



UUUCR

Annual Report 2015

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville
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Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville

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Staff

Rev. Lynn Thomas Strauss, Minister
Rev. Douglas McCusker, Assistant Minister
Rev. Jack Young, Minister Emeritus
Andrea Spencer-Linzie, Interim Director of Religious Education
Sarah Prager, Interim Youth Coordinator
Ginny Scher, Religious Education Assistant
Jennifer Rodgers, Director of Music
Justin Furnia, Pianist
Nancy Gregory, Director of Communications and Membership
Donna Taylor, Church Administrator
Bryant Taylor, Facilities Coordinator

Officers

Cynthia Bauerle, President
Terrie Barr, Vice President
Bill Hurlbut, Secretary
Julie Robinson, Treasurer
Eric Burch, Assistant Treasurer
Barbara Harrison, Assistant Treasurer
Narcy Klag, Immediate Past President

General Trustees

Adriana Brigatti
Richard Chitty
Bill Newhouse

Annual Report 2015

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Vital Statistics – as of April 30, 2015

Members: 398

Friends: 145

Religious Education Enrollment: 125

Religious Education Families: 88

New members from May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015: 42

Antonio Jorge Aguilar, Bruce Baskett, David Bennington, Corynne Carpenter, Erin Claxton, Kelly Cooper, Deb Delavan, John Dunbar, Stephanie Feller, Lynn Foster, Tim Francis, Lisa Fredin, David Garofalo, Rachel Goodrich, Cat Goodyear, JP Goodyear, Lucinda Grinnell, Beth Harrison, Todd Harrison, Chris Holbein, Bronson Hoover, Leah Larson-Rabin, Zach Larson-Rabin, Jennifer Lyons, Gary Magnuson, Utako Matsumura, Anne McCaffrey, Richard Noreikis, Eric Norris, Karen Norris, Julia Santerre, Christy Shannon, Mark Shannon, Richard Simpson, Rebecca Sosa, Abbey Uffelman, Emily Untermeyer, Jenny Wheeler, Teddy Wheeler, Steven Wilcox, Emily Woolaver, Sue Zarrett

Members off the roll from May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015: 21

Tina Berger, Thomas Conway, Kim Curtis, Katie Daniel, Sally Davis, Theresa Dellomo, Robert Eagen, Ken Early, Mary McCarty Early, Laura Gordon, Rick Gordon, James Hedges, Anthony Killeen, Alice Larsen, Mike Larsen, Lynn Luethke, Claudine Michelin, Ellen Pskowski, Harold Pskowski, Maggie Raftery, Christine Sow

Members changed to Friends from May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015: 9

Jeanine Braithwaite, Margie Henry, Carol Howard, Art Latterner, Bonnie Latterner, Francis Purdy, Jason Reed, Carol Richards, Brian Sullivan

Child Dedications: 5

Casey Takenori Claxton
James Fuminori Claxton
Lindy Grey Heilman
Cecilia Mary MacDonald
Griffin Feller MacDonald

Deaths: 3

Maria Del Solar (February 26, 2015)
Ed Kimball (December 25, 2014)
Meta Lagerwerff (August 24, 2014)

Report from the President —*Cynthia Bauerle*

The UUCR Board of Trustees establishes policy and provides governance and discernment over the direction of major congregation programs, hiring of senior staff, financial and strategic planning, and major expenditures. In 2014-15, the Board worked to balance its efforts to provide oversight and guidance to congregational work, remain responsive to congregational needs in the face of unprecedented turnover in staffing, and coordinate efforts to develop future plans and strategic priorities for growth in membership, staffing, and space needs.

Our activities are guided by the framework provided in the 2012-17 Strategic Plan which directs our efforts to:

- Grow and diversify our membership;
- Strengthen and enhance congregational practices that support and connect all members and friends;
- Improve UUCR governance and staffing; and
- Cultivate UUCR's spiritual practice of engaging both the congregation and wider community as a leader and partner in social change.

In 2014-15 the Board's emphasis was guided by the following strategic objectives:

UUCR Strategic Plan Goal 3: Improve UUCR governance and staffing

Objective 3.1: Create more effective structures for governance and ministry

Activity 23: Create long range planning (LRP) process for connecting current Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) to future strategic planning

Item 1: Develop objectives for LRP process

Item 2: Create structure for LRP process

The Board year began in August 2014 with a two-day Board retreat, during which we oriented incoming members and developed our Covenant and goals for the year. The Board met monthly to conduct the work of the congregation, and hosted two Town Hall Meetings (November 2014 and April 2015), a Mid-Year Congregational Meeting in February 2015, and the Annual Congregational Meeting in May 2015. Board members were visible and active in the life of the congregation, including weekly delivery of welcome at the Sunday service and presence during the post-service coffee hour, regular participation in new member events and Start-Up Workshops, and participation in a joint workshop coordinated with the Lay Ministry Council. Throughout the year, the Board worked closely with the Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, Church Administrator, and Senior Minister to update and strengthen personnel management policies and practice, and secure contractual obligations.

The Board's goals for 2014-15 included:

- Advance UUCR growth and diversity
 - Support staff development
 - Oversee RE program re-vision and staffing
 - Develop five-year staffing plan
- Advance Board governance
 - Develop prioritized five-year capital improvement and renovation plan

- Initiate conversation with Lay Ministry Council to coordinate governance and ministry roles at UUCR
- Oversight of management of UUCR assets
 - Implement 2014-15 Canvass
 - Establish Canvass team
 - Implement Canvass approach
 - Initiate conversation for the next five-year strategic plan

Board accomplishments in 2014-15 include:

Goal 1: Support Staff Development

- Provided guidance and support to senior staff in responding to significant staff turnover, including the hiring of UUCR's first part-time Assistant Minister, the retirement of our long-time Director of Religious Education (DRE) and Youth Coordinator, the onboarding of an Interim DRE, hiring of an Interim Youth Coordinator, and late in the year, responding to staffing needs precipitated by year-end staff departures.
- Provided guidance and support in the formation of the Religious Education Transition Team, which is charged with developing a staffing plan for supporting the RE program into the future.
- Reactivated the Personnel Committee and developed a Board liaison position to ensure effective interaction in response to staffing needs.
- RE program support.

Goal 2: Advance Board Governance

- Coordinated with the Lay Ministry Council and Buildings & Grounds Committee to develop a five-year Capital Improvement and Renovation Plan. This plan guided actions and expenditures in 2014-15, including multiple access and safety improvements to the building and grounds, and will serve to inform future expenditures based on priorities established.
- Supported planning for capital campaign to enable significant space renovation of Building 1.
- Established Board liaison with the Lay Ministry Council, and engaged in ongoing conversation about integrating policy governance and ministry at UUCR.
- Evaluated Board process and accomplishments against goals set, through regular reflection and discernment.

Goal 3: Management of UUCR Assets

- Monitored progress toward 2012-17 Strategic Plan and conducted Annual Implementation Plan audit.
- Monitored UUCR's operating budget and established planning practice of evolving a three-year rolling budget for operations.
- Coordinated efforts with the Canvass Committee in support of this year's forward-looking Canvass budget.
- Supported efforts to reduce UUCR's ecological footprint by approving a PPA to build solar energy generating capacity on the roofs of our buildings.

President's perspective:

The 2014-15 Church Year was in many ways a year of transition for UUCR, with expanding membership and ministerial staff concurrent with turnover that marked the end of an era for Religious Education. The year brought opportunities to dream about new spaces, new functions, new relationships - as surely as it brought worries about what to do first and how to sustain funding support. Transitions are demanding as they offer both the promise of new opportunities you don't want to miss, and the challenge of maintaining a shared sense of community as you try to keep up with the "new normal." Perhaps this is just another way of saying that UUCR is a congregation with so much to offer to the world, and so much potential to deliver.

UUCR is blessed with a steady stream of newcomers through our doors and a deep community of members to welcome them, with dedicated members and friends who share their resources, expertise, and dreams in service to this community, and surely more than our share of individuals with the spirit to step toward the next big challenge rather than away from it. Heartfelt thanks to the members of the Board, Lay Ministers, committee chairs, hardworking staff, and Our Most Reverend Minister Lynn for the indefatigable source of talent and clear-headedness you brought to our work this year. It has been my honor to serve with you.

The 2014-2015 Board of Trustees budget is \$800 of which \$98 has been spent as of April 9, 2015.

Board of Trustees for 2014-2015: Cynthia Bauerle (President), Terrie Barr (Vice President), Bill Hurlbut (Secretary), Julie Robinson (Treasurer), Adriana Brigatti, Richard Chitty, and Bill Newhouse (General Trustees), Nancy Klag (Immediate Past President and non-voting member), and Rev. Lynn Strauss (Minister and non-voting member)

Report from the Treasurer—*Julie Robinson*

The Treasurer has overall responsibility for all of the congregation's financial activities and is a voting member of the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer verifies that UUCR's financial records are accurate and up-to-date and prepares a monthly Treasurer's Report for presentation to the Board and to the Finance Committee. The monthly Treasurer's Report will be made available to any member or friend of the congregation who requests a copy from the Treasurer, a member of the Board of Trustees, or a member of the Finance Committee. In the future, we hope to use the UUCR website to make financial information more readily available to interested congregants.

UUCR's financial condition is sound. The Endowment Fund is growing and now exceeds \$320,000. The General Reserve is approximately \$270,000. Building and grounds costs have been higher than expected this year, driven by a second year of record-setting snow removal costs, while payroll costs were lower than budgeted due to several months of open positions. After completing ten months of the current fiscal year, we expect to finish the year with a budget surplus.

UUCR's current operating budget is \$739,598. Payroll costs are the largest expense and will be \$434,000 for the current year. More than 75% of operating costs are funded by contributions from members and friends of the congregation, so a successful annual canvass is vital to our financial health. Thanks to all the members and friends who pledged, we were able to add a part-time Assistant Minister to our staff this fiscal year.

The Treasurer's financial responsibilities are shared with two Assistant Treasurers and a bookkeeper. Eric Burch is the Assistant Treasurer for Receipts and Barbara Harrison is the Assistant Treasurer for Disbursements. Martha Taylor is the bookkeeper. The Treasurer, Assistant Treasurers, and bookkeeper work closely with the Finance Committee, chaired by Kent Hancock, and with Donna Taylor, Church Administrator.

Report from the Lay Ministry Council—*Fran Lowe*

The Lay Ministry Council is responsible for visioning, coordinating, supporting, and evaluating the program areas of the congregation, and for overseeing the congregational calendar and may render advice and/or make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on any issue which, in the Lay Ministry Council's judgment, may have a significant impact on the programs of the congregation.

Major accomplishments:

- Lay Ministers have participated in extensive training led by Rev. Lynn Strauss and our intern ministers, including Unitarian Universalist history, theology, ecclesiology, governance, and right relations.
- Per this year's Strategic Plan AIP (Annual Implementation Plan), Lay Ministers have:
 - Shared information regarding leadership development programs that are available through the district and the region. This list will become more comprehensive and formalized as part of the Leadership Development Program.
 - Worked with our ministers to create a comprehensive UUCR Leadership Development Program for current and potential leaders; the first workshops are planned for May 30, 2015.
 - Led the Buildings & Grounds team to assess and plan for first floor space in Building 1.
 - Provided pastoral care workshops and fellowship gatherings.
- Lay Ministers have also:
 - Assisted with the Religious Education program transition by recommending people to serve on the Interim Director of Religious Education Search Committee and on the Religious Education Transition Team. Lay Ministers are also serving on the RE Transition Team.
 - Organized the Passover Seder, attended by almost 80 people.
 - Supported the Multigenerational Fair - Mind-Body-Spirit.
 - Organized the annual Activities Fair.
 - Hosted a joint Board of Trustees and Lay Ministry Council retreat.
 - Provided informational articles in *Quest*, including "Basics of the Lay Ministry Council" and articles focused on hunger, Adult Faith Formation, pastoral care and community outreach.

Lay ministry is about building community and relationships, recognizing the value of ministry, viewing the church as a whole, facilitating transparency, bringing people together, and recognizing that the process of ministry is equally important as goals or objectives (ends). The initial commitment for being on the Lay Ministry Council is two years, and while many of our current Lay Ministers plan to stay, we look forward to welcoming and integrating new people so we can stay vibrant and continue to improve ministry and programs at UUCR. Many of our Lay Ministers will move on to other responsibilities and we believe the lay ministry experience will serve them and the UUCR community very well.

The 2014-2015 Lay Ministry Council budget is \$500 of which \$198 has been spent.

Lay Ministers: Worship & Music Arts - Cynthia Shires-Thurston, Stephanie Kreps; Social Justice - Bennett Rushkoff; Adult Faith Formation - Steve Eckstrand (Co-Chair); Children & Youth Religious Education - Gwen Rowe; Community Outreach - Ken Sandin; Pastoral Care - Jane Klag, Paulette Campbell; Membership & Communications - Jill Asman, Carole Danielson; Buildings & Grounds - Marie Reed (Co-Chair); At -large - Celia Young; Lay Ministry Council – Fran Lowe; Board of Trustees liaison – Terrie Barr

Report from the Minister —*Rev. Lynn Strauss*

A year of transition calls forth deep gratitude for all who have brought a loving spirit and wise counsel in support of change and transformation. We've had many "goodbyes" and much "welcoming." Special thanks to our Board of Trustees and to our Board President, Cynthia Bauerle who has led with steady and passionate dedication. Thanks to the members of our Assistant Minister Selection Committee and our Religious Education Transition Team who said "yes" when asked to serve, and who continue to lead us in careful discernment and process. Special thanks to continuing staff for supporting excellence in worship, music, communication, administration, and so much more.

Highlights of 2014-2015:

- Celebrating Jennifer Maschal-Lorms and her 4½ years of service to our youth program.
- Celebrating the 29-year ministry of Director of Religious Education, Deborah Kahn, as she moved on to prepare for prison ministry.
- Welcoming our first Assistant Minister, Doug McCusker, and appreciating his ministry in Adult Faith Formation and Small Group Ministry, as well as preaching and teaching.
- Welcoming our Interim Director of Religious Education, Andrea Spencer-Linzie, and engaging in the work of RE transition with her and the RE Transition Team.
- Engaging Joseph Priestley District/CERG (Central East Regional Group) consultants in Start-Up Workshops for both the Assistant Minister (Rev. Lyn Cox) and the Interim DRE (Rev. Sandra Greenfield), as well as consultant, Pat Infante.
- Welcoming Sarah Prager as our Interim Youth Coordinator and sending her and the Junior Youth off on the Heritage Trip.
- Continuation of active participation in the Montgomery County Interfaith Working Group, hosting many meetings, inviting Rev. Kasey Kaseman to speak in worship, and building a UUCR Interfaith Action Group to support Rev. Strauss in this ministry.
- Leading and supporting UUCR staff through the many staff changes this year.
- Creating the Second Annual Multigenerational Fair – Mind-Body-Spirit Fair
- Transition work in Religious Education, including Data Gathering, Teacher Panel, Focus Groups, revisioning RE staffing, enhancing structural support for teachers.
- Moving ahead on Building 1 renovation planning, hiring architect, considering designs.
- Anticipating solar panel installation in June.
- Increased communication and intersection between Lay Ministry Council and Board of Trustees.
- Recruiting new Lay Ministers (in late spring) and holding Leadership Development training.

Opportunities ahead:

- Celebration of Rev. Strauss's 10th Anniversary at UUCR on September 12-13, 2015.
- Welcoming our second Assistant Minister in the fall of 2015.
- Capitol Campaign for Building 1 renovation.
- Selection and welcoming of our next permanent Religious Education professional in spring 2016.
- Celebration of UUCR's 60th Anniversary in 2016.
- Reverend Strauss's sabbatical in two parts in 2016-2017.

Blessings and gratitude for an inspiring year!

Report from the Assistant Minister —*Rev. Doug McCusker*

This was a new position for the congregation, so in many ways I had the freedom to create a portfolio around the concept of Adult Faith Formation. I was the primary staff leader for our adult religious education, Small Group Ministries, and leadership development.

This was my inaugural year as a professional minister in which I began my preliminary ministerial fellowship, was ordained, and was called to be a settled minister at another congregation. I am immensely grateful for how welcoming, supportive, and collaborative this congregation has been while I established my unique style of ministry.

Highlights of 2014-15:

- Inspiring and creative theme-based worship, with two ministers assisting one another two to three times a month
- Successful Assistant Minister Start-up Workshop facilitated by staff from the Joseph Priestley District
- Integration of Adult Faith Formation with the monthly liturgical theme
- Development of weekly adult curriculum structure based on four topical areas: the Unitarian Universalist Association Congregational Study Issue, world religions, UU history, and the monthly liturgical theme
- Establishment of Adult Faith Formation course evaluations that provided valuable feedback
- Wednesday evening pilot program with vespers, dinner, and presentation that was well attended
- Innovative multigenerational worship/spiritual practice event: Mind-Body- Spirit Fair
- Addition of two Small Group Ministry (SGM) groups and training for four new facilitators for a total of six strong groups
- Creation of participant guidelines, facilitator's handbook, and session plans tied to monthly liturgical theme, which were posted on the SGM web page
- Leadership development training series open to all congregants
- Professional development as a small group spiritual director
- Justice For All rally in downtown Washington D.C. in which I marched with local clergy and Standing On the Side of Love contingent
- Development of an ordination service at the River Road UU Congregation that was attended by many UUCR congregants and the Adult Choir

Report from the Interim Director of Religious Education—*Andrea Spencer-Linzie*

The work of an Interim Director of Religious Education (IDRE) is different from a long-term DRE. An IDRE does need to sustain and continue the current program. At the same time, s/he also engages in other tasks that are part of an intentional transition period that has a shape and momentum set apart from that of a settled leader. The limited time of an Interim DRE helps the congregation focus on its developmental work. The interim professional also needs to shine a light on possibly uncomfortable truths and to work with the congregation to effect difficult changes that may be necessary for the future health and success of the program.

There are five categories for my work as the IDRE at UUCR, which were developed by LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), as well as the ongoing work of supporting, administrating, and developing the current program.

Coming to Terms with History

Much of the history I learned through the IDRE Start-Up Workshop in March 2015, facilitated by Sandra Greenfield, Director of the Adjunct Staff for the Joseph Priestley District (JPD). By creating a time-line of significant events in the history of UUCR and its RE program, there were two major learnings that came to the surface: a) despite other ups and downs throughout UUCR's history, the RE program has remained consistently strong; and b) programs tend to get created and sustained based on individual persons/personalities rather than systems. The first learning speaks volumes of the strength and impact of RE. The second points to challenges in creating systems that are sustainable over time and that do not require a particular person in order to function. I've also had several one-on-one conversations with leaders, teachers, parents, and others about RE, its history and how people view it today. I still need to have many more conversations to better understand the history so that we can name it, understand it, and move forward.

Evolving a Unique Religious Education Program Identity

The RE program has a strong history with UUCR. What we have started to identify since January is the importance of support for teachers in terms of curriculum and training, respite for teachers in order to worship and/or further develop spirituality, and inspiration. We are also focusing on the fact that it really does take a village to raise children. We are looking to integrate more programmatically with other areas of the congregation's life, as well as make it easier for others to participate in RE through commitments to shorter time-periods, or sharing a specific talent, skill, or knowledge with RE.

Leadership Changes During the Interim Period

There have been no formal leadership changes in RE yet this year. However, we are focusing on ways to better support and inspire teachers and other leaders in RE. This is an area for growth over the next year. We are in the midst of determining a frequent teacher/helper training schedule for the coming year to better prepare teachers and helpers and engender new ideas and processes. We had our first Teacher Meeting on May 3 and have agreed to continue them as a way of communication, support, and programming.

Renewing Associational Linkages

I have joined LREDA nationally and through the local JPD. I attend GWAREC (Greater Washington Area RE Committee) meetings and trainings. The sixth grade had its Heritage Trip this year which consistently highlights our ties with the national work of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the

history of Unitarian Universalism. Youth participation in district and cluster CONs this year was very high.

Commitment to Future Program and Vitality

One of the major initiatives in this area was the development of a trimester approach to the RE year from September through May, utilizing rotating teams of three persons. The trimester approach allows teachers and helpers to commit for a shorter period of time. The three-person team in each trimester for each class provides consistency. For teachers and helpers who want to be in the classroom all year, they may still do that. For others, a nine-month commitment is too much, but they can still be a leader in RE for one or two trimesters. This change will go into effect in the fall. As with all change, there is anxiety, but there is also some energy about trying something new. We will monitor how things go and make course corrections as needed. We are practicing the “discover, explore and practice” model here.

It is also important to mention here the work of the Religious Education Transition Team. While there is a separate report for its work, it is highly necessary to the future program and vitality of the UUCR RE program. Information from the focus groups, research, and visits with other congregations will be crucial to the further development of the UUCR RE program, its identity, and its programming going forward.

In summary, there are a few new things that are in place beginning in January, and a few challenges that we still need to work through.

New initiatives:

- Trimester model for fall 2015, utilizing three-person teams per trimester.
- Attendance tracking spreadsheet that captures data for individual teachers, students, and classes as well as attendance rates overall. (We used to use pencils and hash-tags; now we use computers.) This type of tracking will allow us to better know when children or youth have consecutive absences so we can follow up sooner with the youth or family.
- The Religious Education Assistant oversaw teacher schedules for classrooms to ensure that each class had coverage each week.
- IDRE developed new ceremonies for Child Dedication, Coming of Age, and Bridging, and a new MLK Day First Fifteen script with PowerPoint.
- Teachers’ meeting initiated with commitment to continue.
- Teacher training in development for this summer and throughout the RE year.
- Successful support of the Mind-Body-Spirit Fair in April that integrated children and youth within the schedule as participants and leaders.
- RE Open House on May 10 for congregants to see what’s happening in RE, and to generate interest across a greater portion of the congregation for tangible support of RE programming.
- Peace Camp is continuing at UUCR this summer, and is totally managed by Little Friends for Peace this year, reducing time for UUCR staff and volunteers.
- RE Safe Congregations Task Force created to ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth, and adults in RE. Windows already installed in all but one RE classroom. Two adults required for each classroom. Final policy recommendations will be presented to the Board of Trustees later in the year.

Challenges:

- Transition of the Interim Youth Coordinator and the long-term RE Assistant will be a stress on RE until the positions are filled. The loss of such experienced and long-term staff, however, will not be easily replaced.
- While there are systems in place in various classrooms, they are highly dependent on individual classroom leaders to sustain. More of a systematic approach to running the RE program, including use of curriculum and scheduling of teachers/helpers, would relieve some stress on teachers and the RE staff, and would facilitate an easier path to integrate new teachers and helpers in RE.
- Expectations for teachers and helpers need to be clearer so everyone is on the same page.
- A suggested “term” for teachers would promote much needed breaks for teachers, and create an ongoing process of recruitment, support, and training for new teachers and helpers.
- Very little of the “process” of RE has been systematically recorded. Creating written protocols, processes, and history will tremendously help future DREs and teachers/helpers.
- Child care has been a huge challenge this year, and has required many hours each week to ensure that we have coverage. We are currently in the process of looking for a long-term Child Care Coordinator for Sunday mornings and other congregation events.
- Integration of RE with other congregational events has been difficult. Multigenerational events need to be the priority of the congregation as a whole, not simply of RE, and need to have age-appropriate programming across the ages.
- Significant events in the life of the congregation would benefit from cross-program area planning so that more or most congregants can participate without conflicts with other events.

September 2014 through May 10, 2015:

- 125 distinct children and youth (nursery – 12th grade) attended RE
- 10 children/youth (nursery – 12th grade) were recorded as visitors in RE
- 79 distinct adults and youth taught or helped in an RE classroom

Report from the Interim Youth Coordinator – Sarah Prager

Senior Youth (Grades 9-12)

This year our Senior Youth were more active than ever. They put together an entire all-congregation worship service that many told us was the best yet. Attendance in Sunday morning classes ranged from 3 to 13 youth per class, and usually around 5.

For multigenerational congregational participation, the Senior Youth ushered at a Sunday morning service, donated a car wash to the Action Auction, and put together a table at the Fellowship Dinner. They had three overnights together and attended even more CONs. Seven different youth attended the Joseph Priestley District’s (JPD) CONs this year, including newbies.

In the service realm, the youth gave admirably. Besides the car wash mentioned above, they also volunteered at DC Youth Pride, and will prepare a meal for the Wilkins Avenue Women’s Assessment Center as part of UUCR’s week-long volunteerism there.

Most of all, they were leaders. Four of our senior youth served on the JPD’s District Youth Steering Committee (DYSC). Abbey Uffelmann was Co-Worship Coordinator, Luke Smith was Social Action

Coordinator, Moriah Heifetz was Communications Coordinator, and Nina Linkletter was the Energy Coordinator. Abbey was also the DYSC's Central East Regional Group (CERG) liaison as well as CERG Youth Ministry Co-Chair.

Junior Youth (Grades 7-8)

As for the Junior Youth, the Heritage Year is a time of growing in our Unitarian Universalist history and gaining perspective on how we live our faith every day. The class provided questions they wanted to learn about Unitarian Universalism and, by structuring them around our Seven Principles and current events, they have come to a greater understanding of how each of them might walk the UU path. Serious class discussions followed each of the principles and, to no one's surprise, there were differing views.

The Heritage Trip was a tremendous success. Seventeen youth went to the Boston area with five adult chaperones for a five-day journey. We visited more and different sites than in past years (and spent less!). The youth all seemed to have a wonderful time and told us they didn't want the trip to end. We visited UU sites, including Orchard House and the Unitarian Universalist Association, and learned about our country's history in a social justice context.

The teachers did an excellent job and report that it was a pleasure working with the youth this year.

Report from the Director of Music—Jennifer Rodgers

The music program serves a vital purpose at UUCR and has functioned smoothly for in the 2014-2015 program year. The Adult Choir continued to welcome new members as an entrée into the UUCR community. We performed with a jazz combo on Christmas Eve and will present the Faure *Requiem* with orchestra on June 7, 2015. Additional special musicians this year included professional steel drum and cello players, plus a jazz pianist, soloists, and youth from within our congregation.

The Children's Choir, under Barbara Weis's direction, has continued to perform regularly, though attendance has fluctuated and we are still working to better integrate the program with other Religious Education activities. Sonaria, under Cynthia Shires-Thurston, has remained strong, also attracting new members to UUCR. A new women's quartet, called Wildberry Jam, was formed this year and presented music on a regular basis as well.

The UUCR Drum Circle has been a successful, regular event with a strong core of leadership. We moved to a monthly circle on Sunday evenings and will continue through the summer. Drummers have also participated in the quarterly Solstice and Equinox services.

I was offered (and have accepted) facilitator and leadership roles with the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network (UUMN) for last summer's conference (a session on issues in mid-size congregations and a juror for the UU composer selection committee) and the conference to be held this coming summer (the chair of the UU composer selection committee). I will attend the UUMN conference in July and my second "Summer Rhythm Renewal" for drumming and meditation facilitation in June.

At UUCR, the staff worship team has worked to achieve more flow between spoken and musical parts of the service and I now regularly lead congregational singing from the stage, which has garnered positive feedback and easier participation from the congregation.

The update of our music library has continued, thanks to the leadership of Gaynelle Campbell.

The 2014-2015 music operating budget remained at \$4,000 and will be spent as documented by the end of the fiscal year.

Report from the Director of Communications & Membership – Nancy Gregory

This was the third year of the Director of Communications & Membership position at UUCR. The first two years brought about substantial changes in both areas. During this past year, I've focused on solidifying those changes and making improvements to our new practices. Keeping members and friends connected with each other and with all that happens on our campus, in the community, and in our broader movement continues to be the heart of my work.

Communications highlights in 2014-15:

- Consolidated and strengthened the system for managing UUCR's website, enabling responsive and timely updates and greater functionality. I remain the website's primary editor and point of contact for requests for routine additions and changes. Our volunteer Webteam – Bill Newhouse, Eric Norris (who joined the team this year – a big highlight), Lisa Petrovich Smith, and Tom Rowe – work on structural maintenance and changes, including improving the website's security and functionality. Congregants may submit material for inclusion on the website using the form at www.uucr.org/submit-new-article. Feedback on the website may be submitted at www.uucr.org/website-feedback. And, in both cases, congregants may also send an email message to webteam@uucr.org.
- Over the past year, many visitors and newcomers have reported looking carefully at the website before coming to UUCR for a first visit. One of the primary goals in the development of the new site was to have it serve as an easily-navigated, informative, inviting point of entry for potential visitors. I think we have achieved that goal to a great degree.
- For congregants, the Webteam has increased the website's usefulness as a tool for dissemination of information and routine administration, including event registration.
- With 525 subscribers and a higher-than-average open rate, *UUCR E-Weekly*, our digital newsletter, remains our most active internal publication.

Communications goals for 2015-16:

- Continue to expand the type and amount of dynamic content on the website. MP3 recordings of most Sunday sermons and some music are currently available on the site at www.uucr.org/worship/sermons. In the coming year, we will launch a blog for the ministers, with occasional posts by other staff members, and hope to engage some guest bloggers from the congregation. We will also replace UUCR's now-outdated digital camera with an upgraded device that can be used for both photos and recordings, making it easier to post new content reflecting the life of the congregation on the website, in the e-news, and via social media.
- Continue to improve the website's functionality for congregants. Members and friends may now access a secure online directory containing congregant email addresses and phone numbers by logging in at www.uucr.org/members/member-directory. The directory includes the option to upload a photo and we'll work with members and friends to utilize this feature, helping everyone to "connect names and faces." In addition, the Webteam is currently working to enhance the "members-only" section of the site, allowing for secure sign-ups and

information sharing for the Religious Education program, posts of complete minutes from Board of Trustees meetings, and more.

- Make better use of social media. The UUCR members and friends Facebook page may be found at www.facebook.com/groups/56415480999/. In addition, thanks to Eric Burch and Bill Newhouse who administer it, the congregation also has a public Facebook page at www.facebook.com/uu.rockville. In the coming year, I hope to coordinate with the Social Justice Committee and other groups to use Facebook and other appropriate social media to better connect UUCR with the larger community, especially in Montgomery County.

Membership highlights in 2014-15:

- We welcomed 42 new members to the congregation this year and, despite membership losses due to moves and resignations, we continue to realize a net increase in membership. UUCR's membership has grown by a total of 40 people over the past three years.
- We improved our ability to help new members find their place in our community through better collaboration with other staff members and committee/group leaders. Newer members have taken on leadership roles on the Religious Education Transition Team, the Canvass Committee, in the Small Group Ministry program, on the Green Sanctuary Team, and more. Others have found their place in the Adult Choir, the Young Adults Group, and the RE classrooms.
- Our Newcomer Brunch with the Minister continues to be an important part of our welcoming process and provides a great opportunity for both attendees and UUCR staff to get to know those who are exploring our congregation. We'll hold our fifth and final brunch for this program year on June 7. A total of 44 newcomers and visitors attended the first four brunches this year.
- In January, we installed new signage on the outside of the buildings, helping visitors and newcomers more easily navigate our campus - find parking lots, handicapped-accessible entrances, classrooms, and primary spaces, like the Sanctuary and Founders Hall. Last October, I created a new Welcome Center which is more visible in the entrance corridor and a more attractive and functional space for visitors. The new brochure display contains a host of more relevant information about Unitarian Universalism and UUCR. Both the signage and the Welcome Center initiatives supported UUCR Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.1, Activity 2: Improve accessibility of UUCR activities and welcoming and nurturing practices based on barriers audit.
- The All-UUCR Picnic returned on June 8, 2014! Thanks to Melissa Rael, who coordinated the event, well over 150 children, youth, and adults enjoyed good food, fun games, and great fellowship following the Multigenerational Flower Communion Service that marks the end of the UUCR program year. Plans are now underway for the Second Annual Return of the All-UUCR Picnic, to be held on June 14, 2015.

Membership goals for 2015-16:

- Expand our ability, with additional volunteers and new processes, to offer visitors and newcomers more one-on-one attention on Sunday mornings, especially during coffee hour.
- Continue to help both newcomers and new members and friends make connections with the people and activities that will nurture them.
- Work with the IT Committee to upgrade UUCR's membership database so that it better meets the needs of both staff and volunteers.
- Develop an expanded and active Membership Committee, especially to help plan and facilitate new membership initiatives.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to my staff colleagues and all the many volunteers who support UUCR's communications and membership efforts. Thanks to UUCR's faithful greeters who warmly welcome all – visitors, newcomers, members, and friends – on Sunday mornings: Jill Asman, Katie Calder, Bob Campbell, Paulette Campbell, John Dickson, Judy Eisenhower, Jewell Golden, Lynne Goss, Chris Holbein, Susan McCall, John McIlwaine, and Rachel Shaw. And, as ever, special thanks to Jill Asman for her very generous support and for all the time and care she devotes to our membership program.

Report from the Church Administrator – *Donna Taylor*

It takes many UUCR volunteer and staff hours to ensure our buildings, grounds, equipment, and infrastructure are in good working order to support the congregation's many events and activities. I am grateful for the expertise, cooperative spirit, and strong backs of so many who help make UUCR a place that people like to use for spiritual, community and social activities.

Jay Stewart continues as our part-time contractual Custodian. Jay cleans buildings 1, 4 and 5 each week, sets up and takes down tables and chairs for special church and rental events, and makes sure our classrooms and Sanctuary are ready for every Sunday morning. As UUCR programs and rental events have grown, Jay's workload has grown; but he still brings his positive and conscientious professionalism to every task.

Bryant Taylor continues as our part-time Rental Attendant and Facilities Coordinator. You'll find Bryant here most Sundays, making sure all systems are up and running for our morning programs. He also supports most of our evening and weekend rental events. And Bryant does a variety of general maintenance around the church, including minor plumbing, assembling new furniture, gutter cleaning, and re-attaching hymn trays under the Sanctuary chairs.

Facility improvements and major repairs are coordinated with the Lay Minister for Buildings & Grounds (Marie Reed) and the Buildings & Grounds Committee, ensuring that this work is aligned with UUCR's Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and Board priorities. Please see the Buildings & Grounds report for these major initiatives.

More routine facility work completed this year includes:

- Reconfiguring space in Building 4 to accommodate our Assistant Minister
- Replacing a subset of Sanctuary lights
- Addressing a variety of building emergencies, including elevator outage and Building 1 electrical outage
- Acquiring a new laptop computer and larger portable projection screen

Use of UUCR buildings continues to grow.

- UUCR program usage increased slightly, mainly due to the refreshed Adult Faith Formation program.
- Long-term rentals have increased with the addition of a group using Building 2 most Saturdays and many Sunday afternoons. About half of our long-term renters are groups that provide important support for individuals or families facing challenges—another way UUCR fulfills its mission to positively transform our community. Long-term rental income will increase slightly this year to about \$14,000.

- Short-term rentals (single events) have increased significantly this year due to an unpredicted rush of rentals in our last quarter of the year. We expect to see at least \$25,000 in short-term rentals this year, up over \$2,000 from last year.
- Increasingly, UUCR provides space at no charge for local non-profit philanthropic organizations which share our commitment to social justice. A few such organizations this year were:
 - Community Ministries of Rockville
 - Interfaith Clergy of Montgomery County
 - Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative
 - Montgomery County Health and Human Services
 - Interfaith Disaster Chaplaincy Training
 - Rockville Men’s Chorus for benefit concerts

Opportunities to support like-minded organizations help UUCR fulfill AIP Activity 5: “Identify and regularly take advantage of ways to make UUCR a public church by enhancing its visibility in the community, specifically by creating links with the interfaith community and other groups.”

Committees Reporting to the Board

Committee on Ministry—*Rev. Lynn Strauss*

The Committee on Ministry (COM) works with our ministers and UUCR members and friends to support and strengthen the overall ministry of the congregation.

This has been a year of many staff transitions and the COM has supported these transitions in a variety of ways.

Assistant Minister (20 hours per week):

- Welcoming and integrating our first Assistant Minister, Rev. Doug McCusker in September 2014
- Facilitating Start-up Event for Assistant Minister led by consultant, Rev. Lyn Cox
- Providing support for Doug’s ordination at River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation in March 2015
- Assisting in the process of Doug’s decision to leave UUCR and accept a call to full time ministry (Doug will complete his contract through July 2015)

Religious Education Transitions:

- July 2014 resignation of our Director of Religious Education (DRE), Deborah Kahn (farewell celebration held in November 2014)
- September 2014 resignation of our Youth Coordinator, Jennifer Maschal-Lorms
- Welcoming and continuing support for our Interim DRE, Andrea Spencer-Linzie (beginning in January 2015)
- Support for Start-up Event for Interim DRE led by consultant, Rev. Sandra Greenfield

Support for Senior Minister's Role in Filling Staff Positions:

- Selection Committee for hiring new Assistant Minister
- Hiring of new Youth Coordinator as Sarah Prager is moving out of state
- Hiring new RE Assistant as Ginny Scher is retiring
- Hiring a Child Care Coordinator

In addition, the COM supported the goals of UUCR's Strategic Plan:

- Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan, the growth and diversity of our membership, is enhanced by COM support of the ministry and covenantal relationships of our ministers to one another, to staff, to the Board and Lay Ministry Council, and to the congregation as a whole.
- Objective 1:2, a better understanding of the spiritual and social justice needs of the congregation, was advanced by Rev. McCusker's Adult Faith Formation and Leadership Training plans. In addition, COM members attended the RE panel and RE Transition Team focus groups to attune to the pulse of the congregation during these changes.
- The COM continues to explore the possible use of an assessment survey of UUCR members and friends.
- Activity 2, assess how we might fulfill needs of central Montgomery County - This assessment happens through our continued social outreach programs and the continuing generosity and congregational support of Manna, Community Ministries of Rockville, Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, Garrett County Habitat for Humanity, Green Team projects, such as solar panels, and the growing involvement in the Interfaith Action Group led by Rev. Strauss. This ministry is supported as COM supports our religious professionals.

The COM also supported ongoing plans for Rev. Strauss's 10th anniversary celebration, which will be held on September 12-13, 2015, and for her sabbatical, which will be taken over two program years (dates pending). In addition, the COM supported plans for UUCR's 60th anniversary celebration, for which a date is also pending.

Committee members: Ricardo Carvajal, Steve Eckstrand, Cita Furlani, See Lam, and Rolf Preisendorfer. Rev. Lynn Strauss and Rev. Doug McCusker regularly attend the COM meetings.

Personnel Committee—*Suzanne Carrillo*

The mission of the Personnel Committee is to provide personnel administrative support for the administration of church employees. This year, we provided professional support, as needed or when requested, for the hiring of staff and in support of the minister's managerial functions. We will continue to provide this support on an ad hoc basis.

Committee members: Suzanne Carrillo (Chair), Jose Clemente, and Marianne Miller

Space Planning Task Force—*Marie Reed*

The Space Planning Task Force was created by the Board of Trustees at the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal year to develop plans to renovate Building 1 to make it more inviting, accessible, and appropriate for current programming needs.

This year's Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) includes a task to "Improve crowd flow and coffee access during coffee hour using currently available resources." To this end, the Space Planning Task Force recommended the purchase of narrower tables for use in Fellowship Hall to improve traffic flow. In addition, small coffee stations have been tried out in a variety of spots to minimize congestion in the lobby. Many thanks to Donna Taylor for her leadership and creativity in making these changes.

This year's AIP also includes: "Activity 16a: Improve the use of space in Building 1, Fellowship Hall, Founders Hall, lobbies, kitchen, restrooms, and closets by 1) conducting a comprehensive assessment of main floor space in Building 1; and 2) reviewing architect's concept of Building 1."

The Space Planning Task Force has been actively working to implement this AIP requirement. In brief, in the summer of 2014, we gathered congregational input via an online survey and interviewed key stakeholders. In the fall, we reported our findings to the Board and the congregation. In the winter, we selected an architect, and in the spring, we worked with the selected architect, Susan Mullineaux of DCMM, to come up with schematic design(s) which were presented to the Board in April and to the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting in May 2015.

The goals of the renovation are to make Building 1 a more inviting and accessible space. We are aiming to improve the coffee hour experience, including quieting the Sanctuary entrance corridor, provide at least one additional meeting space a la Room 44, make Founders Hall more usable for Children's Worship and the congregation at large, and significantly improve the kitchen and bathrooms. Of course, there are many other goals and considerations.

Current Status: We currently have two options for our consideration - one based on the current footprint and one with an expanded footprint. *Neither is a final schematic.* During the coming year, the Space Planning Task Force will work with the Board and the congregation to design/select a schematic floor plan that the Board and congregation feel best meets our program needs. To move forward, the Board will proceed with developing a Capital Campaign to finance the renovations.

Task Force members: David Bennington, Mark Corfman, Sue Hedges, Marie Reed, and Donna Taylor (Church Administrator)

Religious Education Transition Team—*Fran Lowe*

The Board of Trustees formed the Religious Education Transition Team this year to protect and ensure the integrity and vitality of our religious education program in light of the resignation of our long-serving Director of Religious Education (DRE) and our Youth Coordinator, and to take advantage of this opportunity to explore new and exciting visions of staffing and program. We were charged by the Board to lead a process of evaluation, research, collaboration, and visioning, in order to develop a proposal for permanent staffing of UUCR's Religious Education (RE) program.

Major accomplishments:

- Conducted research via the Internet and, so far, one visit to another congregation to learn about RE staffing and programs at other UU congregations. This will be continued next year.
- Met with UU Central East Regional Group consultant, Pat Infante to learn about best practices for carrying out our mission, including discerning congregational needs, and setting a timeline and goals.
- Collected and reviewed previous five-year RE children and youth attendance data.

- Held a panel discussion to learn how the Children & Youth Religious Education and other programs are organized and relate to each other, and how curricula are implemented and classes are planned. We heard presentations from our teachers and helpers, the Children & Youth Religious Education Committee, the Children's & Youth Worship Committee, OWL (Our Whole Lives sexuality education) facilitators, staff, the Rainbow Youth Alliance (RYA), and the Adult Faith Formation Committee. About forty people attended.
- Assisted with and participated in the Interim DRE Start-up Workshop, facilitated by Joseph Priestley District consultant, Sandra Greenfield.
- Held focus groups to provide opportunities for everyone in the congregation to share perspectives on the strengths and challenges of our RE program, their ideas for strengthening it, and to share their dreams for the future of RE at UUCR. As of this writing, five focus groups, each with approximately eight people, have been held, including one with the Senior Youth Group. Several more are planned.

Next year, we will continue our research and analysis, including more Internet research, more meetings with stakeholders in our congregation, and visits to other congregations. Our goal is to submit our proposal with recommendations for permanent staffing of UUCR's Religious Education program to the Board in October 2015.

Team members: Fran Lowe (Chair), Erika Pied, Gwen Rowe, Andrea Spencer-Linzie (Interim Director of Religious Education), Rev. Lynn Strauss, Len Taylor, Beth Vann, and Karen Whitesell

Congregation-Chartered Committee

Nominating Committee—*Ethel Gilbert*

The Nominating Committee is a congregation-chartered committee charged with presenting a slate of candidates for church officers, Board of Trustees, and Nominating Committee members, who are then elected by the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting in the spring.

We identified candidates who demonstrate leadership skills and creativity, and who reflect the general make-up of the congregation. We found candidates for three Board positions (Vice President, General Trustee, and Secretary) as well as candidates for Assistant Treasurer for Disbursements and for two Nominating Committee positions. Biographic information, obtained from the candidates, was published in the April issue of *Quest* and posted on UUCR's website. We found excellent candidates and thank them for agreeing to run for office.

Committee members: Ethel Gilbert (Chair), Cynthia Bauerle (Board representative), Ricardo Carvajal, Jack Eisenhauer, Clarice Julka, Andy Moore, and Karla Timmons.

Worship & Music

Worship Arts Team—*Cynthia Shires-Thurston*

The Worship Arts Team is charged with supporting the Minister and Assistant Minister in planning and creating high quality worship services. The team provides a Worship Steward to prepare the Sanctuary for the service every Sunday, a Worship Associate to assist in the pulpit as needed, and also

coordinates the lay led services, the quarterly solstice and equinox celebrations, and often the Sunday services with guest speakers.

We were very pleased this year to welcome our first Assistant Minister, Rev. Doug McCusker, to the team. Team members, Stephanie Kreps and Cynthia Shires-Thurston play dual roles, as they also serve as Lay Ministers for Worship & Music. Again this year, the team did not have a formal committee chair. We experimented with rotating some of those duties among the members, and Rev. Lynn Strauss also took on some of the duties.

The Worship Arts Team appreciates the time and effort that Rev. Lynn and Rev. Doug provided this year in giving guidance and mentoring for the team. We are very grateful for the work that Jennifer Rodgers, Director of Music, has done to provide inspiring music for worship services as well as leading congregational hymns every Sunday. And, we would like to recognize the time and effort of many volunteers, and of our Interim Director of Religious Education, Andrea Spencer-Linzie, in providing assistance for the multigenerational services and the Christmas pageant. The team also appreciates the consistent, outstanding work of Nancy Gregory in preparing the Order of Service each week and emailing it out to the correct persons, which serves as a reminder and keeps us organized.

Discussion continues around upgrades that are needed for the Sanctuary, such as a video projector, an upgraded sound system, and a new pulpit, perhaps with a fold-out step. A new and very welcome addition this year, adding to the quality of the Sunday worship services, is a Sound Team comprised of congregational members who are trained to use and monitor the recording system, microphones, and other sound equipment.

Team members: Jim Blue, Wayne Crump, Julie Graf, Christin Green, Stephanie Kreps, Rev. Doug McCusker, Dominic Russoli, Cynthia Shires-Thurston, and Rev. Lynn Strauss

Music Committee—*Mike Holmes*

The mission of the Music Committee is to support the choir and the Director of Music in the use of music to enhance the life of the congregation, both in Sunday services and through other musical events that support the social justice goals of UUCR and provide an outreach to the larger community.

Steve Lapham joined the committee this year, bringing our membership up to five.

The Tree of Life Cafe has continued to be a success. This year we have been hosting one event every second month, starting this past September. Attendance varies from event to event, but we have continued to bring in enough to exceed the \$300 artist guarantee each time, while still covering our expenses and accumulating additional funds in our account as a hedge against low attendance or unexpected needs. We will continue the series next year, returning to Friday evenings every second month.

The annual choir/Ethier Fund fundraiser, this year called My Funny Valentine, was a great success. We raised about \$2,600, and everyone had a great time. This time, the event was held on Valentine's Day and featured songs and skits about love. Greg Yoder once again provided some wonderful hors d'oeuvres and treats, supplemented by contributions from other members of the choir. The turnout was good in spite of a snowstorm that hit during the event. Thanks to everyone who braved the weather!

Committee members: Jennifer Rodgers (Director of Music), Mike Holmes (Chair), Julie Graf, Steve Lapham, and Jeremy Schuhmann

Decorations Committee—*Holly Meyer*

The Decorations Committee provides floral decoration in front of the Sanctuary every Sunday, and Stephanie Kreps and Carolyn Pooley managed the poinsettia sale at Christmas. This committee pays for the evergreen wreaths outside the Sanctuary during the holidays, and for some memorial service receptions.

This year, Branka Kienstra arranged decorations on the first Sunday of each month, Sue McCall on the second Sunday, Holly Meyer the third Sunday, Mary Caroline Colletti the fourth Sunday, and Carolyn Pooley the fifth Sunday. Ginger Dixon and Joan Fox were substitutes. Summer services were covered by Holly Meyer, Mary Caroline Colletti, Carolyn Pooley, Elaine Perino, Anne Hope Scott, Pat Reuther, Ginger Dixon, and Carolyn Randall.

The 2014-2015 Decorations Committee budget is \$200.

Ushers—*Patty Walker*

Ushers welcome congregants and visitors and maintain the dignity and spiritual atmosphere of the Sunday service.

Three people resigned as ushers during the year and three people quickly stepped up to fill their spots. Should we have additional resignations, efforts to recruit new ushers will be made. Training for new ushers was completed on an as-needed basis. The Christmas Eve services were staffed by four ushers at each service. One thing to improve for next year is encouraging ushers to be more proactive in finding seats during crowded services, especially for guests.

Ushers and substitutes for 2014-2015: Diane Baillie, Susan Beach, John Beach, Tina Berger, Katie Calder, Jim Carleton, Antonio Carrillo, Claudia Chitty, Jose Clemente, Len Cohen, Steve Crawford, Elaine Diamondidis, Ginger Dixon, Pat Einhorn, Steve Einhorn, Joe Goss, Mary Hoferek, Nancy Klag, David Lorms, Alberta Maschal, Maude McGovern, Steve Ouimette, Mylene Ouimette, Anne Oyler, Bob Oyler, Louis Paulson, Elaine Perino, Jan Popp, Robbie Reasoner, Scott Reilly, Ken Sandin, Burt Smith, Ellen Swinford, Sue Thomas, Karla Timmons, Eva Tolgyesi, Patty Walker (Chair), and Elizabeth Zerby

Lifespan Religious Education

Children & Youth Religious Education Committee—*Jonathan Langsam*

The mission of the Children & Youth Religious Education (RE) Committee is to help provide the best educational and community building program we can – we want all children and youth to feel valued and their growth to be nurtured, and to have all members of our congregation support RE and connecting with our children and youth.

- We planned and lead many potlucks and holiday gatherings this year: Sukkot, Christmas and Hanukah, Chinese New Year, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter/Passover.

- We are always working to be an all-inclusive congregation in that all generations feel welcome and thought of at all of our gatherings.
- We are available to greet new families on Sunday mornings when they try out UUCR with their children. Helping parents to feel welcome, relaxed, and safe with their children is a big part of what we do.
- We supported our Coming of Age, Bridging of Graduating Seniors, and Teacher/Helper Appreciation ceremonies.
- We increased teacher training and recruitment, and are planning a new approach to organizing the year by breaking the year into three or four pods in which teachers and helpers can sign up in 9-10 week chunks.
- Full week Peace Camp! This year's camp will be held August 3-7. We are excited that it will be offering three scholarships to Beall Elementary School, which is in the UUCR neighborhood.

Next year, we'd like to work on helping teachers feel more fulfilled and on improving systems that will support our growth and philosophy.

The 2014-2015 Children & Youth RE Committee budget is \$5,282.

Committee members: Jonathan Langsam (Chair), David Lorms, Karen Pittleman, Ellen Rohan, Gwen Rowe, and Andrea Spencer-Linzie (Interim Director of Religious Education)

Children's & Youth Worship Committee—*Gwen Rowe*

The mission of the Children's & Youth Worship Committee (CYW) is to provide meaningful worship opportunities through planned services and rituals that parallel our adult services, and connect us to the larger Unitarian Universalist community of faith.

The CYW Committee meets monthly and is responsible for:

- Bi-monthly Children's Worship services for preschool-5th grade, held in Founders Hall. In addition to our beloved annual services, including Tashlich, Social Justice/Manna, New Year's, and Maypole, our Children's Worship services coordinate with the monthly liturgical theme and function as a point of contact between the children and members of the congregation. In the past year, Bennett Rushkoff shared with the children about Sukkot, Barbara Weis told us about her work in Haiti, and Phil Lowe joined us as we continued our "Meet a UU" series, which introduces children to current members of our congregation as well as famous historical Unitarian Universalists.
- Support for the Youth-Led Worship, held in the Lower Level, with the 6th grade through Senior High RE classes.
- Our ongoing social justice project of food collections for Manna.
- The annual Christmas Pageant. We continued our ongoing expansion of set and costumes to accommodate the growing number of children and youth who participate, and welcomed the entire congregation to a celebratory reception!
- Support for our Interim Director of Religious Education for the First Fifteen multigenerational portion of the Sunday worship service. We support planning and implementation of First Fifteen services on the two Sundays per month during which the preschool-Senior High join the

full congregation before going to RE classes. One favorite First Fifteen service is the Mitten Tree, our annual collection of hats, gloves, scarves, and mittens for families in need.

Goals for next year:

- Continue to expand the Christmas Pageant set to increase visibility for the congregation, accommodate participation of more children, and maximize longevity and ease of storage of the set components.
- Continue to use multimedia for visual aids for appropriate Children's Worship services.
- Coordinate with the Children & Youth RE Committee to plan "all-morning" Children's Worship services for preschool-5th graders periodically throughout the year. These services will take the place of RE classes for those grades on those days.

The 2014-2015 Children's and Youth Worship Committee budget is \$650.

Committee members: Wendy Buzy, Mary Carvajal, Jane Christenson, Dainia Langsam, Jennifer Lyons, Gwen Rowe (Chair), and Andrea Spencer-Linzie (Interim Director of Religious Education)

Adult Faith Formation Committee—*Shira Ehrlich*

This year was transitional for the Adult Faith Formation Committee. Director of Religious Education, Deborah Kahn departed as our staff advisor, as she left in November to pursue new ventures. Assistant Minister, Rev. Doug McCusker offered guidance when he joined the staff in September. Under Rev. McCusker's advice, our committee offered Sunday programs on a monthly system, with each week covering one of four topics:

- Congregational Study Action Issue: Escalating Inequality
- World Religions
- Unitarian Universalism
- Monthly Congregational Theme

Other accomplishments:

- Collaboration in the multigenerational Mind-Body-Spirit Fair in April. Rev. McCusker initiated this event, in which UUCR members and staff led others in various spiritual practices.
- "Wisdom Wednesday" in February. Rev. McCusker organized this event, which included dinner and a performance by storyteller, Candace Ridington.
- Co-sponsorship of a class with another UUCR committee: Escalating Inequality and UU Values, led by Shira Ehrlich and Tim Francis of the Adult Faith Formation Committee, and Antonio Carrillo of the Social Justice Committee. Several participants of this class have expressed a desire to form an Escalating Inequality Task Force, which will work on the Congregational Study Action Issue.
- "An Honest Conversation ..." series, organized by Rev. Lynn Strauss and Rev. McCusker. This included "An Honest Conversation Between a Minister and a Cop," and "An Honest Conversation on Cuba Today."
- Three new classes developed and offered by UUCR members. Shira Ehrlich and Deborah Kahn led "Gun Violence: A UU Perspective" in October; Bill Newhouse led "Digital Literacy" in

November; Maude McGovern led a class on UU historical figure Judith Sargent Murray in March.

- The creation of documents and forms to establish procedures for the committee. These include: Guidelines for Proposing an Adult Faith Formation Class, Guidelines for Preparing and Presenting an Adult Faith Formation Class, and an evaluation form for class participants.

This year, our committee missed sponsoring the always well-attended Friday night Poetry & Music Coffeehouse. Celia Young, who usually organizes this, had taken a break. However, she has stepped forward to revive this event. We have scheduled two coffeehouses, for October 2015 and April 2016.

For the 2015-2016 program year, the Adult Faith Formation Committee is considering offering some multi-session classes from the Unitarian Universalist Association *Tapestry of Faith* series. This is a challenge, given that Rev. McCusker, who has offered such valuable guidance to our committee, will be leaving UUCR in July. We wish him well in his new position as minister of another congregation, but we will miss him. A big improvement for our committee would be to have a full-time staff professional who will be here to offer long-term guidance.

The 2014-2015 Adult Faith Formation Committee budget is \$575 of which \$541 has been spent.

Committee members: Steve Eckstrand (Lay Minister), Shira Ehrlich (Chair), Teki Fabian, Tim Francis, Chris Julka, and Rev. Doug McCusker (Assistant Minister)

Social Justice

Partner Church Committee—*Louise Friedenberg*

The mission of the Partner Church Committee is to help build a religious community with the Unitarian Church in Magyarzsakod, Transylvania, Romania, to facilitate the exchange of people and ideas, to assist in economic development, to support modern education, to increase knowledge about the roots of Unitarianism, and to foster mutual tolerance and respect among ethnic groups.

UUCR and Magyarzsakod have been partners since 1992. Rev. Sandor Balazs has been serving as minister in Magyarzsakod since April 2013. He initiated an important Village Caretaker program which is still running as the demand for services is increasing. He has an Internet connection at the Parish House where he lives, but communication is still difficult because of his English skills. His archaeologist son, Bence, was able to help him with emails and translation the first year, but now Bence is living in London, so communication has become more difficult this past year.

Many programs for the children of the Magyarzsakod congregation are being held. A traditional dance group was formed and they publicly performed for the first time in April 2015. A Confirmation ceremony will be held in June 2015 where the children who have reached a certain age confirm their faith in front of the congregation. A summer camp is being organized for the children. During the summer holiday, Rev. Balazs would like to take the children to Hungary to visit some of the famous Unitarian landmarks and historical places.

UUCR held a fundraiser in May 2014 and sent \$2,000 to support the Village Caretaker program. We also sent a \$750 stipend to Rev. Balazs - \$500 from the UUCR operating budget plus an extra \$250 from our fundraiser. In November 2014, we sent \$500 to help with Christmas expenses, especially for the elderly and the children.

Rev. Balazs invites UUCR members to visit Magyarzsakod. The parish house is renovated, so it is comfortable to host visitors.

The 2014-2015 Partner Church Committee budget is \$650. This covers the annual minister's stipend of \$500 and our \$150 annual dues to the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council in Massachusetts.

We were saddened to lose one of our faithful committee members, Ed Kimball, who passed away on Christmas Day 2014. Other committee members are: Fred Beckner, Lou Cerny, Lana Cerny, Joan Fox, Louise Friedenbergl (Chair), Branka Kienstra, Audrey Koch, and Eva Tolgyesi.

Social Justice Committee—*Bennett Rushkoff*

The mission of the Social Justice Committee (SJC) is to lead and engage the congregation on social justice concerns, providing tangible ways to live our Unitarian Universalist principles in the community and the world, financially supporting social justice groups, working in coalition with partner organizations, and encouraging congregational exploration and action on emerging issues.

The SJC coordinates the work of the congregation's social justice groups, as well as the congregation's support for partner social justice organizations. In February 2015, UUCR reached a milestone in environmental activism, joining the 240 UU congregations that, since 2002, have received Green Sanctuary Accreditation from the Unitarian Universalist Association. Another highlight this year was UUCR's co-sponsorship of the inaugural Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival in October 2014.

The congregation currently has the following social justice groups:

- Green Sanctuary Team – environmental awareness and activism
- Hunger Relief Task Group, including food collection and volunteer work at soup kitchens
- Immigration Action Group, including work for immigration reform
- LGBTQ Task Group, including the Rainbow Youth Alliance program
- Peace Study Group – study and promotion of peace and non-violence

In addition, the congregation supports the following Unitarian Universalist and community allies:

- Action in Montgomery (AIM) – non-partisan community organizing and advocacy
- Amnesty International Group 82 – letter-writing for release of prisoners of conscience
- Beacon House – activities and programs for at-risk children in DC
- Community Ministries of Rockville (CMR) – coalition of congregations serving the needy
- Habitat for Humanity – summer work constructing homes in Garrett County, Maryland
- Interfaith Works – service work includes Community Based Shelter in Rockville
- OpenDoor Housing Fund – loans to affordable housing developers
- Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) – advocacy at Maryland General Assembly
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) – worldwide social justice work
- UUs for Social Justice (UUSJ) – collaborative work in the National Capital Region

As part of this year's Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), the SJC has been charged by the Board of Trustees with 1) finalizing a biannual process for identifying the congregation's three or four priority social justice programs, and 2) determining how best to use Internet-based social media to connect

UUCR's social justice activities with the larger community. This work has been postponed for several months while the committee has collaborated with the Board to develop a Partner Plate Pilot Project for the 2015-2016 program year. From mid-May through July 2015, the SJC will be coordinating a congregational process to select six community service organizations with which to share UUCR's Sunday service cash collections. Each organization selected will receive a 50% share of UUCR's cash collections for a two-month period.

The 2014-2015 Social Justice Committee budget is \$12,500. The budget will be spent by the end of this fiscal year. Separate reports below detail the accomplishments and amount spent by each group.

The committee has no chair at this time. Responsibility for preparing the meeting agenda and chairing meetings is rotated among active members. Bennett Rushkoff, Lay Minister for Social Justice, serves as a point of contact for the SJC.

Social Justice Committee Groups:

Green Sanctuary Team —*Matt Beyers and Mary Lanigan*

The Green Sanctuary Team is leading the effort to deepen our spiritual interconnectedness with all existence of which we are a part, expand our knowledge of environmental and environmental justice issues, and make environmentally appropriate choices in our actions and decisions as individuals and as a congregation.

We completed the twelve projects outlined in our Green Sanctuary Action Plan. Following the February 8, 2015 unanimous vote at the Mid-Year Congregational Meeting, UUCR was accredited as a Green Sanctuary by the Unitarian Universalist Association on February 18, 2015. Leadership of the group was transitioned in September 2014 from Mary Lanigan and Terrie Barr to Matt Beyers and Julia Santerre.

Activities for the year:

- The UUCR Board of Trustees signed a contract with Solar Solution LLC in February 2015 to place 42 kilowatts of solar cells on UUCR roofs under a Power Purchase Agreement, led by the Solar Working Group. Installation is scheduled for June and is expected to generate approximately 35% of UUCR's electricity needs.
- Invited Rabbi Fred Sherlinder Dobb from Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation as guest preacher on Labor Day weekend.
- Screened four Friday Night Brown Bag Films on environmental and ethical eating themes.
- Participated in UU Green Leaders Collaboration Gathering meetings, established to foster regional cooperation on environmental issues.
- Hosted the 4th annual Interfaith Forum on February 15 to showcase and share efforts congregations are making to green their sacred grounds and improve local stream health – focused on storm water management.
- Adopt a Road: UUCR youth in grades 6-12 began by picking up trash on Crabbs Branch Road in Derwood in October.
- River cleanups: Participated in the Annual Potomac River Watershed cleanup on April 11 (fourth time) and Anacostia River Watershed cleanup on April 25 (third time).

- Organized a day-long boating/guided bus trip on June 20, 2014 to Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay, home to Maryland terrapins, muskrats, bald eagles, cormorants, herons, and egrets. Twenty-two people attended.
- Continued to promote wind power through a group purchasing program conducted by Groundswell and publicized by Interfaith Power and Light (\$0.096/kWh).

The 2014-2015 Green Sanctuary Team budget is \$1,000 of which \$650 has been spent.

Team members: Terrie Barr, Matt Beyers (Co-Chair), Jim Carleton, Len Cohen, Wayne Crump, John Dickson, Jon Facemire, Julie Forrest, Tim Francis, Cathy Higgins-Bisnett, Gail Katz, Jon Landenburger, Mary Lanigan, Steve Lapham, Marsha Luce, Karen MacIntyre, Alberta Maschal, Richard Noreikis, Hellen Oketch, April Pulvirenti, Julie Robinson, Julia Santerre (Co-Chair), Rachel Shaw, and Herb Winkler

Hunger Relief Task Group—*Dolores Barnes*

UUCR continued its weekly Manna food drive in partnership with the Children's & Youth Worship Committee. We are tracking with last year's end-of-year total of 2,500 pounds of food delivered, and will continue the drive through the summer months to meet our goal. Efforts to publicize current and ongoing summer collections will run in upcoming *Quest* and *E-Weekly* communications. UUCR has donated over 1,900 pounds to the Manna Food Center in Gaithersburg as of the end of April 2015.

UUCR youth and friends continued a once-a-month (third Monday) service day at The Lord's Table Soup Kitchen in Gaithersburg. We will work on continued recruitment of youth to staff our service day for the coming year, September through May. UUCR adult volunteers continued to work throughout the year at The Lord's Table, preparing and serving meals. In addition, the Hunger Relief Task Group used part of its budget to supply specific needs for The Lord's Table "wish list."

The UUCR community once again donated Thanksgiving baskets to Community Ministries of Rockville (CMR). Eighteen complete baskets were assembled and additional grocery gift cards were donated to CMR, which serves the Montgomery County community. Money allocated from the Social Justice Committee budget was also donated to Rockville HELP, a volunteer emergency aid service in Montgomery County.

Immigration Action Group —*David Strauss*

The Immigration Action Group (IAG) seeks to educate the UUCR community on the issues affecting immigrants in Montgomery County and throughout the nation, in keeping with the Unitarian Universalist Association's statement of conscience on immigration. We also collaborate with other faith-based and community organizations to engage in both service and policy actions on behalf of immigrants.

The IAG has about 25 members, many of whom participated in the group's monthly meetings and activities. The IAG is co-chaired by David Strauss and Adriana Brigatti.

Our year's main activities:

- We were one of the most supportive congregations in the National Capitol Area for the inaugural Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival. The festival took place over the four day period of October 23-26, 2014. The IAG showed the film, *A Better Life* at an auditorium at Montgomery College. All seats were filled, for a total attendance of 72. Following the film, Adriana Brigatti moderated a panel of three immigration experts who interacted with the audience, most of whom participated. The IAG also facilitated the showing of another film, *Sleep Dealer*, at Montgomery College's Takoma/Silver Spring campus. Overall, the festival reached over 1,000 people in eleven venues. The festival will be produced again in the fall of 2015. The IAG will continue to serve on the festival's steering committee and to be a vital part of this event. UUCR's part in the festival included a strong collaboration with Community Ministries of Rockville (CMR) and the Student Abroad program of Montgomery College.
- The IAG continued to manage UUCR's successful collaboration with CMR's Language Outreach Program. Since CMR started classes at UUCR in the fall of 2013, it has held two ESOL classes and two citizenship education classes each year. CMR will be conducting another intensive citizenship class from mid-June to mid-July 2015.
- Several members of the IAG volunteered in CASA de Maryland's clinics in Langley Park to assist young undocumented immigrants under President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. The IAG will be working with CASA to consider holding clinics in the Rockville area when and if the court stay of the President's new program for adults is lifted.
- The election of a much more conservative Congress in November 2014 presented a strong challenge to the IAG's desire to help facilitate a just and equitable federal immigration reform program of legislative changes to what we see as a broken system. The IAG will seek opportunities through Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice and other groups to protect the rights of immigrants in the coming year.

The IAG stays informed of advocacy activities on the state and federal levels and remains committed to participating in actions that will forward the cause of immigration reform. We will continue to stay involved in service provision that assists immigrants, and to keep the UUCR community informed on the issues.

The 2014-2015 Immigration Action Group budget is \$800.

LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Task Group—Stephanie Kreps

The mission of the LGBTQ Task Group is to support the rights and concerns of LGBTQ people in our congregation and in the wider community, and to foster awareness of such concerns among UUCR congregants and friends.

Major accomplishments:

- UUCR and Rainbow Youth Alliance's participation in Capital Pride, Youth Pride and Rockville Hometown Holidays are major outreach activities.
- Other outreach activities completed: Stephanie Kreps participated in a day-long seminar for Gay Straight Alliance high school groups presented by SMYAL, and in a Town Hall Meeting organized by Brother Help Thyself.

- Ongoing outreach activity: Representing the LGBTQ Task Group, Stephanie is helping to facilitate a new monthly PFLAG support group in Germantown at the United Church of Christ Seneca Valley. She also is working with an ongoing group based at Rockville United Church whose aim is to help LGBTQ youth in foster care and in the Montgomery County justice system.
- The Rainbow Youth Alliance (RYA) completed its 9th year of service to LGBTQ teens in March 2015. Timothy Elliott completed three years as our RYA Program Coordinator. He continues to be most able, enthusiastic, and effective. Fundraisers at Nellie's Sports Bar in DC were arranged by Timothy and brought in several hundred dollars in donations. RYA's monthly Movie Night, a new program initiated this year, continues with mixed success. One successful ongoing collaboration is with Rockville Open House, the LGBTQ youth support group of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, located on Montrose Road in Rockville.
- The long-awaited Rainbow Youth Advisory Council convened with its first meeting in March 2015. It is made up of UUCR members Stephanie Kreps, Jennifer Carter, Terri Fritz, and Beth Irikura. Other members are Rev. Ginger Luke, retired Unitarian Universalist minister, and Charles Farmer of Washington, DC. Timothy Elliott is an ex-officio member.
- Our annual grant from Brother Help Thyself brought us just over \$4,100 this year

The 2014-2015 LGBTQ Task Group budget is \$1,000.

Peace Study Group— *Ken Sandin*

Since 2002, when a group of UUCR members and friends formed a Peace Action Group, peacemaking - both internationally and at home - has been a focus of UUCR's Social Justice Committee. Today, several members of the congregation are members of Peace Action Montgomery, which the Social Justice Committee formally joined in 2014. We host some Peace Action Montgomery events and encourage congregational participation in peace vigils, petition drives, demonstrations, and peace advocacy directed to local, state, and national legislatures. In April 2015, we co-sponsored and hosted a very well-attended forum, "Demystifying Syria – The Real Story Behind ISIS."

Group members: Steve Lapham, Ken Sandin, and Alonzo Smith

Social Justice Committee Affiliations:

Amnesty International Group 82—*Roald Schrack and Zana Miller*

Amnesty International (AIUSA), the worldwide human rights organization based in London, is unaffiliated with any government, church, corporation, or other organization. AIUSA, Group 82, while independent of UUCR, continues to benefit from the use of its facilities for meetings. The group was founded in 1975 by Parson Bill Moors and the late Dan O'Connell, a member of the church. About one-third of the group's members are also members of UUCR. The co-leaders are Zana Miller and Cathy Knepper.

During this church year, Group 82 has continued to hold its monthly meetings on the third Sunday at noon in Room 53. UUCR members and friends have a standing invitation to attend these meetings as observers or potential members. We are currently participating in world-wide campaign against torture, and Guantanamo detainees. We also work on human rights abuses involving refugees and indigenous peoples. We are actively engaged in anti-death penalty work.

We send about 200 cards and letters throughout the year on behalf of various prisoners of conscience. We send cards at Christmas and at the Persian New Year. We send postcards in the summer. We also take action on cases that are posted online. We have a prisoner case involving one prisoner of conscience in Indonesia, which is shared by other groups in the mid-Atlantic region. Our other prisoner of conscience is a young Kurdish woman in Iran, Zeynab Jalalian. Our member Ferrah Pourahmadi, originally from Iran, is in charge of the case. Several of our members attend the Annual General Meeting of AIUSA each year.

Beacon House—*Alberta Maschal*

The purpose of the UUCR liaison to Beacon House is to keep the congregation informed about activities, needs, and volunteer opportunities at Beacon House.

Beacon House Community Ministry is a Unitarian Universalist community ministry founded by Rev. Donald E. Robinson in 1991. Beacon House is a neighborhood-based organization supporting youth and families of the Edgewood Terrace community located in Northeast Washington, DC. The primary goal of Beacon House is to provide at-risk youth with opportunities for positive educational and culturally-rich programs, and to assist at-risk children and youth to identify and pursue their educational objectives, culminating in college or vocational training and to prepare them for productive involvement in their community and society.

In addition to providing funds for scholarships for Camp Leap, the summer day camp sponsored by Beacon House which serves about 200 children for eight weeks, the congregation donated supplies and kits to the Back to School drive during the summer and gave generously to the Christmas gift collection for children, youth and seniors at Edgewood Terrace in November and early December.

To learn more about Beacon House, check out its website: www.beaconhousedc.org, or go to its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/beaconhousedc>.

Beacon House is supported by all of the members and friends of UUCR who contribute to the Back to School drive during the summer, who donate new unwrapped gifts for the children, youth and seniors at Edgewood at Christmas-time, who make financial pledges to UUCR, which enables support for Beacon House to be funded as part of the Social Justice Committee budget, and who volunteer their time. Community service hours are available to our Senior High youth who wish to participate in Beacon House activities.

Community Ministries of Rockville—*Antonio Carrillo*

Community Ministries of Rockville (CMR) is an interfaith coalition of twenty-one Rockville congregations founded in 1967 to serve those in need in Rockville and Montgomery County. UUCR is represented by two Board members and contributes financially. This year, UUCR contributed \$2,000 to CMR and \$1,000 directly towards the Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic (MKHC).

CMR is an advocate for the underserved and supports several programs to serve the needs of the community. These programs include an emergency assistance program (REAP), the Latino Outreach Program, Elderly Ministries to enable frail elderly to remain in their home, the MKHC for uninsured adults, and Jefferson House and Rockland House – transitional housing for homeless men and women, respectively.

While the Chase Men's Shelter is no longer under the auspices of CMR and is now operated by Catholic Charities, UUCR members and friends continue to bring meals to that facility. In addition, many members and friends participate in a variety of CMR programs, such as making Thanksgiving baskets for needy families in the Rockville community. Through the efforts of UUCR's Immigration Action Group, the congregation made an in-kind donation of its facilities for CMR's Language Outreach Program and citizenship classes.

CMR has many challenges for the upcoming years. This includes continual funding for the MKHC. Financial and volunteer support through the member congregations is crucial for the organization's survival. UUCR, as a member of the Rockville community, has an obligation to support CMR at its past historic levels. More detail about the programs and budget is available through www.cmrocks.org and the CMR annual report.

UUCR's representatives on the CMR Board are Johanna Marshall and Ken Sandin.

The 2014-2015 budget allocation for CMR is \$2,000 for general programs and \$1,000 for the Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic. The full \$3,000 has been sent to CMR for the year.

Interfaith Works—*Antonio Carrillo*

UUCR is a member congregation of Interfaith Works, which operates community-based shelters, a clothing center, and emergency support services, and serves as an important resource for the referral of people seeking assistance. UUCR's main activity has been "meals week" when congregants volunteer to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner for one week in June for up to 35 residents at the Wilkins Avenue Women's Assessment Center. The Center provides shelter and other services for women.

The budget for Interfaith Works remained at the same level as last year: \$1,650. Of that, \$1,400 has been donated to the organization and the remaining \$250 is slated for use for purchase of supplies during UUCR's meals week.

OpenDoor Housing Fund —*Terrie Barr*

The mission of the OpenDoor Housing Fund is to support affordable housing development in underserved communities. OpenDoor partners with forward-thinking investors and benefactors to create the financial, strategic, and technical assistance required to develop economically strong and diverse communities. OpenDoor's philosophy is "leveraging faith based investment to put low/moderate income people in safe, permanent homes by exploring opportunities with developers/managers of low/moderate income housing." To learn more, visit www.odhf.org.

OpenDoor's major accomplishments:

- Preserved over 25 units of affordable housing, and provided housing related services to over 75 individuals or families located in the Metro Washington, DC area.
- Catholics for Housing, Prince William County, Virginia, and OpenDoor joined forces to provide home ownership counseling workshops for 38 renters and first time homebuyers transitioning to homeownership in Prince William County.
- Baltimore City REO (Real-Estate Owned) Reclamation Project – OpenDoor, working with the National Community Stabilization Trust, teamed with a local housing developer in Baltimore

City to rehab and return four foreclosed single-family homes to affordable occupancy in the Belair, Brooklyn, and Windsor neighborhoods.

- HomeFree USA – OpenDoor Partnership – This partnership provided housing counseling services and redeveloped foreclosed properties located in Prince George’s County and Baltimore City neighborhoods which continue to be hard hit by ongoing foreclosures and the explosion of REO properties. This partnership yielded the redevelopment of five units of affordable single-family housing in fiscal 2014.
- Emory Beacon of Light CDC - the Emory Beacon of Light project continues to serve 10-15 low-income families annually. This project provides housing as well as supportive services to families that struggle with chronic homelessness in Washington, DC.
- Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) – Scattered Sites – OpenDoor, working with Georgetown Bank, renewed a combined \$800,000 credit facility extended to MHP that allowed the agency to preserve 19 units of affordable rental housing in the Silver Spring/Takoma Park area.
- The Fuller Center for Housing – Home Thrift Stores – OpenDoor continued its partnership with The Fuller Center (formerly Habitat for Humanity of Prince George’s County), a national nonprofit ecumenical housing organization, by providing a much-needed \$58,000 line of credit to support the operations of its two home supplies thrift stores, which resell building and construction materials donated by Home Depot to housing developers.

The 2014-2015 budget allocation for OpenDoor is \$350, which has been sent to OpenDoor for operating expenses. UUCR holds an institutional investment of \$10,000 in OpenDoor, maximizing the UUA matching amount. This investment earns 3% interest. UUCR members hold individual investments in OpenDoor and make annual donations.

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland – *Andrea Hall*

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) advocates for legislation that reflects UU values in the Maryland General Assembly.

Before the start of each year’s 90-day legislative session, UULM-MD selects three or four priority issues, working with established coalitions. These priority issues are centered on bills that will be introduced that year that foster UU values. This year, the priority legislation selected by UULM-MD included bills for paid sick leave, reforming the criminal justice system, and climate change. During the legislative session (January 14 to April 13), Andrea Hall tabled after services to let UUCR members and friends know of opportunities to contact their state legislators to express support for our priority legislation, and urged congregants to call, email, or visit their legislators. Two UUCR members attended a Lobby Night and Rally for the climate change bills in February.

Three of the criminal justice reform bills that UULM-MD supported passed this year:

- The Maryland Second Chance Act - to shield certain nonviolent misdemeanor convictions from public view after a three to seven year waiting period;
- The Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council Act - to develop a statewide framework of sentencing and corrections policies to further reduce the state's incarcerated population and reduce spending on corrections; and
- A bill to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

UUCR's involvement with UULM-MD gives members and friends an opportunity to take their faith and values into the wider community and advocate for positive change in Maryland. It gives UUs a voice in the legislative process. The work of UULM-MD involves all of the Maryland UU congregations, so participating in these advocacy activities brings together UUs from across the state. Because UULM-MD works with established coalitions, it also gives UUCR members and friends the opportunity to work with other diverse faith communities and nonprofit organizations, such as the Maryland Climate Coalition.

This year, under grants from the UU Funding Panel and the UU Church of Annapolis endowment, UULM-MD completed an overhaul and update of its major communications pieces. By updating the website, email blasts, and social media tools, UULM-MD hopes to reach a broader audience of Maryland UUs and other activists, including youth and communities of color. Next year, we will push for greater UUCR involvement in UULM-MD Lobby Night (usually held on President's Day).

The Social Justice Committee allocated \$300 for UUCR's annual membership in the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee—*Ken Sandin*

UUCR supports the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a membership organization founded in 1941 to advance human rights and social justice worldwide, by encouraging individual memberships and, with the Children & Youth Religious Education Committee, collecting for UUSC's annual Guest at Your Table fundraiser.

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice—*Ethel Gilbert*

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) is an organization of congregations and individuals who believe that working together is the most effective way to accomplish social justice goals, and connects social justice leaders in over 20 area congregations deeply committed to UU religious principles of human dignity, justice, and compassion.

UUSJ continues its focus on advocacy on Capitol Hill on issues consistent with UU principles.

Current priorities are as follow:

- The environment and climate change
- Comprehensive immigration reform
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) rights
- The widening wealth divide

Since the retirement of Executive Director, Rev. Terry Ellen in June of 2014, the UUSJ Board has launched a Governance Task Force while continuing its programming and advocacy efforts under the leadership of Board Co-Chair, Lavona Grow.

UUSJ sponsored or co-sponsored the following events this year:

- "Beyond the Partisan Divide," a presentation by Revs. Scott and Anya Sammler-Michael on how we relate to UUs with different political views

- A briefing on the new Congregational Study Action Issue, Escalating Inequality
- A program on “How to Make Your Climate Efforts Count”

UUSJ’s website, www.uusj.net, has information on UU and interfaith social justice activities throughout the region and has been used by UUCR, along with the UUSJ e-newsletter, to publicize UUCR programs.

The 2014-2015 budget allocation for UUSJ is \$800, which has been sent to UUSJ. In addition to this contribution from the UUCR operating budget, several UUCR members and friends maintain individual memberships and contribute to meet UUCR’s fair share of \$1,810, which helps to pay for one-third time staff member, Rev. Cynthia Snavely, and other expenses, including consultant fees.

The current UUCR representative on the UUSJ Board is Ethel Gilbert. Cathy Higgins-Bisnett is the alternate representative. David Strauss is a member of the Immigration Task Group.

Membership & Communications

Chalice Lighters—*Jewell Golden*

This is a way that we support growth of Unitarian Universalist congregations in the Joseph Priestley District. “Lighting the Chalice” refers to funding grants to congregations that have an intention to grow and have a specific urgent need. They suggest \$30 a call to answer the need and there are three calls a year. The needs supported by grants have been for land, buildings, a first minister, a first music director, a first director of religious education, and innovative growth proposals. There are many opportunities to grow our religion in the Joseph Priestley District. Jewell Golden is the contact person.

Quest Newsletter—*Alberta Maschal*

Quest provides information about people, activities, programs, and major decisions to UUCR members and friends. It’s published once a month in three formats: mailed paper version, postage-saving email (in color), and the web version appearing on our website. In addition to this monthly publication, our weekly electronic newsletter, *UUCR E-Weekly*, allows for timely announcements and reminders of congregation activities. Nancy Gregory is the editor of *UUCR E-Weekly*.

Editing, producing, and delivering *Quest* is the work of teams: Alberta Maschal, Beth Irikura, and Elizabeth Sullivan are the editors on a rotating basis. Layout, proofreading, production, and distribution of the email version are handled by Nancy Gregory, who also posts *Quest* on the UUCR website. Louise Friedenbergl is the Wednesday collating and mailing crew coordinator, Margaret Chalkley, Nancy Grissom, Branka Kienstra, Joan Fox, and Gwen Rowe are the regular crew. Substitutes this year were Jo Wilson and Ken Sandin. Thanks to all for the reliable and efficient operation.

Finance

Finance Committee—*Kent Hancock*

The Finance Committee assists the Board of Trustees in developing fiscal policy and in setting an annual operating budget. The Finance Committee also prepares the annual canvass budget and assists

the congregation and staff on financial matters. The committee, in partnership with the Treasurer and Bookkeeper, assures that UUCR keeps accurate financial records, and plans for the long-term financial health of the congregation.

This year and next, the committee is updating existing UUCR financial documents, and developing new policies for Board consideration where needed. To date, the Board has approved an updated Aesthetics Committee Policy and Credit Card Policy. The Board approved closing UUCR's Medical Reimbursement Spending Plan as recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Additionally, at Board direction, the Finance Committee developed a new restricted fund in honor of Deborah Kahn's 29 years of service, the "Scholarship Fund for Children and Youth of UUCR."

The committee works closely with the Lay Minister for Buildings & Grounds (LMBG) and the Church Administrator on identifying needed capital improvements for our aging facilities. This year, the LMBG submitted UUCR's first ever 5-year Capital Plan to the Board. The Board approved the highest priority items, such as automated doors for the handicapped, graveling the lower parking lot, and replacing 55-year-old original side doors on buildings 2, 3, and 4.

Recently, UUCR signed a new 5-year rental agreement with the Rockville Community Nursery School (RCNS) which begins September 1, 2015. As part of this agreement, UUCR and RCNS are equally sharing the cost of installing a new tile floor throughout Building 3.

Committee members: Eric Burch (Assistant Treasurer - Deposits), Kent Hancock (Chair), Barbara Harrison (Assistant Treasurer – Disbursements), Dave Marks, Marianne Miller, Melissa Moore, Julie Robinson (Treasurer), Martha Taylor (Bookkeeper), and Bill Newhouse

Canvass Committee—*Bill Newhouse*

The Canvass Committee manages the annual UUCR pledge drive and is responsible for nearly 80% of the income necessary to meet the congregation's operating expenses. Each year, the canvass is held in February and March to inspire and inform members and friends to support UUCR's operating budget for the next fiscal year. The canvass includes the goal of connecting with every congregant to ask for a pledge and to provide an opportunity to connect with every member and friend.

Major accomplishments:

- The Board of Trustees set the 2015 pledge drive target at \$612,485, a figure 6.1% above the pledge total collected in 2014, based on a canvass budget delivered by the Finance Committee. The canvass budget was approved at the January 2015 Board meeting.
- The "From Generosity to Justice" theme for the 2015 pledge drive was utilized to inspire this year's generosity and to connect with the worship themes on Sundays. Suzie Spangler provided the logo this year and offered some framing words about its connection with the theme.
- *E-Weekly* and *Quest* articles, along with Order of Service announcements, were used to communicate throughout the canvass.
- Posters were made to remind people that Canvass Sunday was occurring on March 1, 2015.
- From Generosity to Justice Moments were offered during Sunday worship services by Bill Newhouse and the 5th grade RE class, Christy Shannon, Abbey Uffelman, Stephanie Kreps, Kris Butler, Cat Goodyear, Kent Hancock, and Antonio Carrillo. Visit <http://uucr.org/canvass-moments> to read their generous offerings.

- As of May 4, 2015, UUCR has received 236 pledges (107 of which are increases, 21 are new) totaling \$546,600, which is 89.3% of our goal. It is projected that by the time the Board adopts an operating budget for the next fiscal year, we will have collected \$579,000 in pledges, which is 94% of the canvass goal.
- At the conclusion of Canvass Sunday on March 1, we had collected \$343,374 from 100 pledges, which took us to 56.1% of our goal.
- The UUCR staff provided outstanding support for the committee's work, with especially strong support in the areas of printing, communication, and mailing needs. The UUCR Canvass Committee works closely with the Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees, the Director of Communications and Membership, and the Lay Ministry Council to ensure that UUCR can meet its financial obligations and support the mission of the congregation.
- The Canvass Committee is grateful for the leadership of Rev. Strauss and enjoyed weaving the From Generosity to Justice Moments and submissions for *Quest*, the *E-Weekly*, and the Orders of Service into her worship themes.
- Canvass documented using the canvasschair@uucr.org and Google drive such that it can be easily used by the next Chair of the committee.

Next year's goals:

- Identify new Canvass Committee members.
- Commit to one-on-one canvassing for one-third of UUCR pledgers.

A disappointment this year was that weather played havoc, cancelling a Sunday service during the canvass along with a reception.

Committee members: Bruce Baskett, Melissa Moore, Bill Newhouse (Chair), Julie Robinson, and Christy Shannon

UUCR is grateful to the following people for pledging during this year's canvass:

Abott, Stacey	Brandt, Larry & Susan
Aguilar, Antonio	Brigatti, Adriana
Allen, Amy Greene & David	Bright, Roselie & Mark Lewandoski
Alzouma, Dana & Karim	Burch, Eric & Arlyn Sanchez
Asman, Jill	Burroughs, Charles
Baillie, Diane	Butler, Kris
Bain, Henry	Buzy, Joel & Wendy
Baku, Esmail	Byrd, Anne
Barnes, Andrew & Dolores	Calder, Katie & Mark Abraham
Barney, Carol	Campbell, Bob
Barr, Terrie & Jim	Campbell, Gaynelle
Barry, Bill & Diana	Campbell, Paulette
Baskett, Bruce & Emily Untermeyer	Campbell, Polly
Bauerle, Cynthia & Robbie Reasoner	Carnes-Stine, John & Brad
Beach, John & Susan	Carrillo, Suzanne & Antonio
Bennington, David	Carvajal, Ricardo & Mary
Bertka, Connie & Yingwei Fei	Cerny, Lana & Louis
Blue, Jim & Lee	Chalkley, Margaret
Bolland, Silvia	Chamberlain, Irv & Sherry Henry
Bradshaw, Pat	Chapin, Patricia & William

Childers, Brian
Chitty, Richard & Claudia
Christenson, Jane & Tom Nastick
Claxton, Erin & Utako Matsumura
Clemente, Jose
Clemente, Kathy
Cohen, Len & Marilla
Colletti, Mary Caroline
Corfman, Mark & Susan
Cox, Allison & Steven Rosen
Crane, Cammy & Alex Szatmary
Crump, Annmarie & Wayne
Dangel, Carol & Richard
Danielson, Carole
Dauler, Jeff
Davis, Niki
Dawisha, Sahar
Deal, Marlene
Delavan, Deb & Bronson Hoover
Dickson, John & Rachel Shaw
Dittmann, Sharrill
Dixon, George & Virginia
Doerr, Ed & Herenia
Dolak, Colleen & Matt Zembrzuski
Dudley, Bill & Kristine
Dunbar, John
Duncan, G. Doug
Durmowicz, Beth & Tony
Eckstrand, Steve & Irene
Ehrlich, Shira
Einhorn, Pat & Steve
Eisenhauer, Jack & Judy
Evans, John
Fabian, Teki
Feller, Stephanie
Fenimore, Chuck & Natalie
Floge, Liliane & Stephen Crawford
Folsom, Ginny & Norman Rave
Forrest, A. Julie
Fox, Joan
Francis, Tim
Fredin, Lisa
Friedenberg, Louise & Paul
Fries, Barbara
Fritz, Terri & Ron Cancelose
Furlani, Cita & John
Garbe, Edward
Garofalo, David & Kelly Cooper
Gellman, Carey & Richard
Gilbert, Ethel & Richard

Gilfrich, Bob
Golden, Jewell
Goodyear, JP & Catherine
Goss, Lynne & Joe
Graf, Julie
Gregory, Nancy
Gregory, Sondra & Bill
Griffin, Glenn & Jane
Grissom, Nancy
Haber, Martin & Valerie
Haldeman, George & Kate
Hall, Andrea & Dan Zabinski
Hall, Karen
Hancock, Kent & Gayle
Harris, Lauren
Harrison, Barbara & Dan Pierce
Harrison, Beth & Todd
Hayes, Allen
Hedges, Sue & Kyle
Heifitz, Cassandra & Adam
Heilman, Robert & Karen
Helton, Don & Shana
Henry, Margie
Higgins-Bisnett, Cathy
Higgins-Bort, Marion
Hoferek, Mary & Susan Wilson
Holbein, Chris
Holmes, Marge & Michael
Huff, Laura
Hurlbut, William & Nancy Blum
Irikura, Karl & Beth
Johnson, Myles & Ruth
Jones, Gretchen
Jones, Peggy & Hunter
Julka, Clarice & Chris
Karras, George
Kawamura, Barbara & Dale
Kienstra, Branka
Klag, Jane & Nancy
Kohout, Nick & Chris
Kreps, Stephanie & Gary
Lam, See-Yan
Landenburger, Jon
Lanigan, Mary
Lapham, Steve & Cheryl
Larson-Rabin, Leah & Zach
Lee, Doris & Jeremy Martin
Libert, Judith
Linkletter, Brett & Rebecca
Lippert, Dory

Lorms, David & Alberta Maschal
 Lowe, Phil & Fran
 Luce, Marsha
 Lyons, Jennifer
 MacIntyre, Karen
 Magnuson, Gary
 Malley, Karen
 Mann, Ashia & Don
 Marks, Dave & Diane
 Martzloff, François & Madeleine
 Mascardo, Jennifer
 McCall, Susan
 McCann, Andy & Susie
 McClelland, Martha & Peter Shaw
 McCormick, Mary
 McGovern, Maude
 McIlwaine, John
 McCaffrey, Anne
 Meyer, Holly & Robert
 Miller, Marianne
 Mondelo, Susan
 Moore, Andy & Melissa
 Newhouse, Bill & Kay
 Noreikis, Richard
 Norris, Eric & Karen
 Ouimette, Mylene & Steve
 Partington, Leigh
 Paulson, Louis
 Perino, Elaine & Don
 Perkins, Neil & Melissa
 Pied, Aaron & Erika
 Pittleman, Karen & Steve
 Plumb, Don & Judy
 Pooley, Carolyn
 Popp, Jan
 Power, Kevin & Christin Green
 Preisendorfer, Rolf & Dominic Russoli
 Pulvirenti, April
 Randall, Carolyn
 Rathbone, Donna
 Rayner, Judith & Dennis Wellnitz
 Reed, Lisa
 Reed, Marie & Steve
 Reilly, Scott
 Reinsberg, Carol
 Rhodes, Alma
 Riley, Bryan & Marla
 Robinson, Julie & Alex Chauche
 Rodriguez, Carla & Kendall Watson
 Rohan, Ellen & Steve Greene
 Rosewater, Mary
 Roth, Sue
 Rowe, Gwen & Tom
 Rushkoff, Bennett & Karen Whitesell
 Ryan, Jimena
 Sandin, Ken
 Schrack, Roald
 Schuhmann, Jeremy
 Scott, Anne Hope
 Shanker, Michael & Tracy
 Shannon, Christy & Mark
 Sherr, Marialyce & Ted
 Shires-Thurston, Cynthia & Ginny
 Simpson, Richard
 Smith, Lisa Petrovich & Jeffrey
 Solberg, Larissa
 Sosa, Julio & Rebecca
 Spicknall, Anne
 Stahl, Deb & Mike
 Steel, Elizabeth & Sam
 Stiles, Mark & Barbara Weis
 Stolz, Richard
 Stover, Constance
 Strauss, Lynn & David
 Tait, Erynn & Brian
 Taylor, Donna
 Taylor, Jack & Pamela
 Taylor, Len & Martha
 Thomas, Frank & Susan
 Timmons, Karla & Burt Smith
 Tolgyesi, Eva
 Tonat, Connie
 Walker, Patty & Kelly Cahill
 West, Bryan
 West, Pamela & Matt Beyers
 Wheeler, Teddy & Jenny
 Wicker, Dorothy
 Wilcock, Daniel & Takako Maeda
 Wilcox, Steven
 Williamson, Victoria
 Wilson, Mark & Jo
 Wilson, Pat
 Yoder, Greg
 Young, Celia
 Young, Joe & Melissa
 Zarret, Sue
 Zatman, Andrew & Marilyn Briant
 Zerby, Elizabeth
 Zetts, Terry

Planned Giving Committee—*Sharrill Dittmann*

The purposes of the Planned Giving Committee are to raise awareness in the congregation of the importance of estate planning and to encourage gifts to UUCR's Endowment Fund through the inclusion of UUCR in those plans and with gifts.

The committee hosted a seminar on "Changes You Should Know About," covering estate planning, impact investing, and planned giving. Len Cohen made the well-received presentation, and a number of visitors attended. We also worked with Rev. Lynn Strauss on Legacy Sunday. One new member to the Legacy Society was introduced to the congregation, and members of the congregation had an opportunity to make direct contributions to the Endowment Fund. Over \$2,000 was contributed on Legacy Sunday.

Several members of the congregation have made contributions to the Endowment Fund in memory or in honor of loved ones and, with the addition of bequests and larger gifts, the fund now totals over \$322,000, up from \$300,000 at this time last year.

We look forward to having more members of the Legacy Society in 2015 and to continuing our educational seminars. We also hope to recruit new committee members and revise the materials on the UUCR website.

The 2014-2015 Planned Giving Committee budget is \$500 of which \$72 has been spent.

Committee members: Len Cohen, Sharrill Dittmann (Chair), and Roald Schrack

Action Auction Fiesta Cruise—*Colleen Dolak*

The Action Auction Fiesta Cruise is a combination of a fundraising event and a community building activity for UUCR. Our focus was to be inclusive of all our members and friends while striking a balance that allowed us to raise funds for our varied congregation needs.

The Action Auction was held on May 2, 2015. This year's Auction had a theme change from Spring Fiesta to Fiesta Cruise. In doing so, the décor, food, and logo were changed, but much of the signage and other resources were reused.

Donation items were solicited from outside businesses, as well as congregation members and friends. This year's Auction set a record of over 155 items up for bid. Donations included many ethnic and innovative dinners, such as French Country Dining, a Locally Grown Farm to Table Dinner Party, and a Polish Dinner Party held at members' homes. In addition, some favorites, such as Mamma Miller's Spaghetti Dinner and the Julia Child Dinner Party returned. There were many gift cards to local businesses and restaurants. Returning bakery and gourmet items included Incredible Carrot Cake, cookies, pies, flan, and gumbo, to name a few. There were many services up for bid, such as pet sitting, car detailing, veterinary consultation, computer assistance, gardening, financial planning, and classes ranging from music and nutrition to varied art sessions and meditation. Entertainment opportunities abounded, such as an Ashton Afternoon Jazz Piano gathering, the family-friendly Board Game Extravaganza, a Family Pool Party and Barbeque, and many more. New this year was a family-friendly catalog supplement which highlighted the offerings ideal for our younger families.

The food this year was in line with our cruise theme - a buffet that highlighted dishes from three ports of call: Turkey, Japan, and Italy. We enjoyed catered kabobs, rice, and pita by Moby Dick restaurant and sushi from Wegman's grocery. Our stellar kitchen team put together a lovely spread of ziti and sausage to represent Italy. The Power Tool Gang sold beer and wine. As is our tradition, there was a fine wine raffle where only 100 tickets were offered for a chance to win approximately \$250 worth of wine. Additionally, this year we offered a "big beer" raffle. Similar to the wine raffle, there were only 100 tickets offered for a dozen large bottles of beer valued at over \$150.

The Action Auction requires much planning, coordination, and participation from congregation members and friends. There were volunteers participating in publicity, business outreach, ticket sales, computer and website work, decorations, set-up, clean-up, solicitations of donations, catalog preparation, and more. The coordination brings many members and friends together for a common goal. In addition, the many dinners and services bring varied groups of congregants together in social settings. Committee/group members were given the opportunity to work together, developing stronger and/or new relationships in a shared experience with a goal to benefit the congregation.

Other tools and resources that would be useful to help the Action Auction achieve its goals for the future include:

- A seed money budget for planning and preparation of the event - this could potentially allow for online bidding to offer more flexibility for those who are unable to attend the event.
- Additional networking with congregation members and local businesses to increase and provide varied donations for the Auction.
- Networking with religious education families, younger members, and new members of the congregation to explain the Action Auction and promote participation.
- A detailed Action Auction manual for future co-chairs, outlining timelines, volunteer needs, location of items used, etc.

For next year, the Action Auction team would like to recruit additional volunteers and new members.

Net of expenses, the Action Auction Spring Fiesta raised over \$30,000 this year.

Action Auction Fiesta Cruise Co-Chairs: Colleen Dolak and Carolyn Randall

NovemberFest—*Susan Hedges*

UUCR's fourth NovemberFest holiday arts and crafts festival was held on Saturday, November 15, 2014. The event featured arts and crafts vendors and community vendors – some repeat vendors and some new vendors.

In addition to the profits we realized from space rental to the vendors, UUCR sales centers included: quilt raffle and quilt goods, UUCR crafters, book sale, jewelry sale, art sales, tote bag sale, used goods, toy sales, breakfast and lunch service, bake sale and granola sales. The Senior Youth Group sold tie-dye goods for their own fundraising. Musical members of the UUCR community contributed live music on the "Café Stage" in Founders Hall, and played piano in the Sanctuary. We contributed to social justice by inviting a nonprofit group, Healthcare for Haiti's Poor, to join the event.

Despite usual publicity efforts, the event was not as well-attended this year by the public or by UUCR members and friends. Although many congregants participated by selling on the day of the event, we

were stretched to provide adequate coverage in several areas. Moreover, recruitment of leadership for pre-event planning and work continued to be difficult. This has been a problem in previous years, as it was for the Bizarre Bazaar, the fall fundraiser that NovemberFest replaced. The same small cadre of members took responsibility for leadership roles in the event, and it was really an insufficient number.

NovemberFest netted about \$8,000 this year, a decline from previous years and an amount insufficient to justify the large effort involved.

NovemberFest was launched four years ago as an alternative to the Bizarre Bazaar, which had become so massive an undertaking that it burned out leadership and became unsustainable. It was hoped that the NovemberFest fundraiser model – an arts and crafts fair with auxiliary sales centers – would be smaller and more sustainable, but that has not proven to be the case. After four years of this experiment, the event leader believes that a large, multimodal public fundraiser is not manageable for the UUCR congregation. People do not have the time to give weeks or months to such an effort, so no one is willing or able to lead it. It is suggested that the event be discontinued, and UUCR attempt to develop a fundraiser more aligned with the needs and time resources of modern life.

Buildings & Grounds

Buildings & Grounds Committee—*Mark Corfman*

The Buildings & Grounds Committee strives to maintain the congregation's facility and property in a condition that allows UUCR members and friends, as well as other end-users, to perform the wide variety of activities that take place here. There are basically three types of projects undertaken to accomplish this.

First, there are annual service contracts for building systems like the elevator and fire alarm, in addition to the regular service contracts for lawn maintenance and snow removal. These contracts are all managed ably by Donna Taylor, the Church Administrator.

Second, there are normal maintenance and repairs which are performed by a combination of UUCR's Facilities Coordinator, Bryant Taylor, the Power Tool Gang (volunteers led by Dan Pierce, Nancy Klag, and Mark Corfman), and contracted services.

Finally, there are major capital improvements, which this year included, the following:

- The conversion of the grassy area below the lower parking lot into a temporary parking area that enables congregation members and visitors to park during both good and bad weather.
- The installation of automatic doors at the front entrance of the Sanctuary and the entrance to Building 1 from the courtyard, enabling easier access for people with mobility challenges.
- The initiation of the preliminary design phase for renovating Building 1, including hiring an architect. This renovation will likely include upgrades to the kitchen and the creation of more welcoming and useful spaces for meetings and social events. Please see the report of the Space Planning Task Force for more detailed information.

All three of these improvements address a key point in the UUCR Strategic Plan (Goal 1, Objective 1.1, Activity 2): Improve accessibility of UUCR activities and welcoming and nurturing practices based on barriers audit.

In addition, steps are being taken to refinish the Memorial Board on the outside of Building 4 next to the patio behind the building.

The Power Tool Gang gathers on a few Saturdays each year to do necessary work at UUCR. Neither power tools nor experience is necessary. We gather for the fellowship and fun, while helping to maintain UUCR property. Some of the projects this past year have included painting the curbs in front of the Sanctuary and painting wood siding and wood trim on several buildings. Our work is accompanied by doughnuts and coffee in the morning, lunch with beverages, and much camaraderie. Any interested person should feel welcome to join in!

There was also significant work performed this year by the Grounds & Site Beautification Committees. See the summary of their work below.

Committee members: Bill Chapin, Mark Corfman (Chair), Sue Hedges, Nancy Klag, Jon Landenburger, Mary Lanigan, Dan Pierce and Jo Wilson

Grounds & Site Beautification Committees—*Barbara Harrison*

The Grounds Committee manages routine maintenance of the landscape – primarily removal of downed branches and trees after storms, pruning of trees and shrubs, tree management, and Do It Day landscape efforts. The Site Beautification Committee follows the landscape master plan for the entire campus to enhance the beauty and accessibility of the landscape as well as to assist in implementing green solutions where appropriate, and to sustain the forest conservation areas on the grounds in accordance with the guidelines of the City of Rockville.

Grounds Maintenance:

This fiscal year, with the help of Donna Taylor, we continued our annual contract for regular campus-wide clean-up, mulching, pruning and edging services – to be carried out by the same firm that performs our lawn mowing, raking, and snow removal. Considerable savings are achieved by bundling these activities. Additional weeding of the garden beds and tear-down of ivy and other invasives has been accomplished by the wonderful volunteers who come out on Do It Day and for other landscape maintenance efforts, organized primarily by Mary Lanigan, Jo Wilson, and Sue Hedges. Attractive grounds contribute to the aesthetic experience at worship services and to the appeal of our congregation to visitors.

Site Beautification:

The Site Beautification Operating Fund provided funding to install an exit patio, pathway, and landscaping around the exit from the south end of the Sanctuary into the Sanctuary courtyard. This increases safety, as the former exit area was a large uneven step down onto sloping grass. It also will allow for easy exit into the courtyard as part of services or activities in the Sanctuary.

This year we continued meetings facilitated by the Lay Minister for Buildings & Grounds. These have been very useful in helping to coordinate plans for landscape and grounds maintenance with many who are involved. We hope to continue this enhanced communication next year to involve all who are interested in the landscape.

The 2014-2015 Grounds budget is \$14,702, of which \$10,892 already has been spent. We have been lucky so far this year, with minimal storm damage. However, the weeping cherry trees along the entrance drive are declining and will need to be replaced soon. Before the end of the fiscal year, we hope to begin the replacement process by installing a few additional dogwoods between the cherries along the driveway. These native trees will be on the edge of the forest conservation zone, where native plantings are required. Grounds maintenance costs are highly unpredictable and are increased due to the City of Rockville's limitations on removal and replacement of trees.

Note: The Site Beautification Committee does not have a line item in the annual budget. It is funded through disbursements from the Site Beautification Fund, a donor-established restricted fund set up some years ago to provide for landscape enhancement projects. Site Beautification Fund principal may not be expended and funds may not be used for other purposes. Disbursements are limited to a small percentage of the value of the fund, and occur only when the balance of the fund exceeds a threshold set by the Finance Committee. Disbursements are made under a policy established by the Board of Trustees, and significant expenditures must be approved by the Board.

Committee members: Louise Friedenber, Barbara Harrison (Co-Chair), Mary Lanigan, Marie Reed, and Jo Wilson (Co-Chair)

Aesthetics Committee—*Sharrill Dittmann*

Liliane Blom and Sharrill Dittmann assumed leadership of the Aesthetics Committee in June 2014, from the capable leadership of Laura Huff. We are indebted to her for nurturing a strong, well-organized program.

The following is a list of artists who have exhibited at UUCR between July 2014 and June 2015:

- June and July 2014 – The Paté Painters, various media
- August and September 2014 – 12 artists from Washington ArtWorks, various media
- October and November 2014 – Patricia Zannie and students, various media
- December 2014 and January 2015 – Jorge Bernal, encaustic monotypes
- April and May 2015 – Claudia and Sergio Olivos, various media
- June and July 2015 – Grace Lipton, paintings

The committee hosted a well-attended lecture/demonstration by Jorge Bernal during which the participants got to try their hands at encaustic monotypes. Six works were sold from which UUCR realized 20% of the sales price.

Funds from the purchase of displayed art are deposited into the Aesthetics Fund from which the committee draws. No withdrawals were made this year.

Committee members: Liliane Blom and Sharrill Dittmann (Co-Chairs)

Information Technology Committee—*Bill Newhouse*

The mission of the Information Technology Committee is to maintain UUCR office IT systems and provide first response when the UUCR staff cannot resolve an IT system problem. The IT Committee also works with the office, Finance Committee, and Board of Trustees to discuss the use of new

technologies and to plan for upgrades of systems when necessary. The IT Committee can also support requests for information technology support for church activities.

IT systems at UUCR include the telephone system (our Private Branch Exchange – PBX -- and its associated desk phones), computers, the LCD projector, facsimile, printers, scanners, mobile phones, and networking equipment such as switches, DSL modems, routers, and WiFi routers.

Major accomplishments:

- Improved wifi coverage throughout UUCR by upgrading all the routers to TP-LINK Archer C2 AC750 Dual Band Wireless AC Gigabit Routers. There are now two wireless bands available from these more modern and secure routers. We are also only using “uucr” as our wifi SSID. The routers also offer a guest access which isolates users from the UUCR network while providing them access to the Internet.
- Procured a Google Chromebook for Rev. McCusker to use as his primary UUCR work computer. Google Chromebooks automatically update their operating system, simplifying maintenance and improving security while allowing native use of the Google drive storage provided by Gmail for all our @uucr.org accounts. The Chromebook is also very portable with long battery life.
- Updated our version of QuickBooks.
- Established accounts for all new staff members, offering each of them only the webmail access to uucr.org thus simplifying maintenance of email which used to require time consuming support to Microsoft Outlook.
- Supported all the staff office moves.
- Moved the server into the Church Administrator’s office, adding a new switch to support the network connections of all the devices in that office.
- Procured a new monitor for Rev. Strauss.
- Continued to push the use of Google forms for RE registration, online pledging, and Fellowship Dinner sign-ups.
- Established mailing lists and aliases for all the congregation’s email needs, supporting our policy not to publish private email addresses on our public facing UUCR website.
- Procured a new Windows 8 laptop that can be reserved for use at any UUCR event.
- Established the ability to scan documents using the UUCR copier and email the pdf file created by the scans to anyone on staff.

Next year’s goals:

- Extend UUCR’s broadband connectivity into both buildings 2 and 3, providing wifi for use on Sundays in RE classrooms in those buildings. At present, ECC and RCNS utilize their own DSL service and associated wifi to meet school administrative needs.
- Develop a new church database accessible from any Internet connected device by properly credentialed UUCR staff and volunteer members to support our congregational needs.
- Move all the staff files into the cloud, eliminating our need to maintain a server onsite at UUCR.

UUCR IT systems are vital to all church functions, supporting our worship, religious education, social justice and fellowship activities and enabling the UUCR staff to communicate with congregants as well as other UU churches and organizations, other faith groups, and other community groups.

The only major disappointment this year was that we are essentially reusing our goals from last year again. The good news in this disappointment is that our current church database is able to meet our basic needs and that our server has reliably functioned throughout the year.

Committee member: Bill Newhouse

Sound Committee—*Mike Holmes*

The mission of the Sound Committee is to enhance and maintain the sound equipment at UUCR, specifically in the Sanctuary and Founders Hall.

Earlier this year and at Rev. Strauss's request, Jennifer Rodgers took on the role of official staff liaison to the committee in order to facilitate a more thorough discussion of the current state of our sound/video capability and wishes for improvements. In our first series of discussions, which involved Rev. Strauss and members of the congregation with relevant audio and video experience, we focused on:

- Establishing a designated sound volunteer on Sunday mornings (separate from the Worship Steward) to set up and sound check equipment, record the service, and adjust levels through the service.
- Replacing our current automated mixer with a more traditional mixer that will give us greater flexibility and control over the sound.
- Investigating the need and desire for video capacity in the Sanctuary.

The separate sound volunteer is working well and has resulted in both more reliable sound quality during services and stress relief for both the Worship Stewards and service leaders.

The findings of the other two initiatives will be compiled into a document, not yet finalized, that will make some recommendations to the Board regarding possible upgrade paths.

There were no significant equipment failures or challenges to deal with this year. We did purchase an additional earpiece microphone (we now have two), as well as two monitor speakers, which we are still working to integrate smoothly into our Sanctuary set-up.

The 2014-2015 Sound Committee budget is \$1,402 of which \$1,486 has been spent.

Committee members: Steve Greene, Mike Holmes (Chair), Jennifer Rodgers (staff liaison), Jeremy Schuhmann, and Dennis Wellnitz

Spiritual & Caring

Small Group Ministry—*Pat Einhorn*

Using session plans developed by the ministers, members of each Small Group Ministry (SGM) group share deep and meaningful facilitated conversations.

This year, four new facilitators were recruited and trained and now lead two new groups. The session plans were created based on Sunday morning sermon themes to allow deeper reflection on issues raised during worship.

Next year, the SGM Steering Committee hopes to encourage leadership from among the group participants, either as SGM facilitators or in other areas of congregational life. We would also like more training and recognition for all current facilitators.

Small Group Ministry Steering Committee members: Rev. Doug McCusker and Pat Einhorn; Small Group facilitators: Jill Asman, Sharrill Dittmann, John Dunbar, Pat Einhorn, Glenn Griffin, Sue Hedges, Meghan Howard, Susan McCall, Marie Reed, Cynthia Taylor, Sue Thomas, and Patty Walker

Pastoral Care Team—*Paulette Campbell and Jane Klag*

In conjunction and cooperation with the minister, the UUCR Pastoral Care Team (PCT), consisting of volunteers, provides support services for UUCR members and friends who need assistance. These services are limited by capability and liability considerations. Team members personally provide some services and arrange for other UUCR members and friends to help as specific needs occur. The team furnishes transportation, runs errands, delivers meals during crises, visits people at home and in hospitals, sends cards and provides other services as needed.

Other major functions include:

- Memorial receptions: They are organized to honor the lives of those members and friends who have died during the past year. Several receptions have been catered this year with the assistance of the Pastoral Care Team. No fees are asked, but donations are gratefully accepted. Paulette Campbell chairs this function.
- Thinking of You column in *Quest*: Joys and concerns are to be communicated to the editor in order to appear in *Quest*. Marianne Miller is serving as editor for the regular *Quest* column. If you have joys and concerns that you would like to appear in *Quest*, please contact Marianne.
- Greeting cards: The Pastoral Care Team is responsible for sending cards to members and friends who celebrate special events and to those who are ill or hospitalized. Sue Thomas is the coordinator of this activity.
- Caring Resources bulletin board: Holly Meyer kept this bulletin board in the Building 1 lobby current, posting newspaper articles and obituaries of members and friends.

Many thanks to all who have donated time and effort to the UUCR community during the past year. A special thanks to Nancy Klag who, through his connection to the Lions Club, delivered health aids to those in need.

In October we held our second workshop. This workshop, “Hospice Care and End-of Life Forms” was held on October 18, 2014 and was well received by 50 members, friends, and presenters. The primary planners of the workshop were Don Helton, Jewell Golden, and Sue Thomas. The workshop included a panel presentation by Suzanne Adelman from Jewish Social Services, Carol Whitney from Montgomery Hospice, and Penny Gladhill from Hospice Caring. The Pastoral Care Team workshops have been well attended and it is our goal to continue them in the upcoming program year.

This year we started a “Post Office” once a month after the Sunday morning service. The Pastoral Care Team tries to help all UUCR members and friends reach out to other congregants who need to hear

from caring friends for any number of reasons. The Post Office table is stocked with cards, stamps, and UUCR's member/friend directory. PCT members staff the table and handle the mailing of the cards. Lately, group signature cards to shut-ins, birthday folks, and those recovering from surgery have been a most thoughtful addition to the effort. However, all types of cards are made available, even beautiful blank note papers for those who wish to take the time to write more personal thoughts.

In an effort to cast a wider net, the PCT identified members of other UUCR groups to be "care communicators." They will bring to our attention members in their groups who have a medical crisis or need some kind of assistance. We have added Marianne Miller for the Adult Choir, David Lorms for Children's & Youth Religious Education, and Lana Cerny for the Craft Group.

Team members: Jill Asman, Paulette Campbell (Co-Chair), Len Cohen, Jewell Golden, Don Helton, Barbara Kawamura, Jane Klag (Co-Chair), Fran Lowe, Susan McCall, Martha McClelland, Holly Meyer, Marianne Miller, Marie Reed, Marialyce Sherr, and Sue Thomas

Spirit of Life Sangha —*Liliane Floge*

The mission of the Spirit of Life Sangha is to assist those interested in improving their practice of mindfulness using the methods recommended by the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh and others who practice mindfulness.

The Sangha meets almost every Sunday after the service to meditate and to study, through readings and discussion, aspects of mindfulness practice. We usually meet in Building 2 from 11:20 to 12:30. Since we began in 2010, the number of persons interested in the Sangha has increased considerably. We have over 45 persons who have attended at least one meeting and are on our Sangha group email list. This year, more of our meetings have had a higher attendance at each meeting: that is 12 to 15 persons. Our meetings are open to persons who are not part of UUCR and a few have attended our meetings. We periodically have a Sangha lunch at a member's home, instead of meeting at UUCR. These lunches have strengthened ties among our members.

The Sangha is managed by a Caring Council whose members lead the meetings and choose the readings. This year, Alex Szatmary joined the other members of the Council: Robert Campbell, Liliane Floge and Ethel Gilbert.

Major accomplishments:

- We participated in the April 19 Mind-Body-Spirit Fair by presenting three sessions on mindfulness meditation.
- We believe that participation in the Sangha has deepened the practice of its members and led to a more positive spiritual outlook. Many of the mindfulness practices encouraged are identical to Unitarian Universalist principles, such as: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; compassion in human relations; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.
- We have prepared a description of the workings of a Sangha, of the particular workings of our Sangha, a document listing the updated Five Mindfulness Trainings (authored by Thich Nhat Hanh, based on Buddha's precepts), and a list of suggested readings. This year we created a one page general description document. These are kept in our Sangha box with copies of previously used readings and other items. During the week, the box is kept in the large closet next to the kitchen.

Women's Spirituality Group—*Melissa Rael*

The group discusses various topics as well as sharing individual life paths. We strive for the spiritual growth of group members through close personal sharing. With the exchange of words in experience, wisdom, and support, we provide laughter, warmth, inspiration, and reassurance, moving forward on one's quest. We celebrate member's distinct achievements, birthdays, and special times in one's life through meals together.

The Women's Spirituality Group meets in Room 44 in Building 4 on the first and third Saturday of the month from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The meeting is open to all and we welcome all to our sisterhood of spirituality and support. In the next year, we hope to increase our outreach and engage more women to attend.

Fellowship

Quilters—*Louise Friedenberg*

The mission of the Quilters is to create one quilt each year to be raffled at the fall fundraiser.

Our group created its 34th annual quilt, called "Quilter's Flower Garden," which was raffled at UUCR's 47th annual fall fundraiser, NovemberFest!, on November 15, 2014. Raffle tickets (847) were sold at \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Net profit was \$1,421. Sam Steel was the quilt winner.

"Quilter's Flower Garden" is an appliquéd and pieced queen-sized quilt, using soft pastel colors. It consists of 20 appliquéd flowers arranged on point alternated with 30 modified 9-patch blocks, also arranged on point. Our inspiration was an antique quilt hanging in the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. Our updated version had 20 appliquéd flowers: primrose, daffodil, iris, dog rose, trillium, chocolate lily, forget me not, tulip, Jack in the pulpit, chicory, cardinal flower, Mexican hat, sunflower, lily of the valley, swamp rose mallow, daylily, wood anemone, poppy, American bell flower, and shooting star. It was hand-quilted by the entire group.

We also made many hand-crafted items for NovemberFest!, including quilted table runners, pillows, potholders, wall hangings, tree ornaments, crayon and pencil roll-ups, note cards, and many knit items. A profit of \$ 1,056 was raised for UUCR.

Our group provides the possibility for anyone who practices needlework to experience group participation in the making of a beautiful product while enjoying the warmth and support of friends who share an interest and meet together weekly on Wednesday evenings.

The 2014-2015 Quilters budget is \$275. We are currently working on our 2015 raffle quilt. Called "Sea Glass," it is a paper-pieced quilt.

Group members: Margaret Chalkley, Carol Dangel, Louise Friedenberg, Christina Ginsburg, Lynne Goss, Barbara Harrison, Marge Holmes, Alberta Maschal, Holly Meyer, Lisa Reed, Gwen Rowe, Anne Spicknall, Jo Wilson, and Florence Wyand

Craft Group—*Sherry Henry*

We provide a place where women can look forward to meeting weekly with others, and work on an art project if they want to. Coffee, Crafts and Conversation meets each Tuesday morning from 10:00 a.m. until noon. We are open to all, and welcome anyone who wishes to join us for coffee and conversation, or to work on an individual or group project. Conversation is a major part of what participants enjoy from this group. On any given Tuesday, the conversation can be about current events, an idea picked up from last Sunday's sermon, or just talk about ongoing craft projects.

Most of our funds were used for materials either to make cards or package them for sale at NovemberFest!. We bought foam slabs to make our own version of rubber stamps, and clear sleeve-like envelopes for completed cards. Occasionally we use money to replace standard items, like colored stamp pads. All materials are shared items, available for everyone in the group to use.

Group leader: Sherry Henry

Writers' Group—*Laura Huff and Marialyce Sherr*

Since its inception about 13 years ago, the Writers' Group encouraged anyone with an interest in writing, novice or professional, to join the group. Members honed their writing skills and felt supported from positive critiques of their work. Everyone was exposed to a diversity of styles and subject matter in various genres: short stories, novels, poetry, essays, and children's stories. We learned from each other and everyone benefited.

Although the UUCR Writers' Group is currently inactive, there are many people within the congregation who write. There will be opportunities for members and friends to gather in the future to enjoy meeting authors or to form critique groups. At the present time, however, our writers are doing what writers do, namely sitting at desks or in armchairs, writing.

UUCR Book Club—*Carolyn Pooley*

The Book Club meets at 2:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month to discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction books. All members and friends of UUCR who enjoy reading are invited to participate. Books are available at local libraries and through UUCR's link to Amazon.com.

Socrates Café Rockville —*Ken Sandin*

Socrates Café Rockville, a philosophical discussion group, meets monthly. Roughly half the participants, averaging about 12 per month, are UUCR members and friends; the others know us through Meetup.com. Some of the latter have become UUCR members and friends. We meet in Fellowship Hall at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of every month. All are welcome to attend.

Dinners for Eight—*Karla Timmons*

Dinners for Eight provides an opportunity for UUCR congregants to share good food and good company on a monthly basis in a friend or member's home, usually in groups of eight, allowing for the congregation to better know one another.

The program provided many new members with an easy access point to meet and become acquainted with longer-standing members of the congregation. This year, we enjoyed increased participation among younger members, while retaining good participation from a variety of demographics across the congregation.

Some of our long-time participants are finding it difficult to drive in the evening, or to prepare a portion of the group/potluck meal. It would be helpful if the UUCR Lunch Bunch were to be resurrected, allowing for a social group for those that need something during the daylight hours.

Young Adults Group —*Cammy Crane and Alex Szatmary*

The Young Adults Group provides opportunities for people ages 18-35 to connect through service, fellowship, conversation, and fun. Cammy Crane and Alex Szatmary are the group organizers.

This year, members of the Young Adults Group participated in:

- The Montgomery County MLK Day of Service on January 19
- A screening of the film, *Silver Linings Playbook*, and a reflection on mental health
- A visit to Washington, DC for the Cherry Blossom Festival
- Several game nights

We are beginning to do some soul searching about the directions in which we want to grow. Young adults often find themselves at critical points on the lifelong path of figuring out who we are and how we want to participate in the world. For our next meeting, we are going to discuss our felt needs as young adults and what activities would best facilitate our being a community of support and encouragement.