

The Unitarian Universalist Church
Rockford, Illinois



Annual Report 2021—2022

The Unitarian Universalist Church

2021-22 Annual Report

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Officers of the Congregation

2020-2021

President: Amanda Tapfield Vice President: Judy Gustafson
Treasurer: Teresa Wilmot Clerk: Bob Spelman

Board of Trustees

Khanh Oehlke Sarah Greer Jami Edmonds

Committee Chairs & Team Leaders

BUILDING & GROUNDS Dave Schubert
LIBRARY TEAM..... Mike Ullrich
FINANCE COMMITTEE Steve Lewis
Investment Panel Steve Blomgren
Memorials & Special Gifts..... Pat Lewis
Stewardship Committee Staff, Board, and Finance Team
DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE Teresa Wilmot
MEMBERSHIP TEAM..... Rev. Joyce Palmer
RELIGIOUS GROWTH & LEARNING Lindsay Dunn, DRE
SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson
WORSHIP TEAM..... Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson
Music Team..... Tim Anderson, Music Director
CARING TEAM..... Wanda Hoover
NOMINATING PANEL..... Linda Johnson

Staff

SENIOR MINISTER The Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson
ASSISTANT MINISTER..... The Rev. Joyce Palmer
DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Lindsay Trank
MUSIC DIRECTOR Tim Anderson
MINISTER EMERITUS The Rev. David R. Weissbard
MUSIC DIRECTOR EMERITA Kay Hotchkiss
OFFICE MANAGER Autumn Powell
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSISTANT Lauren Smith

President's Report 2021 - 2022

We have made it through another difficult year, but when our hearts broke, they broke open. What a generosity of spirit we have been able to witness this year!

This year as your board, we have explored a report on systemic racism in the church, Widening the Circle of Concern (found here: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>). We have used this knowledge and insight to guide our decision making, and to affirm some of the decisions made prior. We have expanded Woodsong to a 5 day program, which continues to thrive with strong enrollment under the leadership of Lindsay and Lauren. In Religious Education, we have hired two folks to help provide a consistent foundation for our Sunday youth programs. Speaking of our youth, we were able to welcome them back into the Sanctuary this year! And Singing! How wonderful to hear the sounds of children, how moving to hear our voices in unison!

The biggest item we tackled as your board this year, was updating our Mission and Vision as a congregation. We had a very strong framework, and had accomplished much from the previous document, so it felt like creating a continuation. It asks that we, as a congregation continue to stretch, to continue to sit with hard truths, and keep propelling us forward by living our faith in the world.

As I mentioned previously, it has been another difficult year for many of us. I, personally, have gone through a great deal of change over the last year (or two), and I am so appreciative of the constants in my life that being your Board President has provided. Having the opportunity to help shape our big picture for our future has helped me to look ahead and to feel hope when there felt very little in the present. I thank you all for the opportunity to have served.

Mission, Vision, & Ends

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

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 Valley Group⁴. Offer creative and engaging adult programs, and programs that

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.

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.

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.

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

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."

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 caring 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 Team⁶, 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.

Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson Report

A year ago, in June of 2021, we returned to offer in-person worship in the sanctuary for the first time in 14 months. We did not know that a year later, we would still be thinking about the pandemic and what it means for our church. Would cases be low enough to make masks optional in the sanctuary? (no.). Would we have to go online-only again? (Yes, for four weeks in Jan-Feb.). Would our giving and financials hold up through all this (Yes, bless and thank you). Would volunteers arise in sufficient numbers (in some areas, yes, in others, no.). Would we stay true to our mission, love each other, and do good ministry together? (Yes, absolutely.)

It is the end of my fourteenth year with you as your Senior Minister. It is a blessing to serve the spirit of love with you. This year has been marked by pandemic management, the search for community and healing, and by forming of new structures for our work together. One of the greatest blessings of this year has been the ministry of the Rev. Joyce Palmer, our ½ time assistant minister. Rev. Joyce's focus on pastoral care and adult programs has helped to strengthen these vital ministries, especially in this time of isolation. Her coloration for worship design, religious education, and the other aspects of ministry has made all of us better at what we do. In addition, our longer-term staff has done fabulous work. Lindsay Trank and Lauren Smith have worked to manage a RE program with not-enough volunteers and then have built a thriving 2-year-old program, Woodsong Nature School, which provides an important ministry and produces extra income for our church. Tim Anderson has provided solo and collaborative music – sometimes recorded choir, sometimes just him, sometimes a guest – based on what was possible and needed. Autumn Powell, our office manager, has not only kept the communication going, but she has also managed the AV and streaming almost every single week all year. I'm so glad to work with this team.

One major focus for me this year, in addition to pandemic management and adding Rev. Joyce to our team, has been working to reset our public and justice ministry. We are now calling this area "Faith in Action" and have created three issue-based teams to lead the work, as well as an Organizing Crew to connect us with our local and state-wide partners. I'm very pleased by this move into work that is grounded in faith and look forward to what we will do together.

I preached 40 sermons this year – a few more than usual, and 10 more than last year. Coming back from our online-only time, I thought it was important to be in the pulpit often. I went to many many meetings, a majority still on zoom. The safety and convenience are nice, though the lack of "time to chat" and personal connection is a loss. I made some pastoral visits – though Rev. Joyce and our great caring team do much of this work. I serve on one UUA committee and continue to mentor two new ministers (one in Madison, WI, and one in Bloomington, IL.). I serve on the Alignment Rockford Ready to Learn team as co-chair.

I performed 5 memorial or committal services: for Jackie Sundby, Vidyut Pandya, Mardie Blomgren, Anne Haub, and Grandon Tolstedt (which I wrote but Rev. Joyce led since I caught COVID that week).

A year ago, I made goals for this year. They, and my progress towards them, were:

- 1) Fully welcome and support Rev. Joyce Palmer as our new Assistant Minister. I want to make sure that the staff, leadership, and congregation as a whole work well and faithfully with Joyce as she establishes her ministry with us. Work with her on our pastoral care and caring ministry.

This must be counted as a great success. We used the services of Rev. Sharon Dittmar, from the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, for a start-up session, which got us going in the right direction. Rev. Joyce and I meet

weekly+, and things are going great. Our pastoral ministry is strong. She's a wonderful colleague.

- 2) Assess, with the board, our progress towards our ends, and review the strategic plan to make adjustments so we can achieve those ends.

Accomplished. I worked with the Board and staff to redo our strategic plan. The board was insightful and wise in this work. You can see the new plan on our website.

- 3) With the Social Justice Council and other leaders in the church and the community, faithfully implement our vision for more relational and theological depth in our justice work.

We made good progress here. We have articulated a new "Faith in Action" model, recruited co-leads for the new teams, and have begun holding meetings. This will be a goal for the coming year, as we live into this new model.

- 4) Recruit, train, and support a generosity team to work on year-round generosity and stewardship work with new and current members, and complete next year's stewardship campaign.

We recruited a great team and had a strong stewardship campaign this year, and they are working on connecting with folks who are members but not giving. The work will continue. Though not stewardship-related, I also worked to get Spectrum School's contract renewed and support Woodsong School's expansion (mostly by cheering on Lindsay and Lauren).

Given both our new strategic plan and the realities of the moment, what are my goals for 2022-2023?

1. Working with others, create lively, spirit-filled, heart-centered worship. We will be using Soul Matters this coming year, and I want to use their themes and materials to their maximum use, as well as return to some of the "Worship Design Studio" methods we were using before the pandemic. I'll also be working closely with Tim to support diverse and heart-centered music.
2. Work with the Board and key leaders to re-write and implement safety and well-being policies. We need to look at our policies around public health, children and youth, conflict, harassment, inclusion, security, and inclusion to make sure they reflect the best wisdom of the moment, and that we are faithfully implementing the new policies.
3. Work with our Faith in Action teams to support their goals and ends, including cultural competency/humility and anti-oppression training and resources within the congregation, pastoral support for front-line activists, and implementing our new model.
4. Supporting giving, both through pledging and the work of the generosity team, and through other sources, including rentals and programs. Ensure that new legacy gifts and major rental income is handled well and in a way that supports our mission and institution.

In faith,
Matthew

Director of Religious Education Annual Report

It is with great pleasure that we are able to report that there was a gleeful return to Religious Education once we were finally able to gather in person in the summer of 2021. It was so wonderful to see how our familiar faces had changed during our time apart and to see some new faces that found us during the pandemic. R.E. classes were held outside through the summer. The grade K & under group remained on the Woodsong playground and had access to classroom 25 for the bathroom and handwashing. The grade 1 & over group gathered at the fire pit and had access to classroom 26 for the bathroom and handwashing. The grade 1 & over group incorporated hikes through the woods and prairie during R.E. time. Our focus was on some of the rituals that grounded us before the shutdown such as chalice lighting, checking in with each other, and a story, as well as new opportunities to discover and appreciate the natural world around us. Once the weather turned colder, we moved R.E. classes inside where children and volunteers wore masks.

Due to the ongoing challenge of recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers, the decision was made to hire two new Religious Education staff members to work each Sunday throughout the year with one Sunday off each month. This has somewhat relieved the demand on volunteers, but, as always, we could use consistent, dependable volunteers in the R.E. program.

Thankfully, we were able to begin offering the Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education curriculum again this church year. We provided the grade K-1 and grade 7-9 curriculum and plan to begin the grade 4-6 level classes this June. This should help us return to our regularly intended schedule in the coming years.

Finally, Lindsay coordinated with our senior minister Matthew Johnson to select and read the story for all ages throughout the year.

Woodsong Nature School

We are happy to report that Woodsong Nature School had its most successful year to date. Beginning in September 2021, we were able to expand our programming to 5 mornings per week (as compared to 3 mornings per week previously). This now allows parents to choose from 2, 3, or 5 days per week. We had remarkably strong enrollment; most months, we had the maximum of 16 students enrolled. Our Summer 2022 session is full, as is the 2022-23 school year.

Our expansion this year has allowed us to nearly double the number of families that we are impacting. We are seeing an increasing number of Woodsong families visit church on Sundays, as well as existing church members sending their children to Woodsong. We have a great relationship with Spectrum and many families with more than one child take advantage of the opportunity to have all their children go to school in the same building. It's also been great to see our program become more accessible to more families, as our new 2-day schedule option is very affordable.

We are really pleased with how quickly Woodsong enrollment rebounded after the initial stage of the pandemic, which had severely impacted our enrollment. It has been a challenge to keep up-to-date with DCFS' ever-changing COVID safety policies, but the families have been cooperative and appreciative of our efforts. It was also extraordinarily difficult to navigate the DCFS licensure process which was necessary for our expansion. We began the licensure paperwork in early summer 2021, and finally received our provisional license in December 2021. Our permanent license will be issued this month.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue offering this program to a diverse population of families, especially for this age-group which is typically underserved. It brings us such joy to spend our days out in nature with little ones and providing much-needed support to parents of young children in our community!

In Gratitude

I would like to heartily thank the following people for their time and commitment to volunteer: Allyson Rosemore, Aida Rosemore, Amy Brandon, Kim Lowman Vollmer, Bill Scarpaci, Susan Carvello, Jessica Hodierne, Shiraz Tata, Laura Patterson, Lisa Volkman, Dorota Smith, Matthew Fields-Huckstep, Amy Tibbitts, Billie Calahan, Kate Larson, and Nikki Ticknor.

Respectfully Submitted by Lindsay Trank & Lauren Smith

Music Director's Report

The program year began with the continuation of multi-platform delivery of worship services begun in June 2021. Because we had not yet decided to reinstate congregational singing in worship, I was responsible for both singing and playing hymns, musical responses, and anthems, along with providing preludes and offertories each week. Eventually, once the COVID indicators reached sufficiently low levels, we reinstated congregational singing with masks in worship, but even then I continued to serve as song leader for hymns and responses. As always, our decisions about congregational singing were guided not only by the COVID indicators for our county but also by the relevant scientific research and guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other professional organizations.

Based on changes in guidelines regarding distancing and singing, we determined that it was safe to resume in-person rehearsals for the **Unicantors** beginning in September 2021. We moved our rehearsal space from the choir room to Deale Hall in order to have more space to spread out and better ventilation, even though the change required setting up and tearing down each week in the space for rehearsal, as well as moving the grand piano back and forth from the sanctuary. In order to maintain appropriate protection for singers, we purchased specially designed singers' masks for the choir members to wear in rehearsal. These masks provide both ample space and additional filtration and have been purchased by many singers and choirs during the pandemic.

Because the state of the relevant scientific research did not indicate that it would be safe yet for the **Unicantors** to present music in worship, even if masked, we devised a plan according to which we rehearsed several pieces of music each month and then recorded those pieces for presentation during worship. The recordings were both played in the sanctuary and simultaneously live streamed each week. In order to maintain appropriate distancing and safety measures when recording, the choir sang masked from the front of the sanctuary. While there were some technical and logistical hurdles to overcome, I am confident in saying that our recordings were a success. The congregation appreciated having the choir participate in worship weekly, even if only virtually, and the choir greatly enjoyed being able to sing and make music together again. This schedule of rehearsals and recording continued until the middle of January when the rise in COVID indicators related to the omicron variant occasioned our decision both to stop meeting for rehearsals and to suspend congregational singing altogether.

Once the omicron wave had passed, we resumed both in-person choir rehearsals and congregational singing during worship. At that time, the decision was made to spend rehearsal time exclusively on preparations for our May Music Sunday service, which marked the return of the **Unicantors** to presenting music live in worship. The theme for the day was "The Courage to Innovate," and the service featured elements lifting up jazz as an example of musical innovation. The **Unicantors** were joined by bassist **Anton Hatwich** and drummer **Ed Pawelski** in presenting *A Little Jazz Mass* by Bob Chilcott. This was the same work originally slated for the Music Sunday in May 2020 that was canceled because of the pandemic. The response to the service was overwhelming. The choir sang terrifically well, and the congregation was pleased to have the choir back in the loft helping to lead worship, which they continued to do for the remainder of the program year.

Along with the May Music Sunday, we also held a December Music Sunday as well. The theme for the day was "Music Hath Charms," and I was joined by good friends violinist **Rachel Handlin** and cellist **Michael**

Beert in presenting a wide variety of selections by Beethoven, Fauré, Mendelssohn, Bridge, and Albinoni. As always, it was delightful to have **Rachel** and **Mike** join us for worship.

At the present time, the plan for next year is for the **Unicantors** to resume weekly rehearsals in September and return to presenting music live during worship at that time. Of course, whether that plan will be realized as conceived depends on a number of different factors, but I remain hopeful that we will be able to return to our new sort of normal for the next program year. Upon my return in August 2022, we will review the state of the relevant research and make sound decisions, as always, based on science and in accordance with the principles of Unitarian Universalism.

At this time last year, I said that the previous program year had been by far my most challenging to date as a church music director. I would amend that assessment to say that the current program year presented even greater challenges and required a fair amount of innovation in order to find a way to incorporate choral music in worship safely. To be perfectly honest, it took a lot of extra work to make that happen, but I am so very glad that we did it. I could not have imagined eighteen years ago how much making music for worship would change during my time as your Music Director, but I am thankful for the support and encouragement of the congregation as you have allowed us to find our way through these difficult times.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Anderson
Music Director

Assistant Minister Rev. Joyce Palmer Report

This has been my first year serving as your Assistant Minister. My primary responsibilities include coordinating and supporting ministries of caring, welcome, and spiritual growth. It has been my pleasure to work with the Caring Team to coordinate meeting the needs of congregants for meals, rides, calls and visits. This year the Caring Team developed the Care List to assist us in keeping track of care needs and concerns and our actions to meet those needs. We once again collaborated with the Religious Education Director to provide children with pumpkins and candy during the Fall season, we delivered poinsettias to our elder members and those members on our Care List many of whom are no longer able to attend worship services. We also sent Valentine cards to members on our Care List in February. The Caring Team was also supportive of the Blue Christmas service we held in December to provide comfort and support to members and friends during the holiday season. The Caring Team remains strong and ready to respond to the needs of our community.

The Membership Team transitioned to the Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry Team, AIM. Our congregation is committed to widening our welcome. The AIM Team strives to welcome individuals with disabilities and their families into the congregation. The main purpose of the team is to keep track of the big picture of the congregation's welcome and accessibility, address issues of concern and possibly develop strategies to address these concerns. This year we held a training by RAMP on Microaggressions and participated in an audit of our building for accessibility with a RAMP staff person. We will make changes and adjustments based on the feedback we received. The AIM Team is working to grow and strengthen our welcome and their dedication and commitment in inspiring.

This year we conducted three Path to Membership sessions and welcomed 15 new members. The adult programs we offered this year include Wonderful Wednesdays, Touchstone groups, a museum and lunch outing, and our CUUPS program. Adult programs and small groups continue to provide opportunities for members and friends to learn, connect and grow together.

Thank you for the warm welcome, support, and collaboration. I look forward to seeing what we can create together next year!

Treasurer's Report

The fiscal Year 2021-2022 ends on June 30th. As of April, pledge income is 110% of the annual budget, on target to end well. Overall, members kept up with their pledges during the pandemic. **I invite all members to complete their pledges by the end of June.**

Our online **auction** is in process now.

Woodsong, our nature school for 2- and 3-year-olds, experienced increased demand. By July, a 2-day program was added. By April, Woodsong's revenue exceeded its YTD forecast by 19%, and the program was fully enrolled going into its summer session.

Belay **virtual bookkeeping** is working well. Our bookkeeper moved to Arizona, but our communication continued to be prompt and efficient.

We continued to invest in **live-streaming equipment** for our ongoing hybrid worship services. Some members prefer the online worship services to in-person. The aged dishwasher required a new water heater to disinfect adequately.

Landscaping for the island the front entrance was completed. This design should be easier to maintain.

The **Investment Panel** continued its pursuit of socially responsible and ESG investments by selling several Wells Fargo funds and replacing them with fixed income managed by Breckenridge Advisors. This increased Wells Fargo's fixed funds to 63% to offset the UUCEF's lower fixed income of 17%. We added Trillium Asset Management to our portfolio, an ESG manager which invests in Small-Cap Business. Our funds have been negatively affected by the decreasing stock market in recent months. Time should move the results to positive as market conditions change.

This year we again paid our **"Fair Share"** to the UUA's Annual Program Fund. May this be an annual goal.
Submitted by Teresa Wilmot

Committee Reports

UU Church Building & Grounds Committee COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Committee's purpose: The Building and Ground Committee plans, budgets for, and executes maintenance and improvements to the Church property, building, furnishings, and equipment. It prepares recommendations for the Church Board and/or the Congregation, as appropriate, for major maintenance, significant, or Capital level improvements.

Summary of committee's activities during the current year.

1. Numerous minor repairs to the HVA/C systems, and an in-depth evaluation of the Sanctuary furnace(s) operation and the failure of the blower wheels has been conducted. The conclusion is there is substantial reverse flow in the return air ducting. A solution is being implemented to correct the condition, and a more detailed description can be found in the B&G Update for May 2022. Other normal repairs to the building systems were completed. A vendor has been identified to service the kitchen dish sanitizer, and maintenance and repairs are in progress also, the pre-heater for the sanitizer has been replaced.
2. Landscaping plans for the Memorial Patio Area are being pursued by the Memorials Committee and a more detailed description can be found in that committee's report. Also, there are at least two Memorial Trees that have failed and need to be replaced.
3. The Church grounds "clean up issues" were addressed during a combined U.U. Church and Spectrum School Workday. Spectrum has also re-planted their vegetable gardens. There remains substantial Grounds work that had been identified and requires funding.
4. Annual building equipment inspections and test were conducted with no major issues identified. The hallway wall sconce lights were replaced with LED fixtures following an inspection that identified a serious electrical condition with the old compact fluorescent fixtures. The Church also entered into a Community Solar Electric supply agreement with Nexamp Solar and hopefully we will be receiving these credits in the near future. (June 2022)
5. Spectrum School: Completed the year with only minor issues except for the broken window in Classroom 9 with a rock thrown through the window, and unfortunately a follow-up incident on May 28/29 2022, when a similar act resulted in windows broken in Room 9 and Room 10, with substantial damage, vandalism, burglary, and loss of Spectrum School property. The Rockford Police have investigated the event and the proper reports have been filed with the Church and Spectrum's insurance companies. Further information, as available, will be included in the B&G Update for June 2022.
6. The Building & Grounds Committee updates for 2022 will continue to be via e-mail, and in person meetings in the Office Workroom the second Sunday of the month following the Sunday service as schedules and conditions permit.

Hopes for the coming church year (Please limit to one paragraph):

1. Continue with the identification and resolution of major building capital funding upgrades, maintenance repair items, and Church facilities improvements as identified by the B&G Committee and others. (e.g. Replacement of all the original single pane windows with high efficiency thermo-pane windows, sealing and re-stripping of the parking lots, Repairs to the concrete sidewalk areas, Painting / re-staining / repairs of the original building siding, Review and reevaluation of the Church alarm company services and costs).

Committee members (names): Skip Abare, Jim Dehler, Anita Johnson, Allen Penticoff, Fred Stellema, Kim Vollmer, Ken Ring, Carole Hunter.

Committee chair: D.J Schubert

Library Committee

Committee members are Mike Ullrich, chair, Jan Dunham, Rhea Overley, and Kathy Young, secretary.

The committee met only twice during this fiscal year because of the covid pandemic. During these meetings, we sorted donated books to determine which ones were appropriate to keep in our library. We also processed and shelved the books we decided to keep.

We bought and shelved the following books:

Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier –
by Cynthia Grant Tucker

Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian
Universalism – by Mark Morrison-Reed

Unitarian Christianity – by William Ellery Channing

Woman in the Nineteenth Century – by Margaret Fuller

They cost a total of \$77.26

Finance Committee Annual Report – 2021-2022

Purpose Statement: The Finance Committee monitors the financial status of the church and helps to maintain its sound condition by its activities and recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Summary of committee activities during the current year:

-Reviewed the church's income and expenses monthly, as well as the status of the fundraising activities, service contracts, memorials and other financial matters.

-With the minister, built a balanced annual budget for fiscal year 2019-2020.

-As of May, the church finances for the year are very much in control. Expenses are running according to plan and the budget within less than 1 %.

-It is a tribute to the church members that pledge income is meeting the budget. Despite half a year of Covid shutdowns and impacts, member giving to the church rebounded nicely from last year.

-the Finance Committee delayed holding a fundraising event, (Auction), waiting for the pandemic to recede and social events could take place. It is underway at this moment.

-the Balance Sheet is healthy, with balances exceeding \$25,000 in each of the Deficit Reserve, the Building Maintenance Reserve, and the Memorials Fund. The Permanent Funds have a balance of \$1,053,000, which allows for an annual income distribution of \$41,500 to help special projects and maintain operations.

Committee Members: Steve Lewis (Chair), Sue Molyneaux, Teresa Wilmot (Treasurer), Steve Blomgren (Investment Panel Chair), Pat Lewis (Chair Memorials & Special Gifts), Pete Giolitto, Ruth Little, Dave Zinn, Matt Menze, Mark Schultz.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Lewis, Chair

Memorials and Special Gifts

Committee's purpose: To act as a sensitive liaison with families and/or donors in the selection of memorials that reflect the life and interests of the memorialized person(s) and are appropriate to the needs, priorities and décor of the church; and to review proposed donations to the church.

Summary of committee's activities during the year:

Received memorial funds for: Marden Blomgren, Ann Haub, Dorothy Hill, Evelyn Johnson, and Vidyut Pandya

Consulted with appropriate persons re: use of loved ones' memorial funds.

Expenditures this year: None

Activities this year: Met via Zoom teleconferencing at least once a month. Visited numerous memorial gardens and patios. Met with contractor and landscape designer to finalize garden proposal

Hopes for the coming year: We have developed a plan to rebuild the Memorial Patio. If the expenditure is approved by the congregation, work will begin as soon as possible. We hope to complete this summer.

Committee members 2021-2022: Francie Barnes, Mary Caskey, Jackie Dehler, Alice Enichen, Kay Hotchkiss, Pat Lewis, Ruth Little

Patricia Lewis, Chair

Pandemic Shutdown Auction

Auction underway now.

Investment Panel

Permanent Fund Allocations to 2022-23 Operating Budget

Approval of the 2021-2022 Permanent Fund Income Allocations

Steve Blomgren

Intern Ministry	\$3,650	(this year, for Assistant Minister position)
Building & Grounds budget	\$21,263	(used for ongoing repairs)
Capital Reserve	\$8,450	(placed into reserve for larger projects)
Growth Programs	\$11,700	(used to subsidize Assistant Minister)
Outreach (Justice)	\$7,100	(includes Shaheen Lecture)
Religious Education	\$1,400	(used for curriculum, supplies, etc).
Other Designated Funds	\$650	(flowers, leadership)
Totals	\$54,213	

Denominational Affairs Committee

Committee's Purpose: The Denominational Affairs Committee informs the congregation about the larger denomination--the MidAmerica Region and the UUA--and provides feedback from the congregation to the UUA.

Summary of Committee's Activities During 2020-2021: Attended 2021 Virtual General Assembly. The theme was "Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage." Anti-racism and "decolonizing" were major themes. The report from the UUA Commission on Institutional Change, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, was promoted and implemented. This document will guide our association in anti-racism, both in denominational realms and in individual congregations. Both our Board of Trustees and our Justice for All Committee have studied this report during this past year.

The Assembly passed the Statement of Conscience (SOC), *Undoing Systemic White Supremacy*.

Stacy Abrams and Desmond Meade delivered the Ware Lecture.

I will experience this June's General Assembly virtually after returning from a 5-day civil rights pilgrimage to Alabama with Zion Lutheran Church and members of Eliminate Racism 815.

Hopes for the coming church year:

Continue implementation of the UUA's report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, in dismantling white supremacy in the culture of our congregations, in our denomination, and in our country.

I will greatly miss Duane Wilke who will move to the Boston area this summer. Duane has been instrumental in communications with our partner churches in Transylvania, Romania. He also pioneered our efforts with the Human Library.

Committee Members: Teresa Wilmot

Other Church Members and Friends Who Have Assisted the Committee:

Duane Wilke (Partner Church)

Gloria Perez (Delegate to GA 2022 in Portland, OR this June)

Signature of Committee Chair: Teresa Wilmot

Caring Team Annual Report

Caring Team's Purpose At the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, the purpose of the Caring Team is to assist the congregation in its ministry to members, especially during times of major life changes; isolation because of age, mobility issues, or other factors; health problems, illness, and hospitalizations; and death of a family member or friend.

Team Membership Caring Team participants during 2021- 2022 include Wanda Hoover (chair), Gaen McClendon, Teresa Palmeno, Sue Wilke, Gloria Perez (scribe), Tom Walsh, Bob Babcock, Diane Kuehl, Kathy Scarpaci, Leslie Mahan, Sue Garwick, Peggy Menze and Billie Callahan.

Please see the Asst. Minister's report for information about Caring Team activities.

Membership Team

The Member Team transitioned to the Accessibility and Inclusion Team.

Accessibility and Inclusion Team's Purpose The AIM Team strives to welcome individuals with disabilities and their families into the congregation. The main purpose of the team is to keep track of the big picture of the congregation's welcome and accessibility, address issues of concern and possibly develop strategies to address these concerns.

Team Membership/Participants Jennifer Riley, Ruth Little, Neita Webster, Rhonda McAllister, Teresa Palmeno

Please see the Asst. Minister's report for information about AIM Team activities.

Religious Growth & Learning

Please see the Director of Religious Education Report

Faith in Action Ministry

During this church we, we transitioned from our previous Social Justice Council and teams model to a new Faith in Action model for our justice and organizing ministry.

The members of the Social Justice Council, who enthusiastically supported this change, included Jason Peckels and Ellyn Ahmer, co-chairs, as well as Duane Wilke, Jon McGinty, Glenda Shaver, David Black, Dale Dunnigan, Bob Babcock, Myrna Lake, Wanda Hoover, and Gaen McClendon. This team supported our various justice efforts including the Justice for All Team (which worked through the Widening the Circle of Concern report together, as well as supported the Human Library project and connected with Eliminate Racism 815), the Prison Ministry Team, Green Sanctuary, Cornucopia Food Pantry, Action for Children, and more, as well as set the share the plate schedule.

The new Faith in Action ministry structure will organize around three issue teams. Dale Dunnigan and Matthew Fields-Huckstep will co-lead the Sex and Gender Justice team. Gloria Perez and Kathie Mattison will co-lead the Racial and Economic Justice team (into which the Justice for All team will transition). Allyson Rosemore and Doug Rix will co-chair the Ecojustice team. In addition, Ellyn Ahmer and Billie Callahan will co-lead the Organizing Crew, which will work closely with our partners at UU Advocacy Network of Illinois and Rockford Urban Ministries. We're excited about this new structure and focus on keeping our justice work grounded deeply in our faith and spirit.

In faith,
Matthew

Music Team

See Music Director Report.

UU ROCKFORD ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Meeting, in person and via Zoom, begins at 11:13 am with Call to Order by Carolyn Arevalo.

Rules and Procedures for Congregational Meeting were reviewed, and it was established that a quorum was present.

Matt Menze is parliamentarian. Because this meeting is also via Zoom, members were instructed to use “chat” to ask questions or make comments.

The minutes of the 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved. Dan Fellars made a motion to accept the minutes, Jim Dehler seconded. There was no discussion. Vote and motion passed.

The nominating committee recommended the following nominees for new board members.

1. Election of Officers:

President: Amanda Tapfield (1 year term) Vice President: Judy Gustafson (1 year term)

Clerk: Bob Spelman (2 year term)

Treasurer: Teresa Wilmot (1 year term) Trustee: Sarah Greer (2 year term)

Note: Gary Huckstep and Khanh Oehlke will continue to serve as Trustees.

a. Sue Molyneaux moved that the selection of officers be accepted for 2021-22.

b. Neita Webster seconds, vote and the motion carries.

2. Election of Nominating Panel members:

Leslie Mahan to be on the nominating panel.

3. Amy Brandon has been nominated to be on the conflict resolution panel. a. Kim Vollmer made a motion to accept these nominees.

b. Kay Hotchkiss seconded, vote and motion passed.

4. Approval of the 2020-2021 Permanent Fund Income Allocations

Teresa Wilmot is nominated to be on the Permanent Fund Income Allocations committee. a. Dan Fellars made a motion to approve.

b. Martha Dunnigan seconded, vote and motion passed.

5. Approval of the Social Outreach Task Force Recommendations

1. Sandi Campbell moves to approve the recommendations

2. John McGinty seconds and the motion carries.

6. Approval of the 2020-2021 Annual Operating Budget a. Bob Arevalo moves to approve the recommendations.