



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

CONGREGATION OF FREDERICK
Spirituality · Community · Justice

Board President's Report for 2020-2021

Despite a lack of astronomical evidence, I am sure many of you will agree it has been an unusually long year. Personally, the congregation, staff and Board of UUCF have been a source of strength, hope and pride for me in this long year.

As tempting as it is to just move on from 2020, this congregation has weathered difficult times and I think a review of the year from the Board's perspective is a hopeful exercise.

The Board year started in August with a Zoom retreat. Please know that you elected a group who work well together, enjoy the work and love this congregation. I am so proud to serve with them. Having Intern Minister Jen with us at Board meetings and the last two Board retreats as well has been a particular blessing. She will be missed by so many in so many ways. The Board thanks her for her service and her contributions.

In our retreat we decided to focus on 3 facets of our congregational life together that, without initially striving for symmetry or whimsy, we called:

Diversity, Digital, and Dollars.

This triple focus has carried us forward through the pandemic and has illuminated the many efforts of this congregation to pursue our mission: *We join together to encourage spiritual growth, build a beloved community, and act for peace and justice.*

DIVERSITY

In terms of diversity, the Board & congregation supported working with "UU the Vote" to forward racial equity and justice in America. Thank you to those who worked on UU The Vote and other get out the vote efforts.

The UUA has provided an incredible tool for UUs and UU congregations to grow as anti-racists and to create multi-cultural community. The Board discussed "Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change" as a group and in more depth as a sub-committee prior to the discussion led by Carl and Jen for all of you. The priorities for a multi-year plan will be further discussed at this year's retreat but you may already notice more presence of BIPOC ("Black, Indigenous, and People of Color") people in the pulpit and more

congregational opportunities for learning and growth towards becoming a beloved multi-cultural community.

Besides input from the group led by Carl and Jen, some of the congregants who participated in the Widening the Circle discussions are working in a committee to make sure that we are as welcoming and comfortable as possible to all who would join us, either online or in person.

And lastly, we made the building available to I Believe in Me as a place to store food being distributed to people in the Frederick Community during the pandemic. IBM is ending this activity in the coming weeks as it is no longer so pressing.

DOLLARS

In December the Board deemed it very important that we focus on Supporting High-Quality Long-term Leadership by increasing staff salaries to move closer to UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines. I am guessing you will agree that the quality of our staff makes possible the experiences and learning people enjoy with UUCF on Sundays and other days of the week as well. We did not want to lose or layoff any staff due to the pandemic and also wanted to represent justice through fair pay.

Moving toward this goal, despite the pandemic has been made possible by you, our members and friends. We have been so pleased by the continued generosity of this congregation to complete pledges, to donate online, and to give of their time, talent and treasure in different ways during this difficult time. The folks behind the Stewardship campaign, the Plant Sale, the Art Gallery and the Auction moved us with their determination, creativity and willingness to work to support the UUCF mission and a building from which to operate. All 3 of these efforts yielded more than was expected during such a time as this. As a result we are much better shape financially than many envisioned at the beginning of the pandemic. The Finance committee has clearly laid out some areas where we will have to pay attention to the building over the next few years and your generosity and commitment reassures us that we can continue to care for our beautiful building.

The Board and in particular the Finance Committee have spent a lot of time pursuing, securing and discussing smartest use of 2 PPP Loans, one of which has been converted to a grant. (The "Paycheck Protection Program" was established by federal government through the CARES Act, "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security.") This represents a much needed influx of cash that greatly helped alleviate the loss of rental income and the loss of several large fundraisers like the Pagan Pride Festival and Winter Ball.

Online donations from old and new friends were an unexpected surprise and provide a segue to the final 'D' category of digital.

DIGITAL

Who knew that digital services could be so powerful?

You might say that when we were in lockdown and there was so little to do and so few places to go, pretty much anything would seem fresh and helpful... but these services have continued to be attended and valued by so many of you even when lockdowns were lifted and we were all allowed a bit more freedom. This relates back to our incredible staff and also to so many volunteers who work very hard to bring great music and a seamless experience to you every Sunday. The focus groups that Reverend Carl offered in February and March gave many of you the opportunity to state just how meaningful you found the services and how much you hope that they will continue even when we are in person because of the freedom they represent to those who have transportation, mobility, geographic or health barriers to attending in person.

The Board recently approved funds to purchase equipment to allow us to do a better job of live streaming an actually live service from the sanctuary. This is in preparation to continue offering online services to any who need or prefer it.

On this the occasion of our annual meeting, I hope you will take a moment to recognize the ways that you have and continue to value, contribute to and benefit from this congregation. The Board will continue to guide UUCF in fulfilling its mission and supporting its members, all while balancing safety, public health and the unknown. The Board has considered, and continues to consider, recommendations from the UUA, the CDC and the Maryland State Department of Health as they relate to UUCF present and future endeavors. We are proud to serve you in maintaining UUCF as it offers hope, fellowship, spiritual fulfillment, challenge and safety to so many.