



Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis

Final Interim Report for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, MD

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It is hard to believe that my time with UUCA is coming to an end. We have been through so much together and it's hard to imagine both of us moving onto another chapter of our lives. However, - that is what interims do; we step into the stream of congregational life for a time; joining the congregation for both the times of smooth sailing and rough waters. We have experienced both! This report is a summary of my two and a half years as UUCA's interim minister, and I offer it to you with much respect, joy, and love.

Every interim has five standard tasks we are asked to reflect & focus on. These five categories are:

1. Reviewing History
2. Shifts of Power & Leadership Changes
3. Discovering a New Identity
4. Renewing Denominational Linkages
5. Commitment to New Leadership and a New Future.

Reviewing History

A Good Goodbye

When I arrived, UUCA had finished a yearlong celebration of Rev. Fred Muir's long ministry with UUCA. This is an example of a "good goodbye." A month prior to my arrival, Rev. Fred and I drafted a covenant, which outlined his relationship with the church. Although named minister emeritus, Rev. Muir and Karen agreed to refrain from attending UUCA for the course of the interim ministry, except when specifically asked. The reason for this is to allow the work of the interim and transitions time to occur without the presence of the long-time former minister. This was Fred and Karen's final gift to UUCA, to me and to the interim process.

What I found in my first six months at UUCA

In October 2017, the Interim Search Team interviewed me, and raised several concerns. These concerns serve as a snapshot of where UUCA was at the time I arrived:

1. The Interim Search Team was concerned about tensions around policy governance, such as ambivalence about Rev. Fred Muir's role as Senior Minister & CEO;

2. There was lack of clarity about Rev. John Crestwell's role in the church system;
3. There were concerns about the Religious Exploration program that it would wither during the interim time;
4. References to the "old guard" not interested in diversifying music or new ways of "doing church"
5. Concerns about pledging or stewardship at an all-time low;
6. Issues with people leaving the church and withholding money because they didn't like the direction of the church.

Culture of "Yes"

Early in the interim time, I identified UUCA as having a culture of "yes." By that, I meant that UUCA is a congregation which has a lot of enthusiasm for a variety of projects and programs. Yet, as I looked a little deeper into the programs offered, I also identified that much of the heavy lifting had to be done by UUCA staff. The execution of these programs often fell on the shoulders of long-time Business Administrator, *Susan Eckert*. I encouraged the congregation to say "yes" to less, but to go deeper into the programs they already had. One of the "yes" that was affirmed before Rev. Muir's departure was to become a Sanctuary Congregation.

The vote to become, but not to host a family in Sanctuary at UUCA

The vote to become a Sanctuary Congregation was affirmed in April 2017, before I arrived. Sometime in late winter/early Spring church member/seminarian Leika Lewis Cornwell asked if UUCA would consider her as a two-year, part time intern minister. After discussing with the Board and the active Intern Minister Committee, Reverend John and I said "yes." Part of her compensation would include her living in the Intern Apartment at Fahs house. This would mean that the apartment was not available to host an immigrant family in need of sanctuary. After researching the volunteer requirements needed to house a family (i.e, Cedar Lane has 100 volunteers committed to sanctuary) it became clear to me that UUCA did not have a sufficient number of volunteers to sustain this effort, should UUCA be asked to do so. The Board voted to support the Annapolis Immigration Justice Network with time, talent and treasures, but not attempt to house a family in the main building. This decision was met by dismay and deep disappointment by a few long-time and beloved members of UUCA. The Board agreed to re-visit this decision once the new minister/ministry team was in place. The congregation is now asked to consider installing a shower in the bathroom downstairs which can serve many needs; not the least of which may be a family in need of shelter.

Ambiguity about the Religious Exploration & Youth Program

Looking back: In hindsight, what I didn't understand when I came to UUCA was that the RE program was also in need of an interim, to provide the time and the space to determine what the needs of the program really were and how they were or were not being fulfilled.

Rev. Christina Leone Tracy had served as the Minister responsible for Religious Exploration. However, when she left UUCA in the summer of 2017, UUCA hired *Elise Berrocal* to be the Acting Director of Religious Exploration. Elise brought not only continuity to the position, but a steady hand on the helm. She worked hard to ensure parents that the program would not only

continue, but thrive. Without her insight, wisdom and savvy, the first year of the interim ministry would have been extremely difficult. We owe her a debt of gratitude.

Likewise, *Paul Berry* was the Youth Coordinator at the time of my arrival. Paul had grown the youth program from a small number of youth to a robust size. His love of the job and of youth were evident. Both he and Elise also inherited a Religious Exploration Program that was under a lot of stress. Some parents were not confident that the program was thriving; others expressed great content and satisfaction. Sustaining a vibrant youth program continues to be an enormous challenge. I hope that both the challenges and accomplishments of our youth program can be recognized.

Transition from Adult RE to Practicing a UU Religious Life (PUURL)

The Connections Team was the group tasked with creating and sustaining Middle Hour Programs, previously led by Rev. Christina Leone Tracy. The Connections Team had an extensive criteria to uphold; programs needed to meet one of four or five programmatic areas. They also had the difficult task of monitoring and, at times, limiting the number of offerings as Middle Hour became increasingly popular. I found it increasingly difficult to navigate the offerings from individuals, the scheduling of rooms, coordinating that with Maurita Williams, former Administrative Assistant and then with Jannina Ortiz (current Administrative Assistant) and working with the committee on programs.

By Late Spring and early Fall 2019, the committee took an unofficial hiatus. As a way to organize adult faith formation offerings, I created PUURL (Practicing a Unitarian Universalist Religious Life) which includes grouping Sunday morning offerings into Mind, Body, Heart and Spirit and created a PUURL booklet for Fall & Winter 2019-2020. The committee decided to stay on hiatus for now until after the interim time. As UUCA moves into its next chapter of life, revisiting the Adult Faith Formation's program and Middle Hour offerings would be an important issue to address in the next year. The team consisted of *Ginger Parsons (chair); LaGuinn Sherlock, John Fischer, & Thornell Jones*. I'm very grateful for this team's hard work and for carrying this portfolio through this transition time. Whether PUURL continues is not important; but certainly gracefully navigating our Adult Faith Formation Program will be important.

Transitions Weekend, November 2018

In November 2018, the Transitions Team and I hosted a Friday night – Saturday morning conversation and reflection about UUCA's identity, strengths, challenges, opportunities, and weaknesses. The information gathered from that weekend confirmed some of the Search Committee's concerns about identity, about Rev. John's role in the future, about Religious Exploration and its future, fund-raising, etc. The Transitions Team and I took note of these issues and I began to work on addressing them as part of a longer-term strategic plan.

Discovering a New Identity

Rev. John Crestwell's changing role

When Rev. Crestwell was called as the Associate Minister in 2009, his role and relationship to the church was proscribed. He was the innovative minister of color who created AWAKE ministries, a dynamic worship style and personal life coaching opportunities. He worked collaboratively with Rev. Fred and Rev. Christina but had a narrow “lane” of operations. I was originally hired as the Senior Interim and in that role, Rev. John was my Associate and supervised by me.

It quickly became evident to both Rev. John and to me that this was an outdated model of ministry which may have worked in the past but would not work for UUCA’s future. We began to talk about collaborative, co-equal ministry and what that might look like. That conversation also began to shape Rev. Crestwell’s vision for the future of his own ministry in relationship to a colleague’s ministry. By the time the church celebrated Rev. John’s 10 years with UUCA in October 2019, the shift from a Senior – Associate to one of Colleagues of Equal Standing had begun to emerge in conversations with the Board and with other key church leaders.

Worship, Liturgy & Music

UUCA was ready for a new chapter in their life, but both Rev. John and I wondered if they would be ready for our dynamic duo of worship! Working with Rev. John as one of the primary architects of UUCA worship has been one of the greatest joys of my ministry. Rev. Crestwell and I began sharing the preaching opportunities more so than he had previously. He would lead & preach the services at least 2x a month and I would do the other two. We often served as each other’s liturgist. We felt that the weekly visual of a white female minister and a black male minister leading worship represented what the church was now – and for its future. In 2019, Joshua Long’s position changed to “Director of Music Ensembles” and his musical offerings increased to 2x a month when the choir was not singing. Together, with Leika Lewis Cornwell, Julie Burman and the Worship Leaders, UUCA saw some of the finest preaching and liturgy we had to offer. We’re proud of the work we’ve done to maintain and to create a vibrant and vital worship life.

Commitment to 8th Principle

Another initiative that had begun before I arrived but was ratified during my tenure at UUCA was the passing of the 8th Principle. The 8th principle was initiated by Paula Cole Jones of All Souls, Washington DC church to enshrine and embed the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression into all levels of church life. The 8th Principle was passed at the April 2018 congregational meeting. Since its inception, the Board has been checking all its work and decisions against the 8th Principle – asking themselves “how are we holding ourselves accountable to the 8th Principle?” Although the adoption of the 8th Principle is a beginning and not an end, it’s an important touchstone to remind the entire congregation that anti-racism and anti-oppression is not a social justice committee or project; it’s a commitment towards transforming white supremacy into the Beloved Community. Personally, I have learned and grown much as a result not only of UUCA’s work on the 8th Principle, but the dedicated efforts of members of the Building Beloved Community (BBC) and the patient and loving admonitions of the people of color and white allies at UUCA. Members of the original Task Force included: *Ken Apfel, Diane Goforth, Thornell Jones, Phyllis Marsh, Heather Millar, Dianne Moreau, Linda Mundy, Lex Robertson, Jim Roman. Alethea Shiplett & John Woolums.*

Building Beloved Community (BBC)

My Tennessee grandmother used to say “Experience teaches a hard school, but fools will learn from no other.” One of the most important experiences of my interim has been with the Building Beloved Community Team. When I came to UUCA, I was confident about my ability to navigate white supremacy. I had taken many classes, led some even – and had felt that my prior experiences with anti-racism would be sufficient to lead others into an anti-racist future. What I’ve learned these past 2 1/2 years is how insidious white supremacy is--and how no one – including myself – is exempt from its grasp. These learnings were hard and painful and embarrassing. I didn’t always react to being called out graciously. It took me far too long to understand what de-centering whiteness meant and how I could assist in that process as a leader.

This was not just an education in the theories of white supremacy, solidarity, and fragility; it required me to feel the pain of it in such a way that could transform my own arrogance into something real and more useful. I am forever changed by this work and I can’t thank the members of BBC enough for their patience, forbearance and forgiveness. It will remain as perhaps the hardest and most important, and ultimately joyful lessons of my life. Members of BBC include: *Olga Pabon, Gwen Schindler, Darrel Nash, Candice Wanhatalo, Candy Clark, Ellen Berkov, Lex Robertson, Heather Millar, Linda Mundy, Thornell Jones, Graham Smith, Caroline Hadley*. Former members included *Don Patterson and Meg O’Regen*. *Ministry Team/Staff members include John Crestwell, Leika Lewis-Cornwell & Julie Burman*.

Religious Exploration Becomes Faith Formation

In Spring 2018, I assembled a team of leaders and parents from RE to conduct interviews for the position of full-time Director of Religious Exploration. Despite receiving applicants from candidates, we came to the end of the church year without anyone to fill the position. Rev. Crestwell suggested that we hire two church members, *Keely Longo* and *Julie Burman* to serve our children, pre-K – 7th and Coming of Age & Youth for the 2018-2019 church year. *Keely* was well known to the congregation, having served as Elise Berrocal’s assistant in RE in previous years. Keely brought a passion for children and for Unitarian Universalism and a creative flair to her work. Likewise, Julie Burman, relatively new to Unitarian Universalism, was a quick study – supervising a particularly large Coming of Age class. *Laura Thacker Schrank* was hired as Youth Coordinator for the 2018 – 2019 church year. Laura brought a passion for social justice and for projects which involved the youth in both learning and social time.

Dayna Edwards, former DRE at UUCA was hired to supervise Keely and Julie. Dayna was also well known to the congregation and had expertise in both Religious Exploration and professional ministry. Dayna provided the congregation and the RE program with wise counsel and guidance. It was at her suggestion that we hold a day-long workshop on the RE program. Out of that workshop came the suggestion that what UUCA was about was not only religious exploration – but *faith formation*. By this we mean-- what do children and youth need to grow themselves into persons of integrity, faith and compassion? In Spring 2019, UUCA re-branded its program to “Faith Formation,” and once again, set forth to find a Director to head the program.

That Spring I pulled together a team to advertise, review and interview candidates for the position. Out of the candidates we considered, one stood out above the rest: *Julie Burman*. She accepted the position in June 2019. With a master’s degree in education, a love of Unitarian

Universalism, children already in the Faith Formation Program and a desire to make Faith Formation her next career, Julie was our first choice. Julie has an educator's mind and a pastor's heart. Working with her this past year has been simply a great joy. It is hard to believe she is coming up on her one year of service with us!

Changes to the Building

Darryl Abernathy's estate left UUCA approximately 100K. His generosity is a testament to the power of generosity and planned giving. Because of his gift, UUCA was able to make several important capital improvements to the building.

The carpet and the sanctuary curtains were...shall we say...well loved. The history of its long use could be seen in the coffee stains, and the worn and threadbare places through the sanctuary and narthex. Thanks to the efforts of the Keeping our Space Beautiful Team, (*Patti Patterson, Charlie Gross, Dianne Ratcliff*) led by *Dianne Moreau*, UUCA purchased and installed beautiful carpet. Additionally, they purchased attractive, motorized blinds to replace the tired, worn out and unattractive curtains. Finally, due to Dianne's efforts, the office previously inhabited by Rev. Fred Muir was turned into an inviting office & meeting space. BIG THANK YOU! Other changes to the building included the purchase of new computers and hardware/software upgrades for the staff, new phone systems, and other necessary capital upgrades, replacements, and repairs. The bi-annual cleaning of the building and grounds helped to make the space look beautiful. Kudos to *Ginny Klocko* for her work on the memorial garden and benches and to *Craig Beyler* and his son, who did some stone masonry on one bright and beautiful spring day.

Another important revitalization of UUCA's focus on the future was the recreation of **BEEC2** (formerly known as the Building Expansion and Exploratory Committee). Chaired by **Paul Jorgensen**, this committee has been exploring not only UUCA's current needs – but anticipating its future needs as well. At the December 2018 Congregational Meeting, BEEC2 was approved to spend monies from an existing Capital Campaign account to enlarge the number of parking spaces in the existing lot and engage with an architectural firm on drawings for a renovated building. Most church members agree that space in the building is crowded on Sunday mornings and that the Fahs house is wholly inadequate as an auxiliary meeting space. Their work was to envision a church that featured a larger gathering space in what is currently called the narthex, attractive Faith Formation classrooms and additional spaces to the end of the existing building and upgrade the kitchen. This is still a work in progress and BEEC2 is wisely planning this in stages. However, their plans are appropriate and will set UUCA well for the future. Members of the committee are: *Jan Bird, Craig Beyler, Thora Burkhardt, Joe Jehl, Jeanne Jehl, Rob Wallace, Charlie. Gross, Margret Martin, Paul Jorgensen*

A Different Kind of Internship

UUCA can be rightfully proud of its role as a teaching congregation of seminarians and students for UU ministry. When I arrived, I was clear that UUCA should not apply to be an internship site for the duration of the interim time. However, when church member Leika Lewis-Cornwell proposed a two-year part-time internship, Rev. Crestwell and I became excited about the possibility of being mentors for Leika.

We had also heard concerns from some members of the congregation that UUCA not lose its momentum and experience as a teaching congregation. We accepted Leika as our 2018 – 2020 intern. **Leika Lewis-Cornwell** was a recent convert to Unitarian Universalism when she realized she was called to UU ministry. Leika brings a variety of skills, not the least of which is her love of graceful, creative liturgy. Working with Leika these past two years has been a pleasure and I look forward to having her as a ministerial colleague one day in the near future.

Typically, UUCA had two intern committees; one for the “on” year (i.e, direct supervision) and one committee to help search for another intern. For the duration of this ministry, UUCA has had one intern committee. Current and former members include **Carrie Baquie (former chair); Caroline Hadley, Pat Reagan, Karen Murphy-Keddell, Rob Malone, Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, & Jane Carrigan**. Their dedication and commitment to the health of UU ministry is exemplary. It’s been a joy and an honor to work alongside all of them.

Changes in Communications

When I arrived, I found church communications adequate, but certainly not sparkling. The newsletter lacked clarity and coherence; the website was outdated, and our publications lacked branding. Because of my background as a communications major and one who believes in the power of graphic design, I created and/or encouraged the creation of a more attractive newsletter and weekly publications. I also contracted and helped re-design the website, as it was woefully out of date. As part of that process, we also received a new logo and some re-branding which helped give UUCA a fresh update.

Resiliency in the Face of Tragedy

On June 28, 2018, a gunman entered the Capital Gazette building and shot dead five Gazette staff members. One of those members was Wendi Winters, a long-time, much beloved member of UUCA. The loss was devastating to UUCA and to the wider community. I was on a long-planned trip to Croatia that summer and heard about the news while heading to a boat that was to launch in less than 24 hours. After consultation with Rev. Crestwell and President Heather Millar, it was decided that Rev. Crestwell as the minister on site and the minister with the longest tenure at UUCA, would be the primary pastor to UUCA. My role was to support him from afar, and to do whatever was needed and whatever I could. From this tragedy, Rev. John’s ministry truly emerged. The congregation saw him as *their* minister; not just the AWAKE minister, but a fully-fellowship pastor capable of handling complex needs and demands. Rev. Crestwell’s leadership of the congregation through that terrible time solidified his ministry with the congregation.

When I returned to the States, I led two services addressing the topic: “How We Heal” in late July and “Is Forgiveness the Only Option?” Together, Rev. Crestwell and I were mindful of the ways in which grief manifests itself in the church. As with the human body, if the body itself is relatively healthy, a church can grieve, absorb and integrate that grief into its narrative. UUCA grieved – and grieved well. A year later, I proposed that we needed a community commemoration to mark this anniversary. Rev. Crestwell and I created the liturgy, worked with a team from the Maryland School for the Arts and were the co-architects of that service. It was a powerful, sobering, joyful and important event in our lives; in the life of UUCA and in Annapolis. We were proud to represent UUCA as your pastors.

Shifts of Power/Leadership Changes

The interim time began under the leadership of **Ken Apfel** as Board President. Prior to Rev. Muir's departure, the church had endured conflict within and outside the Board of Trustees. Ken's presidency brought stability, clarity, focus and direction. I learned much about wise and seasoned leadership from experiencing Ken's steady hand. With **Heather Millar's** presidency, the church began to dig into the significant issues that would arise during her tenure; i.e, how to embed the 8th Principle in all that we do; complicated decisions about the form and shape of the minister with Rev. Crestwell, and a variety of interpretations about how to live and govern under the policy-style governance. Heather has brought an indefatigable energy and laser like focus to her role. Her passionate commitment to the people and programs of UUCA have helped UUCA become the place that it is today. I have found the UUCA Board of Trustees composed of dedicated members who are willing to make tough yet wise decisions. I'm excited about the new leadership coming into UUCA's Board.

Bylaws and Governance Revisions

One of the conflicts that UUCA experienced prior to the interim time concerned the role of the minister, the board and the congregation. UUCA set out to examine in detail, their bylaws and governing documents. This group was incredibly thorough, detailed and painstaking in their analysis. They reached out to several congregations of our size and with similar governance leanings to compare. Special kudos go to **Brian Barrett** whose exhaustive charts detailing these differences and similarities was enormously helpful. As a result, UUCA now has revised bylaws and the Board continues to draw on the wisdom and insight of the Bylaws and Governance Task Force. Members who participated in and/or worked on this process include chair **Evelyn Spurgin & Michael Willis (now deceased)** **Cory Diehl, Larry Werner, Gina Williams and John Woolums**. The group that participated in the entire process included: **Bryan Barrett, Craig Beyler, Angelique Berry, John Ford, Jackie Heimbuch, Dianne Moreau, Karen Murphy-Keddell, Darrel Nash**.

Staff Transitions

During an interim time, it is not unusual for there to be staff transitions. However, even I would admit that UUCA saw an extraordinary amount of transitions in a short amount of time! I have already mentioned staff transitions in the Religious Exploration/Faith Formation department, so this section will include transitions other than those. When I arrived, the leadership before me had fired the former Administrative Assistant. It took several months to find **Maurita Williams**, who had previous experience working with churches and who understood some of the unique demands required of the position. After Maurita left **Jannina Ortiz** came to us from the recommendation of a church member and she continues to serve as Administrative Assistant. We appreciate Jannina's aesthetic and artistic eye and professionalism.

Susan Eckert was the heart and soul of the Administrative staff for almost 17 years. She knew almost every inch of the church and every administrative procedure. After the first year of the interim, she announced she would be retiring in January 2019. Although it sent shock waves of fear throughout the congregation (who am I going to ask about...?) we all knew it was time for

Susan to get her life back! We celebrated her ministry in grand-UUCA style on a Sunday morning. Before her retirement however, we had to find someone to replace her. A small ad-hoc personnel team sifted through dozens of resumes to find **Pam Ausiello**, who began with UUCA in January 2019. Pam comes to UUCA having work in churches previously, but most recently for the Community College. Pam was looking for a position that would allow her to use all her administrative & managerial skills. Pam's skill, expertise, diligence, and commitment quickly endeared her to the church, to staff members and to me – her supervisor. Her love of church and its people; the work, and its future, is all part of her DNA. UUCA is especially fortunate to have found her. Pam and I identified the need for a part time facilities person to assist with the maintenance of the building. She hired **Charles Nelson** to assist with building set up needs and minor repairs of the building.

The music program at UUCA is a much-cherished tradition and extremely important to the worship life of the church. When I arrived, **Betsy Kraning** was the music director, and **Len Langrick** and **Sara Jones** were the choir director and accompanist. Betsy Kraning's music ministry went beyond playing the piano or offering music on Sunday. Her vision and passion for bringing people together was instrumental in the creation of the Black Lives Matter concerts. Her wide-reaching community connections brought people of color to the building and into relationship with UUCA. Betsy decided to retire from this position and her music ministry was celebrated in August 2019.

Len Langrick was beloved by the choir. His skills included not only creating fine musical experiences; he worked hard to create a spirit of unity with the choir. He also brought *MAD* camp to UUCA; Music, Arts and Drama – an extremely successful musical arts experience. **Sara Jones** had been hired by Rev. Fred Muir as the accompanist, but Sara is also an accomplished jazz singer. Her liquid vocals lent an elegance and beauty to both her playing and her singing. Both Len and Sara lived about 40 minutes away from UUCA; and when other opportunities came up to use their gifts closer to home, they decided to move onto other opportunities. We miss them!

In September 2019, I worked choir members **Lisa Fleeharty**, **Max Ochs**, **Nancy Somers**, **Ginger Parsons** and **Jamie Harms** who sifted through resumes, invited candidates to guest conduct the choir and together, we found our match – with the incomparable **Rob Redei**. Rob's composition "Hope Springs" was well known by the choir – and one of Len Langrick's favorites! In fact, it was Len who suggested we reach out to Rob Redei. Once again, UUCA embraced the change with grace. They enthusiastically welcomed not only Rob, but a colleague of his who now serves as our accompanist, **Ron Giddings**. Ron is well known figure in town as an actor and singer in his own right. Another dynamic duo at the keys!

Joshua Long's roles at UUCA have changed too! He holds two portfolios: Membership Coordinator/Small Groups and Director of Music Ensembles. Joshua Long is the primary contact for the successful Inquirer's Series. I give Josh's leadership a lot of credit for the fact that we continue to have good attendance at the classes and that attendance usually translates into well-informed, highly motivated members. In April, UUCA welcomed twenty (yes, that's correct) new members – on line!

Musically, Josh's role has expanded from offering music occasionally to be the primary director of music for non-choral Sundays. His original compositions and great keyboard & guitar chops

enrich our Sunday services. In addition, he has partnered with Faith Formation Director to direct the Children's Choir, which sings several times a year.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the death of long-time former music director, **Betsy Jo Angebranndt**. Betsy Jo was the music director of UUCA for over 40 years. Her compositions are still in demand; and many can be found in the gray hymnal. When Betsy Jo died, her daughter bequeathed \$5K from her estate to seed a fund for a new piano. While the existing piano was good enough, it had its limitations, especially under the dynamic playing of Brian Ganz! I suggested that we do a fund-raising campaign for the purpose of purchasing a piano worthy of Betsy Jo's legacy. In August 2019, Brian Ganz and former owner of the piano Bob Brittan coordinated with **Paula Degen and the Arts in the Woods Team** to produce a celebratory soiree for the new Steinway Piano purchased with the help of Brian Ganz. Betsy Jo's family was able to attend and bless the new piano, purchased in honor of their mother's memory. It was an astonishing event!

Volunteer Fair & Leadership Class

"How does a person volunteer around here?" a church member asked me. She had been a member for several years but did not feel that there was any clear path to volunteer efforts. She tried several times to make inroads into existing volunteer opportunities and all of them ultimately failed. Her experience was that you had to know someone who would invite you and mentor you into volunteerism.

In response to that, I instituted the **Volunteer Fair** (September 2019) which encouraged various groups to set up a booth, offer middle hour snacks and to use this as an opportunity to recruit for their committees. While I did not collect the data afterwards to see how many committees were enlarged by this effort, both committees and members seemed to think it was a good idea and should continue.

UUCA needs a clear path for not only volunteers but to develop and nurture leaders. This was one of my goals for the interim time. In response to this lack of a formal leadership development program, I wrote a curriculum which was UUCA-specific for **the Developing Spiritual Leaders Program for UUCA**, held in January – Feb. 2020. The purpose of this class was to train, equip and inspire participants to accept volunteer positions at church. Graduates of the class included: **Chelsea Ihnacik, Abby Ratcliff, Jenn Pollitt Hill, Dianne Moreau, Diane Knaus, Liz Yoder, Peggie O'Dea, Betsy Kraning, Linda Mundy and Brandon Pace**. Co-led by Rev. John Crestwell and me, this team of leaders astonished us with their depth, breadth, and commitment. We were blessed to share such quality time and conversations with them.

Fall Fundraiser

It had been a long time since UUCA had a Service Auction. Led by **Patti Patterson and Diane Ratcliff**, assisted by **Evelyn Spurgin, Jackie Heimbuch, Charlie Gross and Chris Wien**. Thanks to Rob Malone who supplied the food, with staff support by Pam Ausiello and ministerial presence with Rev. Crestwell – the Fall FUNdraiser was a smashing success! Not only was \$\$ raised, but people had a fabulous time! I hope that whenever we can gather again, that UUCA holds another FUNdraiser.

Engagement with ACT

Although I was not the minister holding the Social Justice Portfolio, I want to give a shout out to *Linda Mundy* and Rev. John Crestwell for their faithfulness in helping Anne Arundel Coming Together (ACT) form. This IAF-organization is desperately needed in Anne Arundel County (and beyond). Linda's tireless efforts in recruiting, training, inspiring, getting money for IAF.

Disruptive Behavior Policy

Most congregations have a Disruptive Behavior Policy (or soon to be re-named "Destructive" Behavior, acknowledging that UUCA is actively about "disrupting" racism & oppression.) UUCA's policy was written but had not been reviewed or affirmed by the Board. During my tenure I made it a priority to ensure that the policy was reviewed and approved.

The policy was enacted twice; first, at the request of one of the authorized groups at UUCA to remove a person who was not a member of the church from the premises for sexual harassment of a female member of the group. The second enactment was to remove a member from UUCA's membership rolls for disruptive and destructive behavior and a refusal to re-engage in the congregation's Covenant of Right Relations/Safe Congregations Covenant. While both instances were difficult in their own way, UUCA's willingness to insist on both appropriate boundaries and behavior is a sign of UUCA's commitment to its own institutional health.

Re-engagement with Denominational Resources

By-Laws and Governing Policies.

One of the first tasks about which I was asked to opine was the church by-laws. In January 2018 I met with the Governance Team and regional consultant *David Pyle* to review his assessment of the church's by-laws and governing policies. As a result of the hard work of the governance team, UUCA adopted new by-laws in 2018. In addition, the Board reviewed its own governing policies, and submitted them to Building Beloved Community for an analysis and assessment of the by-laws & policies in light of the 8th Principle. As a result, UUCA's anti-oppression and anti-racist commitment is seeded throughout these two important documents. This was met with some quiet and some not-so quiet resistance as some members thought it was "over-kill." Yet, the Board remained resolute that the by-laws and governing documents must always reflect the 8th Principle. (Note, see "Shift of Power, Leadership Changes" for additional information).

Although UUCA identified itself as having a policy governance system, and much work has been on the policies itself, there has been less clarity from the Board on how to actually implement the policies we already have. Policy-based governance is useful only if the Board understands and is willing to undertake the disciplines of their own governance. To fully embrace policy-based governance, the Board would need to surrender to the disciplines around such areas as policy creation and review, reporting, monitoring, executive limitations and be less focused on reacting or responding to the diverse and inevitable needs that arise from the church system.

One conversation that the Board and I did not have is to examine the entire governance system through the lens of white supremacy. That is an enormous undertaking, and as far as I know, no one in our Association has done a thoughtful analysis of governance with that lens. I am hoping in my next assignment to be able to reflect more deeply on the link between white supremacy culture and the Carvel model or Hotchkiss interpretation of the Carver Model of Policy-based Governance.

Trauma Ministry Team.

Shortly after the Capital Gazette murders occurred, I suggested to Rev. Crestwell that he might engage the services of the Trauma Ministry Team to come to Annapolis. Their role was to assist the congregation in dealing with the trauma of this death in a variety of ways; whether leading small groups, checking in with staff, supporting the minister, or talking to parents and families in our Faith Formation program.

Prior to the Capital Gazette murders, I initiated an Emergency Response Training, which included how to deal with an active shooter scenario. Wendi Winters attended that training. The police officer who led the training discussed the classic “Run, Hide, Fight” strategy. Prior to this training, I spent some time with the police officer to determine his awareness of how the police are viewed with some suspicion by communities of color. He was open to my suggestions, though it was still clear that the Anne Arundel Police Department needed more training in this area.

At the Gazette, Wendi could not run (the doors had been blocked), there was no place to hide, so she decided to fight. She lost her life in that fight, but in so doing, she is credited with saving others. My hope is that in the future UUCA will continue Emergency Procedures and Active shooter training every year. This should include a Fire Drill, which we did not do in 2019-2020 church year.

Engagement with Denominational Resources

One of the reasons why “renewing denominational linkages” is a transitions task is because congregations often become insular; i.e., forgetting that there is a larger world of church & resources. Furthermore, when a congregation goes into search, they naturally tap into the resources of the denomination for help. This year, UUCA used Transitions Coach **Kate Walker** and Transitions Director, **Keith Kron** for assistance in the process of searching for their next settled minister. In addition to engaging these denominational resources, I’m proud to say that UUCA continues to be a full fair share congregation, despite economic downturns and sometimes slower than usual pledges. This means that we can hold our head high in denominational events, knowing that we give as much support as we take.

Re-thinking Stewardship

UUCA adopted the year-round pledging model several years ago. When it was first adopted, it appeared to engage both laity and staff equally. My observation was that over time, stewardship became primarily a staff function with some support and engagement from a lay team. This was not the fault of the laity, likely more about the lack of clarity between staff & lay roles and responsibilities. I suggested that UUCA engage Stewardship Consultant **Mark Ewert** to

conduct a series of interviews and to write a report about his findings regarding the future of UUCA's stewardship campaigns. That report was submitted to the Board. The Board was strongly motivated to follow up on his recommendations and was beginning to do so until COVID-19 shut down the church from meeting regularly. In addition, the report came prior to the work of calling a new minister. It is my hope that UUCA and the new ministry team revisit Mark's report and engage him in deeper conversation about the how, the when, the why and the possibilities for creating a robust and dynamic stewardship team.

Legacy Giving

One of the projects that I began but will be left undone is the creation of a Legacy Society. The Legacy Society is not the endowment committee. The Legacy Society would be created to provide information and support for individual to leave bequests and gifts to the church, presumably after their lives end, although some give during their lifetimes. I began this conversation with Maury Marks, who was interested in spearheading this effort. Maury's life circumstances changed, and he is no longer attending UUCA. However, I hope that this idea of a legacy society will continue as UUCA has benefited greatly from unsolicited gifts such as the ones given by Darryl Abernathy and Marlene Browne's estate.

Commitment to New Leadership & a New Future

On Sunday, May 3, 2020, UUCA successfully voted to call Rev. Rev. Anastassia Zinke as colleague of equal standing to work with Rev. John Crestwell. This is the culmination of a 2/1/2 year discernment process. The congregation can rightfully feel proud of its work. The future of UUCA does indeed look very bright!

A New Culture Emerges

When I arrived at UUCA in January 2018, I found a congregation that was still a bit sore from past congregational wounds and certainly tired. You all had worked hard to say goodbye to Rev. Fred and you did it well... What I inherited however, was a congregational that also felt mistrustful of staff and the Board. It seemed that no matter how much communication happened, it wasn't enough.

That has changed. The church feels more positive, more trusting and more appreciative of the staff and their ministers than earlier in my time. The congregation that I Rev. Fred, Christine and John described before I arrived truly emerged. I found at UUCA a group who was hard working, passionate, dedicated, fun-loving, and proud of what they and previous generations had built. You have stepped into your own now – and I couldn't be happier to have shared this time with you. You used this interim time wisely and well. This time was not a holding pattern, but a movement forward.

The Transitions Team

I must give one final shout-out to my Transitions Team, composed of *Ken Apfel, Jaimie Harms and Linda Rhoads*. The Transitions Team was created to provide counsel, guidance, feedback and evaluation of the interim minister. Working with this team has been one of the best experiences of my ministerial career. Their seasoned and experienced wisdom helped me to understand and interpret the culture of the congregation. When I felt that I had made a mistake, they processed it with me. When I needed guidance, support or course correction, they were there for me. What they gave me was a gift – and what they gave UUCA is a legacy of wise leadership. I hope that a future ministry team will adopt a similar model. I have found this experience to be invaluable. The congregation and I both owe them a debt of gratitude.

Before I close, I want to summarize a few recommendations and hopes for UUCA. Whether or not they are begun or completed is, of course, entirely up to your new leadership. However, here are some pieces of unfinished business:

- 1. Deepen the work of the 8th Principle (this could also be part of the ENDS work).** This should always be front and center of the work of the church. There is confusion and lack of clarity about the relationship between BBC and the Board. This spring, the BBC and the Board were going to hold some conversations and with all that has happened this Spring, it's been slow to take root. However, getting clear about what is the relationship between BBC and the Board would be a good one to figure out in the year ahead.
- 2. I hope that some form of on-going leadership development will occur.** As noted earlier, the opportunity to form a “class” of leaders each year builds continuity and enthusiasm for the tasks of lay leadership.
- 3. Further engagement with Mark Ewert & Stewardship for 2020-2021.** Before COVID-19 hit, the Board was excited about working with Mark Ewert on Stewardship analysis to rebolster Stewardship strategies. I hope the Board builds on that momentum even during this time of virtual meetings. We need stewardship now more than ever!.
- 4. Moving all exempt staff to mid-point of salary range as congregational goal.** This was not a goal that I discussed with the Executive Team or the Board, however, I think a future X-team & Board should consider setting as a goal that all exempt staff salaries be at the mid-point range for our Geo Index and Church Size. (and this directly relates to #3 above!)
- 5. Support for building improvements & renovations 2020-2021 year.** I have tried to keep my opinions relatively quiet about the proposed building plans – but since this is my final report, let me say “I HOPE YOU GO FOR IT!” BEEC2 has been one of the hardest working, highly functional committees I've ever had the pleasure of observing. I trust their leadership and their decisions and know that UUCA will be in a much better place when you are able to complete your building renovation. (And yes, that means saying goodbye to the Fahs house.)
- 6. Creation of a policy and procedures manual.** This was one of my unfinished tasks. There is a lot of oral tradition about “the way things are done” which works great

when you have the same people in place. Yet, when there is conflict, everyone wants to know “what’s the policy?” So I hope that the Executive Team (which I call the X-Team) would devise a clear Policy and Procedures Manual.

7. **Revision of personnel manual.** Another task undone. Similar to the P & P manual above, much of personnel procedures is based on an outdated personnel manual.
8. **Engagement with Laura Park or similar consultant to work on the Congregation’s new ENDS statements** and engage in significant training on how to govern as a policy-based Board. UUCA has ENDS statements which have not been revisited or revised in many years. Earlier this year the Board was interested in hiring Laura Park, a consultant on Policy Governance and ENDS statements to work with us, but it was determined that the congregation didn’t have the capacity for that AND a search. This made sense to me. So, I hope UUCA may consider doing this early in the new ministry.
9. **Establish a Legacy Society to receive gifts; annually and publicly thank donors.** Since writing this I discovered two church members who may be interested in spearheading this effort!
10. **Continue volunteer fair and/or other recruitment efforts.** This was primarily lay-led and people seemed to enjoy it.

COVID-19

As I write this, we are in the midst of a global pandemic, with ever shifting narratives, needs, stories. Our economy is in free-fall, we are now all experts on concepts like “flattening the curve,” and the most effective PPE’s, we’re all mindful of distancing ourselves physically – and we’re all wondering: what will happen? Will we open in the fall? Will there be a spike in new cases? Will anyone we know and love die? COVID-19 has revealed the brokenness of the American health care system that existed before this pandemic hit. It revealed the disparities between communities of color and the ways in which unrelenting racism takes a toll on black and brown bodies. It has also demonstrated how much we need each other and how much we need a spiritual answer to the existential questions of our time.

I’m proud of how UUCA has quickly adapted, without complaint, to the on-line format of worship and small groups. This is consistent with who you are – a flexible, friendly, generally positive and loving congregation. I have absolute faith and zero doubt that you will continue to give generously and to thrive, even if other churches must close their doors. You won’t. It’s just not in your DNA or in your constitution. You have good, strong, wise and loving ministers, leaders, members and children. This is your church and nothing – not even COVID-19 is going to change that.

A final word and thanks.

Before I even arrived, *Rev. Fred Muir* and *Karen* reached out to me as a gesture of collegial hospitality. Shortly thereafter, Rev. Muir and I created a covenant of understanding, which required that he and Karen remain apart from the congregation. Rev. Muir has modelled exemplary ethical behavior. Although still in town, his presence at UUCA has not been visible except when asked. I owe a debt of gratitude to Rev. Fred Muir for his integrity and for his willingness to be a sounding board, a listening ear and wise counsel – all while keeping his distance as has been part of his agreement.

And then, there's *Rev. John Crestwell*. At our very first meeting, Rev. John offered me his open hearted and enthusiastic welcome – even before I got the job! When I began, he went out of his way to ensure a smooth transition. He did everything he could to set my interim up for success. It can be a difficult thing – to take two strong personalities, throw them together in a church, mix them up and hope and pray they work well together. Sometimes it doesn't work – but in this case – it did. It really did. I don't know how, exactly. I'm a type "A", ENTJ, intense, middle-aged, white woman who is so steeped in white supremacy culture that most of the time I don't even realize it. Rev. John is more heart-centered and makes decisions guided in part by intuition and instinct. I love the written word; he's a master of the oral tradition.

Our relationship has gone from Senior/Associate to co-equal colleagues in under the 2 ½ years. Because of my relationship with Rev. John, I had to first see – and then acknowledge – the realities of white supremacy culture and my own tendencies towards white solidarity. And yet, John managed to point this out to me through what is perhaps his greatest strength, the power of love. Sometimes we have fought and argued and disagreed, but both of us came back to the relationship because of a deep and profound respect and love for one another. When times were rough, I never once doubted that we would get through it because of the strength of our commitment to the ministry, to the church, the Spirit that moves in, among and beyond us, and to one another. I don't have any regrets about leaving UUCA, but there is much I will miss – and certainly a big one is the long-ranging, deep, philosophical, discussions that I've had with Rev. John...and his laugh. The world is set aright with that joyful booming laugh.

Final Thoughts

Actually, I do have one big regret and that's not being able to say goodbye in person. COVID-19 has created so many losses; certainly, loss of life is at the top of the list, but all the losses of beloved rituals, whether graduations or celebrations; family gatherings, church endings. My ability to say goodbye well is only one casualty out of many. Yet, you will always be with me. What I've learned here, how I've grown as a minister, how I've been deepened by your kindness, your capacity to get things done, and the ways that you cherish your ministers have forever changed me.

As many of you know, I often burst out into song – so...I'm hearing a song coming on right now...it's from, "Wicked..."

"I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason.
Bringing something we must learn.
And we are led, to those who help us most to grow if we let them
And we help them in return.
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true,
But I know I'm who I am today, because I knew you..."

... Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you... I have been changed for good."

Thank you, members of Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis. Because I knew you, I have been changed—for good.

Love,
Kathleen