

Annual Report 2022-2023

Rev. Leia Durland-Jones, Minister of Faith Development

What a joy to start the church year last fall trying new things:

- instead of Children's Worship, 4-year-olds through 5th grade began in the sanctuary for the first 20 minutes or so of community worship every week
- we started having our children take the "light" from our sanctuary chalice to their classrooms by carrying a lantern lit by the chalice flame.
- youth programming (6th-12th grades) met *following* community worship, with hope that families with youth would attend worship together before the youth attend their programming
- we offered a weekly parents' conversation and support circle concurrent with youth programming with rotating facilitation support from Amy Nash, John Griffith, Yvonne Chadwick-Mehta and Liberty Powers.

In February, we began offering supervised childcare most Sundays from 12:30-1:30 for children 5th grade and younger. It had become clear that creating this time for connection and play is an important aspect of our ministry to families! The past three years have left our children in need of time for free play and socialization with peers. Providing paid childcare allows parents and caregivers to attend the weekly parent circle, attend newcomer circles, and participate cottage conversations while their children are having fun and making friends at church.

Children's Programming

This year was a time of intentional reconnecting and rebuilding after the worldwide impact of COVID. We had four learning groups: 1) Nursery for children 3 and younger, 2) Spirit Play for 4-year-olds through 1st grade, 3) 2nd & 3rd grade and 4) 4th & 5th grade all offered concurrently with worship. It was lovely to see our children in person and to learn, explore, grow, and play together.

Youth Programming

Our youth programming was robust with awesome advising teams across the board. Our 6th-8th grades experienced Neighboring Faiths, the program that introduces them to other faith traditions and how we as UUs can be good neighbors to those whose beliefs differ from our own. They visited many local faith groups including the Temple Beth Israel, the Islamic Center of Central Virginia, the Hindu temple in Richmond, the Church of the Incarnation, Mount Zion African Baptist Church, the Friends Meeting, and more. Our 9th & 10th grade had their Coming of Age year. In addition to meeting on Sunday mornings, each youth was paired with a mentor for deeper conversation and exploration of our UU faith and values. 11th & 12th grades participated in our high youth group, YRUU. YRUU meets weekly for conversation, exploration, snacks, and time in a safe, welcoming space to be your whole self.

Our 9th – 12th grades will be volunteering again this summer through the Appalachia Service Program (ASP) to help repair homes in southwest Virginia.

Thank you to the loving, caring, devoted adults who served as volunteers in our RE program this year: Maggie Record, Alaina Loy, Mary Anderson, Jed & Laura Devine, John Marier, Katie Watts, Chris Little, Jen Smith, Dana Redick, Lara Gastinger, Amy & Terry Epp, Linda & Frank Dukes, Beth Jaeger-Landis, Carissa Temerson, Pam McIntire, Greg Townsend, Cindy Dent, Margaret & Michael Gorman.

Adult Faith Development

Fall courses offered: Rev. Tim's World Religious (with over thirty participants!), Women's Spirituality Book Group (led by Jeanine Braithwaite & Laura Horn), Women's Friendship Group (Angela Orebaugh, coordinator), Tai Chi (Vicki and John Shackford)

Winter/Spring: Tai Chi, Women's Dream Quest, Holding Space as a Spiritual Practice (Rev. Leia), With Head and Heart: The Spiritual Wisdom of Howard Thurman (Rev. Tim), Creation Spirituality on the Labyrinth: A Dance of Four Powerful Paths (Mary Ann Warmhoff), Coming Together: How we can heal the divide (Sean McCutcheon), Women's Friendship Group, Insight Meditation, Women's Book Group. Kundalini Yoga (Amy Epp), Afroflow Yoga (Katherine Jenkins), Mindful Parenting using STEP (Debby Norton & Micaela Raine), Winter Afternoon Retreat (Rev. Leia) , Dream Journeys (Alan Kindler & Susan Karlson.)

Worship & Preaching: It was a joy to collaborate with Rev. Tim on many services throughout the year including Ancestor's Sunday on October 30, Bread Communion November 20, The Giving Tree service on December 11, Love Stories, on February 12 (followed by our annual PJs and Pancakes extravaganza), Easter April 9, and for our congregation's 80th birthday celebration April 16. It was deeply meaningful to me to have the service on October 23rd be a celebration of my 30 years of service with the UU Congregation of Charlottesville and the 2nd anniversary of my ordination.

Rev. Tim and I led a vigil on Wednesday November 16 to create a space for those grieving the tragic shootings at UVa and acts of violence everywhere.

I led worship on August 28 and September 4, with sermons reflecting on my learnings with The Centre for Holding Space. On November 6, I preached on the proposed 8th UU Principle and my time in Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama at LREDA Fall Conference. On February 5, my sermon focused on the UUA's Commission on Article II and the revision of our UU purposes and principles and how this and connects to our own mission/purpose work at UUCville. Sunday March 19, I spoke on *Together We Build: Braver/Safer Spaces*. I am meeting with our COA class to continue helping them put together the service they will offer for the congregation on May 21 and will lead worship again on May 28.

Pastoral Care

I am grateful for our wonderful Pastoral Visitors team, under the leadership of Patty Wallens and Meg Dunham, and the support they as well as the CareNet team offer our community. I continue to meet with individuals and couples regularly for pastoral conversations.

Rites of Passage

It was a joy to officiate at the wedding of Ben Ryan (Bev Ryan's son) and his fiancé, Susanna on September 17, Harrison Lund (Karen Fairchild's son) and his fiancé Sarah on September 24. Both grooms spent time in our congregation as young people, and it is a delight to be part of these special and sacred occasions. We also dedicated four children and their parents at our Ceremony of Child Dedication on May 14.

Building Use & Re-opening Task Force

I continued to meet monthly with the Building Use Task Force at the pleasure of the Board. We offered recommendations around covid safety and protocols through March 2023.

Professional Development

Our congregation hosted the cluster meeting for UU religious professionals in our region in September, November, and May.

I was able to attend my first in person (in two years) Fall Conference of the Liberal Religious Educators Association this year in Birmingham, Alabama.

My resumed my learning with the *Centre for Holding Space* in their Advanced Practitioner program.

Special Events

- UUCville Giving Tree Worship Service and receiving of gifts.
- All Church Holiday Party Sunday December 11 after church
- Christmas fresh food drive for UUCville families December 18
- All Church Solstice Lantern Walk & Celebration of the Season December 18
4:30-6PM
- Christmas Eve Services 4:30PM Interactive Nativity and 7PM Traditional
Candlelight
- New Year's Eve Labyrinth Walk, outdoor labyrinth 2-4PM

Our children and youth also made meal packets for the UVa medical center as a way to explore service/giving. Many thanks to Margaret Gorman for her leadership with this initiative.

In faith and with love,
Rev. Leia