

Vision

A loving congregation that connects with ourselves, one another, and the larger community.

Mission

We care for ourselves, each other, and our neighbors while taking risks acting for justice. We are continuously building an inclusive, empowered, anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural congregation. Our connections foster radical love for ourselves and others.

Ends

1. **Each person in the congregation is invited into a spiritual life. We are inspired and equipped to share radical love¹ through our daily lives and authentic conversations.²**

Strategy 1A: Our leaders and staff develop worship and programs to enrich our spiritual lives.

1A1: Creative, multicultural, loving **worship and music**. Worship invites spiritual living, (re)connects people, and gives people energy and hope for living their lives. We continue to use multi-platform worship with online and in-person options. High quality and diverse guest preachers and speakers and guest musicians are added to our current offerings. The choir is a source of joy, connection, and is an inclusive and increasingly diverse group. We give more care to make the space beautiful and joyful, in connection with the theme.

Resources: Increase guest preacher budget by \$1000/year and guest musician budgets by \$2000 per year. Ministers and Music Director focus on this area.

Timeline: Begin with 22-23 church year. Recruit musicians and guest preachers who will be regular guests. By 24-25, we will have regular roster of guests and worship will be noticeably more multicultural than it is today. During Rev. Matthew's next sabbatical (probably 24-25), ensure that a large percentage of the guest preachers are Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color.

1A2: Heart-centered, caring **small group ministry and adult learning**, all of which equip people to share radical love in their daily lives, and to have authentic conversations. Support the Touchstones/Covenant Groups, and other small groups.³ Support the Sauk

¹ See <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/love/what-is-radical-love/> for a good explanation. There, it says "The term *radical* is used to describe something that is whole, complete, and thorough. A radical change, for instance, is one that completely overhauls existing standards. Radical love, then, is love that is not fractured in its expression or experience. In more common terms, radical love is unconditional love." "Radical love is the kind of love that can be felt for all of humankind; for everything on earth, alive or not, seeing everyone and everything as interconnected, and vibrant."

² Authentic conversations are meaningful, honest, and deep conversations characterized by respect, curiosity, and growth. People talk about their fears and hopes, sources of meaning, and learn about themselves and others through these kinds of conversations.

³ Includes ramblers, India House, Pickleball, CUUPS, and similar groups.

Valley Group⁴. Offer creative and engaging adult programs, and programs that grow intercultural competencies⁵ and build relationships. Share opportunities in our community partners and with UU organizations, especially for people with marginalized identities.

Resources: Current support for Assistant Minister, Theme-Based Ministry (Touchstone or Soul Matters) Subscription, should be sufficient. Look at partnerships with Womanspace, art groups, and others.

Timeline: 22-23: Enliven existing groups, start new ones, and begin at least one partnership with arts/spirituality organization. Regular support for Sauk Valley Group.

23-24: Census of members; goal: at least 100 members total in a variety of small groups. Support creation of new groups/programs where there is interest.

24-25: Create second partnership with arts/spirituality organization.

1A3: Religious Education for children and youth, which supports and engages caregivers and families, demonstrates and encourages radical love, and develops UU spiritual life and values. Building on our strengths in nature-based learning, sexuality education, and justice work – especially including antiracism, anti-oppression and multicultural work--, design and execute an effective and volunteer-efficient plan.

Resources: Consider stipends and partnerships to supplement volunteers and staff. Budget for 3-month sabbatical (not necessarily all at once) for Lindsay Trank (\$5000, saving 2500 a year in 22-23 and allocating 2500 in 23-24).

Timeline: 22-23: Design and implement a plan, in consultation with caregivers, children, youth, and other members of the congregation, to offer religious education given current habits, constraints, and opportunities. Matthew, Lindsay, and Lauren to lead; also to recruit through this process a team to support RE.

23-24: Implement this plan. Manage Lindsay's sabbatical.

24-25: Adjust, improve, and implement the plan.

1A4: Create a family camp/conference weekend for regional Unitarian Universalists. We have attempted to promote existing camps, but they are too far away/too long. We will create a weekend camp at a retreat center in Southern Wisconsin or Northern Illinois and invite Unitarian Universalist families from around the region to attend. In the design and program we will be sure to center multicultural families.

Resources: Staff time, and a planning team from the congregation to get started. Though the camp should be self-sufficient, we will want a scholarship fund (which could be the Minister's Discretionary Fund).

Timeline: 22-23. Recruit team, choose location and days, advertise.

23-24: Hold first gathering. Learn from and build on experience.

24-25: Hold second gathering.

⁴ UU's in Dixon, Oregon, Leaf River, and nearby communities. They gather monthly for a theme conversation and meal, and have sponsored an Afghan Refugee family.

⁵ Intercultural Competency and Cultural Humility. Competency here means knowledge about your own cultural patterns and that of others, and the skills to navigate cross-cultural situations well. Humility means knowing that we do not fully understand another person's culture(s) and being curious, non-judgmental, and open. Key to both concepts is recognizing that the white, middle-class, Midwest culture is one among many, and not the "default normal."

Strategy 1B: We connect more people to worship and programs.

1B1: We use key tools to **spread the word** about activities, events, and our mission within the church and in the wider world. We use social platforms, email, texts, and postal mailings to inform our folks and others about what we are up to and how to get involved, with a focus on our anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multicultural (ARAOMC) programs and outreach to diverse populations.

Resources: Staff time, and a small team of volunteers to make suggestions. Small ad budget for social (already in the budget).

Timeline: Ongoing, with regular review.

1B2: Members **enthusiastically invite** others to participate in the church. Members are trained and encouraged to invite others to participate – both existing participants to get more involved, and potential newcomers to come for the first time. These invitations will be culturally competent/humble.

Resources: Existing staff time.

Timeline: Ongoing. Hold at least 3 “Bring a Friend” Sundays/year. Write and preach about having a culture of invitation and outreach.

1B3: Engage more people to participate in **small group ministry**. Start new groups at least 2x/year. Advertise openings and the opportunity to start interest-based groups. Include/support/center participation of Black, Indigenous, and other members and friends of Color.

Resources: Existing staff time. New facilitators.

Timeline: Ongoing, with big push in fall 2022.

1B4: Hold 2x/annual “**Engagement Fair**” to encourage joining teams/committees. Teams should use resources from 1C2 to ensure what their work is aligned with our ARAOMC goals.

Resources: Some staff time, leaders to staff tables.

Timeline: Start spring 2022, and continue with October / March? each year.

Strategy 1C: Lay leaders and members are inspired and equipped to lead these programs.

1C1: Training and support for **small groups leaders**. Assistant minister offers regular support and training to leaders of Touchstones/Covenant groups and other small group ministry programs, and interest-based groups. Intercultural competency/humility and anti-racist leadership is included in this support.

Resources: Existing staff time.

Timeline: Ongoing. Some gatherings, and often one-to-one coaching.

1C2: Share best practices for **team and committee leaders**, especially about how to welcome and include and to bring anti-racist, multicultural practices into their work. Staff and Board liaisons work with their teams and committees to share these practices and monitor progress, with more direct coaching as needed.

Resources: Existing staff time. Commitment from team and committee leaders.

Timeline: Spring 22: Share best practices with leaders.

Fall 22: Make assessment of each team and committee, with a plan to improve the team's operations.

Follow through on plan.

Reassess each November.

1C3: Substantial focus on recruiting and supporting **volunteers for religious education** for children and youth. The RE staff and the Ministers will encourage, support, recruit, and assist in this work. We'll consider stipends as needed. Volunteers will be equipped to put our ARAOMC goals into practice.

Resources: Existing staff time. Potential stipends.

Timeline: Beginning spring '22 and ongoing. We want to see a highly robust roster of reliable volunteers by fall '22.

1C4: Encourage participation in **UUA programs for leadership** development. UUA programs now always include an ARAOMC lens. The Denominational Affairs Coordinator and the Senior Minister will share leadership development opportunities with leaders in the church. Scholarships provided from Minister's Discretionary Fund as needed.

Resources: Existing, including continuing to be Fair Share to the UUA.

Timeline: Ongoing.

End #2: In our interdependent covenantal congregation, our church is nurtured by our members and our members are nurtured by our church.

Strategy 2A: Our Members are Nurtured by our church

2A1: The **caaring team** provides supportive, loving, culturally-competent, and appropriate lay pastoral care to members and friends of the church. They are well-trained and equipped for this ministry.

Resources: Assistant Minister time.

Timeline: Ongoing. Annual trainings offered by Assistant Minister.

2A2: We care for, connect, and enrich the lives of our **families with children** (including parents, grandparents, and more). We have social gatherings, resources to support caregivers in their role as religious educators, and offer pastoral and spiritual support to families, especially those with very young children who have experienced so much disruption due to COVID-19. This ministry embodies our ARAOMC commitments.

Resources: Time for RE Staff and ministers, connection with UUA resources, volunteer time to lead social gatherings.

Timeline: Ongoing, and included in RE plan noted above. Restart social gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so.

2A3: We have strong and theologically-grounded **safety and well-being policies**, and enforce them. This includes policies to support public health, child safety, anti-harassment, right relations, ecological sustainability and anti-racism, disability justice and accessibility, and fair compensation.

Resources: UUA examples, Board time, staff time.

Timeline: Board task force created in '22 to examine, revise, and create policies related to safety and well-being.

2A4: We grow and strengthen our practices and culture of **belonging and inclusion** as part of our work of becoming a more multicultural, multiracial, and beloved community. This includes genuine accessibility for disabled people, intercultural competency and cultural humility, being a vital Welcoming Congregation, and working for justice, equity, and inclusion in the congregation as well as in the world.

Resources: Ministers, lay-leaders

Timeline: Spring '22: Transform Membership Team into Inclusion Team, which includes AIM (accessibility in ministry), Welcoming (GLBTQ), and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) focus. Review progress and next steps. At least 2x/year, ministers provide or bring in others to grow cultural competency/humility. Create and conduct annual assessment.

2A5: We provide a beautiful and well-cared for **physical place** which nurtures the diverse people who come to the church and use its indoor and outdoor space. We use our property in ways that move us toward being net-zero for carbon and methane emissions, which are accessible, which support economic and racial justice, and which support the rental income of the church.

Resources: Minister, Office Manager, Members. Income from permanent funds, including some of expected Evelyn and Stuart Johnson Bequest.

Timeline: Spring '22: Research on net-zero gap. Planning begins.

Agreement with Spectrum on long-term land/property use.

Fall 22: Begin implementation. If campaign needed, plan for raising funds. Consider need for staff to support volunteers.

2A6: Staff and lay leaders work to **rebuild and build anew vital community and participation** in a pandemic/post-pandemic world. We reach out to those who have not yet returned, connect with those seeking community, rebuild social connections, and address the trauma, fear, and longings that people are experiencing.

Resources: Staff and lay leadership focus on time, mailings, outreach, etc. Consulting with leadership from UUA or UU resources.

Timeline: Beginning spring 2022 and continuing for years to come. Begin mailings to congregation. Make invitational phone calls in Summer/Fall. Advertise safety measures.

Strategy 2B: Our Church is Nurtured by our members

2B1: We cultivate a robust, multicultural culture of **lay ministry, volunteering and leadership**. We continue to train and support leaders, through the Harvest the Power UU leadership development curriculum, and one-on-one coaching, and encouraging volunteerism (see Engagement Fair and RE recruitment, above). We celebrate volunteers and leaders.

Resources: Staff time to lead programs and support. The time and energy of members who volunteer and lead.

Timeline: Ongoing. Plan for Harvest the Power in 23-24.

2B2: Members offer their generous financial support to the church, through **annual giving, legacy giving, and fundraisers**. An ongoing Generosity Team helps plan the annual campaign, connects with newcomers about giving, and follows up with non-giving members. We talk about giving in culturally competent ways. We regularly promote legacy giving and thank our legacy givers. We run a fun and successful Auction.

Resources: Volunteers on Generosity Team. Minister and Office Manager time to support campaigns. Volunteers to run Auction, Office Manager time to support.

Timeline: Ongoing.

2B3: Financial, Building, and Governance leaders take steps to increase, secure, and support **non-pledge income** which also advances our values, including the Woodsong Nature School, rental income, and the ethical management of our permanent funds. Ethical management includes ARAOMC goals. We seize opportunities to advance our values while funding our mission. Connects with 2A5 above.

Resources: Budget for Woodsong staff and supplies, building utilities and upkeep, time of finance, investment, board, building and grounds, and staff.

Timeline: Ongoing. For 22-23 year and ongoing, increase support for Woodsong staff (including vacation/sick coverage). See if we can come to a long-term agreement with Spectrum School (they have renewed through June 2023).

End 3: Accountable to our faith, we act to foster a world of understanding, equity, repair, and solidarity.

Strategy 3A: We inspire and equip each other to act in faithful ways for justice in their personal, volunteer, and/or professional lives.

3A1: We offer strong **training for cultural competency/humility, anti-racism/anti-oppression, and faith-based justice making** as well as resources to our members and friends to resource putting their faith in action (see also, 2A4). We create ways to hold ourselves accountable to our values and expectations for covenantal behavior while doing this work.

Resources: Staff time, guest presenters (some funds).

Timeline: At least 2x/year, if not more.

3A2: We **share clearly, often, and effectively about opportunities** to get involved in justice ministries, especially ministries that further our ARAOMC work. This sharing includes testimonials, revamp of website section on this, event invitations, one-to-one outreach, pulpit announcements, and social media sharing.

Resources: Attention from staff and Faith in Action leaders.

Timeline: Ongoing.

3A3: We hold a **“Nourish + Sustain Circle”** to support those who are doing front-line justice and mercy work. This circle provides pastoral supporting, faith grounding, ARAOMC coaching and networking for those doing this work in our wider community.

Resources: Senior Minister time.

Timeline: Begin in late spring 2022.

Strategy 3B: In collaboration with community partners, organized teams in the congregation and the ministers of the church expand and nurture the beloved community.

3B1: We successfully implement the new Faith in Action plan, creating **effective “cluster teams” for ecojustice, sexuality and gender justice and racial and economic justice**. These cluster teams have strong, inclusive leaders grounded in faith, and organize effective action efforts in which engage many church members and our partner organizations.

Resources: Staff and volunteer time.

Timeline: Recruit in spring 2022 and begin meetings. Ongoing support and training. Have at least one major action per year in 22-23, per cluster, and two in 23-24.

3B2: As part of our new Faith in Action plan, we create an **Organizing Crew** which will work with our cluster teams and with both Rockford Urban Ministries and the Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois to advance campaigns for faith-based justice.

Resources: Support for Rockford Urban Ministries and the Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois, partially with Philon bequest.

Timeline: Recruit in spring 2022, offering yearly trainings, support at least 5 campaigns in 22-23 and 8 in 23-24.

3B3: The Senior Minister engages strategic efforts to advance our values. Currently, and for the foreseeable future, this is as co-leader of the **Ready to Learn Team**⁶, working to ensure that every young child has a real opportunity to flourish and be loved in our wider community.

Resources: Senior Minister time.

Timeline: Ongoing.

⁶ See <https://alignmentrockford.com/ready-to-learn/>. Ready to Learn is a community collaboration to improve outcomes for young children in Rockford.