

Annual Report 2020-2021

Towson Unitarian Universalist Church
1710 Dulaney Valley Road
Lutherville MD 21093



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Mission and Vision

Our Mission is to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives together as we work for racial, social and environmental justice.

Our Vision is to be an intentionally inclusive community engaging with each other and the world in a heartfelt search for truth and meaning.



From Your Minister

The Reverend Clare L. Petersberger

rites of passage in a time of pandemic

Hopefully, in the coming year, we will finally be able to celebrate, in person, the lives of Ken Kirchhofer, Cynthia Saalfield, Joan Kolobielski, Al Peabody and Dr. William (Bill) Reichel; unite in marriage Nicole Hebert and Clay Condol; and dedicate Abigail Reiher to the care and nurture of our religious community.

In July, I had the honor of delivering the invocation at the Celebration of Service recognizing Jen Larson's retirement from the United States Air Force. In March I had the honor of delivering a blessing for shared ministry at the virtual installation of The Rev. Jane Smith at Channing Memorial Church. On May 2, we honored, in virtual space, graduating high school seniors Ben Fireman, Gabe and Sebastian Gordillo, Rosa Green, and Rufus Roundy.

MINISTRY IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

The focus of this report is primarily programs that were designed for this pandemic year in light of our mission. More detailed information about my activities as your Minister may be found in my monthly reports to the Board posted on the TUUC website <https://www.towsonuuc.org/governance>



THE MISSION OF THE TOWSON UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
IS TO DEEPEN OUR ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIVES....

WORSHIP

A primary way we do this is through worship. Following a rich summer series on what it means to be a people of life-lines, we continued to draw on the resources of Soul Matters, which asked us to explore what it means to be a people of renewal, deep listening, healing, stillness, imagination, beloved community, commitment, becoming, story, and play. We had the opportunity to explore these themes in Sunday worship as well as in Monday evening Vespers services which rotated among Lay Worship Associates and me. I joined Marcia McFee's Worship Design Studio which focused on virtual worship this year. Elements from it were incorporated in our Blue Holidays service as well as our joint worship service with the UU Congregation of Scituate, MA.

I am grateful to the Rev. Dr. Gabrielle Parks for volunteering to co-conduct an auction worship service on the theme of your choice and to Dr. Neil Porter for purchasing it and giving us only the title---"Being One."



Virtual worship requires engagement. I appreciate all who sent photos of pets for our Blessing of the Animals; of flowers and gardens for our annual Flower Communion; of favorite bodies of water for our Water Communion (as well as those who came to our drive by Water Communion filmed by Jay Herzog); images that stunned them to stillness in December and to those who arrived to the early service, Christmas Eve, with their favorite ornament in hand and a story to tell; to those who sent images of favorite foods; to those who arrived on Easter morning wearing their bonnets and brought decorated eggs by their devices; and to those who shared favorite childhood stories for Mother's Day!

I am grateful to our Lay Worship Associates, to Tracy Hall, our Choir, our instrumentalists and vocalists for enriching our virtual worship services with their gifts. A special shout-out to Tony Bonta for his music videos! Kudos to our amazing Technical Ushers: Sue Royer, Andy Peterson, Robin Sinn, Mike Tierney, Steve Finner, Lila Wisotzki, Patty Barry, Jane D'Ambrogi, Jason Braspennickx, Dan Alper, Lisa Lubomski, Tony Bonta, Marilyn Maze, Neil Porter, Tom Zeller, Spice Kleinmann, Mark Moseng, Walter Burnett and Jenny Hare (all the way from England!)



As a result of our common read last year, “An Indigenous People’s History of the United States” by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz and the June Sunday morning worship at the Unitarian Universalist Association’s General Assembly, we added a Territorial Acknowledgment at the beginning of worship.

Although we are all Covid weary and very much want to see one another in three dimensions, we anticipate that worship will be virtual through the summer to give everyone time to get vaccinated and to give TUUC’s leadership time to get the building ready.

Territorial Acknowledgment

We are on stolen, un-ceded land of the Piscataway Conoy Nation.
We humbly offer our respects to the elders, past and present.
We remember and honor the indigenous ancestors and stewards of the land we live and work on. This acknowledgment does not take the place of authentic relationships with indigenous communities but serves as a first step in honoring the land we occupy as an act of resistance against the erasure of their histories. We acknowledge just how deeply the roots of colonialism, racism, and inequality run in this country.



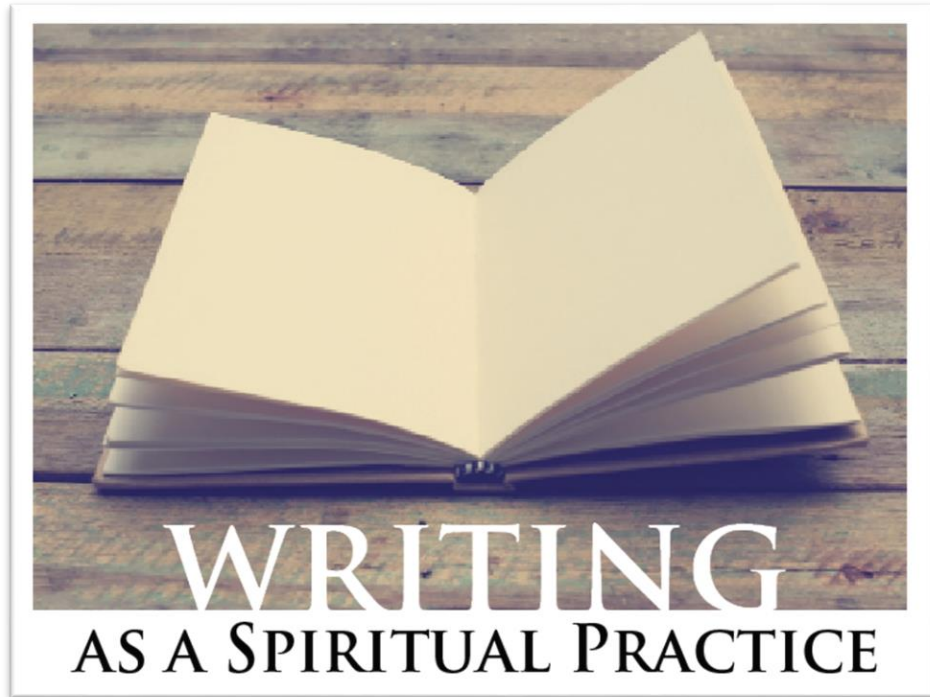
Soul Matters

**What does it mean to be
a people of STORY?**



SOUL MATTERS SHARING CIRCLES

This year we had two virtual Soul Matters Sharing Circles running at the same time. Art Starr and I facilitated one circle. Anita Cox and Patty Barry facilitated the other. We averaged a total of 16 participants who met twice a month to explore the Soul Matters themes in more depth through a spiritual practice and question for reflection.



WRITING AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

To deepen our spiritual and ethical lives, I facilitated a virtual drop-in program on writing as a spiritual practice which met twice a month at 1 p.m. on Fridays.

Generally, 8-10 people joined.

CARING

Another way we deepen our ethical and spiritual lives is through caring for one another. Because of concerns about isolation when we were required to socially distance, our Lay Pastoral Associates grew to include: Mimi Marks, Mary Beth Brizzolara, Carol Horst, George Harrison, Ann Beezley, Nancy Mears, and Lila Wisotzki. I am grateful to our Caring Committee: Lisa Lubomski, Spice Kleinmann, and Michael Magrogan who did a wonderful job of organizing meals for a family this summer. I made a total of 142 calls, Zoom visits or socially distanced visits. I enjoyed connecting with several TUUC members during Coffee With The Minister from noon-1p.m. on Tuesdays. In the fall, I also offered a virtual Happy Hour for those who wanted to gather on Friday afternoons.

Another way we expressed our care for one another was through establishing a Covid Care Fund to be used to help those experiencing financial hardship. We raised \$2,925. As of May 3, \$1,601.47 has been dispersed to cover expenses such as rent, utilities, and medical bills. TUUC is a generous congregation.





TUUC CONGRATULATES KARYN MARSH!

After a decade as an active leader of TUUC, having deepened her spiritual and ethical life, and graduating from seminary, this year Karyn Marsh did her Ministerial Internship at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma (a congregation of about 2,500 members.) In April, she went before the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association and has been accepted into Preliminary Fellowship. Karyn is now ready to be ordained. TUUC can be proud that we have the opportunity to ordain Karyn Marsh.

THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRIES AND SUNDAY MORNING STRUCTURE TASK FORCE

Prior to the pandemic, the Committee On Ministries and Sunday Morning Structure Task Force held a number of listening sessions with regard to programming on Sunday mornings.

During the pandemic, The Committee on Ministries (Karen Fireman, Walter Burnett, Lou Gieszl, Ellie Hughes, Sue Proctor, and Janet Schollenberger) held conversations on July 12, 13, 26th, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, and Nov. 8 about virtual programming.

In early 2021 parents were asked about what programming would be most useful to their children. As a result of these conversations, when the COM and Sunday Morning Structure Task Force met in March, it was decided that now is not the time to conduct a written survey capturing a moment in time. Too much is in flux. Now is the time to be having conversations with one another on these questions about multi-platform ministries:

What are the good things from being in virtual space that we want to carry forward when it comes to planning programs for the year to come?

What are we looking forward to going back to when we re-open the building?

How do we further deepen engagement in terms of our mission to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives together as we work for racial, social and environmental justice?

Who might we have forgotten to include in our programming?

Your thoughts are welcome! If you have not already done so, please share them with me, or Andrew Hager (Convener of the Program Council.)

LEADERSHIP

Heartfelt thanks to the Board of Trustees for their leadership which has focused on “the big picture” and whose sense of fun was evident during Game Night With the Board! Deep gratitude to Andrew Hager whom in addition to serving as President-Elect has also been Chairing the Program Council and thanks to the entire Program Council. Our recent Variety Show embodied the teamwork of the Program Council! This has been an unusual year and we are fortunate to have such committed, visionary, and spirited leadership!

PERSONNEL

This year we welcomed Philip Browne to the staff team of TUUC as our part-time TUUC Social Media/Outreach Coordinator. We are fortunate to have such a caring and committed team: Kai Aiyetoro, Church Administrator; Joyce Duncan, Credentialed Director of Religious Exploration; Tracy Hall, Music Director; and Phil Browne, Social Media/Outreach Coordinator. We are grateful to our contractors: Raly Balthev, Bookkeeper and Felicia McConnell, Janitorial Services.

OUR MISSION IS TO DEEPEN OUR ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIVES TOGETHER AS WE WORK FOR RACIAL, SOCIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

We honored the Transgendered Day of Remembrance in worship as well as centering voices of people of color in virtual worship services. We plan to continue to expand bringing more diverse voices and music to our worship services.

In the local community, I was grateful for a virtual program for clergy to meet the new Islamic scholar, Dr. Zeyneb Sayilgan, at the Institute for Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Studies as well as for a program hosted by the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on how we maintain the values of our own faith traditions while not excluding other faiths. I participate in an ecumenical clergy group that meets monthly for spiritual deepening.

Following the work of Planned Parenthood Federation of America has been important to me this year given all the challenges now underway to Roe V. Wade.

DENOMINATION

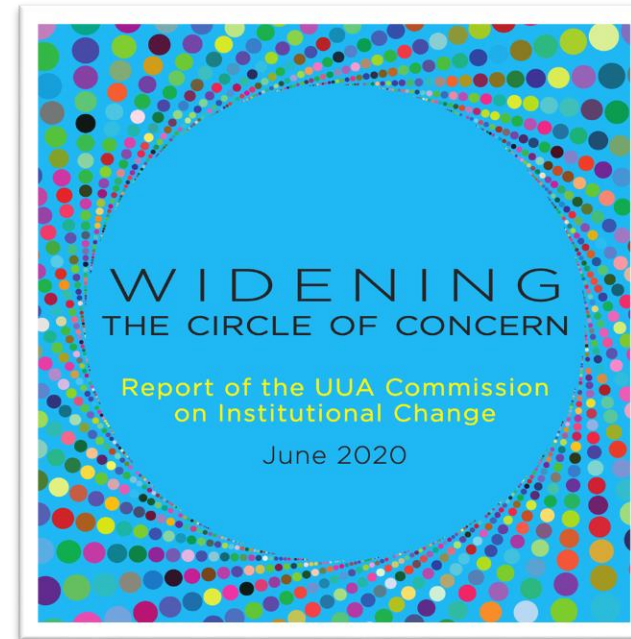
In addition to attending virtual Ministry Days and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly last June, I participated in a local collegial cluster group; meetings of the Chesapeake UU Ministers Chapter; and attended virtual programs by UU the Vote and the College of Social Justice on “Realism and Resilience” in this crucial election year for our democracy. I also attended two virtual programs facilitated by Richael Faithful hosted by the Chesapeake Unitarian Universalist Minister’s Association on restorative justice. I also participated in a program on pre-emptive radical inclusion by CB Beal. Attending the virtual Unitarian Universalist General Assembly last June, I learned about the report of the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Commission on Institutional Change which concluded that “What is at stake is nothing less than the future of our faith.” This is an attention-grabbing sentence!



WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF CONCERN

Having preached on the report in November, in the new year, eight conversations were scheduled on the following chapters in the report: Theology, Governance, Congregations and Community, Hospitality and Inclusion, Living Our Values In The World, Restoration and Reparations, Accountability and Resources, Where Do We Go From Here?”

These conversations were well attended with an average of 18 participants. The action steps on the next three pages were adopted.



It's incumbent on us as a predominately white church to take the steps to dismantle white supremacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WIDENING THE CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS

- Edit and refocus website: To meet needs of newcomers and be welcoming to younger people, LGBTQ and BIPOC, state mission more clearly.
- Research and provide opportunities for anti-oppression anti-racism (AOAR) training for greeters, ushers, hospitality, pastoral care providers, teachers, and the congregation.
- Worship and Music to include more voices of marginalized identities and greater embodiment.
- Continue Common Reads on issues of justice.
- Offer Lifespan Religious Exploration on our theology and the contributions of people of color.
- Offer field trips with learning focus to Hampton Mansion and/or East Towson
- Conduct a multiculturalism audit.
- Organize a workshop like Jubilee or with a BIPOIC trainer for the congregation
- Install a plaque acknowledging the history of the land our building is on...as unceded land of the Piscataway Conoy Nation and as home to enslaved people by Hampton Mansion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WIDENING THE CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS

Partnerships In The Community

- Join Black Lives Matter Interfaith Coalition.
- Go to diverse communities at Goucher/TU, asking what they might need.
- Join group opposing incinerators in Baltimore racial and environmental justice issues. <https://ilsr.org/baltimore-neighbors-band-together-to-battle-incinerator/>

Unitarian Universalist Association

- Adopt 8th Principle.





RECOMMENDATIONS CON'T

TUUC sponsor scholarships to attend General Assembly (GA). Do orientation for GA and also take positions regarding voting as a church. Start the planning for this now and not two weeks before registrations for GA.

Other excellent action steps were suggested. These are the ones we will be focused on in the coming year to help us to live into our mission to deepen our spiritual and ethical lives by working for racial, social, and environmental justice.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM YOUR MINISTER

What we first anticipated would be two weeks and then a few months of social distancing turned into a year of learning how to be together as a faith community when we had to be physically apart. While vaccines for COVID (currently undergoing clinical trials for children) give us hope that we will be able to safely gather in our building in the future, we are still in a liminal space. To paraphrase the late Catholic theologian, John O'Donohue, "At any time, we can ask ourselves: at which threshold are we now? At this time in our life, what are we leaving? Where are we about to enter?" It is an honor to ask these questions with you as, together, we live into our faithful answers.

Respectfully submitted,

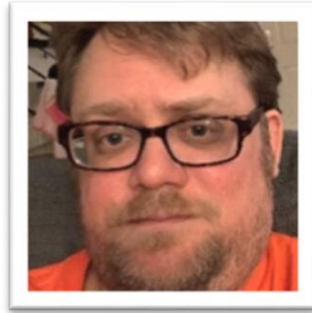
Rev. Clare

Board of Trustees

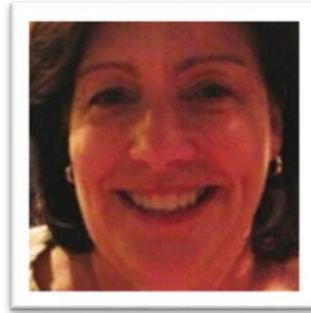
BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Sue Royer
President



Andrew Hager
President-Elect



Susan Riggs
Secretary



Wendell Finner
Treasurer



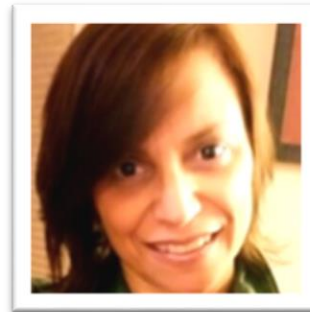
John Mattingly
Trustee-at-Large



Samantha Saalfield
Trustee-at-Large



Patty Barry
Trustee-at-Large



Angela Castello-Epps
Trustee-at-Large

INTRODUCTION

As of this report, the Board has met twelve times this fiscal year. In addition to monthly meetings, the Board met for a special meeting to discuss the Water Runoff Remediation Project on July 25. The Board met virtually (via Zoom) throughout the fiscal year, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

ANNUAL VISION OF MINISTRY

The Board selected two top priority goals for TUUC to guide the Board's actions and to guide the Administrative Team, the staff, and the Program Council in setting priorities for the fiscal year:

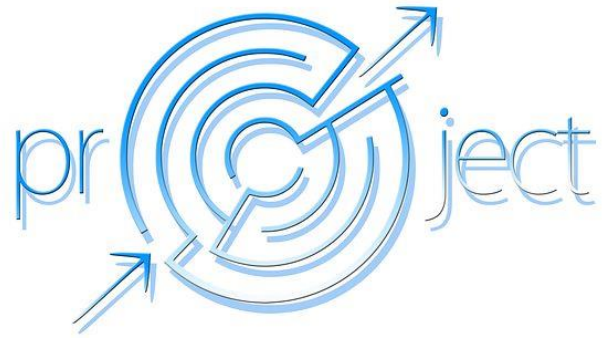
1. During these COVID times, maintain and strengthen our ministry, including drawing in visitors, supporting families, and reaching those for whom Zoom isn't working. Facilitate a sense of connection for congregants and guests.
2. Seek ways for our social, racial, and environmental justice work to have meaningful impact while we are in virtual space.

OPEN QUESTIONS

The Board considered three open questions during this fiscal year:

1. What changes do we need to make to be more accessible to those living with disabilities or special needs?
2. How can we strengthen our work and give people the tools to dismantle white supremacy, in ourselves, our church, and around us?
3. What changes do we need to make to more fully live our values through the stewardship of our resources (financial resources and other resources)?

The Board hosted a listening session on the first question on January 24. The second question was addressed as part of the Widening the Circle of Concern discussion series with the TUUC community. The Board plans to address the third question with the congregation in the future.



BOARD GOALS

1. Codify our multi-year governance change through congregational approval of the Bylaws revision
2. Update/renew the Letter of Agreement with Rev. Clare
3. Pass the 8th Principle as a Board and engage members in working toward its adoption by the Congregation
4. Follow-through on implementing the new governance policy

GOVERNANCE

In October 2020, we held a congregational meeting, and the long-studied Bylaws changes were approved. These Bylaws clarify lines of organization and accountability. Many cumbersome lines of communication were eased and streamlined and it is now more clear who is accountable to whom. The Articles of Incorporation from the 1960s were also updated and approved. The amended and restated Articles of Incorporation were filed with and accepted by the State of Maryland.

The Letter of Agreement between the church and the Minister is currently being updated, using a model of the UU Minister's Association as a guide. The Board is recommending that TUUC provide dental insurance coverage for the Minister and staff as a result of this review.

FINANCE

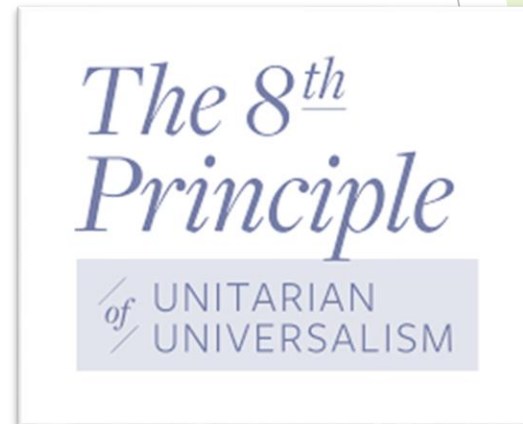
The Board approved TUUC applying for a second loan for \$59,300 through the Paycheck Protection Program which was created to enable small businesses to keep their workers on payroll during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first loan was received last fiscal year and the second loan for the same amount was received in February. Based on federal guidelines for this program, it is expected that both loans will be forgiven.

8TH PRINCIPLE

The Board voted in March to adopt the 8th principle of Unitarian Universalism:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

It is the hope of the Board and Rev. Clare that the congregation will also approve this proposed principle, which requires a vote at a congregational meeting. Prior to such a vote, extensive discussions among members of the congregation will be facilitated.



CHURCH AS EMPLOYER

After Nancy Hannah retired from our employment last year, this year we welcomed Philip Browne to our staff. Philip's responsibilities focus on communications and social media. We are fortunate that he came to us with experience working for a UU church, as Philip was hired during the COVID-19 pandemic, with all staff working virtually. While some of us have not met Philip in person, we see his work every week in the Threshold and Facebook postings.

Our employee benefits are being reviewed with the goal of being equitable for all staff. Our staff has been flexible and creative in responding to the pandemic. We look forward to returning to church in person, while keeping our presence in a dual platform approach. This approach will require upgrading our internet and video equipment, and additional learning. The learning curve is steep and swift, and to that end, staff and lay leaders have been taking training, through the UUA.

The Personnel Committee, comprised of John Mattingly, Luke Williams, and Tracey Myers Preston updated staff letters; reviewed the UUA's Benefits Tune-Up workbook; and is making recommendations for compensation.

ENDOWMENT

The new Bylaws brought TUUC into line with the law governing endowments by placing the assets under the Board's direct management subject to the advice and experience of the Endowment Committee. Paul Konka stepped down as chair of the Endowment Committee after many years of committed service. John Barry accepted the role of chairing the committee. We made the following changes to the allocation and use of our investments:

1. Withdrawals to support church operations will be calculated as a percentage of a 13 quarter average rather than the endowment balance at a single point in time.
2. The share of the endowment in socially-responsible investments was increased to 28%.
3. The share of the endowment in cash and bonds rather than equities was increased to 11%.

The Board continues to work with the Endowment Committee to protect the Endowment assets and to align Endowment investments with TUUC values.

Date	6/30/2020	9/30/2020	12/31/2020	3/31/2021
Value of the Endowment	\$936,872	\$1,017,098	\$1,154,992	\$1,220,473

The TUUC Endowment is invested in the following: Vanguard 500 Index Fund, Vanguard FTSE Social Fund, Vanguard Total International Fund, Schwab US Small Cap ETF, Cash, and Vanguard Interim Term Corporate Bond Fund.

STEWARDSHIP

The theme of our Stewardship campaign was #BelovedCommunity #Commitment. Moving testimonials were shared during Sunday morning worship in February and March by Tony Bonta, Nancy Caswell, Jane D'Ambrogi, Steve Finner, Spice Kleinmann, Susan Riggs and Sue Royer. Congregants were encouraged to give from their heart and to take a photo of themselves holding a sign with the theme.



We have received pledges from 149 households, totaling \$290,500. Thank you!

149 pledges received for FY 21-22 of which:

- 58 pledging households increased their pledge
- 70 pledging households kept their pledge the same
- 17 pledging households decreased their pledge
- 4 pledging households are new

With 4 outlier data points removed:

Average Pledge	\$1,660
Mean Pledge	\$1,142
Median Pledge	\$1,200

Special thanks to all the Stewardship Team members and especially Susan Riggs, Sue Walker, Steve Finner, Mary Ellen Haisfield-Wolfe and Sue Royer. Between them, they called 53 households!

A-TEAM

This year, we have implemented our new governance, which entails the congregation electing the Board and the Board delegating operational decisions to an Administrative Team comprised of the Church Administrator, Finance Council Head, House and Grounds Council Head, and Minister. Since we did not have a Finance Council Head, Sue Royer, our TUUC Board President, filled this role. Our goals for this year included:

- Conduct environmental health study of TUUC and take results and proposal for remediation to the TUUC Board
- Review and submit to Board the following operational policies;
 - Communications and Social Media Policy
 - Safe Congregations Policy
 - Building Use Policy

The current focus on the A-Team is a plan to remediate environmental concerns and prepare for multi-platform worship when it is safe to re-open the building.



A-TEAM GOALS

We did have an environmental study done which revealed that the amount of dander in the offices of TUUC is off the scales. We are now getting bids to remediate this problem through cleaning the offices; checking ventilation; and cleaning our duct work.

We submitted a Communications and Social Media Policy to the Board which was approved.

We supported the Gunpowder Conservancy water remediation project which you may learn more about [here](#). Special thanks to Janet Schollenberger and Todd Robertson for all they did to make this happen!

We still need to review the Safe Congregations Policy and Building Use Policy.

The A-Team also supported two applications for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans; approved the removal of stilt grass and trees that needed to be removed; researched and approved the lease of a new duplicator; responded to vandalism of signs on our property; wrote policies for use of the grounds and rest rooms in the building; and discussed next steps to make the building more accessible---from upgrading listening devices to hiring an architect to design an accessible bathroom.

Kai Aiyetoro—
Church
Administrator

Patty Barry—
Membership

Philip Browne—
Communications
and Outreach
Coordinator

Nancy Caswell—
Socrates Cafe,
Our Messy Lives

Joyce Duncan—
Director of
Religious
Exploration

Stephen Finner—
Denominational
Affairs

Tracy Hall—
Music Director

Carel Hedlund—
Green Sanctuary

Michael
Magrogan—
Adult Religious
Exploration

Rev. Clare
Petersberger—
Minister

Charlene Rossi—
Green Sanctuary

Robin Sinn—
Memorial Garden

Lorraine
Sorbello—
Social Action
Committee

Art Starr—Men's
Group, Writing
Your Spiritual
Autobiography

Program Council Members

Andrew Hager—
Convener of the
Program Council;
Cabin Fever

ROLE OF THE PROGRAM COUNCIL

The Program Council is tasked with supporting the mission and vision of TUUC by offering a variety of programming. The group had 10 meetings this year, all via Zoom, with an average attendance of 14. Most meetings included small group time for brainstorming and planning, as well as spotlight topics, which included Youth Religious Exploration, Stewardship, Sunday Morning Structure, and new programming proposals.

The council worked hard to provide a wide range of programming to keep the church community engaged during this difficult, socially-distanced year.



VARIETY SHOW

This spring, the Program Council worked together to create a variety show that would highlight various talents among church members and offer an evening of family-friendly entertainment. The show was held on Saturday, April 10 and featured 90 minutes packed with lively music, improv, magic, poetry, and fun!



GREEN SANCTUARY

The Green Sanctuary Committee remained active with its core group of members (approximately 8) holding monthly meetings and with more people participating in activities.

In the summer and fall they continued to support the gardening projects at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church; those activities picked up again starting in March of 2021.

A number of fair trade sales of coffee, candy, tea and nuts were held on the TUUC front porch.

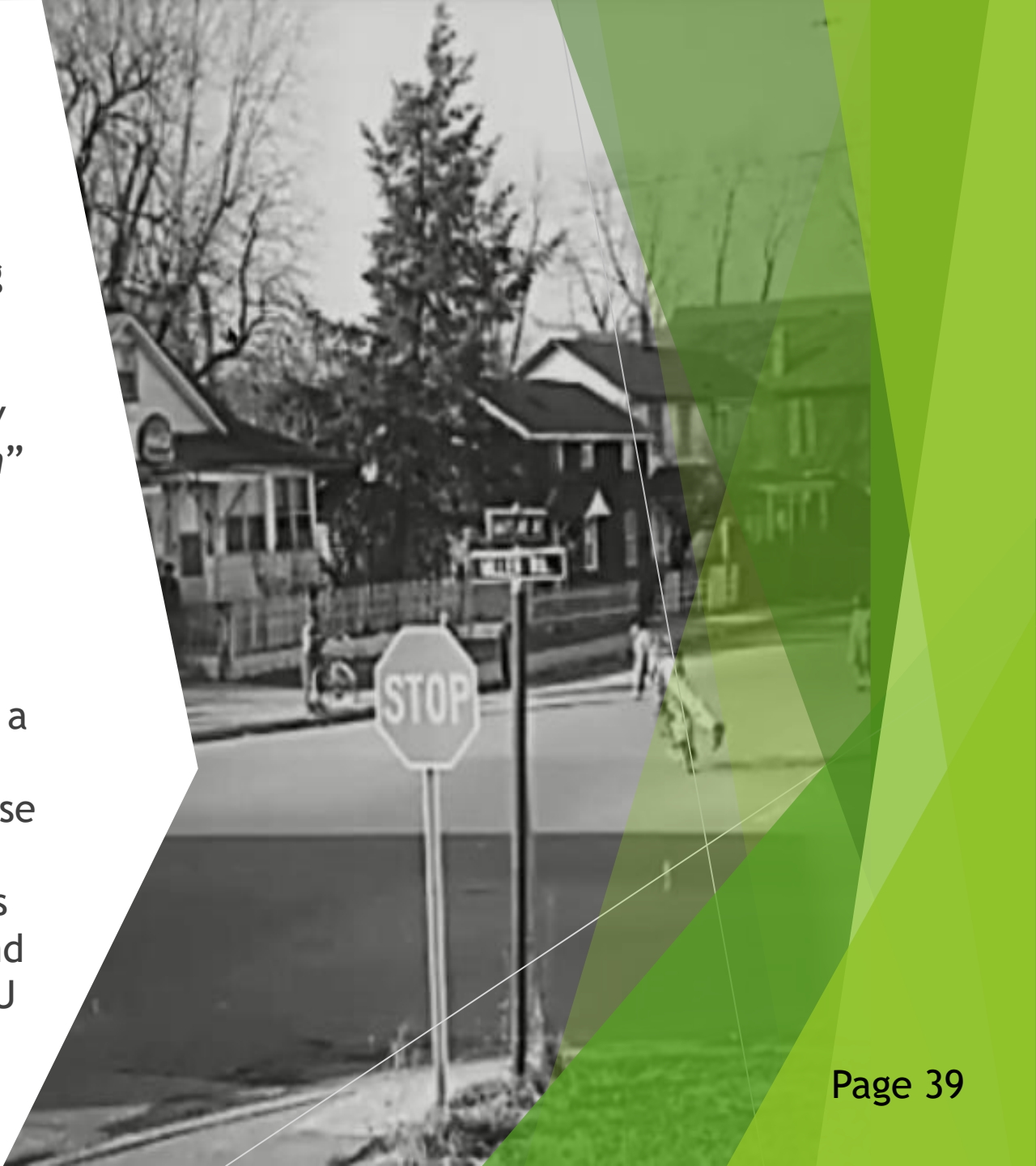
The committee created an Earth Day service for April 18th on the theme of climate urgency with guest speaker Rev. Dr. Terry Ellen.



GREEN SANCTUARY ACTIVISM

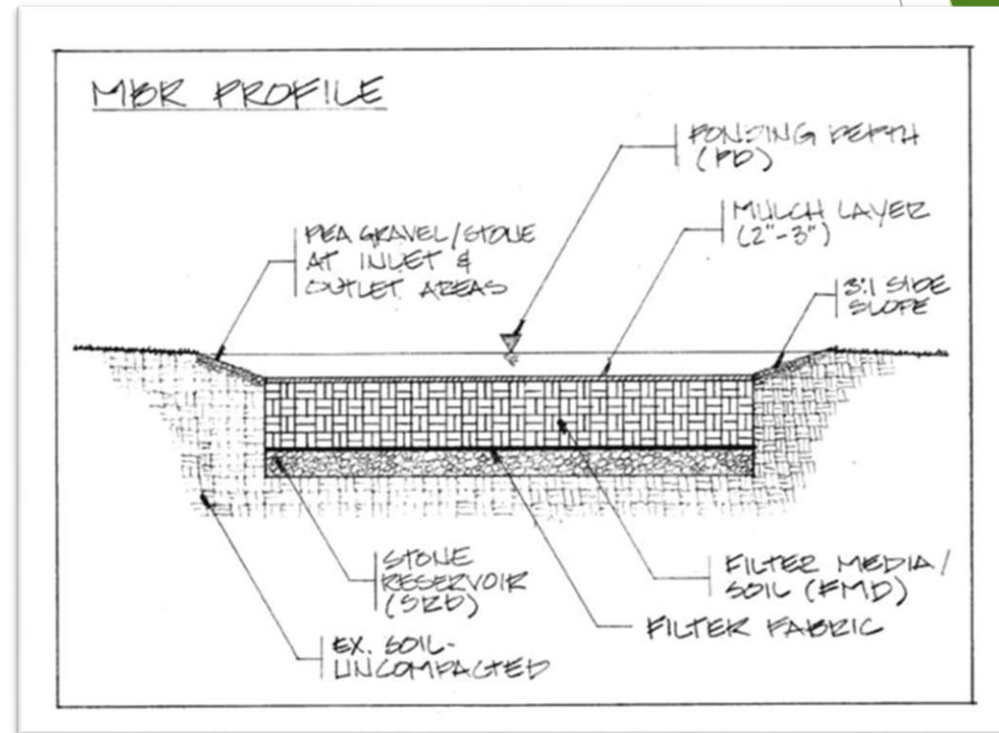
In November, a letter was written from the Committee in support of Historic East Towson neighborhood's challenge to The Red Maples housing project that would have severe environmental impact on the neighborhood. The Committee co-sponsored a zoom lecture "*African American History from Jim Crow to Black Lives Matter in East Towson*" in December.

In February the Green Sanctuary Committee prepared and sent four letters to our district's state legislators on behalf of TUUC supporting a constitutional amendment on environmental rights; a prohibition on single use plastic bags; a climate solutions bill that requires acceleration in greenhouse gas reductions that targets overburdened communities, protects fossil fuel workers and plants 5 million trees; and a bill targeting transit safety and investment. These were all priority issues for the UU Legislative Ministry.



GREEN SANCTUARY EFFORTS AT TUUC

The committee also assisted the church in applying for a grant from Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (GVC) for a new bioretention area to reduce flow of water across the driveway; this area was built and planted in the fall by GVC with Green Sanctuary Committee members installing a protective fence around it.



DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

Our congregation has increased its presence and visibility this past year at meetings of denominational bodies. Last year, Steve Finner, working with Paula Cole Jones representing the Central East region of the UUA, resurrected the Baltimore Cluster which consists of seven congregations in the Baltimore area. Since then TUUC has had one or more representatives attending the monthly meetings of the cluster. Steve attends the monthly drop in information exchange meetings hosted by Rev. Meg Foley, Director of the Central East Region.

A number of TUUC members have attended the monthly meetings of The Eighth Principle Project and gathered information to assist us in implementing the Eighth Principle which has been endorsed by the TUUC Board of Directors.

TUUC had a number of delegates to the 2020 virtual General Assembly and will have delegates to the 2021 virtual GA. A few of our members have also served as volunteers to the 2020 GA and will be doing the same this year. Plans are in process to hold a formal orientation session for GA delegates and for a congregational meetings to discuss business resolutions that will be considered for vote by our delegates.



Steve Finner

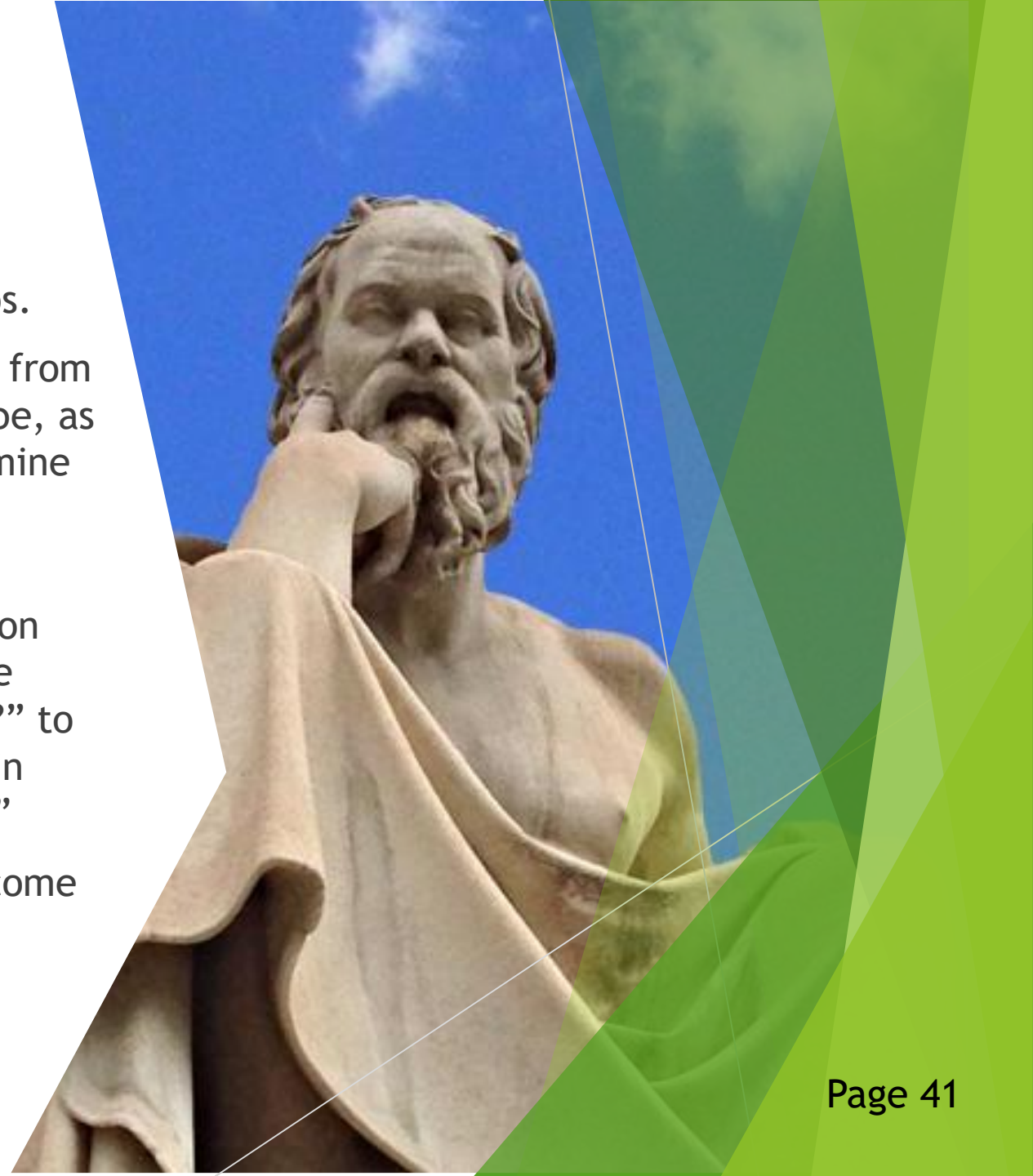
SOCRATES CAFÉ

The TUUC Socrates Cafe, which began virtually on Zoom, in September of 2020 is a discussion group based on the book Socrates Cafe by Christopher Phillips.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of every month from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Participants suggested question to probe, as Socrates would have us do with his admonition to examine questions without seeking answers. There are approximately 14 attendees each month.

Questions from “If one decides that there isn't a God, on what does one base one's ethics?” to “Is compassionate capitalism possible?” and from “What makes us happy?” to “Must we change our modern notion of epistemology, in terms of our modern times, especially with COVID-19?”

Our mission is to do as Socrates would have us do: to come to "know ourselves" through philosophical inquiry.



OUR MESSY LIVES

Praises to Art Starr for inaugurating and being the initial facilitator of Our Messy Lives and appreciation to the initial Zoom Host, Walter Burnett.

Each session a provocative word is chosen to contemplate and explore together. Examples of words have been Resilience, Patience, Wisdom, Anger, Integrity, and Morality.

The group meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month from 3-4 p.m.





SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Social Action Committee (SAC) acts as a liaison between the TUUC congregation, (local) Community and (national and international) Unitarian Universalist Partners. SAC regularly donate TUUC funds to selected Partners, keep the congregation aware of their activities and of volunteer opportunities.

Some Partners have been more active during the pandemic than others. The Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC, our oldest partner) has been very active. They serve needs which are particularly acute during the pandemic, such as food insecurity, made worse by rampant unemployment, and services to the homeless population. In addition to limited donation of foodstuffs, TUUC members were encouraged to contribute more funds (including to the Thanksgiving Baskets). Several of the TUUC congregation volunteer their time there also. Earl's Place continued to provide a temporary home to formerly homeless men. Each year TUUC contributes to the Holiday Gift-Giving program.



SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE (CONT'D)

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry UULM lobbied for legislation or overrides of vetoes of laws which support our UU values.

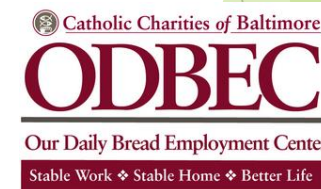
On SAC Sunday, we featured the organization Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood (MMTH) for which many members volunteer tutor. Speakers inspired TUUC to collect a record amount for a field trip for urban young men and boys to widen their horizons.

Funds were donated to Out for Justice for bail payments of mothers with no resources for bail. These mothers would otherwise remain in jail after just being charged.

This year TUUC was encouraged to donate funds instead of the pledged 50 casseroles (4 times a year) for the Our Daily Bread program. This program has provided meals to the hungry daily since 1981.

In addition, TUUC members were encouraged to join the international UU Service Committee.

During the pandemic, the usual meeting attendance has been 12 members.



FELLOWSHIP

The Men's Groups meet twice a month for an hour and a half with an average of 8 members. There have been a few socially-distanced outside gatherings.

Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography met twice a month this Spring with an average of 4-6 members.

Aging Together meets on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays.



CABIN FEVER

The Cabin Fever Movie Group began last March as an attempt to entertain people during what was then assumed to be a two week period staying at home. Each week, the group watches a movie available on a streaming platform and meets on Saturdays at 4 PM to discuss said movie over Zoom. Films have included *Nomadland*, *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*, *Crip Camp*, and *The Love Witch*. Average weekly attendance is 8 to 10 people.



COMMON READ SERIES

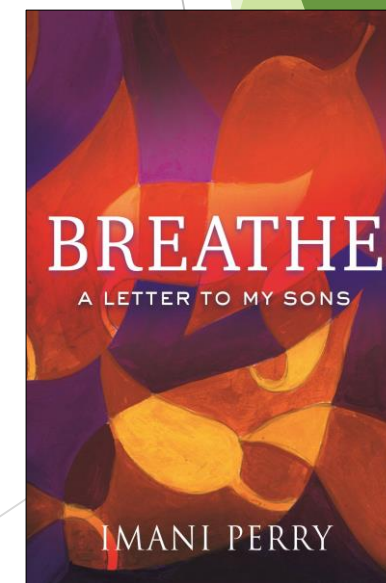
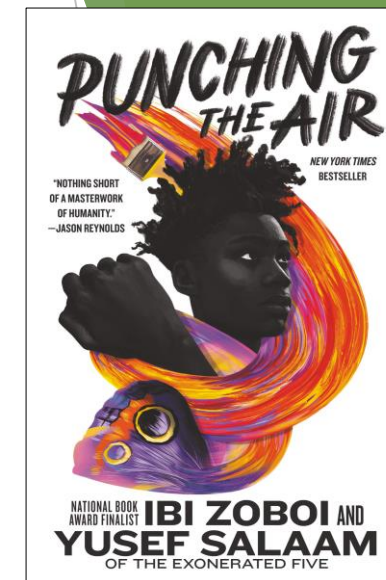
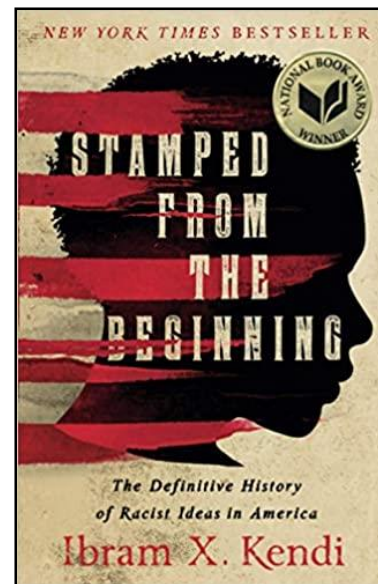
This year, TUUC continued efforts to grapple with the history of white supremacy in the United States via our Common Read. Instead of choosing one book to read and discuss, we read three!

Stamped from the Beginning (Ibram X. Kendi) / *Stamped* (Jason Reynolds)

Punching the Air (Idi Zobol and Yusuf Salaam)

Breathe: Letters to My Sons (Imani Perry)

As our congregation continues to discuss the 8th Principle, the insight gained from these books and the ensuing book talks certainly inform our conversations.



AUCTION

The Board asked the Auction Committee to plan for a virtual event for November 2020 and the Auction Team rose to the challenge! The theme was Diamond Jubilation to continue to celebrate TUUC's 60th anniversary! New software was adopted and multiple coaching sessions were held to help congregants learn how to bid using their smartphones. Thanks to the leadership of Nina Della Vecchia, Marilyn Maze and Dan Alper, plus many additional committee members, we raised \$15,000! The Board was thrilled with the results. Auction hosts Patty and John Berry kept the energy flowing all evening and a fun time was enjoyed by all!



Youth Religious Exploration

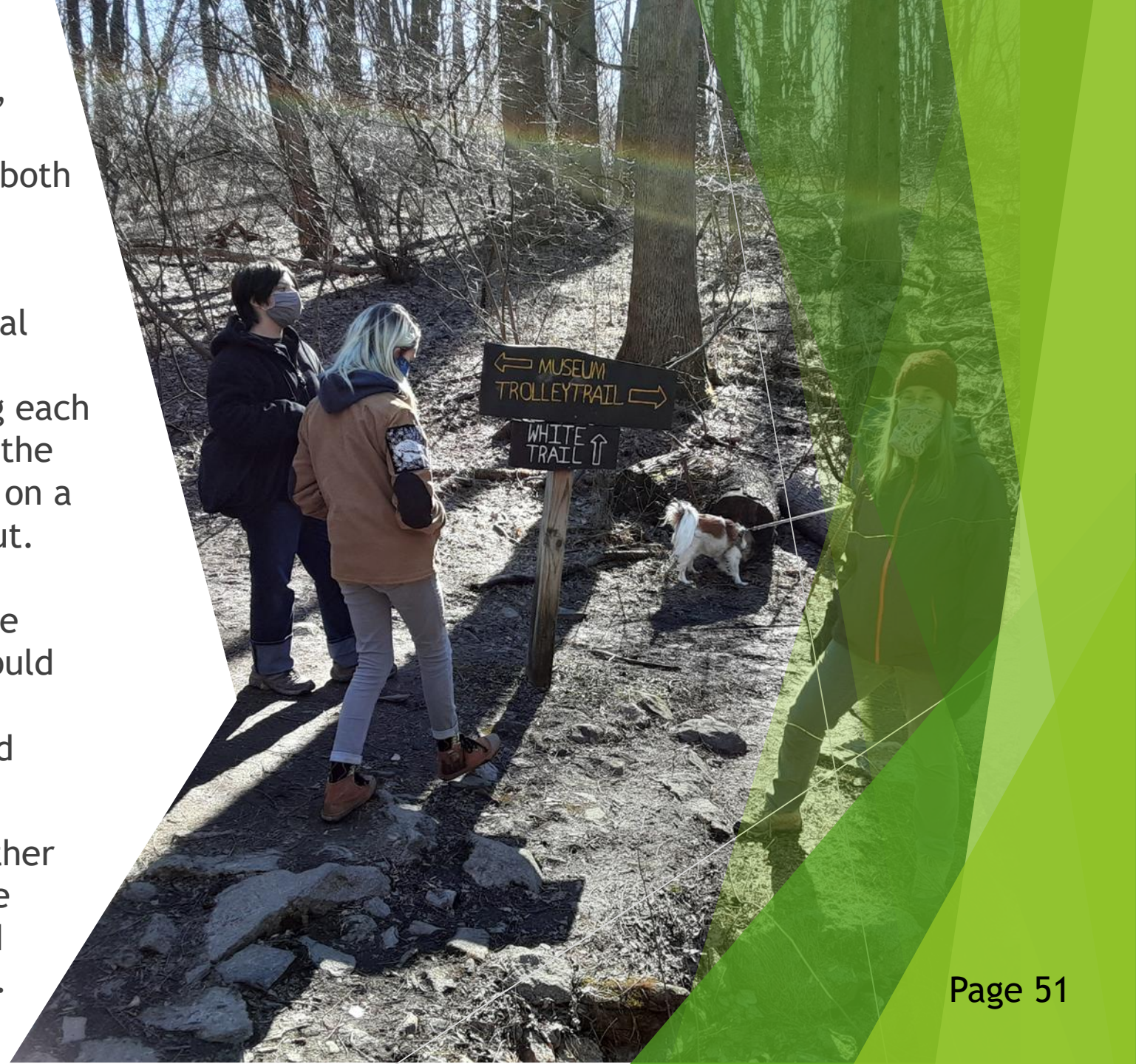
Joyce Duncan, CRE
Credentialed Religious Exploration Director



This year was challenging for all: families, children, teens, and teachers. The Youth Religious Exploration Committee planned both virtual and safe in-person experiences to maintain and build community.

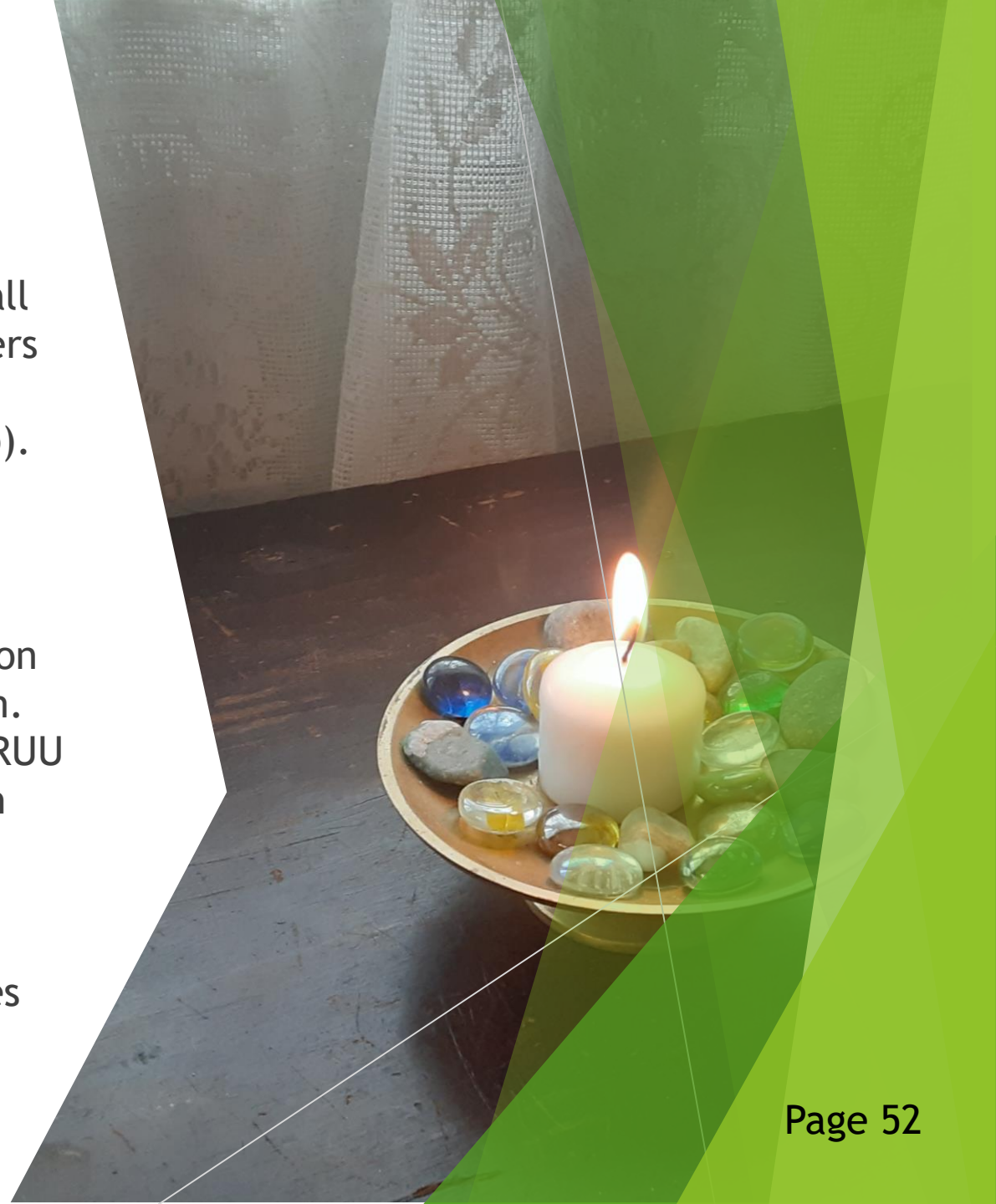
Physically distanced walks in different local parks started last summer allowing many families to enjoy being outside and seeing each other safely. These continued throughout the fall and winter. Visiting Hampton Mansion on a snowy day in March had the largest turnout. Hopes to revisit with more emphasis on learning the history of the enslaved people who lived on that property which once would have included the land on which TUUC is located. Trish Lott and Lisa Barnett helped organize and lead these walks.

The group followed up with a visit to another local park that features the story of a free Black man, Benjamin Banneker, renowned scientist, writer, and activist in the 1700s.



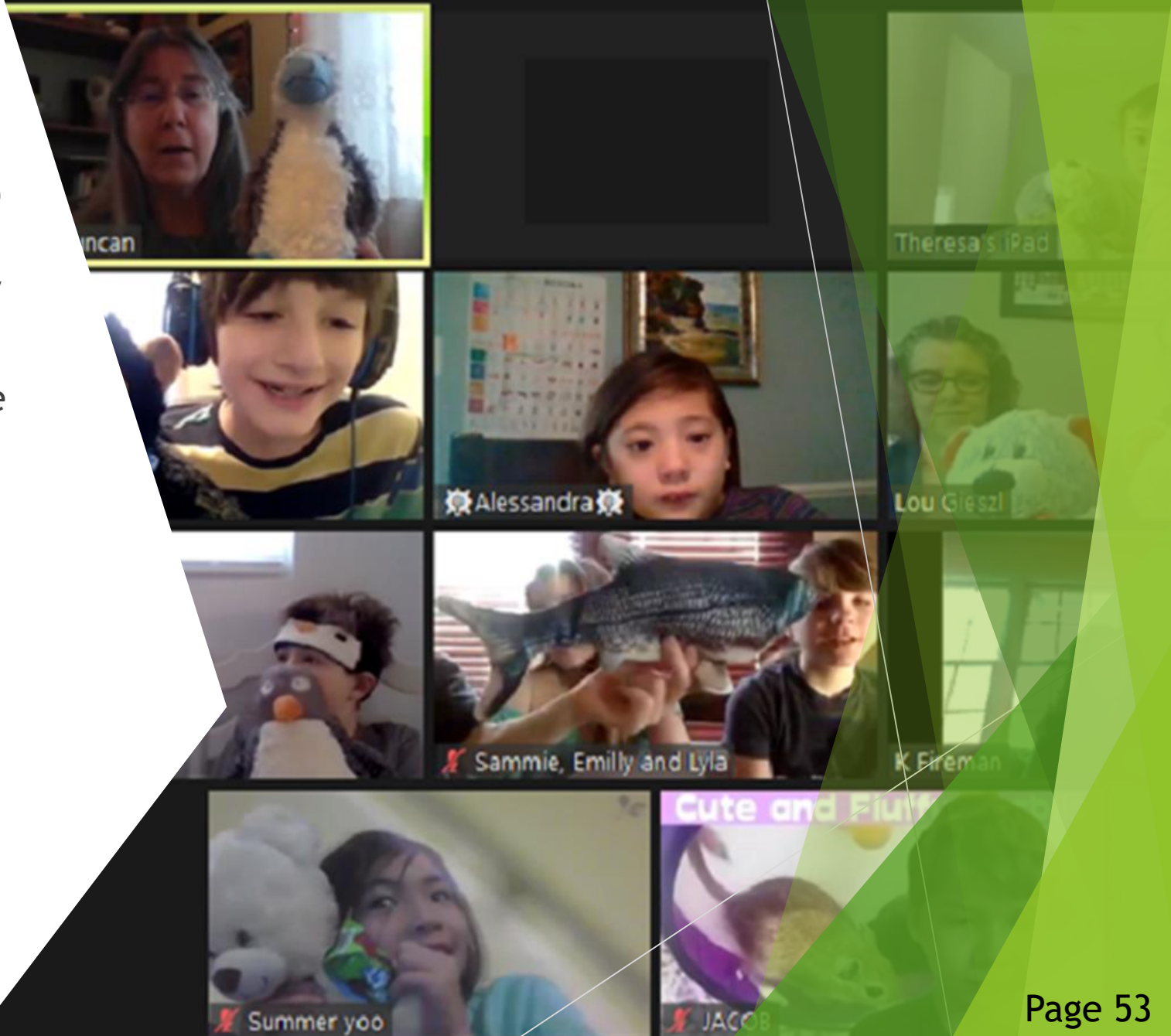
Other outdoor activities include completion of two different programs of Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education. The class for 8th/9th graders led by Deborah Kleinmann and Larry Magder, which had started in the Fall of 2019, finished last fall. The OWL class for 5th-7th graders (which had just begun in March 2020) will end June 2021 (Tom Zeller, Trish Lott, and Joyce Duncan lead this group). Two sessions of an outdoor multi-gen program entitled Circle of Trees were offered but ended early due to low attendance.

Those in 8th/9th did some sessions of a curriculum based on the Twilight Zone after they completed the OWL program. Teens were initially interested in meeting virtually for YRUU programming led by Tom Zeller and Fred Sypher but both groups succumbed quickly to Zoom fatigue. About nine teens gathered at Cromwell Valley park in December to stuff stockings for the men at Earl's Place and Prospect Place; these groups also had opportunities to join in hikes and two bonfires in the picnic grove at TUUC.



A small but dedicated group of younger children in Kindergarten through grade 7 met virtually on Sunday mornings at 9 am. The group met for a story and introduction to the weekly and monthly themes, then broke into two groups.

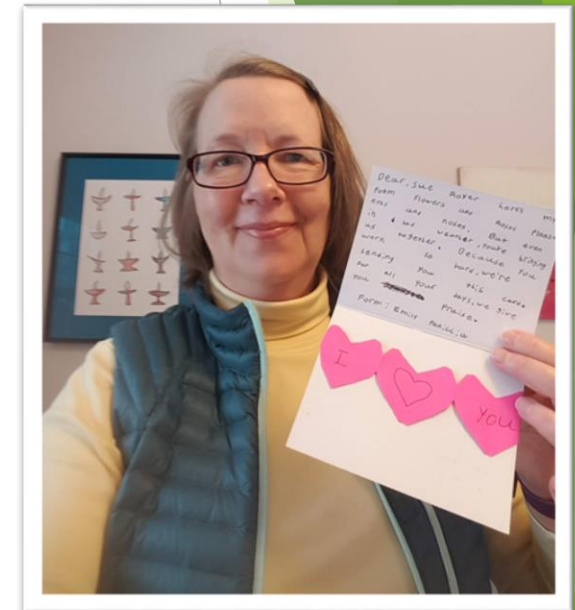
Lou Gieszl and Ellie Hughes, leading the older children, used a combination of sessions from a curriculum based on episodes from The Simpsons and short videos with justice themes to inspire discussion. Younger children, in a group led by Angela Castillo-Epps and Karen Fireman, enjoyed packets mailed or hand-delivered that included materials for art projects related to the monthly theme, as well as the Sunday morning stories, meditations, discussions, and activities.



Members of the Youth Religious Exploration Committee, chaired by Karen Fireman, most of whom also taught classes or led groups, chose curricula and gave input on format for classes. Together we planned additional family events, including a virtual Easter celebration, monthly parent meetings, a special holiday packet mailing to all RE families, the Senior Bridging service, and the annual YRE Sunday service. The committee planned and Joyce executed the [Teddies at TUUC](#) Facebook event and story for all ages. Social justice projects were a challenge this year, but younger children gave back to their church community by writing cards of appreciation to members of the Aging Together group and to the board.

Joyce attended many webinars and meetings of professional groups that helped explore ways to meet the needs of families and children. She also participated in such church events, as Widening the Circle, Sunday Morning Structure task force, and the Common Reads and also enjoyed both telling and reading stories for Sunday morning worship services.

The YREC and DRE look forward to finding ways to maintain and enhance connections to each other as we adjust to changing circumstances.



Music

Tracy Hall, Music Director



TUUC's music program adjusted to the new Zoom worship started in March 2020, as did everyone! By the summer, it was typical to include some live singers leading hymns and songs, some instrumentalists playing live, and also a significant volume of pre-recorded music. Some came in the form of music videos prepared by outside groups and artists (including a number of UU musicians who have begun recording more frequently, and sharing their work). By mid-fall, Tracy developed a practice of recording piano work in the building at a scheduled time about once per week.

The TUUC Technical Usher Team for Zoom services, combined with Rev. Clare's taking on extra tasks, has proved invaluable for making the Zoom services happen in a smooth way. And many musicians have helped in many ways with both planning and execution.



TUUC Choir continued to rehearse on Zoom on Thursday evenings. That involved singing while muted, having social time and learning about the recording process for virtual projects. A little before Christmas, the choir did their first audio-only virtual recordings that were edited by Tracy and they have continued to do this throughout the year. Tony Bonta included the choir in a Christmas video of a John Lennon song, and edited that video himself. Sharen Camille Becker and her son Rainer also did some recording and editing.

During the summer and throughout the year, Tony contributed a number of videos that he prepared with various musical friends (special thanks to Jay Herzog and Jane Chase!) Tracy Hall helped with many Vespers services, by offering guided meditations, helping to select music or leading singing.



Keeping all the musical needs covered proved to be quite demanding, so Steve Finner helped out by covering musical coordination while Tracy had a two week leave of absence in early October.

Tracy held a small outdoor drum circle in late October.

The Music Committee, headed by Donn Teubner-Rhodes, continued to meet virtually throughout the year. The Committee discussed the many complexities of trying to make music virtually, and of how and when it might be safe to begin making music together again. That remains to be seen.

The Music Committee offered a gift basket with an Italian theme that included musical recordings and gifts, as well as many home-made food items, for the TUUC Annual Auction in November. Judi Clague delivered the basket to the winner Marilyn Maze.

Choir members and several other musicians helped lead a holiday sing-along on a Saturday in December with a variety of formats.



The TUUC Variety Show coordinated by Andrew Hager and assisted by Tracy Hall with technical help from Sue Royer and others was held on April 10th. A fun night for all!

As of this writing, TUUC choir and other musicians are preparing for Special Music Sunday on June 6th, 2021.

Many thanks go to musicians who have helped lead, record, or present music throughout the year on Zoom, including but not limited to: Deborah “Spice” Kleinmann, Tony Bonta (and friends!), Donn Teubner-Rhodes, Patty Barry, Judi Clague, Steve Finner, Liz Boniface, Dominique Hall, Luke Williams, Lelane Schmitt, Andy Peterson, Ellie Hughes, the TUUC Choir, and many others.



House & Grounds

Todd Robertson, Chair

The past year has been an unusual one by any standards. While the congregation has not been able to use the building itself for services and nearly all activities, things have still been happening. With proper pandemic precautions in place we have hosted three of the most successful blood drives in our history for the American Red Cross. Some groups have been able to use the property for distanced meetings in the parking lot, on the patio or in the Cherry Grove. We have recently instituted a bathroom use procedure for these outdoor meetings. The Memorial Garden has remained open for guests, members and visitors. Staff have been able to use the facility as needed to support our virtual ministry.

Work is ongoing to address air quality issues in the office spaces on both floors.



Due to a variety of factors including lack of group access to the buildings, weather difficulties, and our largely virtual programming, work party attendance has been significantly down despite the continued needs to maintain the grounds. However, there have been two major successes.

Water flow off of the hill above the church, particularly in the area of the turn-around has been a significant problem, some years resulting in tremendous ice build up in this area of the parking lot. Through the diligent work of Janet Schollenberger of the Grounds Team and Green Sanctuary Committee in spearheading grant research and application, TUUC was able to secure over \$6,000 through a 70/30 grant from the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy's Clear Creeks Project to build a micro-bioretenion area or MBR. Similar to a rain garden, only larger, this MBR will help control runoff from almost 48,000 SF including close to 7,000 SF of impervious surface on Long Quarters Court. Thanks also to Carel Hedlund and the Green Sanctuary Committee for providing design input and guidance.

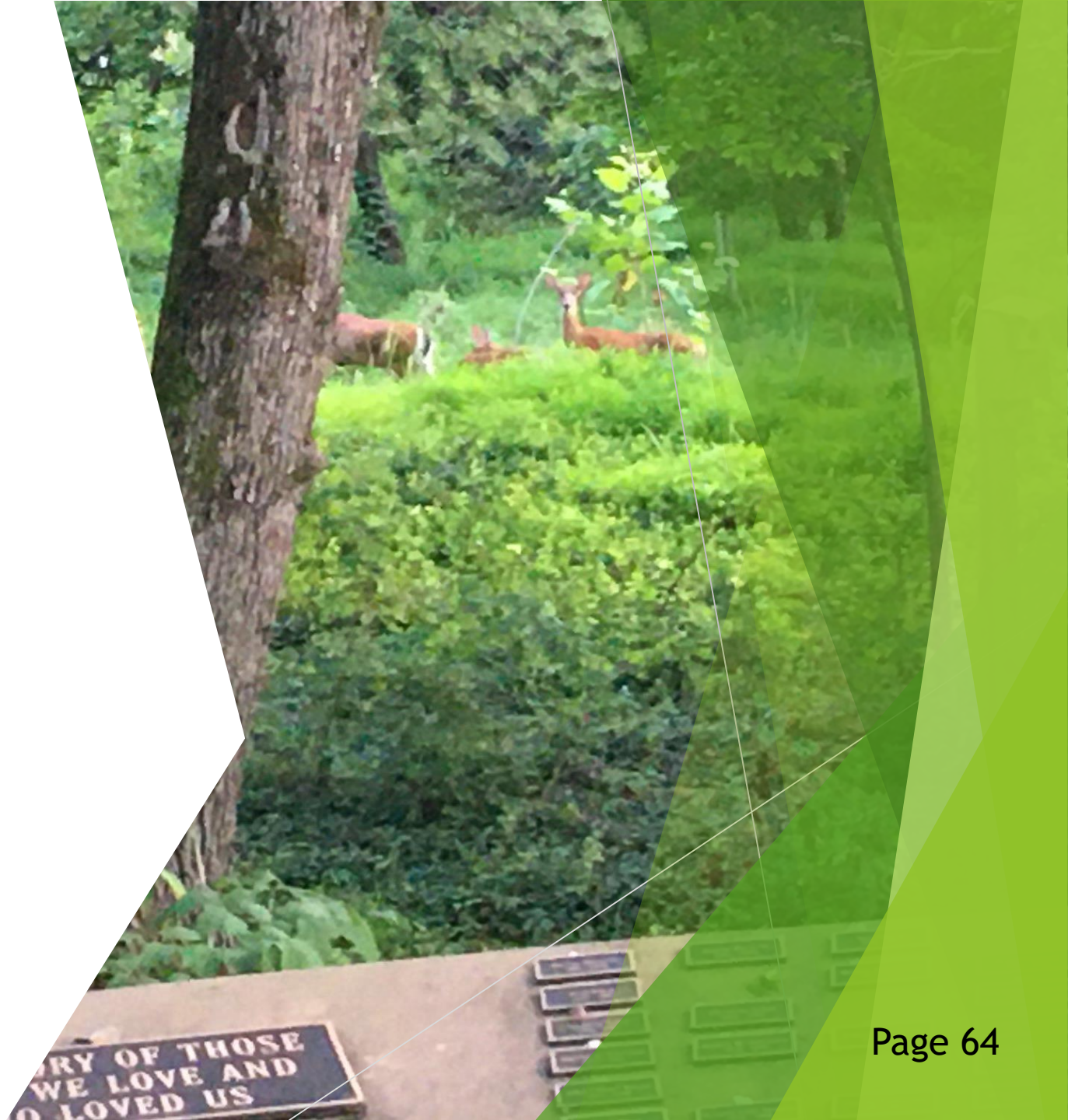
<https://www.towsonuuc.org/house-and-grounds>



Sebastian Gordillo chose TUUC to complete his community service project towards his Eagle Scout rank. His planning and leadership resulted in cleaning, beautifying and improving the Memorial Garden and surrounding area, the Thoreau Meadow and Meditation Area and other areas of the grounds. Thanks to all of the members and parent of BSA Troop 35 from The Church of the Redeemer on Charles Street for their wonderful effort and teamwork.



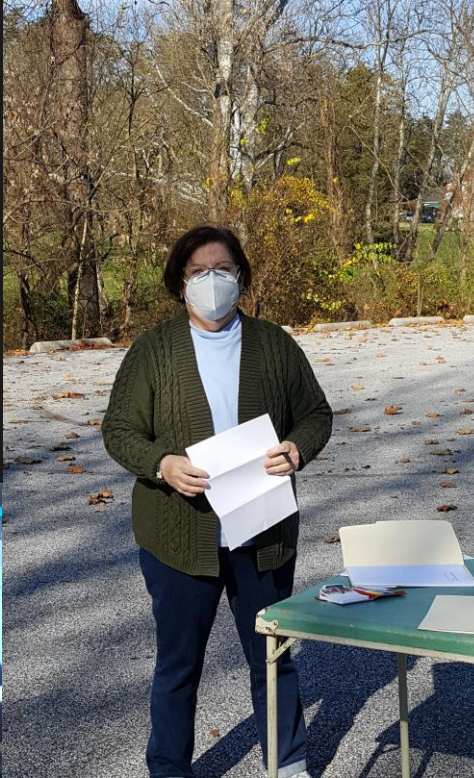
Finally, this marks the final annual report for Todd as House and Grounds member of the Administrative Team. Todd has held the House and Grounds chair position for more than 9 years. He has learned far more than he ever wanted about asphalt and budgeting. But has also been rewarded with early morning deer herds in the mist in the parking lot and through working with and getting to know so many amazing people. He could not have accomplished everything without being part of this wonderful community. Rest assured, his work on the grounds isn't anywhere near done. So he hopes to see you all at one of our third Saturday work parties in the coming year.



#Beloved Community

#Commitment





#Beloved Community #Commitment





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