

## **Report of the Developmental Lead Minister**

**Rev. Tim Temerson**

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville**

**May 2024**

It has been another amazing year at the UU Congregation of Charlottesville! The church year has included a number of extraordinary achievements, including the completion of important repairs to our building and grounds, another record-setting pledge drive, the development of a long-range plan that will enable UUCville to live its mission, holding very successful church fundraisers, welcoming 21 new members, and so much more. In fact, if I could somehow summarize this year in a few words, I would simply quote our mission statement in saying that we are a congregation that is putting love into action! That's what I'm feeling at UUCville and I look forward to building on that positive energy as we look to a future filled with so much possibility.

One of the great joys of serving the UU Congregation of Charlottesville is the opportunity it affords me to work with a talented and dedicated staff. Rev. Leia Durland-Jones continued to lead with wisdom, intelligence, and great joy. Rev. Leia also did a wonderful job of helping us prepare for her six month sabbatical. She is on sabbatical as I write this report and I am so looking forward to welcoming her back in late August 2024 and to hearing all about her many adventures! I also want to lift up the best part of Rev. Leia's sabbatical planning, which was her suggestion that we hire Rev. Susan Karlson as our Sabbatical Minister for Faith Development. Rev. Susan is a true delight to work with and our congregation has benefitted from her wisdom, her kindness, and her many ministerial gifts. On a personal note, Rev. Susan has been a wonderful ministerial partner and I have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with her on worship and so much more. Sean Skally had a somewhat challenging year in his role as Director of Finance and Administration and those challenges have led the Board to make the decision to hire a part-time bookkeeper to help relieve some of the responsibilities of the DAF position. Sean skillfully handled technical and building issues with his usual effectiveness, including a flood in the Lower Hall, a significant problem with the church website, and following through to make sure the lights in the Edgewood Lane Parking lot were repaired. Scott DeVeaux has had a very successful year as our Director of Music Director. His outreach efforts helped the choir grow significantly this year and the quality and variety of anthems were terrific. I'll also add that the Music Sunday service was one of the best I've ever experienced in Unitarian Universalism... I am also very pleased to work closely with both Caroline Heins and Carole McIvor, who are always ready to help with whatever needs to be done and I am especially looking forward to working with Carole as we seek to grow our rental program. Finally, a word of deep appreciation for Rachel Buckland, our A/V Tech. Rachel does an outstanding job handling dual-platform worship, is training lay volunteers to step in for her when she is away, and uploads service recordings in a very timely way.

I can't possibly name all the fabulous lay leaders who give so much of their time and talent to the UU Congregation of Charlottesville. I have been blessed to work alongside a very healthy and dedicated Board of Trustees. Pam McIntire is an amazing president who combines a big picture visionary mind-set with an incredible work ethic and an ability to get things done. Pam has not only led the Board, she has also served on the Long Range Planning Task Force and teaches OWL. The remainder of the executive team is equally effective and visionary, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Bev Ryan, Hayley

Owens, and Kay Frazier. I am sad to see Hayley complete her term as Board Secretary but thankful for the many other gifts she shares with our congregation. I also want to thank the at-large board members, including John Griffith, Renee Brett, Achsah Carrier, and Jimmy Gorham. Jimmy is completing his term on the Board and I am very grateful for the many ways he serves our congregation.

Below are some important aspects of congregational life that I have been involved in during the 2023-24 church year.

- **Developmental Goals and Long-Range Planning** – My core task as Lead Developmental Minister is to help UUCville achieve the four developmental goals that were established before I arrived. Those goals include 1) helping to create a shared sense of purpose and identity 2) building a more welcoming and inclusive congregation for all 3) cultivating a deeper sense of stewardship as a year-round ministry emphasizing generosity and giving of not just money, but also time and talent 4) improving transparency through better church communication, both within the congregation and in the wider world

While the work to achieve each of these goals is ongoing, I am very pleased with how much we have accomplished in a relatively short time. In terms of the first goal, developing a long-range plan to help us live our mission is such an important step. It has been a pleasure to work with the Long-Range Planning Task Force, which includes Pam McIntire, Chris Little, Greg Townsend, Tammy Wilt, Achsah Carrier, John Griffith, and Ellie Syverud. The task force convened focused conversations with the congregation, gathering many creative ideas and then held two feedback sessions about drafts of the plan. The plan will be put to a vote at the congregational meeting on 6/9/24. Work on Goal Two includes my active participation with the membership committee, both at monthly newcomer circles and at the New Members and Friends class. I will also add that I'm very hopeful about our congregation undertaking an Inclusivity audit that will help us determine how we can be more open and welcoming, especially to historically marginalized communities. The third goal, which is focused on deepening our stewardship ministry, is in such good hands thanks to our Stewardship Steering Committee, of which I am a member. The SSC celebrates and seeks to deepen our culture of giving and generosity in numerous ways. I am especially impressed with the work they are doing to develop a ministry of planned giving and so grateful to them for coordinating an annual service/volunteer fair in the Fall. The fourth goal is one that we continue to work and I am part of the outstanding Communications Team, which is the way I work most closely on this goal. I'm also very proud that the Board decided to follow the Communications Committee's recommendation and take down our account on X/Twitter, which has become toxic. That is such a good example of living UU values.

- **Adult Faith Development** – I co-led one of the most impactful courses I have ever taught called "Transforming Hearts: Trans Inclusion in UU Congregations." It was a joy and a privilege to teach with Circe Strauss, who is a wonderful person and a deep soul. Circe spoke so authentically from her experience as a trans person and I feel like I learned much more than I taught. I hope Circe and I get the chance to teach together again.
- **Pastoral Care Team** – I attend the meetings of the Pastoral Care Team and work closely with co-chairs Patty Wallens and Meg Dunham on pastoral care. The Pastoral Care team has begun

playing a visible role in our Sunday services and I feel their presence is reinforcing pastoral care as a core ministry in our congregation.

- **Pledge Drive** – The pledge drive equaled our all-time record of just over \$500,000 and also saw 20 new pledging units. What was especially impressive to me was how well-organized the pledge drive was and how well-integrated messaging and communications were with the overall drive. Jimmy Gorham stepped up to chair the team and he was ably assisted by Kay Frazier, Jude Bias, Achsah Carrier, Sandy Brooks, Carol Temerson, Bob Brett, Chris Little, Renee Brett, David Shutt and many others. As I said in my report last year, when it comes to pledging and stewardship, well done, UUCville!
- **Interfaith** – I exchanged pulpits with Pastor Lehman Bates on January 14, preaching the Sunday sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church. I also delivered the benedictory words at the Martin Luther King Interfaith service at Mt. Zion African Baptist Church and became a member of the planning committee.
- **Worship** – We held a number of meaningful services during the church year, including an amazing sermon about racism and health delivered by Greg Townsend, an equally inspiring service about the environment featuring our Ministry for Earth co-chairs Ellie Syverud and Kim Grover that included a ritual with a really tall tree! Pastor Lehman Bates preached a very impactful sermon and I'm excited about the guest ministers who will be leading services over the summer. Let me add that I especially enjoyed leading multigeneration services about interdependence and Flower Communion with Rev. Susan.
- **Rites of Passage** – I officiated at four memorial services this year, including services for Bob Millman, John Lineweaver, Pat Millman, and Jean Shepard. I also want to mention that the incredible Virginia James is turning 104 as I write this report!
- **Outreach** – I feel I should mention that I was present at UVA when nonviolent protesters were pepper-sprayed, beaten, and arrested by state police. A call for clergy presence had gone out earlier in the day and I spent most of my time offering support and checking in on protesters who had been harmed. Witnessing such brutality was shocking and led me to conclude that as a minister, I have to do a better job of showing up and speaking out against the violent suppression of dissent, which I fear will be an ever-increasing threat in our society.

Let me conclude by saying that I am looking forward to beginning a new church year and feel that the UU Congregation of Charlottesville is on a very good path with an incredibly bright future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Tim Temerson