

We are a liberal religious community that opens minds, fills hearts, and transforms lives. We work for peace, equality, a healthy earth, and an end to poverty.

Annual Report 2014

Olympia Unitarian
Universalist Congregation

A note about this Annual Report: Leaders were asked to submit reports about the work of their committees and teams, focusing on what has changed as a result of their work in the past year. This is a compilation of the reports received, not a complete record of all that's gone on at OUUC this year.

A Message from the Interim Minister

From the moment I saw your zine, “Transitions,” last summer, I knew that OUUC was well-prepared to embrace the opportunities and challenges of the interim period. It has truly been a privilege and a joy to share the first of two years of interim ministry with you. At this juncture, I have several observations I’d like to share with you.

You are a strong, vibrant congregation with skillful lay leaders and engaged members who truly care about OUUC. You also care deeply about the sense of community many of you have found here, and there’s a palpable sense of joy and connection here.

You have a remarkable staff who do great work here at OUUC, and are recognized as leaders by their colleagues. I am deeply appreciative of their individual skills and dedication, and the collaborative nature of our work together.

As you know, an interim period is not a “business-as-usual” time in the life of a congregation. Intentional interim ministers (ministers who specialize in interim ministry) are both the spiritual leaders of the congregations we serve, and coaches who assist congregations, and their lay leadership with developmental tasks known to be crucial to the forward movement of congregations. Here’s an overview of this work:

- Claiming and honoring your past and healing griefs and conflicts
 - In the fall, over a third of you participated in listening sessions and a history wall project, and many noted feeling considerable easing of the conflict over the handling of a personnel issue two years ago. Founders and early members, as well as current and former Board presidents, have met with me to reflect on the past, and I have invited you to reflect on your former ministers in worship services and workshops. While intentionally working on the past will take a back seat as we move forward with your identity work, your processing will certainly continue as you find new ways to hold your memories and love for Arthur over time.
- Illuminating the congregation’s unique identity, its strengths, its needs, and its challenges

- This work begins in earnest this spring, as the Transition Team leads an Appreciative Inquiry process to help you consider the best of OUUC. It will continue with the Ministerial Search Committee's work, which will elicit your thoughts, feelings and observations about OUUC, in order to synthesize and articulate them for ministers in search.
- Clarifying the multiple dimensions of leadership, both ordained and lay, and navigating the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition
 - Turnover in elected and appointed leadership roles is a necessary feature of a healthy congregation; during times of transition, there is often greater than usual turnover as people navigate their roles and loyalties in changing circumstances. There have been a number of changes in lay leadership since I arrived, and we will surely see more. All of this is healthy and as it should be in an interim period.
 - Your Board is continuing the process of moving OUUC fully into Policy Governance, which will contribute substantially to the clarification of roles, responsibilities, accountability and authority.
 - Finally, I will continue to work to clarify current understandings of the role(s) of the minister, so that you will have a clear picture of what expectations you and your next settled minister might reasonably have of one another.
- Renewing connections with available resources within and beyond the UUA
 - I hope a large number of people will participate in General Assembly in Portland, OR this summer
 - The Ministerial Search process will bring OUUC into greater connection with the district and the UUA
 - The Board is considering bringing in a consultant to assist them in their work on Policy Governance
 - OUUC is in need of a volunteer or team who would be interested in Denominational Affairs who might be willing to support deeper connections between the congregation and the district and UUA.
- Embracing the future with renewed vision and strong stewardship, prepared for new professional leadership, full of anticipation and zest
 - Your stewardship this year has been absolutely amazing!
 - This process will continue to unfold in the coming year.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to share this valuable ministry with you, and am grateful for the opportunities it gives me to learn and grow as a spiritual leader and a human being.

Warmly,
Emily Melcher, Interim Minister

Leaders were asked “What has changed at OUUC as a result of the work you did in 2014?”

Director of Lifespan Religious Education

This year I completed the process to earn the Religious Educators Credential, Masters Level, from the Unitarian Universalist Association. This credentialing reflects the professional development I have done and the support and value that OUUC has placed on having quality leadership in religious education at OUUC. This quality is then shown in the lifespan religious education program at OUUC. Our religious education programs are changing as my job description has expanded – now as Director of Lifespan Religious Education I am taking on leadership of the adult religious education as well. In 2014 we launched a new elementary program, Labyrinth Learning, which has proved wonderfully successful, and new monthly newsletters for faith formation at home, as well as continuing to offer the other quality programs we have come to love: Our Whole Lives, Spirit Play, High School Youth Group, and Adult Education classes.

Sara Lewis, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Board of Trustees

The goals of the Board of Trustees included the following:

Finances: Concerns included cost overruns on parking lot expansion, capital loans starting paybacks in 2015, and not paying staff to UUA Guidelines. To date we are now paying all staff at UUA guidelines, we started fair compensation to Sexton, \$15.00/hour, and to meet loan costs, we asked the congregation to increase pledges by 15%. We received a generous 12.5%.

Stewardship and fundraising: The Stewardship Committee with Debby Pattin, Susan Dodson, Gretchen Faulstich, Penny Chatfield, Erin Finch, Mikel Young, with assistance of The Reverend Emily Melcher ran an excellent campaign. The Board decided to ask for more loans from members to assist with construction costs. Mark Swanson was able to find donors to meet the goal through gifts to OUUC.

Executive Team: A concern was that more understanding of the Executive Team's policies and operation was needed. We have now identified the need for more knowledge of Policy Governance. The Board is undergoing training and it will continue to review our Policies and in the next year will work on rewriting Board and Executive Team policies.

Leadership Longevity: A concern was that Chairmanship and membership in committees can be stagnant. There needs to be a regular turnover to prevent burnout and to introduce fresh ideas in each committee. The Program Council has been working with committees and chairs to increase awareness of term limits for each. Worship Arts has started this and many other committees are working on terms.

Facilitate a successful transition of ministers: The concern was handling all the change in a transition. We are following the UUA guidelines and are working on naming the Ministerial Search Committee, setting aside the funds to pay for the expensive part of the transition (which will occur in 2016), communicating about the transition to the congregation with more announcements in the weekly emails, Sunday inserts and the Board Blog on the OUUC website.

The Board continues to be as transparent as possible; Board meetings are open to every congregant, per OUUC ByLaws. We are available for comment by email (board@ouuc.org) and each member of the Board can be identified on Sundays by our lavender name badges. We encourage all members of OUUC to speak to us about our Church and our community.

Jacob "Jack" Jackson, President
Penny Chatfield, Board member
Lorie Eaton, Board member

Administration

The most significant change in 2014 was the launch of the new website. Our website planning team started early in the year, mapping out the basics of the new structure. We were fortunate to contract with Colin Elliott, an experienced and creative designer. I, along with other staff and volunteers, spent much time evaluating, transferring and creating content. We learned how to work with WordPress and I learned how to make online instructional tutorials. The website launched in November and has provided us with new ways to communicate with church members - and with those newcomers seeking a liberal religious community.

Darlene Sarkela, Congregational Administrator

Adult Education

The adult education committee strives to offer programs that touch heads, hearts and hands; reflect our seven principles; support a deeper understanding of ourselves and our fellow inhabitants of this earth; and promote an enriched discussion of issues. Adult education classes serve as one of the doorways bringing people into the congregation. We expanded our offerings by presenting 26 classes in each of our 2014 sessions; several of these attracted more than 30 participants. Our outreach and recruitment of class leaders and special support to first-time leaders resulted in attracting new talent from our own congregation as well as in attracting class leaders (8 in 2014) from the larger community. Positive responses to classes exploring the arts, science, spirituality, evolution, and consciousness led to the development and offering of additional related classes in 2014. Classes offered in prior sessions have also resulted in the formation of groups that have continued beyond the classroom setting. Two examples: 1) an ongoing Spiritual Healing group formed from classes offered during four different adult education sessions, and 2) the Justice Not Jails coalition (consisting of participants from OUUC, the Olympia Friends Meeting, and others) formed in 2014 in response to the 2013 adult education class studying Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow*, and resulted in a significant addition to OUUC's social justice outreach. In addition, several pieces of electronic equipment purchased by the adult education committee have supported not only our own classes, but are at the disposal of the entire congregation and have been used frequently in other religious education classes, committee work, and conferences.

Members of the OUUC Adult Education Committee in 2014 included Jim Anest, Nancy Brickell, Tom Joldersma, Donna Killelea, Sara Lewis, Martha Nicoloff (chair), Ann Rockway, Elizabeth Rodrick, Bernie Steckler, Billie Williams, and Gary Worthington.

Martha Nicoloff, Chair

Family Ministry Team

The Family Ministry Team endeavors to support families, children, and youth and create a welcoming intergenerational community at OUUC. In 2014 our efforts were largely spent supporting Sara Lewis, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, especially during her sabbatical. We step in to supervise Sunday Religious Education when she is away, and we greet new

families and assist them in connecting to our varied programs. We provide a sounding board to her during program creation and implementation including the new "Labyrinth Learning" format and "OWL" programs. We assist with family events such as the Easter egg hunt, Mother's Day festivities, family picnics and family game night. We provide food and hospitality for various meetings throughout the year. We support each other on the parenting journey and seek to understand the needs our congregation's families. OUUC was a more welcoming and family-friendly place and a more supportive employer encouraging professional growth in its staff in 2014 because of our work.

Tiffany Felch, Chair

Green Sanctuary

The Green Sanctuary Committee (GSC) grew in numbers from six to nine active members in 2014. The increase allowed the GSC to take on more UU 7th Principle related activities for the congregation and in the broader community. In 2014, the GSC was involved in the following activities: We supported the 2014 Faith Action Day and Run for Your Lives and provided legislative environmental actions to congregants by linking to the League of Women Voter weekly summaries; and provided continued information about Coal and Oil Trains. We organized the annual invasive species and trash removal from OUUC woodlands and grounds and formed OUUC Cyclists team for the Intercity Transit bike commuter contest and conducted Ride Share Sundays. We conducted a 7th principle Earth Stewardship Pledge for the Earth Day Service. We updated neighborhood lists to help OUUC congregants with carpooling. We shared Warm Window workshop experience at the PNWD meeting in Spokane and at four Olympia area events and conducted seven Warm Window workshops. We gained Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary accreditation for OUUC woodlands and coordinated with Religious Education program to include children in the process. We sponsored an OUUC Community Dinner with a Food Waste theme with a speaker from Thurston County and improved GSC webpage on the new OUUC website. We reviewed OUUC waste management system (compostables, recycling and garbage) and recommended a change that will save OUUC money on its utility bills.

Chair: Joe Joy Members: Leslie Romer, Carol McKinley, Mary Moore, Bonnie Guyer-Graham, Katie Rickman, Frank Turner, Elizabeth Rodrick, Jennifer Miller, Maureen Canny

Joe Joy, Chair

Interfaith Works

The work I did through Interfaith Works that reflects on our congregation is time and energy devoted to the new homeless shelter, including being on a planning committee. A number of our members joined me in the Crop Walk by walking and donating to help those in need locally and around the world. Quite a few members also turned out for our Thanksgiving Celebration. I try to keep the church apprised as to what is happening at Interfaith Works and help that is needed.

Pat Perry, Interfaith Works Delegate

Membership

We produced with input from Bonnie Buyer-Graham the “Connections” document, outlining all the ways to get involved at OUUC. We produced the New Guide to Membership at OUUC. We totally revamped the Class 4 in the Membership Classes to have a more personal look into the OUUC. We produced the New Member Form used in registering new members and friends and produced Membership Intent Form. We cleaned and reorganized the kitchen, purchased the new coffee cup cabinet, instituted the one coffee service in the summer, initiated three coffee servers for the services and initiated having professional help in yearly kitchen maintenance and cleaning and weekly check-ups to keep it. We eliminated hundreds of excess nametags from the nametag board, starting to get more Religious Education kids involved with Ushers and Greeters and individually trained new ushers and greeters.

Angela Trzepkowski, Chair

Music

Our choir numbers increased last year which has enhanced the overall quality of our vocal sound as a choir, and allowed us to perform more challenging musical ensembles. Our music supports the message of our minister. To aid in the transition of the interim minister, we provided choir participation for worship services during July and August of 2014. Congregants who were non-choir members participated, and as a result, several joined the choir permanently. We initiated better management of the music archives which adds convenience for our director and any others who may wish to use our collection of music. The Voice Class is

open to anyone who has the desire to sing, member or non-member. As the result of Voice Class, some participants have joined the church and some have also joined the choir. It is a method to connect with the greater community of which OUUC is a part. The choir significantly enriched the worship experience by introducing vibrant world music such as genres of gospel, blue grass, and African pieces. The choir increased OUUC district visibility by participating in the music festival.

Anita McIntosh, Chair

Out of the Woods

In 2014 Out of the Woods was open all year serving 18 families and provided 3,512 bed-nights at a cost of \$22.78 each. Our biggest change in 2014 is developing partnerships with other agencies to ensure our services are relevant and a vital component of the homeless services network in Thurston County. Out of the Woods serves the most fragile homeless families and helps them find employment, housing and education as needed. We work closely with the Family Support Center and Community Action Council to make Rapid Rehousing dollars available to our families when they become available and the families are financially stable enough to receive these funds. With government cutbacks to all housing projects and grants these dollars are needed more than ever to continue the work we do for a growing homeless population.

Sally Brennand, Out of the Woods Board

Share the Plate

The Share the Plate program allows us to donate half of our Sunday offering to another non-profit organization. This last year saw new people involved with decision making that resulted in some new groups being selected.

Tom Best, Coordinator

Worship Arts

With the resignation of our settled minister in June, the ongoing work of the WAC gained urgency. The 2014 Chair, Ann Yeo, trained and mentored five new celebrants to assure they were fully functional in the role. All committee members capably and confidently worked with lay and ministerial guests. All worked supportively and flexibly with the interim minister as she has taken charge of OUUC worship services.

Christine Parke, Chair