evening in partnership with the Karen Organization of Minnesota's Weaving Circle. Many Karen people have brought their cultural traditions to Minnesota upon seeking refuge from oppression in Burma. This event included education about the Karen people's story and an opportunity to share in a meal prepared by Karen community members.

In addition to Unity's Art Team, the church recently established an Artist in Residence program that seeks to cultivate generative relationships between the church and creatives across diverse art forms. Recent residencies included Marcus Young, Ina Yukka, and Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra. The program amplifies the congregation's vision of becoming a multicultural, antiracist Beloved Community, and opens Unity to larger dimensions in the work of making culture change.

Unity Church has a robust literary ministry that has developed over the past thirteen years. Included below are some of the main offerings:

*Faithful Words* is a community ministry of poetry, stories and words. Engaging writing as a spiritual practice and a tool for social action, Faithful Words offers guided writing and meditative reading sessions as well as social action communications workshops in congregational, community and retreat settings.

*Cairns: The Unity Church Journal of the Arts* is an annual, edited journal with an open call for submissions of poetry, prose, art, sermons, and music by members, friends and youth of Unity Church and Above Every Name. Its thirteenth volume will be published this year.

The Library/Bookstall Team manages and staffs the Bookstall on Sunday mornings and the Whitman Children's Library and Anderson Library. The team also organized the 2020 Unity Book Read, and supported The Gathering women's retreat and the St. Paul Sanctuary Coalition book reads. The team was able to hold the 12th Annual Café Unity: Poetry and Music Salon on Zoom, and sponsor a 15-poet reading from "Rocked by the Waters: Poems of Motherhood" (also on Zoom).

Reredos Press, an imprint of Unity Church, has published "The Vintage Cookbooks of Unity Church-Unitarian," a compilation of two cookbooks produced by Unity Church in the late 20th century, and "The Story of Unity Church 1872-1972," Revised Edition, by Elinor Sommers Otto.

## **The governing structure of the congregation and how the minister is a part of this structure**

Unity Church is in the tradition of congregational polity, with ultimate authority residing in the membership of Unity Church. The congregation operates under a policy governance model. It elects a Board of Trustees that sets all church policy and to which the Executive Team directly reports. The Executive Team currently consists of the Senior Minister, the Minister of Faith Formation, and the Executive Director.

We know that the ET model is unusual. It was born out of a tumultuous period in our history, in part to guard against a repeat of an "imperial ministry." That the model has served us well since then is due in large measure to personal character, good chemistry and high levels of trust all around. But more importantly, the ET was and is an expression of shared ministry at Unity Church, and is guided by that intention, by our norms, and always by what is in the best interest of the church. The mission, ends, and values have always been central to its work.

It is for that reason that membership on the ET has varied over time. Only the Trustees may change its make-up, after carefully considering the needs and trends they perceive. For example, an original member at its founding was the chair of the Development Ministry Team, flagging the Board's commitment to restoring trust in the fiscal integrity of the church. In 2007, when congregational survey responses indicated the centrality of community and congregational engagement, the Board added the Director of Congregational Life. Rev. KP Hong's addition to the ET in 2019 stemmed from a growing commitment to our multicultural aspirations and to faith formation over the lifespan.

While the ET model has served Unity Church well, we recognize that it may not be the ideal structure going forward. The new settled minister will again change the composition and dynamics. Our Executive Director will be retiring within a few years. These changes represent an important moment in time, during which the settled minister, the Board, and others will have the opportunity to reassess how we structure the executive role within policy governance.

Lay leadership is cultivated through membership in ministry teams and through programmatic offerings in the church. This includes but is not limited to:

- Community Outreach Ministry Teams
- Religious Education Ministry Team
- Welcome, Food Ministry, and New Member Mentor Teams (hospitality)
- Pastoral Care Associates
- Worship Associates
- Music Ministry

### **How the work of the congregation happens**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for visioning the work of the church, expressed in the 5-year Ends Statements developed through a congregation-wide appreciative inquiry process. The Board monitors the work of the Executive Team within the framework of the Governing Policies.

The Executive Team manages and puts in place the systems, staff and programs needed to support the spiritual, financial and general administration of the facilities. See the organizational chart and job descriptions found in the Documents Packet

for details.

The Beloved Community Staff Team strengthens and coordinates Unity's antiracism and multicultural work, and provides opportunities for congregants and the Church to grow into greater intercultural competency. Members include the Executive Team, program staff leaders, and some lay members of the congregation.

Various ministry teams work with ministerial and program staff in providing oversight and development of children, youth and adult programming.

### **Recent successful work of the congregation**

When George Floyd was murdered in May 2020 by Minneapolis police officers, there was a gathering of congregants, facilitated by staff. The purpose was to speak to the grief and outrage and to identify where people might be useful. The initiative was called "Next Right Action" and included discussion of various ways people could stand up for justice. These included posting on social media, protesting in the streets, providing financial support, educating themselves, and having tough conversations with friends and family about race, policing, justice.

This was followed up in the fall with a seven-week Equity + Justice series presented by Team Dynamics and attended by almost 200 people. Team Dynamics was hired by Unity in 2019 to help us as we work toward our Ends of dismantling dominant culture and creating an antiracist multicultural spiritual home. Building on the Next Right Action initiative, expert facilitators and trainers led Tuesday evening workshops to explore critical concepts to equip us as advocates for racial justice in our own lives, in our communities, and in our spiritual growth and development.

### **Series Learning Goals in Service to Unity's Multicultural and Racial Healing Ends**

- Increase self-awareness to understand how our experiences of race, gender, and more inform the choices we make in pursuit of our personal and collective justice goals
- Explore tools for deeper practice as an advocate for racial justice
- Understand how movements for social change work and how we experience them

- Situate ourselves within a movement for justice and consider when and how to deploy our tools and take actions

Another outgrowth of the Next Right Action initiative is the Antiracist Literacy Partners (ALP), an ongoing resource for individuals to address what it takes to be racially literate and engaged in antiracism on a day-to-day basis. The ALP program identifies a range of books, podcasts, videos, and more. Participants choose a resource and are matched up with partners or small groups to discuss the topic over the next two months.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was first introduced to the congregation in 2017. Unity has since made a commitment to offer and provide resources to get more people to take the IDI and create an Individual Development Plan. Over 350 congregants have completed the IDI and have participated in a group debrief session.

A significant number of those have also participated in a two-part workshop to empower individuals to create their Intercultural Development Plan and establish a communal learning process to make progress together. Cultural competency is seen as critical to building authentic relationships across differences. Unity sees using this approach as one avenue to developing that competency.

In the fall of 2021, the Beloved Community Staff Team introduced a framework to help ministry teams see and strengthen the links between faith formation and antiracism multicultural work. The “Double Helix” is envisioned as a tool to assist with integrating this approach to how a team works together. An example of how a team might begin to use this tool can be found in the Documents Packet.

### **The work within the congregation which is slow, stuck, or not attended to**

As the MST digested what we have learned from the Listening Sessions and our own involvements within the church, we identified the following examples:

1. Creating a community where BIPOC and LGBTQ feel genuine welcome and belonging. Many congregants who are not in those groups feel all is well and we’re “past” any exclusionary history, but those who identify tell a different story in which they feel marginalized and not invited into circles of belonging and leadership.

2. Integrating youth engagement through intergenerational worship and other contributions. Children and youth, as well as their parents, who teach Religious Education classes, are physically separate and virtually invisible to the rest of the

congregation on Sunday mornings.

3. Expanding and encouraging leadership and shared ministry from all quadrants of our community, rather than the “inner circle” or “in-group” identified by top leadership.

4. Extending the concept and delivery of Pastoral Care as a shared responsibility of the congregation, and extending that care to members across all ages, not only to elders.

5. Completing work on updating Unity’s history since 1972. This project was suspended for the duration of our ministerial transition. During the volunteer team’s work, it became evident that there remains significant disagreement about how to tell the story of the ministry of Roy Phillips, discussed previously. For many who lived through that period, but not all, the injury outweighs any aspects of his ministry that were inspirational. While this period of history is unknown to a large number of current members, it remains a conflict to be resolved in the context of the project.

6. Creating authentic welcome and belonging for all, and working to facilitate connection for visitors and new attendees. We are a large church, where visitors and new attendees can feel lost and unconnected.

7. Developing a process for discerning issues that the church will support in a public way.

8. Addressing the needs of people with disabilities, and supporting parents who have children with disabilities. Over the last several years, the church’s physical site has been made more accessible for people with mobility access needs/ requirements. Efforts to make the spoken word accessible to those with hearing loss (especially age-related hearing loss) include providing assisted listening devices in the sanctuary and, currently, working to ensure that Zoom programs are captioned. However, more is needed for people with a variety of physical, sensory, and mental health disabilities, in order to provide not just access, but equity, and to communicate to the community that ours is a church that is prepared.

### **How money is raised within the congregation**

Money is primarily raised through pledges and donations. Annually, during the month of October, our congregation engages in a pledge drive. A three-person team of Unity members plans for the drive, develops a theme, and schedules

activities. The pledge team members provide testimonials as to why they pledge at each service in October.

Ministers also ask for pledges during services in October. Documents are sent via mail and email to members so they can read the material and pledge online or on paper. In addition, the minister might meet with families or individuals to discuss their financial contributions directly.

The Heritage Society was created in 1999 as a way for members and friends to make a legacy gift to the church. Society members do not need to be wealthy or have a large estate to use legacy giving through a charitable bequest or naming Unity Church as a beneficiary of life insurance, retirement plan assets, or other planned gifts. The Society holds an annual dinner, with an invited guest speaker, to celebrate and honor those who have chosen to contribute in this way to Unity Church's future.

### **The most recent capital campaigns in the congregation**

The most recent capital campaign began in 2010 in order to fund major renovation to the church space. The congregation raised roughly \$6,000,000 towards a \$8,000,000 project that saw a completely new lobby space, a welcoming entrance, new kitchen facilities, a more open religious education space among other renovations.

Historically, capital projects at Unity were funded by a small number of families. When we decided to do the capital campaign, we were able to engage over 600 households in making commitments to the project. This was a significant shift in Unity's history.

### **Debt that the congregation has**

2017 was the first year of our long-term debt that resulted from our 2012 Unity Tomorrow capital project. The Unity Tomorrow renovation tied together the church campus that had been built in five stages over more than 100 years. We created a new main entry, a restroom addition and updated the infrastructure with new, high efficiency systems.

The project cost \$8.0 million and we raised \$6.8 million in commitments. After paying principal and interest on the short term construction loan for 4.5 years, we converted the remaining \$1,950,000 of debt to a long term note on January 1, 2017. This is a 5 year note on a 20-year amortization schedule and a fixed 4.0% interest rate. The congregation approved this debt with the caveat that debt service could not exceed 10% of the annual operating budget, and we have stayed within that limit.

Debt service in the first five years has been \$142,512 annually and has been paid from Capital pledges made by the congregation. In addition to debt service payments, we have been allowed to pre-pay up to 20% of the principal balance each year without penalty. Since 2017, we have made additional loan principal payments of \$690,937.

We are currently renegotiating this loan with American National Bank (previously Western Bank). The principal balance is now \$850,000. This will be another five year note on a 7 year amortization schedule with a fixed 3.7% interest rate. Debt service payments will be \$138,000 per year (7% of the 2022 budget). Some members of the congregation have made principal-only gifts, and, with these gifts, we believe that we'll be able to pay it off in full in five to six years.

In 2015, the congregation began making Capital pledges in addition to Operating pledges. Capital pledges allow us to pay debt service and provide funds for capital acquisitions and repairs, thus avoiding deferred maintenance and protecting the Operating budget. Capital pledge totals average \$218,000 each year from over 300 households. In addition to debt service payments, we are proposing a \$50,000 Capital budget for 2022.

### **How the congregation feels about its stewardship**

The congregation takes the concept of stewardship very seriously and defines it broadly. One significant form of stewardship is in the ongoing love and respect for our building. Members of the congregation support the upkeep of the building and grounds. Members of the congregation help maintain plantings and the garden outside, and, during the summer, children help plant and grow vegetables in the garden.

Another form of stewardship of our space is in support of the use of our building by other churches, neighbors, or people in need. Our congregation has supported other churches using the sanctuary. Unity has also become a Sanctuary

Congregation and created living space in the basement for individuals and families with issues around immigration status. In addition, our congregation actively participates in creating and maintaining relationships with a broader community through partnering on events and activities. Members of our congregation have invited local community members and leaders to use our church space for important gatherings.

In terms of financial resources, in addition to pledging annually, members of the congregation regularly contribute to offerings during services. In 2006 we began giving away 70% of the Sunday offering. Since that time, we have taken in a total of \$1,629,411, with \$1,233,116 going out to community organizations. Prior to this, the offering plate brought in about \$30,000 annually. By “giving away the plate,” the congregants have contributed an annual average of \$108,000, of which 70% goes “out the door” to organizations working directly in communities. These organizations are advancing work connected to the values of Unity Church Unitarian and are often working to achieve social justice and meet social needs.

### **Role of the minister(s) in stewardship**

Ministers are active participants in fundraising. They support the pledge process and speak to the need for contributions during Sunday services. In addition, ministers meet directly with some individuals to discuss their contributions and will meet with higher donors and discuss their interests, needs, and concerns.

In addition to fundraising, ministers play an active role in recognizing the non-financial resources that members bring. Ministers are active in recruiting and supporting volunteers in various aspects of church life. They work with congregants to see their strengths and to help steer them into rewarding roles in the church, such as being a worship associate, serving on the board, teaching religious education, or serving on a ministry team.

### **The ten largest pledges within the congregation**

1. \$63,900.00
2. \$28,600.00
3. \$24,000.00
4. \$16,800.00

5. \$16,000.00

6. \$15,000.00

7. \$14,000.00

8. \$12,190.00

9. \$12,000.00

10. \$11,500.00

### **What a prospective minister should know about the building and grounds for the congregation**

Unity Church is in the second building of its 150-year history. The current sanctuary was constructed in 1905, with additions to the building in the 1920s—the Ames Chapel and Parish Hall; mid-century modern Eliot Wing for church school classrooms, offices, a new kitchen, and restrooms in 1957; rebuilding after the sanctuary fire in 1963, resulting in the current worship space, a blend of old and new sensibilities; and the addition of a second level to the Eliot Wing in 1988 providing space for meeting rooms, the adult library, choir room, as well as additional office and meeting spaces. An elevator was added to the church at this time, connecting all levels.

By 2010, years of deferred maintenance had caught up with an extremely well-utilized building. A major capital campaign, Unity Tomorrow, was initiated in 2011, with the \$8,000,000 infrastructure project completed in 2012. The result is a well-integrated and highly efficient building. Asbestos and other hazardous materials were removed or abated; new windows and insulation were added, the entire building was ultimately provided with a sprinkler system; numerous HVAC systems were replaced and streamlined into one.

New and enlarged restrooms were created; the kitchen was remodeled into a highly functional space. The lower religious education level saw a maze of hallways replaced by a single corridor with classrooms branching off it. A new stairwell to this level allows light to filter into a previously dark space. Significantly, a new front entrance was created: a non-ADA compliant stone-walled cloister with fortress-like doors was replaced with a curving glass walled entrance, accessible to all. A hidden courtyard is now a garden viewable from the street. The neighborhood, once seemingly excluded, is now welcomed into the embrace of Unity Church.

As of 2021, most of the building is physically accessible to those of all abilities. Exceptions are the choir loft, bell tower, a second level office, and the chancel, all of which are accessed via stairs. The sanctuary has audio and video enhancement; various pews have been modified to allow those using wheelchairs to sit with their families.

The Art Team has spent the past years cataloguing and re-hanging Unity's extensive art collection. Embracing our Mission and Ends statements, the team has stated that "exhibitions provide spiritual enrichment and liveliness for those attending the church [and] will...[enhance] the mission and values of the church." Recent purchases have been made to broaden representation of local artists of color within the collection.

Pre-COVID, the church building was open seven days a week. Besides myriad uses generated by the congregation, Unity has housed Above Every Name Ministries and One Voice Mixed Chorus, an LGBTQ and straight allies community chorus, which uses the Parish Hall for its rehearsals. One Voice also rents office space on the second floor of the Eliot Wing. Unity is home to a preschool, Medley Village, and The New Century Club has held their monthly forums at Unity Church for nearly a century. Various recovery groups meet at Unity throughout the week, and Unity is an election site for the City of Saint Paul.

Gardens surround much of the church, tended by an active team of congregants. Along the Eliot Wing, a rain garden was created to capture runoff from the roof. A pollinator garden, sapling bed to support tree planting in the neighborhood, and a children's garden is maintained in the green space, an open lot to the east of the sanctuary. The children's garden served, pre-pandemic, as the focus of the summer RE program. A new feature of this space will be a large tent that will provide shelter for events deemed appropriate for an outside setting.

Unity Church owns a duplex to the east of its building, on Holly Avenue. Its two units have provided rental income for many decades. During the 2012 reconstruction project, the church offices and religious education functions were moved to this site. It was used to house the Hallman Intern Minister prior to the pandemic.

Unity Church has handicapped parking available in a lot next to the church building, maintains a parking lot a short block away from the sanctuary entrance (Portland Avenue), and is able to utilize, on Sunday mornings, the staff parking lot of the elementary school across the street from the religious education and church offices entrance (Holly Street). On street parking is also available surrounding the church building.

## **The condition of the buildings and grounds**

As stated above, the church building underwent a major reconstruction in 2012 which saw enhancements to virtually all corners of the structure. Since then, there have been needs that have arisen, such as repair to a section of the red slate roof, which dates to the 1905 and 1920 sections of the building. Subflooring in front of the chancel was repaired, which resulted in the need to re-carpet the sanctuary. The video and sound systems in the sanctuary were enhanced or replaced to enable livestreaming services during the pandemic. The Portland Avenue parking lot is due to be resurfaced.

Two projects that were envisioned in the initial planning for the 2011 Unity Tomorrow capital campaign, but didn't or haven't come to fruition, were:

- A new 600-seat sanctuary built on the green space, east of the current sanctuary, converting the current sanctuary into a social hall capable of hosting nearly 400. The new sanctuary would have pitched floors allowing for better sight lines. This would also enable it to be used as a performance space. Cost prohibitive, these plans were removed from the project. Also, the need for a larger sanctuary may be mitigated by our commitment to maintaining the livestreaming of services into the future.
- A columbarium to be created in a space under the bell tower. Of the two projects, this one has a continued momentum. Architectural schema has been developed and over 100 families have expressed an interest in this offering; a member of the congregation has indicated a willingness to be involved.

A five year note for \$1,950,000 was taken out in 2017 to pay off the Unity Tomorrow commitments. As of 2021, this has been reduced to \$850,000, which should be paid off in five to six years with annual payments of \$138,000 beginning in 2022.

Starting in 2015, pledging members and friends have been asked to make a yearly capital commitment as well as their operating pledge. This effort brings in about \$218,000 annually; \$142,500 of that has been used to pay debt service on the Unity Tomorrow loan. In 2013 a \$500,000 gift was made to establish an endowment for major repairs and acquisitions. As of 2020, its reserves were made available for these purposes.

Since our Unity Tomorrow renovation in 2012, the building has been well maintained largely because of the congregation's generous capital pledges. This allows us to make repairs and acquisitions as they are needed, thus avoiding

deferred maintenance.

### **Expectations of the congregation for a minister(s) around pastoral care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation**

A general statement centers around the COVID-19 pandemic. Coming out of the pandemic, having not been with each other for more than 18 months, has made clear that the single greatest and most important challenge we have as a congregation is to rebuild an embodied awareness of us as a community and to make it vital. This will feed everything else on the list. We are a community - both here for each other and the larger cause beyond the walls.

Pastoral care has been siloed for many years, seen by the congregation as something separate from the rest of the church's work, attended to by the senior leadership. Many of the participants on the Pastoral Care Team are retirees with little connection to families with young children or young adults. The model for how we serve the congregation is in flux, moving away from a singular entity to one where pastoral care is integrated at all levels of the congregation. At present, members are working to ensure the Pastoral Care Associates program aligns with our ends. They are considering what it means to have congregational care at every level, to tend to the pastoral needs of us as a congregation, in addition to individuals' needs.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around children and adult religious education**

The Senior Minister works directly and significantly with the Minister for Faith Formation to address ideas and concerns around faith formation across the lifespan. Additionally, the Senior Minister works with the RE Ministry Team and the Teaching Associates to continue to broaden and deepen work around faith formation.

The Religious Education program for children and youth asks a lot of the families. We ask much of our volunteers, not just in helping to shape and form the spiritual and theological lives of the children and youth, but in working to develop their own theology and faith journey as part of being an RE volunteer. Some need the demands of RE and RE volunteering to be more manageable and convenient. Demands and expectations place more pressure on families. Volunteer numbers are diminishing.

These are the wishes related to intergenerational worship:

- Children's voices are elevated, present, and heard more than they currently are in the service. The wish is that the whole congregation better knows RE. Children and Youth feel and find a home here as part of the community.
- Children are present and heard in the community.
- The ministers will know the children by their names.
- There is a connection between the church and the RE themes.
- The minister delights in children.
- The appreciation of RE volunteers and staff.
- The church is more relevant to younger adults.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around community building / facilitation skills / coffee hour and social times**

One important way that congregants stay engaged at Unity is through membership in one of our Community Outreach Ministry Teams. Members of these teams take Unity Church out into the world, working with community organizations close to home and far away. 96% of survey respondents indicated that they'd like to see Unity's involvement in social action/justice work remain at current levels or increase

While the minister will not be expected to be involved in the day-to-day work of each group, a strong supportive ministerial presence will be key to ensuring the continued success of the work the teams undertake. They seek a minister with a strong commitment to social justice who is open minded and has good conflict resolution skills. Their hope is to see Unity Church generally become more visible in church and in the community on social issues, making the outreach teams a living example of our Unitarian Universalist faith and spirituality blended with social action.

Pilgrimages have been part of Unity's DNA since the early 2000s, with groups traveling around the country or to other parts of the world for learning and reflection. Groups of pilgrims, both young people and adults, have traveled with our ministers to Boston, to Transylvania (Homoródszentpéter, our partner church), and to Selma, Alabama. Shorter, closer-to-home pilgrimages are also part of our congregational life, including weekend writing retreats in Northern Minnesota and meditation weekends in the Twin Cities.

Some pilgrimages are not direct pilgrimages, but instead, service project trips, engaged in with a pilgrim mindset. Members of Unity have traveled with ministers to New Orleans to participate in Habitat for Humanity rebuild projects, starting after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Others have traveled to Bolivia to work side by side with Mano a Mano and communities of villagers to help improve living conditions for people there. Sometimes, our work in the community is closer to home.

While the minister participates in many of these travels and projects, we realize that it is unrealistic to expect our new settled minister to do everything. What will be important is the attention and presence our new minister will bring to each of these events and what that communicates to the congregation.

Coffee hour and social times: a minister's presence in the building, especially on Sundays, is important to the congregation in many ways. It builds trust and confidence in the minister and offers both congregants and the minister an opportunity to know each other casually at first and later, more deeply. In times of vulnerability and need, congregants who know their minister will feel more comfortable and comforted if they already have a shared history.

Throughout the church year and sometimes in the summer, Unity's ministers, members, and friends gather socially. For many years, congregants and ministers attended a local St. Paul Saints baseball game in the summer during a time of day when families could participate. Many remember the ice-skating party at The Depot Minneapolis. It was a lot of fun. Once a year, church-goers gather in the Parish Hall for Café Unity, an evening of poetry, story, and song as we celebrate each other's creativity. Times like these spark joy and connect people to each other. We would expect the minister to be engaged in some of these activities and celebrations.

Note: 67% of congregants place a high value on having a minister with a sense of humor.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around committee / task force work**

At Unity we use the term team rather than committee. This dates back to Roy Phillips, who at some point in his ministry stated that no one comes to church to serve on a committee.

All teams, committees or task forces are advisory to the Minister and Executive Leadership. As part of the Executive Leadership, the senior minister will confer, as needed, with each team on how best to work together to serve the Mission of Unity Church. Attendance by the Minister at team meetings is welcome, but not routinely expected.

Respondents to the congregational survey see as critical/absolutely critical a strong commitment to community involvement, social action/justice, and anti-racism work, which includes the work of the church under its team structure and community engagement beyond our walls. This was evident broadly as a response to both the church's ongoing involvement and as part of a list of desired characteristics in our next settled minister.

In response to the question about how much community involvement and engagement our congregation would like to continue to see the church and (perhaps ergo) our minister involved with, 56% would like to see Unity continue to stay engaged at about the same level as we've experienced in recent years, while 42% would like to see the church be more involved.

In answer to the question about Unity's continued involvement in social action/justice work, 58% would like to see our involvement remain the same, while 38% would like to see us do more.

In the area of growth in anti-racism and multiculturalism, 45% would like to see work in this area remain the same; 48% would like to see Unity grow in these efforts;

Later questions center around ministerial candidates. Here, 61% saw a minister's commitment and involvement in social action/justice efforts as being important/critically important. 64% saw a commitment to anti-racism as a critical/absolutely critical attribute in our next settled minister.

The senior minister will be asked to engage in this important part of church life, in part as work toward fulfilling our Ends Statement.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around leadership development**

The previous ministers introduced a model of shared leadership within the church that many find to be an important part of Unity's ministry. As described in the response to an earlier question about the work shared by the congregation and

minister, the ministry teams provide opportunities for developing and nurturing leadership among the congregation.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around membership and membership growth**

The congregation expects that the minister will lead, foster and participate with other members of the Executive Team, staff, and lay leaders in an accessible and comprehensive path to membership. However, the ability to expand the membership is not seen as absolutely critical; most congregants have moderate expectations about the minister's ability in this area.

Currently, the path to membership includes an introduction to Unity Church and Unitarian Universalism through Finding Yourself at Unity, modeled after the First Unitarian Church of Dallas' Inquirers Series, which revolves around eight hour-long sessions that take place most Sundays. The senior minister participates in the series as a "guest" in one or two of the sessions. One of these sessions (Membership 101) discusses membership at length and outlines the steps to membership, what it means to "sign the book" and formalize commitment to Unity Church. An Ingathering of New Members takes place during Sunday services, at which ministers welcome new members individually and as a group, lead the congregation in words of welcome and commitment to the new members, and join an after-service reception to celebrate the new members.

It is expected that ministers learn the names and faces of new congregants, greet any new visitors warmly, and seek out new faces and engage with them in openhearted welcome. It is standard practice before Sunday worship service that the minister and other worship leaders stand in the foyer and greet persons as they enter the building. During the worship service they also invite service attendees to greet them in the reception line immediately after and will mingle in the Parish Hall to chat with people when it is possible to do so.

Learnings from the Listening Sessions and the Congregational Survey indicate that it is extremely important to congregants that Unity attracts more people from diverse backgrounds, younger adults (under 40), families, and youth. The congregation would welcome ministerial leadership in this area as it is seen as critical to the growth of a more inclusive community. Additionally, a large, robust membership has remained vital to Unity's reputation as an institutional leader within the denomination.

In the year and a half of pandemic lockdown, Unity has suffered the loss through death of a number of elders and significant leaders. At the same time, people have continued to join. It will be important after this challenging period to persist in providing welcome to the curious, and to demonstrate Unity not only as a safe harbor and place for receiving pastoral care and spiritual deepening, but also a place that is vibrant with people who are committed to advancing social justice, antiracism and multiculturalism. The minister will be expected to model authentic welcome, and encourage congregants to demonstrate radical hospitality to all comers.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around staff relations and supervision**

While the minister and staff operate under a model of shared leadership, competency in supervising and managing a large staff is seen as extremely important for the senior minister leadership. On a scale from 1 (less important) to 5 (absolutely critical), 39% of congregants place it at "5." Unity currently has 16 staff members; over half have served in their positions for more than seven years with turnover infrequent.

The work of staff is recognized as critical to the stability of church operations and is understood to be the foundation of a vibrant, healthy organization. It is expected that the senior minister will treat staff with respect, regarding each as intrinsic to the overall health and wellbeing of the church and work with other members of the Executive Team and Board to ensure the safety, wellbeing and satisfaction of staff members.

Each staff member reports to a member of the Executive Team, with some other levels of reporting in the facilities program, music, and nursery staff. Staff meet weekly on Wednesday mornings for 1 to 1.5 hours and communicate during the day in meetings, via text, email and inter-office phones and throughout the building. Annual gatherings are intended to build the team. Compensation is determined by the Board and Executive Team.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around anti-oppression work / social justice / social action**

It is expected that the senior minister will be a strong, effective, persistent leader in this work within, among, and beyond the walls of the church. Congregants have become accustomed not only to messages from the pulpit and a menu of challenging relevant programming, but action-oriented leadership out in the community—embodying Unity’s values in local and national movements to advance equity (Poor People’s Campaign, e.g.) and connecting with other progressive movement leaders. Congregants want/need ministerial leadership that is able to inform, guide, and provide vision for anti-racism, anti-oppression work and articulate how this work connects to spiritual development and growth.

According to the Congregational Survey, 89% of congregants have said that whether or not it had been their original motivation for becoming involved with Unity, they continue their involvement because of social justice work; 65% of survey respondents rate this aspect of congregational life as very much valued; 48% of respondents wish for more emphasis to be placed on growth in anti-racism and multiculturalism.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around interfaith / community work**

The desire to reach beyond Unity’s walls and make an impact on the larger community is strongly held and the reason why the work of community outreach teams has grown so strong in the last two decades. Outreach teams partner with outside groups for their work in racial, social and environmental justice, affordable housing, and more. Many times, this involves working with groups in other faith communities (Beacon Interfaith Housing, eg). This work is not seen as the sole responsibility of the senior minister, however; there is staff to oversee this work and lay leaders are also often trained for specific outreach activities.

There have been modest interfaith connections that have not been sustained. Senior ministers were members of an interfaith group of local ministers; for a brief time there was a music exchange with Reverend Carl Walker, Jr. pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church. Most significantly, Above Every Name Ministries (AEN) held Sunday services in Unity’s sanctuary for a few years before the COVID lockdown. AEN and Unity congregants participated in a couple of crossover programs such as Beloved Conversations as well as a Christmas eve service lauded by many who attended.

Currently, two lay leaders from Unity are involved in Minnesota Multifaith Network, a statewide network supporting faith and interfaith leaders and organizations working for a more just and loving world. Several years ago representatives from Unity (including senior ministers) traveled to NYC to participate in a worship-

focused retreat held by Rev. Dr. Jacquie Lewis at Middle Church in order to explore expanded ideas of worship. While prospective changes to worship service were enthusiastically discussed, no changes were adopted.

Interfaith work driven by the senior minister is perceived to have stalled; the congregation as a whole has not made specific mention of this, probably because the pandemic has normalized Unity's (and other churches) isolation. The current ministerial staff has expressed a desire for more effort made in this area. Especially regarding anti-racism, multiculturalism work, Unity would benefit if stronger relationships could be established with other local denominations.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around denominational activities**

The congregation expects a senior minister to sustain and steward the larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future, but does not necessarily equate that work with denominational service. 68% of survey respondents are satisfied with the current state of Unity's relationships with local UU churches; 26% have expressed a desire for more connection. Participation in denominational activities does not figure strongly regarding congregational expectations of the minister, but it has been an important part of past ministerial leadership. There was an appreciation for the leadership exemplified by the ministers within the denomination.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around other areas not already addressed above**

A keen appreciation for the arts and an understanding of the power of beauty and the arts as a means of expressing the human condition is important to congregants. The artistic integrity of the worship service with its multiplicity of voices, music, poetry, silence, prayer has been key in sustaining those who regularly attend Sunday services.

The minister's interaction with and support of the children and youth in the congregation is seen as extremely important. The minister is expected to model leadership, kindness, integrity, and active concern for all congregants but especially those with the least power—children.

### **How trust is built between the congregation and the minister**

Trust will develop if the minister practices the following:

- Patience towards congregants, staff, and community members
- Openness
- Transparency
- Is direct in communication and asks others to be direct in communications with the minister.
- Understanding that it will take time to grow into relationship and build shared trust
- Vulnerability
- Humility
- Listens with an open heart
- Understands and appreciates the value of silence
- Deep sense of empathy
- Being fully present
- Willing to learn/curiosity about others
- Gives space and tenderness to those in pain and in need of healing
- Willing to acknowledge when there is conflict and able to express a difference in opinion with respect
- Admitting mistakes when they are made and allowing the congregation to do the same, open to difficult conversations
- Authenticity: being honest about who we say we are, and that we are all human!
- Able express emotions, even those perceived as negative, and does not hold grudges
- Is able to forgive
- Instigates new, creative approaches to church life with recognition of and appreciation for past
- Makes room for joy, humor, and fun

**Why people leave the congregation, and why new visitors do not return**

Apart from moving out of the area, in no particular order, people have left Unity or not returned because they are not happy with the persistent emphasis on anti-racism/oppression work; perceived clash with ministerial leadership style; dissatisfaction with the paucity of BIPOC and LGBTQ opportunities for engagement; pressure to pledge, perceived as bias towards those with money; and the demands made on families in Religious Education program. This last has occurred as the program has evolved, helping to facilitate the faith formation of parents as well as that of the children.

#### Other Membership Notes:

Currently, membership is just about holding steady, pre-COVID to now, perhaps declining slightly, and our pledge base is mostly holding steady. We've added new members, although under the pace that we had pre-COVID. However, the members who are coming in are deeply committed to congregational life and spiritual practice. It's hard to tell whether the decline is permanent, or just COVID-related, because so many people are waiting for the definitive word that it is safe to gather.

#### **Any expectations there might be about a minister's family and personal life**

Life and work balance is key. While the last ministers' family was quite visible due to the fact that they were a married couple, the congregation understands that this was a choice on their part. There is little to no expectation that a minister's family must take part in the life of the church community, nor should the minister's life apart from church be an issue unless it affects their responsibilities and obligations as senior minister.

#### **One mistake a minister could make that would seriously affect the ministry**

A pattern of violating trust would cause a rift between the minister and the congregation.

#### **Questions the congregation would have liked to have been asked which were not included here**

None

#### **Trust in the congregation**

Trust appears to be good at this time. Our departing ministers devoted considerable attention last year to helping the congregation navigate the pandemic and also prepare for their retirement. Our interim minister also is preparing the church for change. Listening sessions revealed that congregants were deeply appreciative of the sacrifices and leadership of the church during the pandemic, and felt supported and connected during this time of isolation. The congregational survey indicated that “there is a high level of trust in Unity’s leadership” (79/100). Our pledge base and membership are holding steady. Congregants are expressing interest and enthusiasm for the work of the search team.

**How is technology currently used in your congregation and what are the expectations of the minister around that?**

Staff manages all technology, from website development and maintenance, to operation of sanctuary audio and video, to hosting Zoom meetings large and small. The minister’s role is to be open to changes in technology that may require adaptation, and to support the church’s commitment to livestreaming Sunday services and perhaps other events. We learned in Listening Sessions that among the things that mattered most to congregants was the agility of staff in pivoting to on-line programming, the professional management of Zoom sessions, and the high quality of choral music achieved despite the challenges of remote rehearsals and recording sessions.