

Lead Developmental Minister Report

Rev. Tim Temerson

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As the world has taken a decidedly negative turn thanks to the results of the 2024 election, the UU Congregation of Charlottesville is living its mission to put love into action. The 2024-25 church year included some extraordinary achievements, including the unanimous adoption and first year of implementing our long-range plan, a record-breaking pledge drive that witnessed an incredible 8% increase over last year's totals, welcoming 27 new members, witnessing significant increases in Sunday morning attendance, holding very successful fundraisers and social events, building additional community partnerships, and so much more. We are truly a congregation that is, as our new UU values indicate, putting love at the center!

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 returned from a long overdue six-month sabbatical and she continues to lead with wisdom, intelligence, and dedication. I cannot stress enough what a tremendous ministerial partner and colleague Rev. Leia is and I am better able to serve UUCville because of her presence. I also want to add what a joy it was to work with Rev. Susan Karlson, who served as our Sabbatical Minister of Faith Development. Rev. Susan was a true delight to work with and our congregation benefited from her wisdom, her kindness, and her many ministerial gifts. Scott DeVeaux had another strong year as our Director of Music. His outreach efforts helped the choir grow again this year and the quality and variety of the choir anthems were terrific. I also want to celebrate the guest musicians Scott invited to play, including UUCville members Amy Wissekerke and Matt Hartung. A word of thanks to Accompanist, John Mayhood, for his beautiful piano music. Finally, I share deep appreciation for Rachel Buckland, our A/V Tech. Rachel does an outstanding job handling dual-platform worship, has trained lay volunteers to step in when she is away, and uploads service recordings in a very timely way.

This past year was also a time of transition for our staff, and we said goodbye to three staff members – Director of Finance and Administration, Sean Skally, Religious Education Assistant, Caroline Heins, and Office Assistant, Carole McIvor. We thank Sean, Caroline, and Carole for their hard work and dedication. We also welcomed new staff members, including bookkeeper/operations manager Sandra Schwartz, Facilities Manager, Steve Rogers, and Religious Education Assistant Bryn Malone. Sandra has dramatically improved

our financial tracking and reporting and her expertise has enabled the church to save considerable money by eliminating unnecessary support services. Steve has brought organization and accountability to the contracted services that maintain our building and he has also been heavily involved in developing a plan to replace the floor in the Social Hall.

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, led by Board President, Pam McIntire, who is concluding her final year of service. Pam's visionary leadership and her incredible ability to get things done will certainly be missed. The other members of the executive team are equally effective and visionary, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Bev Ryan, Tammy Wilt, and Kay Frazier. Kay is completing her second term as Treasurer and I can honestly say I have never worked with a more conscientious and dedicated church treasurer. I also want to thank the at-large board members, including John Griffith, Renee Brett, Achsah Carrier, Chris Little, and Sylvie Semmelhack. Renee and Sylvie are concluding their service on the board and both have made wonderful contributions.

Below are some important aspects of Congregational life that I have been involved in during the 2024-25 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

- creating a shared sense of purpose and identity
- building a more welcoming, inclusive, and diverse community for all
- cultivating a deeper sense of stewardship as a year-round ministry emphasizing generosity and giving of not just money, but also time and talent
- improving effectiveness and transparency through better church communication and processes.

In terms of the first goal, developing and beginning to implement a long-range plan is such an important accomplishment. Our mission and long-range plan have provided us with focus and way to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable. I am also very grateful that we are in the process of rejuvenating the Committee on Ministry, which will focus much of its attention on implementation of the long-range plan.

Work on Goal Two includes energizing our membership ministry, which I play an active role in both at monthly newcomer circles and at the New Members and Friends class. I will also

add that we are working to be more welcoming and inclusive of those who have been historically marginalized in Unitarian Universalism, UUCville, and the wider world. We are offering donated meeting space to several LGBTQ support groups and have created a Mosaic Ministry Squad, which consists of church members who attended a powerful training last fall and are now committed to helping our congregation connect to activism opportunities in our local community and to becoming more anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural within our congregation. I will also mention the consideration to purchase an induction hearing loop for the sanctuary, which would be a major improvement to the inclusivity of our most important congregational space.

The third goal, which is focused on deepening our stewardship ministry, has really hit its sweet spot this year thanks to the amazing work of the Stewardship Steering Committee. The SSC seeks to deepen our culture of giving and generosity and I am especially impressed with the work they are doing to develop a ministry of planned giving and to coordinate the annual pledge drive, which witnessed an over eight percent increase from the previous year (which is unheard of!) and took in new pledges from well over twenty new pledge units! SSC member Jimmy Gorham chaired the pledge drive team and was ably assisted by a talented and dedicated group of volunteers.

The fourth goal is to help our communications and processes become more transparent and effective and I can't say enough about our Communications Team, which does an outstanding job with the church website. I will also add that at my urging, the church is now counting all cash and checks in the church office and then taking them to the bank. I greatly appreciate the willingness of our depositors to make this change, which now puts the church in line with best practices for counting and handling money.

- Community Partnerships – The growth of our community partnerships is the accomplishment for which I am most proud. Our work with Sin Barreras entered its second year and the Pre-K class we offer doubled in size. The class moved to Church of the Incarnation and we are currently planning to teach next year's class at UUCville. We also began providing rides for parents and children, which certainly made the class more accessible... This spring, we launched a new partnership with City of Promise and are participating in a pilot program called Nurturing Neighborhoods. A team of UUCville volunteers has been matched with a family in the 10th and Page neighborhood to provide very basic support, such as rides to school, work, etc. Finally, we are working with PHAR (Public Housing Association of Residents) to support their work and, at their suggestion, we are part of the effort to plan the Westhaven Community Day, which will be held on August 2, 2025.

- Interfaith – I exchanged pulpits with Pastor Lehman Bates on January 12, preaching the Sunday sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church. I was also a member of the planning committee for the Martin Luther King Community Celebration. Finally, Rev. Leia and I had several very productive meetings with the ministers at Sojourners UCC and I met with an Associate Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian.

- Advocacy and Public Protest – With support from the church communications and the Mosaic Squad, many UUCville members have been participating in local protests held in Charlottesville and on Grounds at UVA. I am especially proud of our participation protesting UVA's ending of gender-affirming health care for trans children and youth. I also want to celebrate the organizational work being done by Indivisible Charlottesville, sponsoring and organizing protests of the Trump Administration's hateful and harmful policies.

- Rites of Passage – I officiated at three memorial services this year, including services for Jim Maxwell, Al Reynolds, and David Gaden. In addition, I also participated in a service held at UUCville for long-time church friend and former mayor of Charlottesville, Satyendra Huja. Mr. Huja's service was attended by well over 200 people, including eight former mayors of Charlottesville. I will also add that Mr. Huja made a very generous bequest to the congregation, which will benefit our food ministry and help pay for the replacement of the social hall floor.

Let me conclude by simply saying that in these difficult times, the mission and ministries of UUCville, both within and beyond our walls, are more important than ever. Every day it feels as if the world is moving in the wrong direction. I believe that our congregation can and must be a beacon of love and hope. I am so proud of all that we are doing and am excited for our future. Together, we are putting love into action!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Tim Temerson