



Towson Unitarian Universalist Church

2021–2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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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.



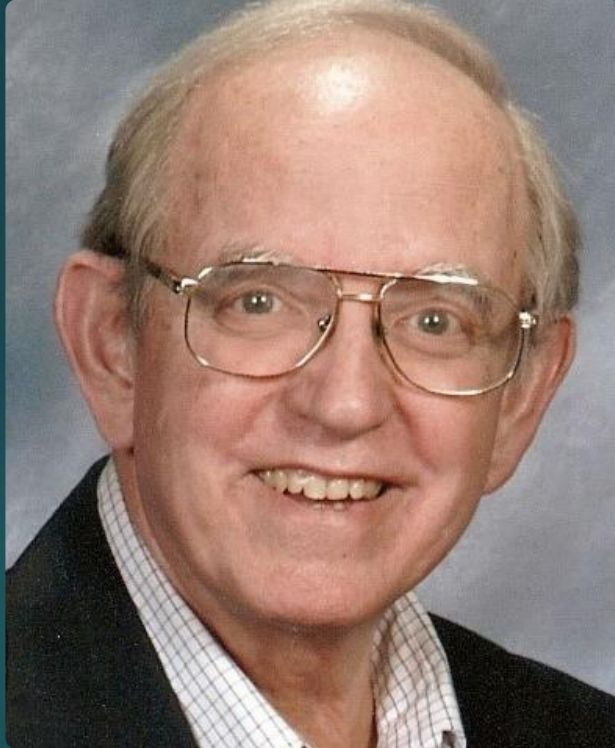
From Your Minister
The Reverend
Clare L. Petersberger

Rites Of Passage In A Second Year Of Pandemic

We headed into the 2021–2022 church year with great hope that, thanks to Covid vaccines, we would finally be gathering safely again in person.

As the comedian Jim Gaffigan said, “Remember when we thought Covid was over? That one day in July was really nice!” In spite of the variants that came after July, we celebrated rites of passage in person and online.

In Memoriam



Al Peabody
September 18, 2021
Via Zoom



Dick Scholle
October 16, 2021
Peaceful Alternatives



Bette Thomson
May 14, 2022
TUUC Meeting Room

In Memoriam



Dr. William Reichel
June 11, 2022
multi-platform celebration



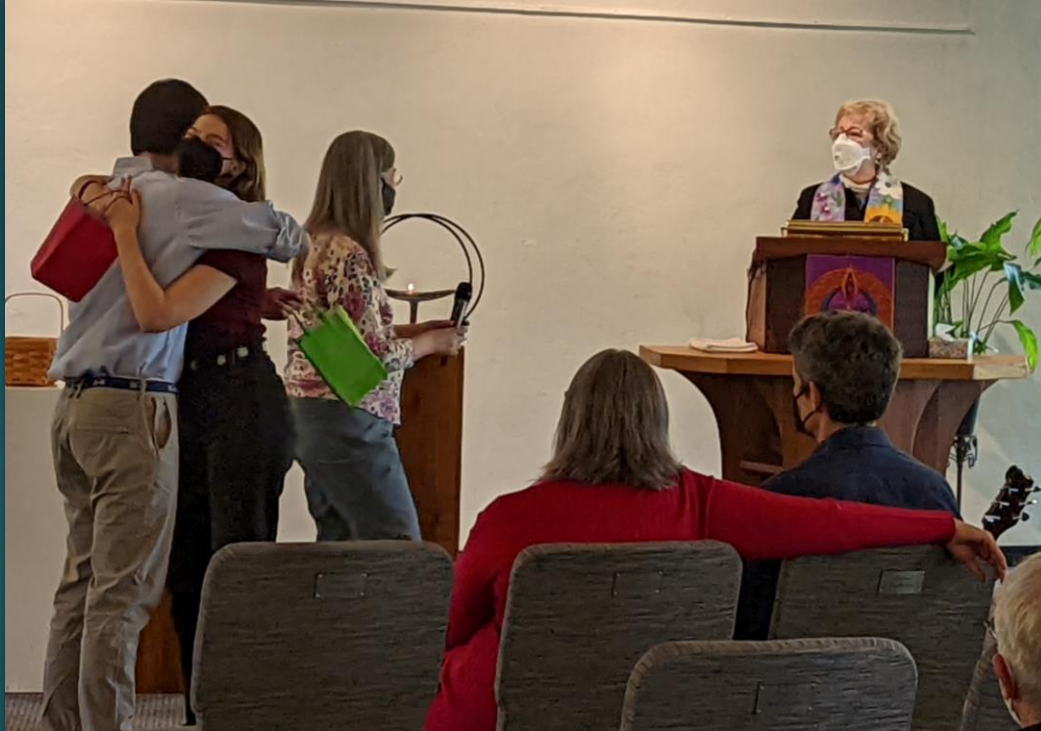
Nancy Hannah
June 25, 2022
multi-platform celebration



Outdoor Wedding of
Clay Condol and Nicole Hebert
November 10, 2021



Bridging Of Our High School Seniors



Brady Mahoney
Class of 2022



Robin Azzam
Class of 2022



We bid a fond farewell to cherished members who moved:
Robin Sinn, Liz and Tim Boniface, Steve Finner,
Janet Schollenberger, and Wendell Finner.



Ministry In A Time Of Ongoing 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....*

Reopening for Worship

A primary way we do this is through worship. Following a rich summer online series offered by Lay Worship Associates on what it means to be a people of play, we gathered in person, outside in the Memorial Garden, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of 9/11.





Our one Sunday morning worship service continued to draw on the resources of Soul Matters. The focus of Soul Matters themes turned to putting our values in action this year. We explored the challenges and adventures of embracing possibility, cultivating relationship, holding history, opening to joy, living with intention, widening the circle, renewing faith, awakening, nurturing beauty, and celebrating blessings. I continued as a member of Marcia McFee's Worship Design Studio which offered resources as we transitioned from online to multi-platform worship.

Thanks to Joyce Duncan and the YRE Committee, we had a wonderful solstice celebration that was recorded outside during an outdoor family gathering in the fall.



Thanks to the hard work of many people, and the support of the congregation, we held our first multi-platform worship service on March 6, 2022 in our new chairs with plaques honoring loved ones! We engaged in a ritual of sharing a symbol of something we could not wait to be rid of from the pandemic and a symbol of something we discovered we wanted to bring forward.

Here was our fabulous in-person tech team on that auspicious day (Sue Royer, Mike Tierney, and Dick Wobus!) And many thanks to Marilyn Maze, Jeff Savoye, and Jenny Hare for serving as Zoom chat hosts.





Gratitude to our Music Director, Tracy Hall, the TUUC Choir, and our talented soloists and instrumentalists for enriching worship both when we were on Zoom and when we gathered again in the building.

Gratitude to our Lay Worship Associates: Dominique Hall, Andrew Hager, Sharyn Rhodes, Nancy Caswell and Michael Magrogan (and to Steve Finner before he moved!) for providing meaningful lay worship services.

Our Choir sang in person for the first time since March 8, 2020, on Easter 2022.

TUUC Ordains The Reverend Karyn Bergmann Marsh!

Congratulations to The Reverend Karyn Bergmann Marsh and to the Towson Unitarian Universalist Church for Rev. Karyn's beautiful, moving, and inspiring service of ordination on May 7, 2022!!!!!!



Photo by Karla Peterson



Photo by Reverend Lynn Cox



Photo by Reverend Sofia Betancourt

The Reverend Karyn Bergmann Marsh has been serving as TUUC's Affiliate Community Minister since the fall. She works as a Resident Chaplain at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. She has offered a worship service and two trainings for TUUC Lay Pastoral Associates. TUUC members are part of a committee that will assist Karyn in moving from Preliminary Fellowship to Full Fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association over the next two years.

TUUC will serve as a teaching congregation for the next two years. With the approval of the TUUC Board, SarahRuth Davis will be our half time Ministerial Intern as part of her seminary training at Meadville Lombard Theological School. SarahRuth's home congregation is the UU Congregation of Annapolis. She brings with her experience advocating for accessibility for people who are differently abled as well as a commitment to community organizing. We look forward to welcoming SarahRuth Davis!

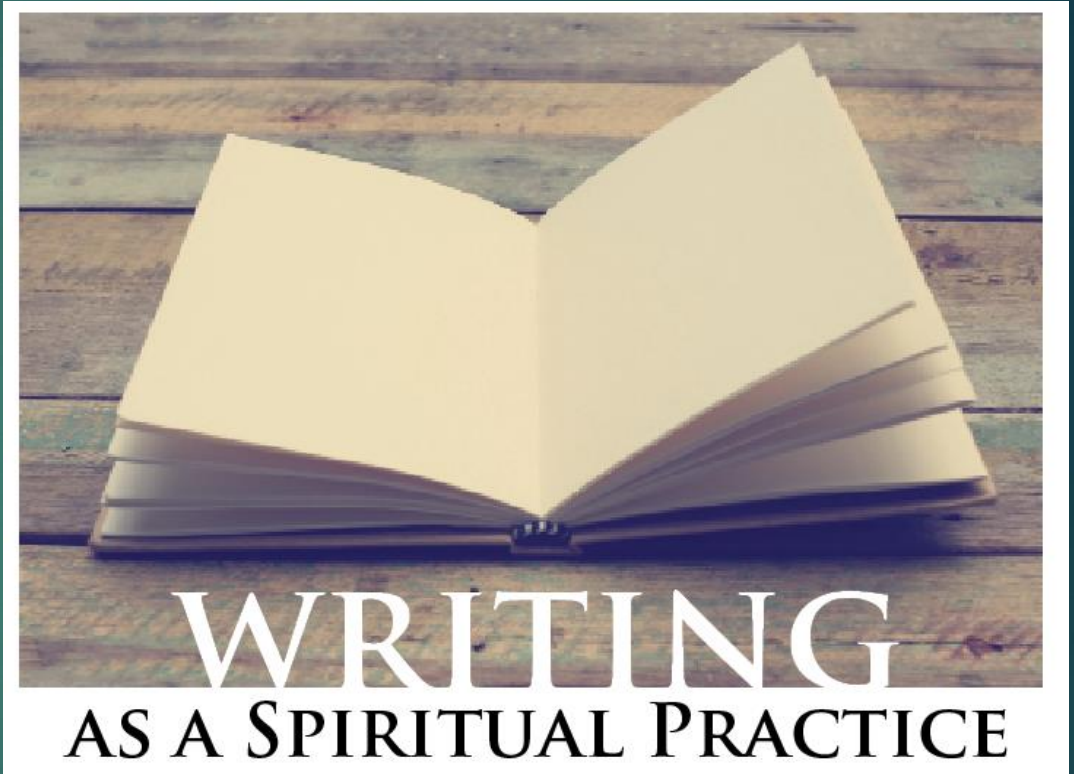
Soul Matters Sharing Circles

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 Nancy Caswell facilitated the other. We averaged a total of 14 participants who met twice a month to explore the Soul Matters themes in more depth through a spiritual practice and question for reflection.

Membership

Our Membership Committee adapted a Soul Matters curriculum to help orient people to our faith community through small group experiences in which each person shares their own faith journey while getting to know others. In this way, we practice what binds us together as Unitarian Universalists: right relationships. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in two of the ten sessions offered by Patty Barry and Art Starr.

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 pm on Fridays. A dedicated core group of 7 – 8 joined. We have discussed sharing some of our writings in a worship service in the fall.





The Towson Unitarian Universalist Church helped to field test a curriculum by The Reverend Karen Johnston, “Date With Death Club.” Who wanted to explore mortality in community during a pandemic? It turns out, 18 – 22 members and friends did! We explored six of the thirteen sessions, and Rev. Karen is very grateful for the feedback provided.

Another way we deepen our ethical and spiritual lives is through caring for one another. It was particularly challenging to maintain a sense of connection during the second year of the pandemic! In January, I sent out a pastoral letter through Breeze asking people how they were doing. I was heartened by the 79 responses I received, from a first time to visitor to a former member who had moved away. And I was grateful to the Membership Committee for following up with phone calls to all members before we reopened in March. I made a total of 152 calls, Zoom visits, emails, and in-person visits.

I enjoyed connecting with several TUUC members during Coffee With The Minister from noon – 1pm on Tuesdays through February. And I'm grateful to Lisa Lubomski for organizing meals for members recuperating from illnesses and surgeries! I'm also grateful to the Lay Pastoral Associates: Ann Beezley, Mary Beth Brizzolara, Mimi Marks, Nancy Mears, Lila Wisotzki, and The Rev. Karyn Marsh for their outreach as Lay Pastoral Associates.



Leadership

Heartfelt thanks to Sue Royer, President of the Board of Trustees, and to the entire Board for their leadership, which has focused on “the big picture.” Sue introduced the practice of rounds in Board meetings which ensures that everyone has a chance to speak. She balances attention to detail with a sense of humor that have been invaluable during these past two years. Sue is dedicated, hard working, and grounded. TUUC has been so fortunate to have her leadership—especially in a time of uncertainty and transition. Deep gratitude to Andrew Hager, who in addition to serving as President-elect has also been Chairing the Program Council and thanks to the entire Program Council. We are fortunate to have such committed, visionary, and spirited leadership!



We lifted up our work for racial, social, and environmental justice in worship this year. Rather than simply take a special collection for our community partners, we dedicated the September 19th worship service to Out For Justice, and Nicole Hansen spoke; the November 14th worship service to Earl's Place, and Sheila Helgerson and Mr. Carter and Mr. Boyce spoke; and our January 16th worship service to Mentoring Male Teens In The Hood, and Patty Barry shared the experience of serving as a mentor. We will be lifting up the work of the Assistance Center of Towson Churches in the June 16 worship service.

I am looking forward to delivering the auction sermon on Critical Race Theory on June 12th before we take a vote on the 8th Principle at our Annual Congregational Meeting.

At the invitation of The Rev. David Carl Olsen, I began attending meetings of the clergy who are part of BRIDGE Maryland, which uses intentional relationship building, organizing and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world. I am encouraging TUUC to become involved with BRIDGE in the coming year.

I attended a clergy breakfast for the Assistance Center of Towson Churches; the annual meeting of ACTC; and participated in a listening session for the future of ACTC.

I continue to participate in an ecumenical clergy group that meets monthly for spiritual deepening.

In January, I participated in a two-day retreat hosted by the newly forming “Spiritual Alliance of Communities for Reproductive Dignity.” This organization hopes to educate members of faith communities about reproductive justice. Given that the Supreme Court is overturning *Roe v. Wade*, it is going to be critical for more people of different faiths to speak up and become activists for reproductive justice. I took a four-hour training for the seven session adult religious education curriculum created by SACReD. I look forward to offering it at TUUC in the fall.

Denomination

In addition to attending virtual Ministry Days and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly last June, I participated in a local collegial cluster group and meetings of the Chesapeake UU Ministers Chapter. Through a process of sociocracy, I was elected to serve as one of two Good Officers for the Chesapeake chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.

It is the responsibility of the Good Officer to incarnate collegiality in the concrete situations where the living tradition of the liberal ministry is at stake.

- The Good Officer helps ministers when we're in tension with each other.
- The Good Officer helps ministers when we're in tension with the institutions we serve.
- The Good Officer helps ministers when we're in tension with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

It is an honor to serve in this role.

Concluding Thoughts

This has been a particularly challenging year, with dashed expectations of leaving Covid behind; waiting through Delta and the first wave of Omicron to regather in person; learning new technology; and discovering, together, new ways of doing and being a religious community. We continue to learn what it means to be a faith community in this, if not post-pandemic, then endemic Covid world which is in need of so much healing and peace. Looking ahead, I hear, in my head, the words that The Reverend David Carl Olsen sang during the laying on of hands at the ordination of The Reverend Karyn Marsh:

*“By will, by grace, by happenstance, by plan
we find ourselves a community of hope, hope in our future,
in the faith we are finding now,
hope in our resilience, our capacity to change,
hope in all that grounds us, gives us life, and gives us now,
hope in our intentions, our direction, and our acts.....
By will, by grace, by happenstance, by plan
we find ourselves a beloved community.”*

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Clare



Board of Trustees

2021-2022 REPORT

Introduction

As of this report, the Board has met ten times this church year. The Board met virtually (via Zoom), 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 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. Actively work to be more accessible to people with disabilities.

Open Questions

The Board considered three open questions during this year:

1. How can we strengthen our work and give congregants the tools to dismantle white supremacy, in ourselves, our church, and around us? How can we carry out recommendations from Widening the Circle of Concern?
2. How can we cultivate a thriving Young Adult community at TUUC? (Young Adults defined as ages 18–35)
3. What changes do we need to make to our approach to racial, social, and environmental justice actions? How can we provide opportunities for meaningful engagement in justice actions for more people, including youth, newcomers, and those not on a committee?

Board Goals

The Board decided on these goals for the year:

1. Update the Ministerial Agreement between Rev. Clare and the church
2. Lead the charge to adopt the 8th Principle as a congregation
3. Enable and support the Right Relations Team

The Ministerial Agreement between Reverend Clare Petersberger and TUUC was updated, approved by the Board, and then signed on November 2, 2021. This agreement was based on a template provided by the UU Ministers Association. Our work on this agreement called attention to TUUC's benefits policies, in that we were not contributing toward dental insurance premiums for Rev. Clare (or for non-clergy staff). The Board approved a change so that we are now providing partial dental insurance coverage for Rev. Clare and for non-clergy staff who qualify for benefits. The Board encourages Rev. Clare to continue to work on the proper balance between work and time-off.

The Board held multiple listening sessions this year on the 8th Principle, and we formed an 8th Principle team, led by President-Elect Andrew Hager. We've approved a resolution to adopt the 8th Principle and will send it to members of the church prior to the annual meeting on June 12.

The Right Relations Team met several times and proposed a revised Conflict Resolution Policy, which the Board has approved.

Church As Employer

After a search process leveraging the UUA network of congregation presidents, we hired Arkady Thompson to serve as TUUC's part-time Bookkeeper, effective November 1, 2021. Arkady and her family live in New Jersey; she was already working as a bookkeeper for another UU church. TUUC filed appropriate forms with the State of New Jersey, since we now have an employee who lives and works in that state. Arkady works remotely 100% of the time. We're glad to have her on board!



Arkady Thompson
bookkeeper@towsonuuc.org

Church As Employer (Continued)

Joyce Duncan, our Credential Director of Religious Education, has announced her plan to retire at the end of this church year. Joyce has served this congregation for 18 years and has touched the lives of many families. We honored Joyce with gifts, speeches, photo memories, and our first post-pandemic pot luck on May 15! We wish her the best in her retirement.

A search committee for a new Director of Religious Exploration has been formed and has started their work. The goal is to have a 20-hour-per-week position filled by September 1. The Youth RE Committee is planning fall programming. The Board thanks Ellie Hughes (Chair), Larry Magder, Angela Castillo-Epps, and Lou Geiszl for serving on the search committee. The Board thanks Karen Fireman, who is stepping down from the YRE Committee Chair position after several years of committed service!

With Music Director Tracy Hall being out due to illness/injury for May and June, the Board has supported Rev. Clare in the hiring of music professionals as contractors to fill in as accompanists and, to direct the choir for the ordination service.



Governance

The Board of Trustees:

- Approved Karyn Marsh as an Affiliate Community Minister in October, 2021. TUUC has an affiliation agreement in place with Karyn, in accordance with guidelines provided by the UUA. Karyn's work is primarily as a chaplain resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She is not being paid by TUUC.
- Approved engaging with SarahRuth Davis, who is a Seminarian at Meadville Lombard Theological School and lives in Annapolis, to serve as a Ministerial Intern at TUUC starting in the Fall of 2022.
- Approved applying for forgiveness for both of TUUC's Paycheck Protection Program Loans. Both were forgiven in full, on June 21, 2021 and October 22, 2021.
- Reviewed and approved contracts, which were then signed by the Board President on behalf of the church, including for janitorial services, for streaming equipment for multi-platform ministry, for a network and phone upgrade, and for a new exterior sign.
- Completed our annual UUA certification.
- Conducted a joint ministry evaluation (Board and Reverend Clare).
- Approved a proposed FY 22 –23 budget.

Endowment

The Endowment Committee submitted quarterly reports to the Board and twice recommended changes to our asset allocation:

- 3Q21: transfer \$40K from the Vanguard S&P 500 Index Fund Admiral to the Vanguard Intermediate-Term Corporate Bond Index Fund Admiral Shares
- 2Q22: transfer \$30K from the Vanguard S&P 500 Index Fund Admiral to Cash

This was based on the recommendation that the Endowment have roughly three years of anticipated distributions available in cash or short-term bond investments. Both recommendations were accepted and approved by the Board. In accordance with our approved budget, funds were transferred from the Endowment to TUUC's operating accounts each quarter.

Claudia Sumler joined the Endowment Committee in September, 2021. Kristel Donner joined the Endowment Committee in January, 2022. The Board thanks John Barry (Chair), Marilyn Maze, Claudia and Kristel, ex-officio members Wendell Finner and Dan Alper, and those who served before moving away: Tim Boniface and Steve Finner.

Endowment (Continued)

The share of the Endowment in socially-responsible investing is 33.8%.

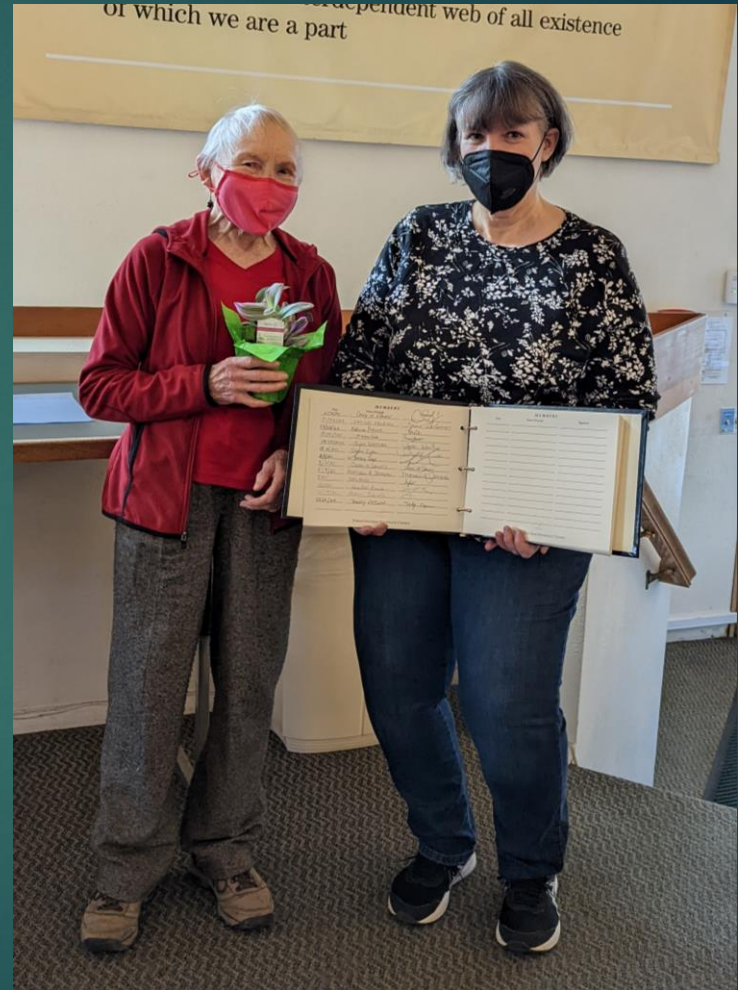
In addition to the two funds mentioned above, the TUUC Endowment is also invested in the Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund Admiral, the Vanguard Total International Index Fund Admiral, and the Schwab US Small Cap ETF.

Date	6/30/2021	9/30/2021	12/31/2021	3/31/2022
Value of the Endowment	\$1,283,827	\$1,287,032	\$1,350,202	\$1,258,629

Membership

The Membership Committee led the four-session Our Journey Together program several times. This is an orientation program for newcomers that guides participants through small-group participation to help them become involved and committed. These sessions were well-received!

During this year, the following new members joined TUUC: Jennifer Erwin, Apua Paquola, David Haupt, Trudy Pojman, Sarita Olson. Welcome! We're so glad you are here!



Membership (Continued)

In the winter, the Membership Committee enlisted additional volunteers to make phone calls to connect with current members. Recognizing that some in our community were not feeling connected, the attempt was made to contact every member of TUUC, whether or not they have been attending services on Zoom.

The Board thanks Patty Barry (Chair), Clare Flynn-Avallone, Anita Cox, Art Starr, Dominique Hall, and Rev. Clare for serving.



Nominating

The Nominating Committee met multiple times and, with President-Elect Andrew Hager serving as Board Liaison, identified and contacted candidates for positions. The Nominating Committee has a full slate of qualified candidates who have agreed to serve next year.

The Board thanks Andrew Hager (Board Liaison/Chair), Jane D'Ambrogi, Nina Della Vecchia, and Marilyn Carlisle for serving.

Ordination

In FY 20–21, the Board established a committee to plan and conduct fundraising for the ordination of our very own Karyn Bergmann Marsh. The committee continued their work this year, working with Karyn to plan for the ordination, send invitations to local clergy and invited speakers, and plan the reception, a gift from the congregation, and a dinner. Over \$5000 was raised to cover the expenses of the ordination.

On May 7, we had the honor and privilege of ordaining the Reverend Karyn Bergmann Marsh!

The Board thanks Samantha Saalfield (Chair), MaryBeth Brizzolara, Bess Hauf, Lila Wisotzki, and Rev. Clare for serving.



Personnel

The Personnel Committee helped with the hiring of Arkady Thompson as our Bookkeeper, and reviewed our Personnel Manual and Employee Handbook. With Rev. Clare, they chose an updated Personnel Manual template provided by the UUA, asked for Board guidance on several matters, and then worked to update our manual based on the UUA template. They also conducted a benefits tune-up using the UUA workbook.

The Personnel Committee made salary and benefits recommendations for staff to the Board as part of the budget input process, and will be supporting the DRE search process.

The Board thanks Rob Canosa, Tracey Myers-Preston, and Ellie Hughes for serving.

Right Relations

The newly-formed Right Relations Team examined TUUC's current conflict resolution policy and the guidance provided by the Board in its governance policy. The team proposed a revised conflict resolution policy, which the Board has approved. The next steps are to make the congregation aware of the team, publish the updated policy, and train additional persons on processes which support our right relations efforts.

The Board thanks Lou Gieszl (Chair), Sue Walker, and MaryBeth Brizzolara for serving.

Stewardship

The theme of our Stewardship campaign was **Gather Our Gifts**.

Our logo was designed by Edith Roundy!



The Board chose these focus areas for our campaign:

- gathering in person at church for worship, while concurrently opening our online doors by streaming from the meeting room, leveraging new equipment and an upgraded network.
- actively working to be more accessible to people with disabilities.
- a congregation fully living into our mission to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives together as we work for racial, social, and environmental justice.

We heard testimonials during Sunday services in February and March from Marianne DeBow, Rob & Roslyn Canosa, Sue Royer, Jennifer Erwin, Andrew Hager, and Lois Hybl.

We have received pledges from 138 households, totaling \$280,133. We appreciate every pledge! Thank you!

Average Pledge	\$2,028.50
Mean Pledge	\$1,144.01
Median Pledge	\$1,200.00

The Board thanks Sue Royer (Chair), Susan Riggs, Samantha Saalfield, Sue Walker, Judi Clague, MaryEllen Haisfield-Wolfe, Karin Symonds, and Nancy Mears for serving.

Administrative Team (A-Team)

2021–2022 REPORT

The Administrative Team worked on and completed multiple big projects this year! The culmination of several of these projects put us in a position to deliver multi-platform worship services and to safely reopen the building for in-person services after two years.



A-Team Introduction

The A-Team worked on several major projects this year, including the Dander Remediation project, Multi-platform Ministry, the Network and Phone Upgrade, and new signage. Details on these projects are on the following slides.

We created and published a reopening plan and Covid matrix (thanks to Ellie Hughes for her help with the Covid Matrix!)

The A-Team hired a forensic accountant to help us to reconcile our books.

And Finance Head Dan Alper sought a tax exemption for TUUC property we had been gifted and were paying taxes on for over two decades. This property includes our playground. Dan's persistence paid off! We received notice of our tax exemption!

The A-Team adopted a new operational policy for acknowledging gifts to TUUC.

Dander Remediation Project – Completed!

Thanks to the leadership and hard work of our Church Administrator, Kai Aiyetoro, the Dander Remediation Project was completed. She deserves a gold star for this project! The project had benefits in terms of improving the interior air quality at the church.

Major tasks included:

- Moving all furniture and contents out of the offices on the main and lower levels
- Removing the carpet from the offices
- Pest treatment with a new provider to address ant fracas in the main office
- A deep cleaning of the offices, including the walls
- Painting the office walls, installing new vinyl plank flooring
- Cleaning the ductwork for the entire building
- Installing iWave ionization devices on our three furnaces. They reduce certain viruses and bacteria in the air that passes through our air handling systems. This benefits the entire building
- Addressing some issues with one of our furnaces, caused by a frozen coil, including replacing a blower motor and insulating the outside air intake tubes.
- Moving furniture and contents back into the offices, while taking the opportunity to sort through and find new homes for some pieces and some documents and books.

Thank you to Kai Aiyetoro, Todd Robertson, Dan Alper, Clare Flynn-Avallone, Rev. Clare, Joyce Duncan, Tracy Hall, and Sue Royer.

Multi-platform Ministry

During the time that our building was closed for services, TUUC made the decision to offer multi-platform services as part of our plan to safely reopen. Multi-platform means that congregants can attend either in-person or online. In addition to being able to watch services, we wanted congregants to be able to speak or sing from their homes and be heard in the meeting room. A team sought and evaluated proposals from three providers, and selected Armbruster A/V, a minority-owned business, to plan, install, and configure streaming equipment in the meeting room. Our new setup includes two cameras, several controllers, a powerful computer, and displays. The A/V team continues to fine-tune our process and request additional services to address specific needs.

Thank you to Sue Royer, Andy Peterson, Dick Wobus, Mike Tierney, Clare Flynn-Avallone, Kai Aiyetoro, Tracy Hall, Jay Hauf, Richard Wagner, and Tony Bonta.

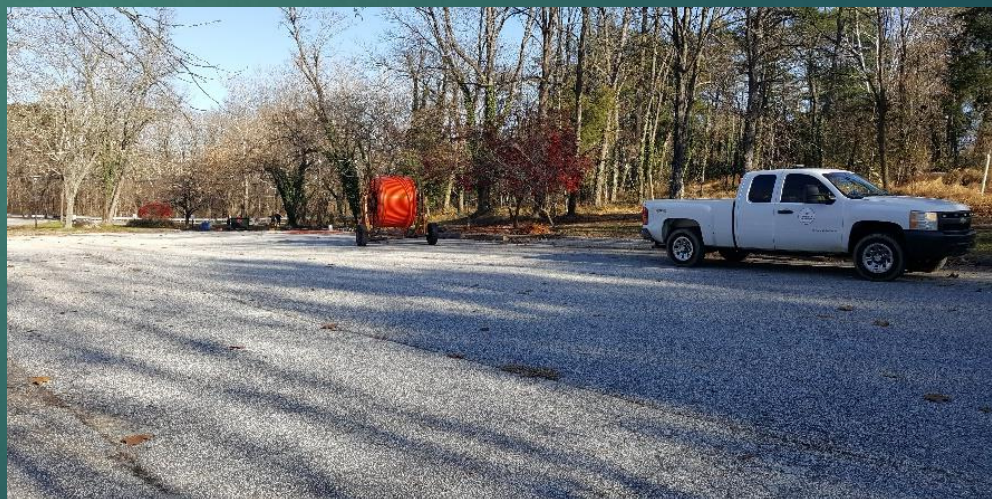


Network & Phone Upgrade

As part of our plan to offer multi-platform worship services, we followed up with Verizon regarding the availability of FIOS to the church. Multiple phone calls and site visits resulted in Verizon installing FIOS 1 Gigabyte service to our building. As we planned to upgrade to that super-fast internet service, we considered other related improvements that TUUC might want to pursue, including purchasing our own router, improving our Wi-Fi access points on the main and lower levels, and leveraging Voice Over IP (VOIP) phone equipment and services instead of leasing multiple “phone lines” from Verizon.



Above: Rack with networking equipment being installed



Above: Verizon's contractor pulling cable for the FIOS service

Network & Phone Upgrade

With the approval of the Board and after evaluating two proposals, we hired Quality Business Solutions to install and configure a new upgraded network, including upgraded Wi-Fi access points on the main level, moving one and installing one other new access point for two on the lower level, new wiring to the office computers and phones, a new Voice over IP phone system, include handsets, and networking equipment for gateway, routing, VPN, and firewall services. Staff now have system-transcribed voice messages sent to them via email. The security system, fire alarm system, and remote access to thermostats were all configured to work after the upgrade.

Thank you to Clare Flynn-Avallone, Kai Aiyetoro, Sue Royer, Nick Troxell, and Rev. Clare Petersberger.

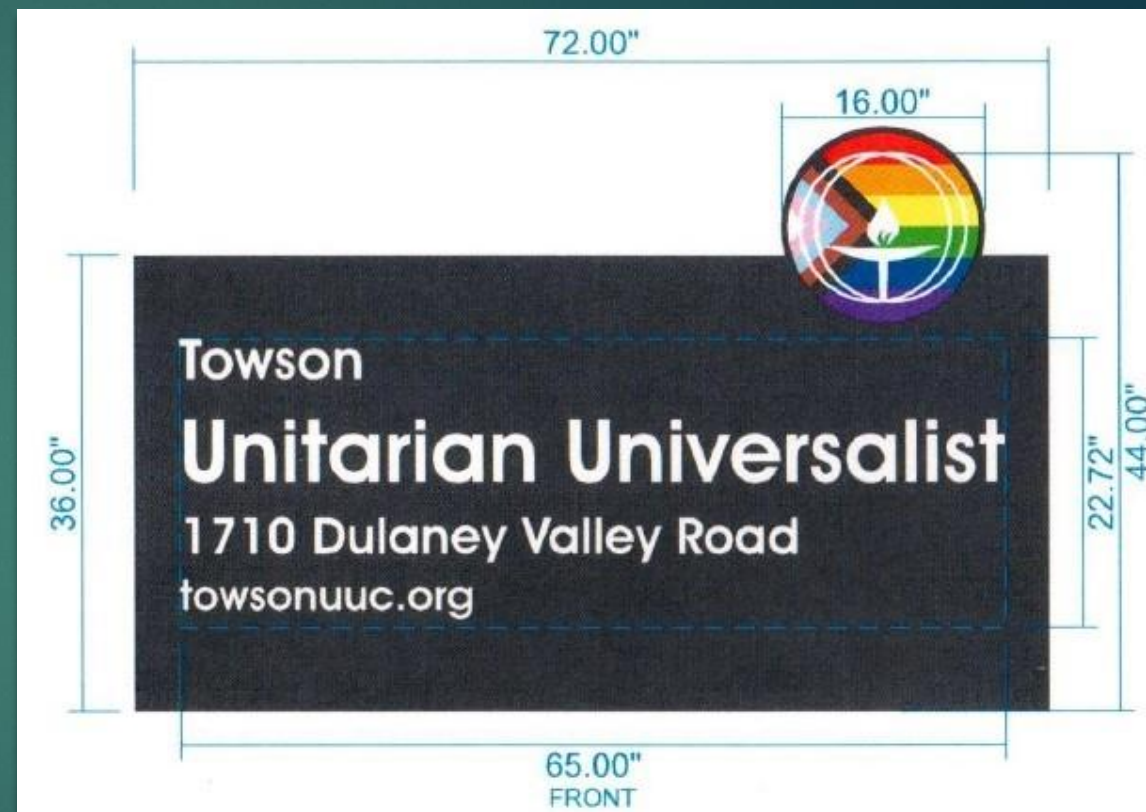


Above: Meeting Room new Wi-Fi access point

Signage

Our sign was destroyed by a car crash. We evaluated two proposals and selected a vendor to provide a new sign, which will have a colorful Progress Pride flag as the background behind a chalice.

By displaying the Progress Pride flag on our sign and in our lobby, we are widening our circle of welcome. Thank you to Kai Aiyetoro, Clare Flynn-Avallone, Dan Alper, and Rev. Clare Petersberger.



Above: Artist's rendering of our new outdoor sign (subject to change)

Regular Care

In addition to special projects, House & Grounds held a number of work parties to care for our building and grounds, and also met with contractors to resolve issues. Tasks included:

- Checking and changing the furnace filters monthly
- Removing ivy, weeding, and general clean-up outdoors
- Hanging the Progress Pride flag in the lobby
- Switching out the projector, replacing lightbulbs, and affixing plaques to the new chairs



Natalie Avallone and Clare Flynn-Avallone assisting with the projector change-out (Richard Wagner is on the ladder and not visible).



Above: House & Grounds Chair Clare Flynn-Avallone changing furnace filters

Program Council

2021–2022 Report

Members

Rev. Clare Petersberger

Kai Aiyetoro

Patty Barry

Art Starr

Joyce Duncan

Carel Hedlund

Michael Magrogan

Nancy Caswell

Todd Robertson

Karen Fireman

Charlene Rossi

Lorraine Sorbello

Philip Browne

Tracy Hall

Andrew Hager

The 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 12. Many meetings included small group time for brainstorming and planning, as well as spotlight topics, which included Youth Religious Exploration, Stewardship, the budget, and new programming proposals. The Council conducted its first ever program audit, a survey of how each committee or group serves the church's mission and vision.

The council worked hard to provide a wide range of programming to keep the church community engaged during this strange year in liminal space.

Green Sanctuary Committee

The Green Sanctuary Committee remained active, with its core group of members (approximately 8) holding monthly zoom meetings

In the summer and fall, they continued to support the gardening projects at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in East Baltimore; those activities have picked up again starting in March of 2022.

GSC also held a number of fair trade sales of coffee, candy, tea and nuts on the TUUC front porch, supporting small farmers around the world.

In January they co-sponsored (with Cabin Fever) the documentary *Kiss the Ground*, which discussed regenerative agriculture.

The Committee created the Earth Day service for April 24th on the environmental injustices imposed on and threatening Historic East Towson, a historic African-American community. The speaker, Nancy Goldring, announced her vision for a walking/cycling trail from East Towson to Hampton Historic Site, which would be an economic benefit to Towson and all populations.

Social Action Committee

The SAC started publishing regular articles in the Threshold and Facebook, which keep the congregation aware of the work done by our Social Action Community Partners. The articles highlight one organization each time, so that TUUC knows what social and racial justice efforts they are helping to support.

The Committee collected funds from TUUC donations and distributed them to Community Partners, organizations which support UU values with their activities. They promote social, racial, gender, and economic justice, by providing assistance to the hungry, urban youth, the homeless, and formerly incarcerated persons, and also work to pass laws which reflect UU values.

The SAC conducted the Social Action Sunday Service, highlighting the activities of the Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood (MMTH) program, and contributing the collection plate to them.

Our Messy Lives

Our Messy Lives, the “discussion of a word/concept” group, which meets every third Thursday from 3–4 pm, has had an ongoing, small, but enthusiastic group of participants who meet on Zoom. The group chooses the word/concept for the next month at the end of the prior month’s meeting. This year, it discussed Morality, Compassion, Diversity, Change, Resilience, Dignity, Fulfillment, Pain, Acceptance, and Idealism/Realism.

Our Messy Lives very much misses the insightful thoughts of Dick Scholle, who up to the time of his passing, added much to our discussions. The group welcomes new participants. To be added to the email list and receive Zoom Links for the meetings each month, please send an email to Zoom Host and Facilitator, Nancy Caswell. (listed in Breeze)

Socrates Cafe

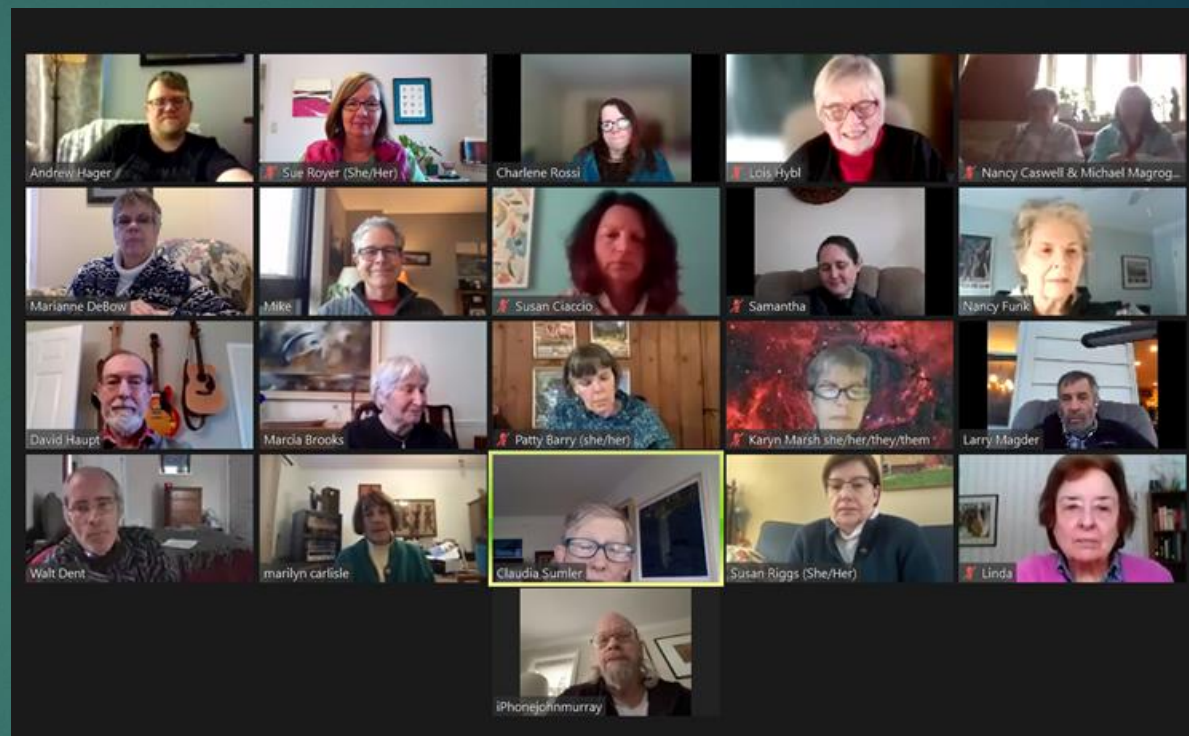
Inspired by Christopher Phillips's book *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy*, this group began meeting in September 2020. At the end of each session the group decides on a question for probing/exploring during the next month's session, as Socrates would do: embracing the question and not necessarily coming to any answers or conclusions. Socrates saw his method as a means to self-discovery.

Since December 2021, we've been examining the Seven UU Principles, one by one, as a backdrop for the proposed 8th UU Principle, in order to be better prepared for the vote on its adoption at our Annual Congregational Meeting on June 12th. The question we'll ask until July is "What does this Principle mean to us, and how are we applying it in our lives?" We welcome new participants! For more information email us at socratescafe@towsonuuc.org.

Cabin Fever

This year, the Cabin Fever movie group continued its quest to contend with a wide range of cinematic offerings in a search for truth, meaning, and entertainment. Issues examined included aging (*On Golden Pond*), mass incarceration (*13th*), sexual identity (*The Power of the Dog*), homelessness (*The Florida Project*), and the challenges of raising a puppet (*Annette*).

The group partnered with the Green Sanctuary Committee to watch the hopeful, soul-restoring documentary *Kiss the Ground*. An in-person viewing of *Hidden Figures* at TUUC was a collaboration with YRE and the 8th Principle Team.



Youth Religious Exploration

2021–2022 Report

This was another challenging year for families, children, teens, and teachers as we cycled through different formats of classes as Covid restrictions changed. The Youth Religious Exploration Committee and Joyce Duncan, DRE, planned both virtual and safe in-person experiences to maintain and build community.

In the fall, we offered outdoor sessions in the picnic grove for K- through 8th-grade kids on Sunday afternoons, based on the 7 UU principles. The DRE and one committee member planned each session. These started in September and ran through the end of November. Families enjoyed getting to know each other, and we were lucky to enjoy good weather. This group told the story of the Return of the Sun, which we recorded for use at the Winter Solstice service in December. Another notable session included an activity in honor of our 7th principle, in which children collected native materials from our grounds and used those to create ephemeral art.



In December, families were invited to attend an online holiday party, where we enjoyed a picture book, made holiday ornaments, had a scavenger hunt, and shared personal stories of our favorite ornaments. Families also participated in the Winter Solstice Sunday morning service and the Christmas eve service.

In January, we switched back to Zoom programming, using the Soul Matters packets corresponding to the monthly themes used in worship services. One member of the YREC and the DRE planned and executed these until the church reopened in physical space in mid-March. We offered opportunities for families and congregants to meet at parks (Cromwell Valley and Jerusalem Mill) on one Sunday afternoon in January and one in February, taking advantage of holiday weekends.

When the building was reopened, we set up the three rooms with windows as classrooms and organized teaching teams for three age groups, Kindergarten through 5th grade, 6th to 8th grade, and YRUU for 9th through 12th.



Parents were called on as assistants when needed as our pool of volunteers was not sufficient. The youngest class continued with the Soul Matters curriculum under leadership of Angela Castillo-Epps, Zinnia Epps, and Lisa Barnett.

Patricia Lott and Joyce taught the middle school group, using the UUA online curriculum *Heeding the Call*, which focusses on social justice.

Larry Magder joined previous youth advisors Pat Mahoney and Tom Zeller this year. YRUU met at TUUC for a bonfire in September and made plans for outdoor activities, including a hike at Oregon ridge and a work party at TUUC. About twelve teens gathered at Cromwell Valley Park in December to stuff stockings and write friendly cards for the men at Earl's Place and Prospect Place. The service-learning trip to improve housing in War, West Virginia, did not garner enough participants to happen this year.



In late April, we learned that the A-Team approved reopening the Nursery, so we reset the Nursery in Room 5 and are currently working on finding qualified childcare providers for Sunday mornings.

Members of the Youth Religious Exploration Committee, chaired by Karen Fireman, many of whom also taught classes or led groups, helped to plan additional family events, including an in-person Easter egg hunt, occasional parent meetings, and the December holiday party.

As DRE, Joyce attended webinars and meetings of professional groups that helped her explore ways to meet the needs of families and children. She also participated in the 8th Principle committee, which cosponsored two movies with YRE and Cabin Fever; provided some stories for Sunday morning worship services, including an interactive online version of Stone Soup; and assisted Rev. Clare with the Senior Bridging service and other services.

The YREC look forward to making a smooth transition to the next religious education professional.



Happy Retirement—Joyce Duncan



TUUC Music Ministry

A “Betwixt And Between” Pandemic Year For The Music Ministry

Worship and Choir rehearsals were on Zoom until the first week of March, 2022. However, the congregation experienced the beauty of Janet Kuperstein's violin at the outdoor worship service on 9/11. The Drum Circle met outside twice in the fall.

We are grateful to the talented instrumentalists and vocalists who enriched our worship services while we were in virtual space!

We were delighted to hear the Choir together through audio recordings Tracy created such as "Nay Do Not Grieve" with the TUUC Choir and Dominique Hall for October 31; "Alleluia! Sang Stars" with the Choir and Donn Teubner Rhodes in December; and "Hail O Sun" in both a minor and major key for the celebration of winter solstice! Tracy also created an Mp4 of "Earth, Water, Fire, Air" for the solstice service.



Tracy recorded Lila Wizotski singing “Going Home” for the October 31st service and “Shining Heart” with Lila Wizotski and Susan Riggs singing a duet for the December 5th worship service. And we are grateful to Sharen and Rainer Camille for their recording of “Don’t Go Back To Sleep” for Easter. The TUUC Choir and musicians offered another wonderful holiday virtual sing-along!

In both Christmas Eve services we were able to “see” the TUUC Choir singing for the first time since the pandemic began. Tracy created the video “While by My Sheep” with her new computer. We also were able to “see” Tracy and Donn Teubner-Rhodes perform “Away in a Manger.” Tracy recorded the Choir singing, “Glory to the New Born King” for the second service. The Christmas Eve services were also memorable because Grace Petrich played the harp live in the family service and Luke Williams played the trumpet live in the second service! We are grateful to Tony Bonta for his recording of “We’ll Fly Away” to honor Wendell Finner before he flew away to western Maryland!

The Choir was excited to begin rehearsing in the building again in early March of 2022! The fruit of their work was celebrated on Easter Sunday with a rousing rendition of “Jesu, Sore” an Ashanti (Ghanaian) Traditional song arranged by Fred Onovwerosuocke. The TUUC Choir enriched the service of ordination for The Reverend Karyn Marsh with their gifts of the anthem “Here I Am Lord” and Steve Finner’s “Hear Your Call.”

The May Special Music Sunday service on Nurturing Beauty, which will be dedicated to Nancy Hannah, and for which the TUUC Music Ministry received a dedicated gift, has been postponed to the fall due to Tracy Hall’s recovery from a late April fall. Subsequently, the TUUC Choir requested a sabbatical until the fall.

The congregation is grateful to all the vocalists and instrumentalists who have volunteered their talents since Tracy went out on sick leave!

The Music Committee is in need of a Chair.

