



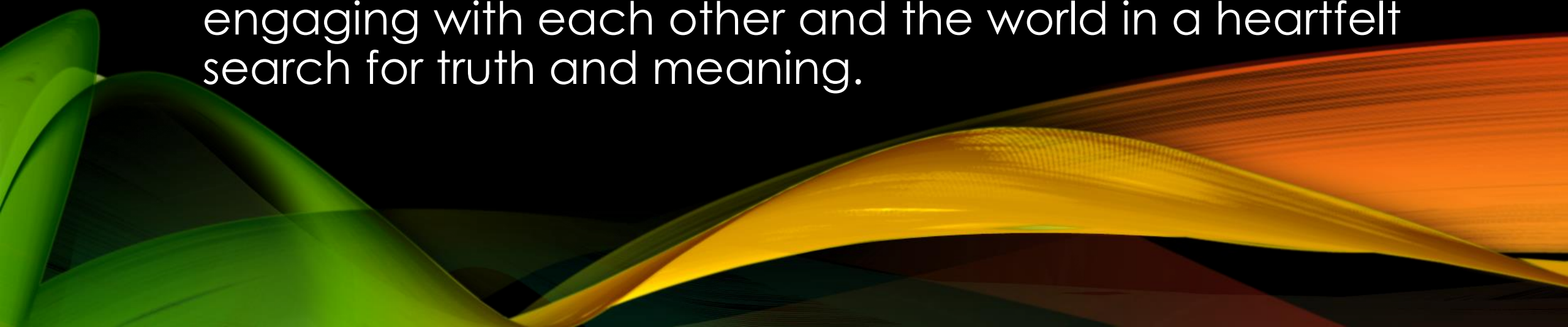
TOWSON UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

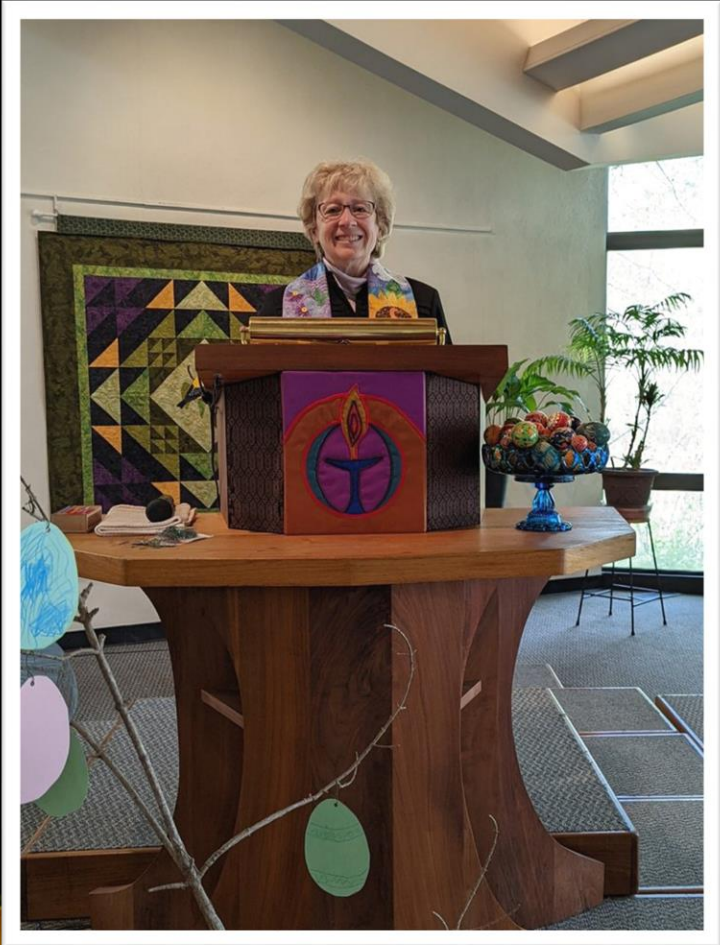
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MISSION AND VISION

- 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.
- 

REPORT FROM YOUR MINISTER



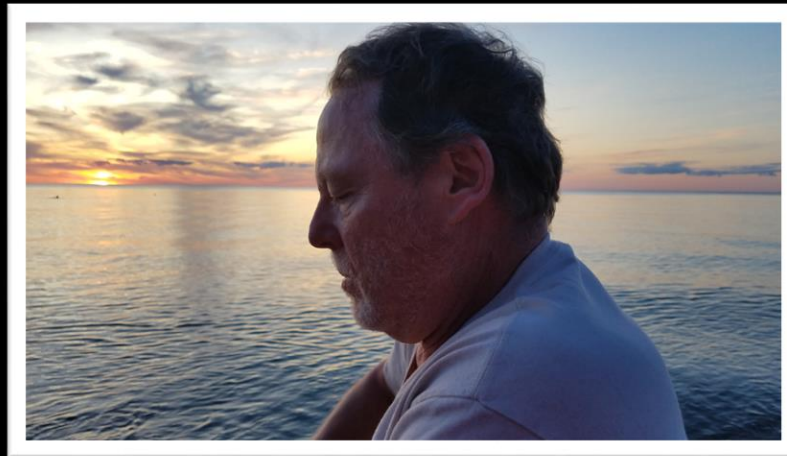
rites of passage 2022-2023



Susan Tusa, a former Board President of TUUC, died in Lacey, Washington, on August 16, 2022. I wrote a tribute to Susan that was delivered during her celebration of life in Lacey.

CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE

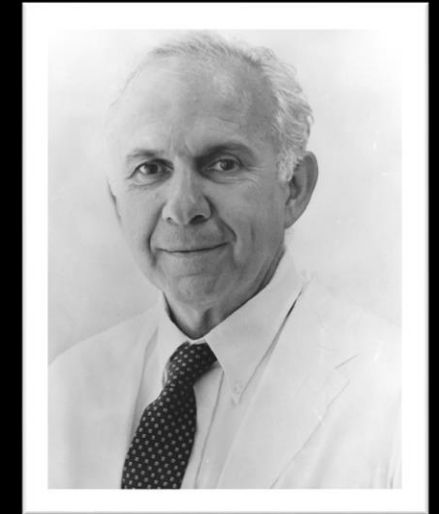
The wall of the TUUC Memorial Garden reads "In memory of those whom we love and who loved us." This was a year to remember people we love who loved us:



Jeffrey Arnstein,
September 10, 2022



Vigil for Kathy
Ramirez,
September 11, 2022

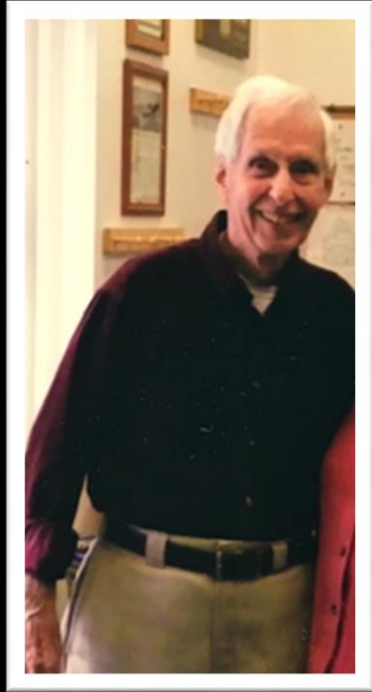


Dr. Simeon
Margolis,
September 17, 2022

CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE...



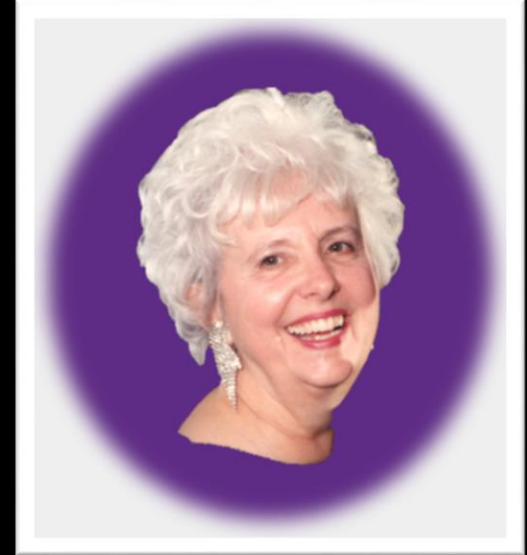
Irv Greif,
September 27, 2022
graveside service in
Churchville, MD



Andy Brizzolara,
October 20, 2022
graveside service



Eve McGovern,
October 24, 2022
Glen Meadows



Jeannie Jung,
November 5, 2022

7
CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE...



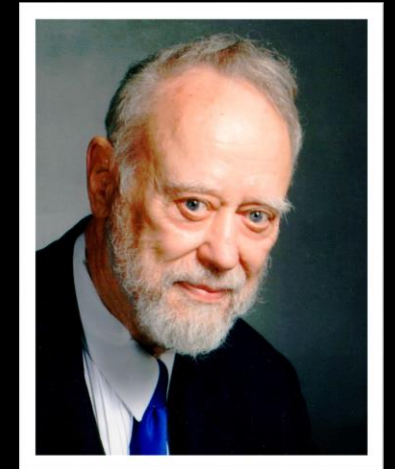
Ginny Billian,
November 12, 2022



Henri Jones,
December 6, 2022



Greg Koren,
February 4, 2022
(streamed from
Massachusetts)

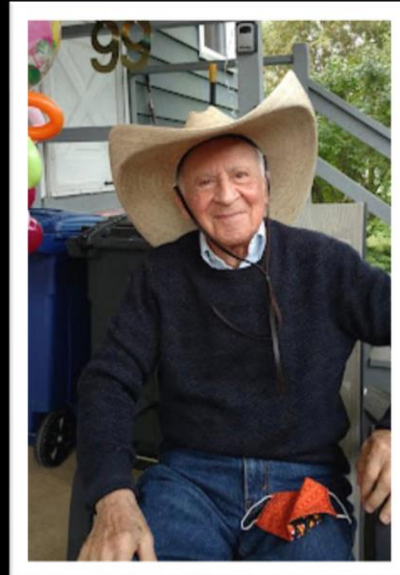


Albert Hybl,
March 11, 2023

CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE...



Charlie Lee,
April 22, 2023
graveside service



Peter Liveright
April 23, 2023
private family
service



Mimi Marks,
April 29, 2023

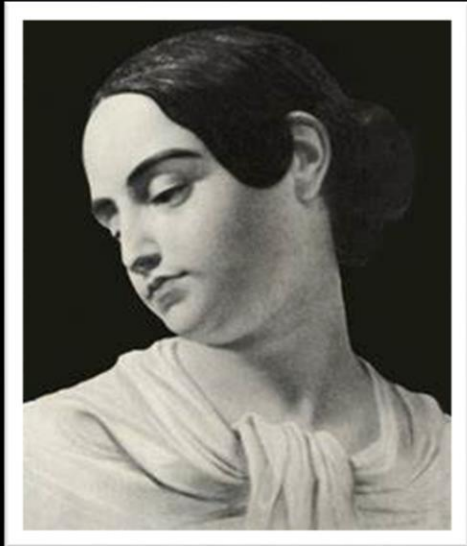


Wade Finner,
May 6, 2023
Newark, Delaware

WEDDINGS...

This was also a year to celebrate weddings for:

CONVOCATION FOR VIRGINIA POE



It was an honor to be asked, at the invitation of the Poe Society of Baltimore, to be part of the 200th anniversary celebrations in August of 2022 of the birth of Virginia Poe.



Sarah Blucher and Matt Lewis at the Baltimore Museum of Art on April 22, 2023

WEDDINGS



Dan Watters
and Nissy Liskey
at TUUC
on May 12, 2023



I am looking forward to
celebrating the wedding of
Lou Geiszl and
Eleanor Hughes
on June 18, 2023



and to celebrating the
wedding of Demian Canosa
(who was raised in TUUC!)
and Melissa Hirsch
on August 4, 2023

LIFE CELEBRATIONS



M' Lords and Ladies, we bid you
welcome unto the most holy union
of Lord Daniel Edward Watters
to Lady Sarah Craighead Liske
on this the year of our Lord
May 12th, 2023

The most gracious Reverend Clare
Petersberger officiating at
the Towson Unitarian
Universalist Church

* Made with ♥ by Sarah Nissy

The order of service shall be
as follows

Processional _____ Downton Abbey - The
Suite
The Chamber Orchestra
of London

Welcome and Acknowledgement _____ Rev. Clare
Words Regarding Marriage _____ Rev. Clare
(From Dennis and Kim Coffey)

Question of Intent _____ Rev. Clare

Words of Blessing _____

Reading from the song "The Book of
Love" _____ Rev. Clare

The 3 Cups _____ Rev. Clare

Vows _____ Sarah
and Dan

Exchange of Rings _____ Lix, Rev.
Clare

Prayer _____ Rev.
Clare

Pronouncement _____ Rev. Clare

Recession _____ Star Trek: The
Next Generation
End Credits

RECOGNITION OF OUR HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR

On May 7, we recognized Rachael Tyler, who is graduating from the Baltimore School For The Arts. Rachael has been one of our Nursery Care providers this year.



FOND FAREWELLS

We bid a fond farewell to cherished members who are moving: Tom Harris, Nina Della Vecchia, and the Woods family.

Our ministries moved from virtual only to truly multi-platform thanks to the upgrades we made to our equipment in the Meeting Room in the fall and to training in how to offer hybrid meetings with new equipment downstairs.

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

WORSHIP

One way we do this is through worship. We are deeply grateful to Dominique Hall, Chair of Lay Worship Associates, for planning such a rich summer series on what it means to be a people of blessing. During the summer, on any given Sunday, Dominique could be found in the pulpit, at the AV desk, and then back up front playing the flute! Dominique's many talents are a blessing!

In our one Sunday morning worship service at 10:30, we continued to draw on the resources of Soul Matters. We explored what it means to walk the path of belonging, courage, change, wonder, finding our center, love, vulnerability, resistance, creativity, and delight. I also drew on resources from Marcia McFee's Worship Design Studio.

It was a pleasure to continue to plan entire worship services grounded in the good work of TUUC's Community Partners.



Time for All Ages



NEW FEATURES OF SUNDAY WORSHIP INCLUDED:
Welcoming SarahRuth Davis as TUUC's half time Ministerial Intern. SarahRuth had not designed an entire worship service before her internship began at TUUC. She created beautiful services in November and March that involved the participation of her children. She also participated in several other TUUC worship services, including those at Christmas and Easter.



Welcoming Kara Tyler as our Director of Religious Education and working with her to offer engaging and participatory times for all ages. These began with her lugging sacks of potatoes to illustrate what it is like to carry anger and resentment and not be able to forgive. Here she is leading costumed RE participants in a ritual . . .





Rev. Karyn with Youth



Rev. Clare and Youth



Youth Participation during the Holidays Service

YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

COMMUNITY CHOIR

Welcoming Tracy Hall's vision for a Community Choir, which met on Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. to rehearse for that particular Sunday. Community Choir makes it possible for families to sing together!





The TUUC Youth Group attending the entire worship service on the first Sunday of the month and sharing their gifts, from lighting a chalice to delivering readings.

Welcoming Dre Melton and Marcel Butler to our AV tech team, chaired by Jay Hauf.



I AM GETTING CLOSER TO MY GOAL

of establishing a consistent TUUC presence on YouTube. On-demand worship is the future direction of faith communities. I attended a summit on the future of religious communities led by Carey Nieuwhof. He advised that in the next 10 years:

1. We need religious leaders who look forward and don't try to go back to February 2020.
2. Congregations are now digital organizations with physical locations (so don't expect everyone to be in the building at the same time; just as people expect to be able to stream their favorite series, people will expect their worship to be on demand).
3. The majority of your congregation will shift to home, just as we did for work and sports and entertainment during the pandemic.
4. On-demand access has greatly surpassed live events in growing churches. Shift focus from gathering at the same time to connecting in myriad ways.
5. Community and connection are more important than content. Growing churches are staffing for digital ministry.
6. "Boomers" are part of the great resignation from religious institutions. Growing churches are intentionally programming for Millennials and Gens X, Z, and Alpha.

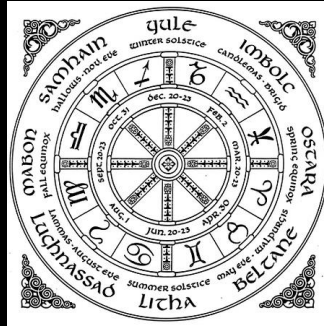
GRATITUDE to our Music Director, Tracy Hall, the TUUC Choir, the TUUC Community Choir, and our talented soloists and instrumentalists for enriching worship.

GRATITUDE to our AV Team: Jay Hauf, Dre Melton, Marcel Butler, Sue Royer, Dick Wobus, Dominique Hall, David Haupt, Marilyn Maze, and Jenny Hare.

GRATITUDE to our Lay Worship Associates: Dominique Hall, Andrew Hager, Nancy Caswell, and Michael Magrogan for providing meaningful lay worship services. And gratitude to Bess Hauf for reviving the TUUC Puppet Thing for a wonderful show on “courage”!

GRATITUDE to Todd Robertson and Rev. Karyn Marsh for breathing new life into our Roots and Wings chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist pagans with rituals for Samhain, the Winter Solstice, Imbolc, Ostara, and Beltane. Thanks to SarahRuth Davis for her support of Roots and Wings.

CUUPS



Beltane Celebration

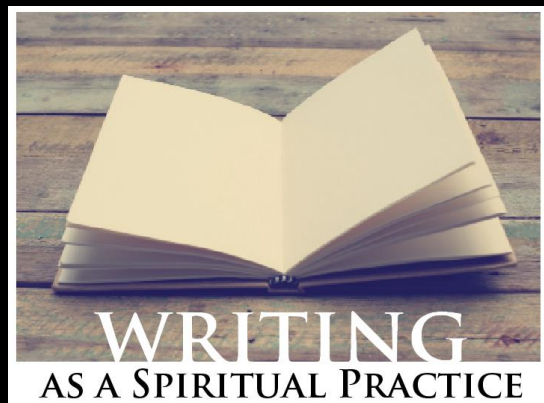
SOUL MATTERS SHARING CIRCLES

This year we had two virtual Soul Matters Sharing Circles running, virtually, at the same time. Art Starr and Tracey Myers-Preston facilitated one circle, and Jane Selewach and SarahRuth Davis the other. We averaged a total of 8 participants who met twice a month to explore the Soul Matters themes in more depth through a spiritual practice and question for reflection.



MEMBERSHIP

I appreciated the opportunity to participate in one of the Our Journey sessions offered by Membership. We held our first New Member Recognition service since the pandemic on January 22, 2023.

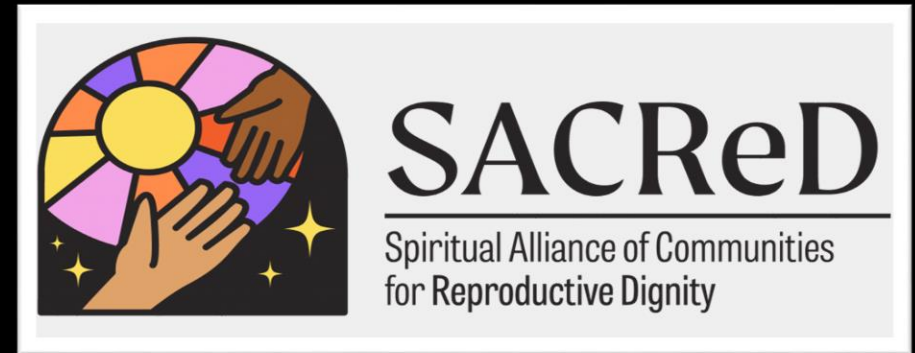


WRITING AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

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. A dedicated core group of 7–8 joined.

SPIRITUAL ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITIES FOR REPRODUCTIVE DIGNITY

TUUC participated in field testing a curriculum by the Spiritual Alliance of Communities for Reproductive Dignity. The vision for this curriculum comes from a recognition that “social movements in the U.S. are more successful at deeper levels when they engage shared values and collective moral imagination to increase justice and liberty for all.” SarahRuth Davis co-facilitated this new program with me. We had 8 participants who met monthly. We will be offering the curriculum again in the fall so that we may bring more people into the vision of building a progressive religious movement for Reproductive Justice.





CARING

Another way we deepen our ethical and spiritual lives is through caring for one another. I made a total of 89 pastoral visits this year. I am grateful to Lisa Lubomski, Chair of the Caring Committee, for organizing meals for members recuperating from illnesses and surgeries. After a decade, Lisa has retired from this role and is willing to train someone new to organize this work. Please speak with me if you are interested.

I am also grateful to the Lay Pastoral Associates: Ann Beezley, Mary Beth Brizzolara, Art Starr, Nancy Mears, Lila Wisotzki, and Rev. Karyn Marsh for their outreach as Lay Pastoral Associates.

A-TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

Members of the A-Team include Rev. Clare L. Petersberger, Kai Aiyetoro, Clare Flynn Avallone, Dan Alper, and often Andrew Hager as a guest.

From July 2022 through May 2023, the A-Team monitored Covid Act Now numbers. While we did not have to re-close the building, we did return to masking when numbers increased in December and made masks optional when the numbers decreased in March.

In August, we delighted in the installation of our new sign with its Pride Flag chalice.

We repaired the fence around the playground, which had been damaged by downed trees in a bad storm in July of 2022.

We replaced the door from the lower level to the playground.



THANKS to Sue Royer, our new AV equipment was installed and has greatly enhanced the quality of sound for people on Zoom.

We approved the expense of replacing the paddles for our AED Defibrillator.

THANKS to Kai Aiyetoro, Clare Flynn Avallone, Jay Hauf, and Nick Troxel, we replaced the monitor in the foyer.

We approved funds for necessary tree work on the grounds.

I reached out to Councilman Kach for help in getting BGE to repair the streetlight in front of our church that was knocked out almost two years ago. Please thank Councilman Kach when you next see him.

THANKS to Todd Robertson, Luke Williams, and Clare Flynn Avallone, our Memorial Garden fountain was repaired.

Clare Flynn Avallone dealt with clogged toilets not once, but twice this year. We thank her for ensuring that the toilet drains work properly.

THANKS to Rev. Karyn Marsh and Kai Aiyetoro, we have a new refrigerator in the lower level community space.

We approved funds for the Eagle Scout project that created our beautiful new trail.

In collaboration with the Memorial Garden Committee, we are proceeding with purchasing plaques for all founding members who do not have one because their passing preceded the construction of the Memorial Garden wall.

We are currently receiving bids to replace the glass in the clouded windows in the Meeting Room, Ministers Office, and classroom downstairs.

Two quotes to make the grove more accessible came in at \$50,000–\$100,000, so we are not moving forward with that plan.

However, a TUUC Accessibility Team has met twice to move forward with plans to make our building more accessible. Please thank those serving on the Accessibility Team: Clare Flynn-Avallone, SarahRuth Davis, Andrew Hager, Todd Robertson, Sue Royer, and Eleanor Hughes, Convener.



LEADERSHIP

Heartfelt thanks to Andrew Hager, President of the Board of Trustees, and to the entire Board for their leadership, which has focused on our Vision of Ministry for 2022-2023:

- 1) Grow and strengthen the present and future of the church by drawing in newcomers, cultivating new members, reconnecting with families, and creating connection and belonging through physical and virtual engagement.
- 2) Foster an intergenerational approach to faith formation, programming, and social, economic, racial, and environmental justice work.



We began the year with a wonderful retreat which included the spirit of play and brainstorming solutions together. The spirit of innovation, of trying new things, of creativity has been a hallmark of this year's Board.

A specific example of this is Stewardship. This year's campaign was grounded in a quotation from the Gwendolyn Brooks poem, "Paul Robeson":

*we are each other's harvest:
we are each other's business:
we are each other's magnitude and bond.*

Not only did members speak on these themes, but our entire multigenerational community was encouraged to engage in stewardship through art projects illustrating how TUUC exemplifies these aspirations.



As part of Stewardship, we also celebrated with our first in-person potluck since the pandemic began. Special thanks to Tracey Myers-Preston who spearheaded this initiative and ensured that our data is up to date and accurate. We are moving to a model of year-round stewardship.



Deep gratitude to Eleanor Hughes who, in addition to serving as President-Elect, has also been convening the Program Council, and thanks to the entire Program Council. We are fortunate to have such committed, visionary, and spirited leadership!

I am so grateful for the TUUC Staff Team: Kai Aiyetoro, Church Administrator; Arkady Thompson, Bookkeeper. Kara Tyler, Director of Religious Education; Tracy Hall, Music Director; and Phil Brown, Media Coordinator.

And three cheers for our wonderful TUUC Auction Team, chaired by Dan Alper, who organized our first hybrid auction: Marilyn Maze, Linda Talley, Jane Selewach, Jason Braspennickx, Samantha Saalfield, Nick Troxel, Spice Kleinmann, Sue Walker, Judi Clague, Neil Porter, Sue Royer, Susan Woolhiser, Andrew Hager, and Mia Hager. And the Auction Emcees with their fabulous bakers' hats, John and Patty Barry.

We are grateful to the DRE Search Committee, Eleanor Hughes (Chair), Lou Geiszl, Larry Magder, and Angela Castillo-Epps for all their good work on the DRE Search Committee, which resulted in inviting Kara Tyler to serve as the Director of Religious Education!

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

We lifted up our work for racial, social, and environmental justice in worship this year. We talked about “There’s A Hole In My Sidewalk” when Earl’s Place visited in November; Mr. Cameron Miles spoke in our January service about Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood; in February, Nicole Hansen came to speak to us about Out For Justice; in March we lifted up the good work of the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland; and in April we celebrated the Assistance Center of Towson Churches. Also in April, for Earth Day, the Green Sanctuary Committee invited Delegate Mary Washington to speak about her work for climate justice in the Maryland General Assembly.



This year our congregation joined 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. Ann Beezley, Nancy Caswell, SarahRuth Davis, and I attended a training August 19–20.

Hannah Freeman, the BRIDGE Maryland Baltimore County lead organizer came to speak in the September 18 worship service. And, most exciting, we trained and commissioned 9 TUUC members as Sacred Listeners as part of a one-on-one initiative to build relationships within the community and discern which community issues we hope to partner on with other BRIDGE MD religious communities. This issues convention will take place in June. I have been part of the Religious Leaders Caucus for BRIDGE Maryland and was invited to write a prayer for our collective Sacred Listening campaign. As part of BRIDGE MD I also attended a three day national Race and Power Summit in December.



Police Accountability Board Meeting Number 3, January 23, 2023

In June 2022, I applied to serve on the Baltimore County Police Accountability Board. In September, I was appointed to serve an eight month term. When it became clear that I would be spending the County's money for an intensive training by the Police in April without the possibility of hearing from citizens (because my term ended June 30 and no citizen could speak until July 1), I resigned from the PAB in January. I am happy to report that, moving forward, citizens will be appointed for a term of three years, which will give them the opportunity to make a meaningful difference!

DENOMINATION

In addition to attending virtual Ministry Days and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly last June, I participated in meetings of the Leadership team of the Chesapeake UU Ministers Chapter. I will continue to serve as one of two Good Officers for the Chesapeake chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. The Good Officer helps ministers when we're in tension with the institutions we serve and when we're in tension with the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is an honor to serve in this role.



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
MINISTERS
ASSOCIATION

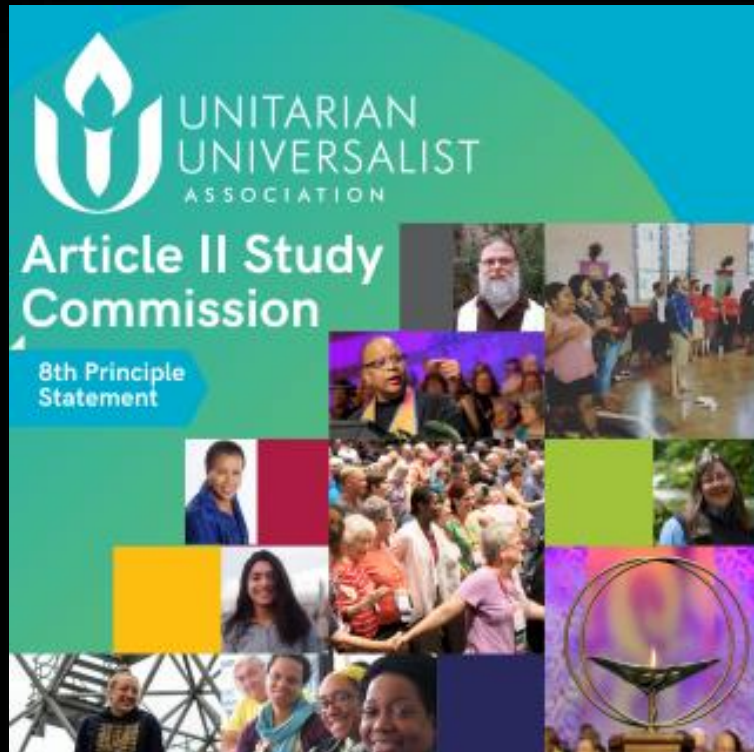
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At the end of June, delegates to the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly will be voting on whether to continue the work of the Article II commission of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its conclusion that *“We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love. Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.”*

I hope we vote “Yes” to the idea that love is the power that holds us together. It is certainly the power that held us together through the pandemic. And it is the foundation upon which we are imaging the future of TUUC.

(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>)

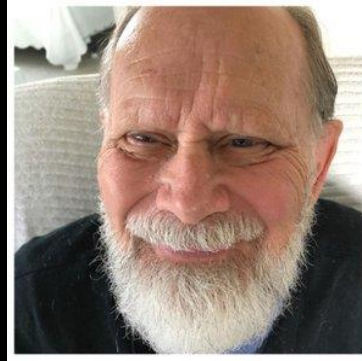
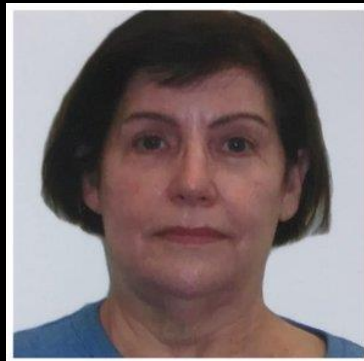
Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Clare



REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2022 Annual Auction Event: Board Games with the Board





The TUUC Board of Trustees meets on the third⁴⁰ Wednesday of every month to address various issues and concerns as we work to support the church's mission and vision.

In 2022–23, the Board consisted of Andrew Hager (President), Eleanor Hughes (President-Elect), Patty Barry (Secretary), Larry Magder (Treasurer), and Trustees-at-Large Susan Riggs, Michael Magrogan, Tracey Myers-Preston, and Samantha Saalfield. Reverend Clare Petersberger serves as a non-voting member. Most meetings were also attended by our ministerial intern, SarahRuth Davis.

The Board began its work this year in August 2022, when we held a retreat at the church. We completed team-building exercises, approved the installation of a new door leading to the playground, and began developing our annual Vision and Goals.



OUR 2022-23 GOALS:

- Hire a new Director of Religious Exploration
We welcomed Kara Tyler as our new DRE.
- Establish a TUUC YouTube presence to further facilitate hybrid accessibility
Tracey Myers-Preston is supporting Rev. Clare on this as she becomes Membership Chair.
- Replenish and grow building fund through a targeted appeal
Forensic accounting revealed that we had far more in the building fund than previously believed. No longer necessary.
- Establish a task force to develop strategy in anticipation of future building and ground needs
A group has convened to address accessibility needs with our church building and grounds, which we believe should be our next area of focus.
- Serve as a teaching congregation for our ministerial intern
We are glad to have SarahRuth Davis as part of our church community.

Samantha Saalfield served as Board Liaison to the Auction Committee. Our auction—the first-ever in-person/online hybrid fundraiser at our church—brought in more than \$22,000!

As part of the Board's contribution to the Auction, we held two different game nights, one online in January, and the other an in-person gathering in April. We enjoyed a scavenger hunt and Pictionary at the former. At the latter, we played Apples to Apples, Mexican Trains, and Donner Dinner Party, among other games. Both evenings were great fun and fellowship.

In November, the Board appointed Lorraine Sorbello to serve on the Endowment Committee. We thank her for accepting this important responsibility.

In the spring, the Board voted to honor the founding members of TUUC by authorizing Memorial Garden funds be used to purchase plaques for and Founders who do not currently have one. We honor our roots.

As a result of the Eagle Scout project that forged a new trail through outlet property, the Board proposed christening the path the TUUC Ancestors Trail. Congregational feedback was solicited. After discussing said feedback at the May 17 meeting, the Board voted to approve the name "Ancestors Trail."

| Date | 6/30/2022 | 9/30/2022 | 12/31/2022 | 3/31/2023 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Value of Endowment | 996,716 | 943,241 | 1,012,024 | 1,034,835 |

ENDOWMENT

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

- February 2023: transfer \$75K from the Vanguard S&P 500 Index Fund Admiral with \$50K going to Cash and \$25K to Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund Admiral
- September 2022: transfer \$45K from the Vanguard S&P 500 Index Fund Admiral to Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund Admiral

The Endowment Committee's goal is for the endowment fund to maintain roughly three years of anticipated distributions available in cash or short-term bond investments. Another goal is for increased socially responsible investing. Substantial strides were made in fiscal year 2022–23 with both goals. In accordance with our approved budget, funds were transferred from the Endowment to TUUC's operating accounts each quarter. The 2022–23 Endowment Committee consists of Claudia Sumler, Kristol Donner, Lorraine Sorbello John Barry (chair), Larry Magder ex-officio, and Dan Alper ex-officio.

The share of the Endowment in socially-responsible investing is 44.6%. In addition to the funds mentioned above, the TUUC Endowment is also invested in the Vanguard Total International Index Fund Admiral, the Schwab US Small Cap ETF, and the Vanguard Intermediate-Term Bond Fund.



STEWARDSHIP

Tracey Myers-Preston coordinated our Stewardship Campaign, using words from Gwendolyn Brooks as an organizing theme. This innovative campaign proved highly successful, raising more than \$299,000. Our thanks to everyone who assisted in all aspects of the Stewardship Campaign.

PERSONNEL

Our Personnel Committee, Rob Canosa (Chair), Tracey Myers-Preston, and Eleanor Hughes, helped with the hire of Kara Tyler as Director of Religious Education; updated our Personnel Manual; and made compensation recommendations to the Board.

RIGHT RELATIONS TEAM

As part of our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, we are bound by right relationships and recognize the inherent worth of all individuals. We also recognize that conflict is inevitable and, when not managed appropriately, is detrimental to right relations. By intentionally working to transform conflict and supporting conflict interactions that are positive, constructive, connecting, and humanizing, we respectfully seek to return to right relationships. The purpose of the Right Relations Team is to educate, mediate, and guide members, friends, and guests in this process. Team Members: Lou Gieszl (chair), MaryBeth Brizzolara, Sue Walker

There was one conflict reported to the team during this reporting period.

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!

The Membership Committee followed up on inquiries about the church, scheduled Greeters for each Sunday's service, and held question-and-answer sessions for newcomers. Committee members worked on editing the Membership Committee Charge and developed a description of programs and activities to distribute to newcomers. The Committee helped with the annual UUA certification.

During this year, the following new members joined TUUC: Emily Bitner, Ali Karimian, Kris Faatz, Shannon Svikhart, and Carolyn Lafond. Welcome! We're so glad you are here! The Committee was pleased to hold its first in-person New Member Recognition ceremony since the pandemic.

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

REPORT FROM THE PROGRAM COUNCIL



The Program Council generally meets monthly and is tasked with supporting the mission and vision of TUUC by offering a variety of programming. This year, the Program Council's goals reflected the transition back to in-person participation in church activities:

Support the church's ability to provide hospitality following services in order to welcome and engage members and visitors, i.e. whether through individual programs hosting or identifying someone to take over hospitality

- **We are grateful to Jane D'Ambrogi for chairing hospitality and to the programs, committees, and individuals that stepped up to support her each Sunday.**

Increase intergenerational activities and our accountability to the 8th principle through new and existing programs

- **Through Program Council we increased adult involvement in RE and built support for our collaboration with BRIDGE MD.**

Expand our volunteer pool in order to support activities and responsibilities that align with the church's mission and vision through better connection with our own community, and especially in order to support RE, Caring Membership, Grounds, Lay Worship

- **Chairs of the committees gave personal testimonials in service about how their volunteer work for these groups helps them find their center.**

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

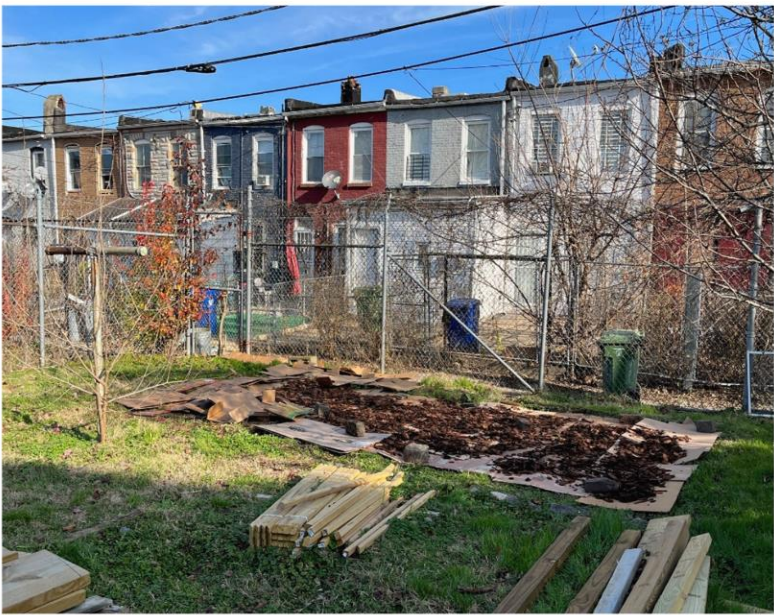
The Green Sanctuary Committee remained active, meeting monthly with its core group of approximately 8 members.

We restructured our partnership with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church/Amazing Port Street Commons to hold two larger work parties each year, rather than monthly ones, to try to get more participants from TUUC.

We held monthly sales of fair trade coffee, candy, tea, and nuts, which enable TUUC to serve fair trade coffee at Sunday coffee hours and to support small farmers around the world.

Several attended UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland's workshop before the legislative session and then followed up by lobbying on climate issues.

In January we co-sponsored with Cabin Fever a group discussion of the film *My Octopus Teacher*, which depicts the healing power of immersion in nature and an extraordinary relationship between a human and octopus.



In March, we showed “Nature’s Best Hope,” a talk by Prof. Doug Tallamy, University of Delaware, which was attended by 15 people. He talked about what we could do as individuals, beginning in our yards by reducing the area of lawn, removing invasive plants, and planting more native plants and trees. We humans, by doing this, are nature’s best hope.

We created an Earth Day service for April 23rd on climate justice. Our speaker, Senator Mary Washington, spoke on recently passed Maryland climate and equity legislation and what we can do to continue our support of climate justice policies.

Several members of the Green Sanctuary Committee volunteered at monthly Work Parties, held on the third Saturday of each month.

In April and May, we piloted a new UUA curriculum, “Survive and Thrive,” by teaching four lessons on endangered and extinct species to our K–5 RE students.



SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Throughout COVID, the Social Action Committee has kept TUUC members informed about the work of our community partners. These partners have been selected because they are nonprofit organizations who embody our values of equity, justice, and compassion. TUUC funds these partners by providing 15% of the weekly offertory to our partners, and every quarter one of our community partners receives the entire non-restricted offertory.

We have continued to donate nonperishable food to the Assistance Center of the Towson Churches (ACTC). Last fall, TUUC welcomed as guest speaker Linda Lotz, ACTC's executive director, who revealed her passion for the work of this organization.





SAC Hybrid Meeting



Our annual Christmas Celebration at Earl's Place was delayed because a resident tested positive for COVID, but we had a great celebration with the music, food, and fellowship after the holiday. We were able to give one of the residents clothes he requested and a refurbished computer.



This year we were able to get back into the kitchen and prepare homemade casseroles for delivery to Our Daily Bread.

TUUC continues to support the strong work of Mr. Cameron Miles at Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood. Our TUUC mentors have been a dependable presence at the monthly tutoring sessions.

Out for Justice, whose mission is to engage, educate, and empower those most impacted by the criminal justice system, recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Several members of our committee were able to attend an OFJ legislative workshop in December. In February, Nicole Hanson-Mundell, executive director, presented Out for Justice's priority legislative issues for 2023.



Mentoring Males Teens in the Hood





BRIDGE MARYLAND

Finally, we are welcoming a new community partner, BRIDGE Maryland, which is a faith-based community organizing nonprofit. TUUC, along with about 9 other Baltimore County churches, are in the midst of The Sacred Listening Campaign, designed to help us identify which social justice issues BRIDGE Baltimore County and TUUC, as members, will promote in the coming year.

SOCRATES CAFE

Socrates Cafe meets every third Monday on Zoom, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. We come together, with a variety of views and philosophical perspectives, to probe a question as Socrates would have us do: with an open-minded, open-hearted give and take, through which we come to know, understand, and appreciate ourselves and one another more fully.

Our generally 6–8 participants have probed a different question each month. For example, this year we referred to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to prepare for the question, "Will the cultivation of equality, in the form of democracy, eventually destroy liberty?" And to Harvard professor and political philosopher, Michael Sandel, and his book, *The Tyranny of Merit*, with the question: "What's become of the Common Good?" Another recent question: "How rational are we?" We welcome new participants! To join, please email socratescafe@towsonuuc.org.



OUR MESSY LIVES

Our Messy Lives, “the discussion of a word/concept group,” meets every third Thursday from 3–4 p.m. on Zoom, and has had an ongoing, small, but enthusiastic group of participants this year, including first-time attendees. We choose the next month's word/concept at the end of each session. Some examples: Clutter, Money, Clarity, Service, Aging, Procrastination, Mystique, Deference, and Reciprocity. To join, please email Nancy Caswell, whose email address is on BREEZE, and receive our Zoom link by email the day before each session.

AGING TOGETHER

“Aging Together” meets twice monthly (second and fourth Tuesdays) from 1–2 p.m. and covers topics ranging from “Ageism” and “What Did You Do on Valentine's Day?” to our present topic: “How Do You as an Aging Person Deal with Death?”



CABIN FEVER

During the 2022–23 church year, Cabin Fever met every Sunday to discuss a variety of movies, from docudramas (like *Mudbound* and *Blonde*) to comedies (like *Harold and Maude* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*) to nonfiction films (like *Fire of Love* and *Descendant*). The group also partnered with the Green Sanctuary Committee to discuss *My Octopus Teacher* and held theater field trips to see classics like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Casablanca*.

These conversations helped us deepen our spiritual lives and our connections to one another.

REPORT FROM THE MUSIC MINISTRY



MUSIC MINISTRY

Music continues to be a highly appreciated part of worship and the congregational life of TUUC.

The learning curve has continued this year with regard to streaming worship, for all involved. The AV Team, the TUUC music program, Rev. Clare and other worship leaders, and the church administrator regularly collaborate in navigating this new world, continually finding ways to improve preparation for and execution of our multi-platform worship services.

The TUUC Choir returned a little early this year (late August), after a hiatus in late spring due to the illness/injury of Music Director Tracy Hall. As numbers were still on the high side in the local area for COVID, the choir and congregation continued wearing masks for rehearsals and services until mid-fall. After the metrics increased again, the mask requirement returned for Christmas Eve services and continued until February 2023. This period was particularly challenging for the choir and for song leaders, but they persevered. Once the mask mandate was lifted again in February, the TUUC Choir began growing again.

The TUUC Choir and Tracy Hall presented a Special Music Service on October 23rd, entitled *The Beauty and the Courage of a Life Well-Lived*, with guest pianist Rose Davila. It included many choral favorites, a beloved jazz tune featuring Donn Teubner-Rhodes, and a musical theater scene offered by Sharen Camille. The service was dedicated to the memory of long-term choir member Nancy Hannah.

The following week, October 30th, our AV Team premiered the use of a new digital mixer, which was a wonderful improvement for music especially, and for sound in general, during worship.

We revived and developed the practice of Community Choir, beginning September 25th and again on Sundays in November, December, March, and May. Singers of all ages and families sing in the choir together after learning the music on the morning of the worship service.

The choir and community choir continuously provided relevant music to enrich our services and support the goals and special events of the congregation, such as a sung blessing for the Stewardship potluck.



Individual singers and musicians also contributed regularly to enhancing our worship: Deborah “Spice” Kleinmann, Dominique Hall, Donn Teubner-Rhodes, Warren Cherry, Tony Bonta, Janet Kuperstein, Patty Barry, and several others. Guest singer Ama Chandra provided worship on a Sunday in February. Song leaders (mostly from the choir) have consistently led our hymns and congregational singing on the mic, giving confidence to the congregation in the building and leadership to those at home on Zoom. Videos from a variety of musicians call us in to worship each week through “gathering music.” Music Director Tracy Hall composes or arranges some of the music we sing or hear in worship.

A Drumming Workshop in the Western African style (specifically from Guinea) was held in March, led by guest facilitator Sharon Pataky.

The TUUC Music Committee continues to provide guidance on music program decisions and to support to the Music Director, this year mostly through email. Its members are Donn Teubner-Rhodes, Judi Clague, Dominique Hall, Sharen Camille, Janet Kuperstein, and Susan Riggs.



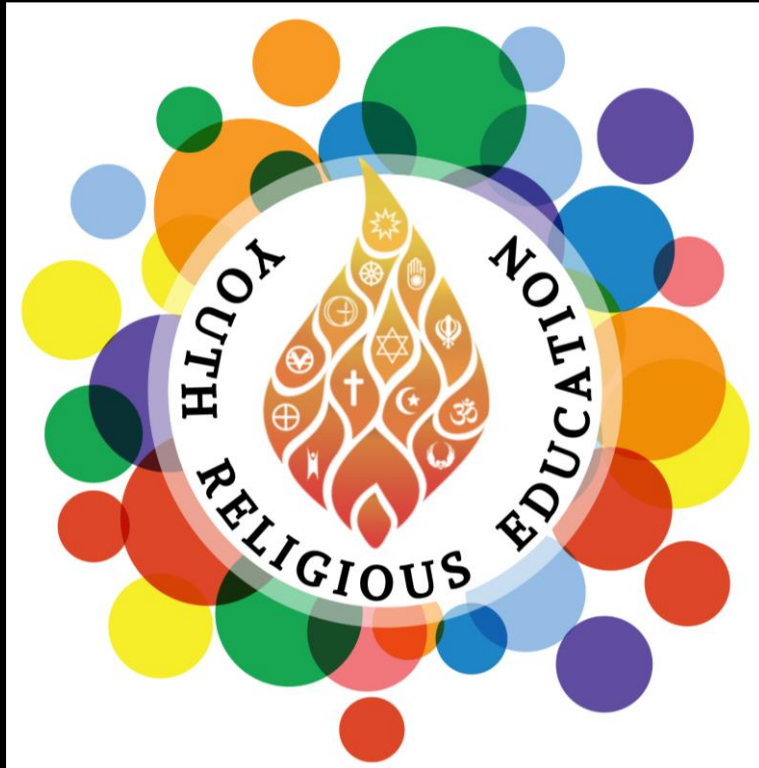


A Special Music Sunday on May 21, 2023, on the topic of the classical elements, featured some extraordinarily imaginative and challenging music to be presented by the TUUC Choir.

Various musicians of TUUC, friends, and guests, provided music for the summer services developed by Lay Worship Associates.



REPORT FROM YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



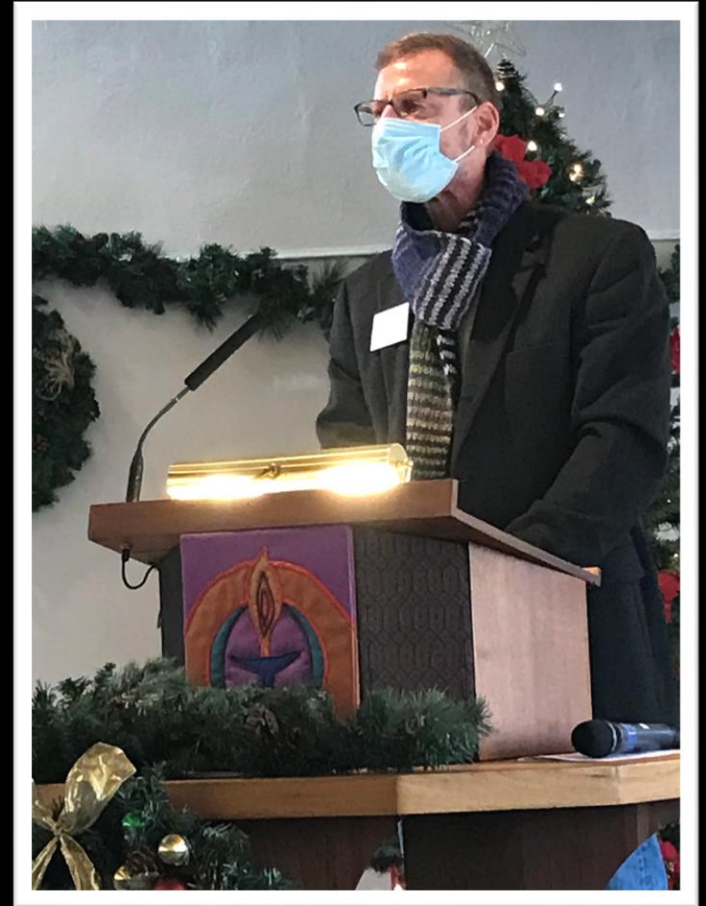
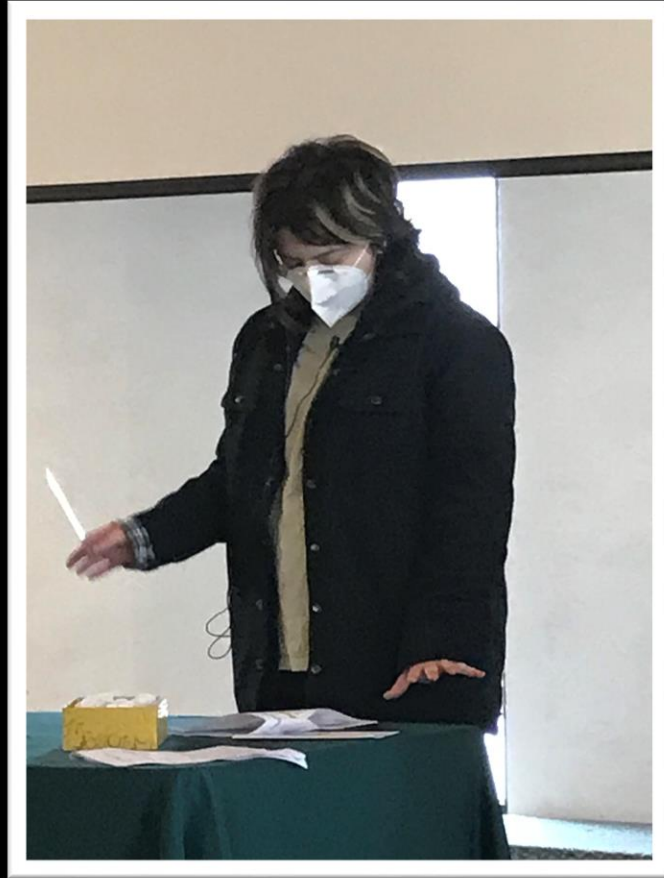
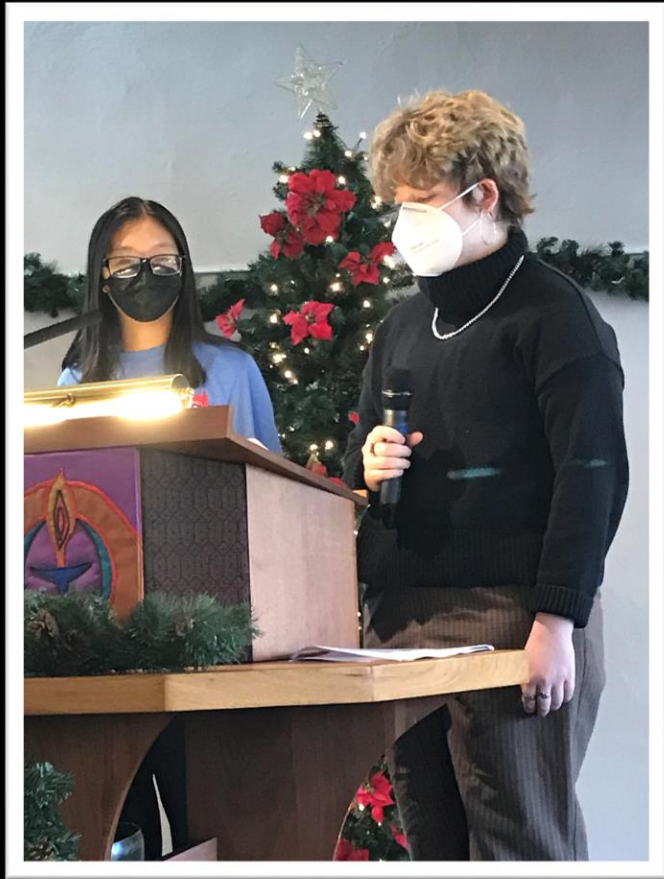
The RE committee (Lou Gieszl, chair, with Jennifer Erwins, Karen Fireman, Ellie Hughes, Trish Lott, and Shannon Fries) had worked in spring and summer 2022 to identify curricula and teachers so that RE could continue in person while Kara acclimated to TUUC.

GRATITUDE to all the teachers, volunteers, guest speakers, students, and families who made RE possible this year.

It's been an eventful year in Youth Religious Education! Our new DRE, Kara Tyler, started in late September and jumped in feet first. Together with dedicated volunteers, she worked hard to bring the kids fun activities like an Easter Egg hunt, learning about the ASPCA, and meeting member pets, and creating art to promote anti-racism.



YRE worked together with the Green Sanctuary Committee to customize the Survive and Thrive curriculum from the UU Ministry on Faith. This program introduced our youngest students to endangered species and the impact humans have on natural habitats. Karyn Marsh, Marilyn Carlyle, Luke Wilson, and Carel Hedlund brought their passion and energy to co-teach classes with RE volunteers. We look forward to more collaborations with Green Sanctuary and other committees in the coming year.





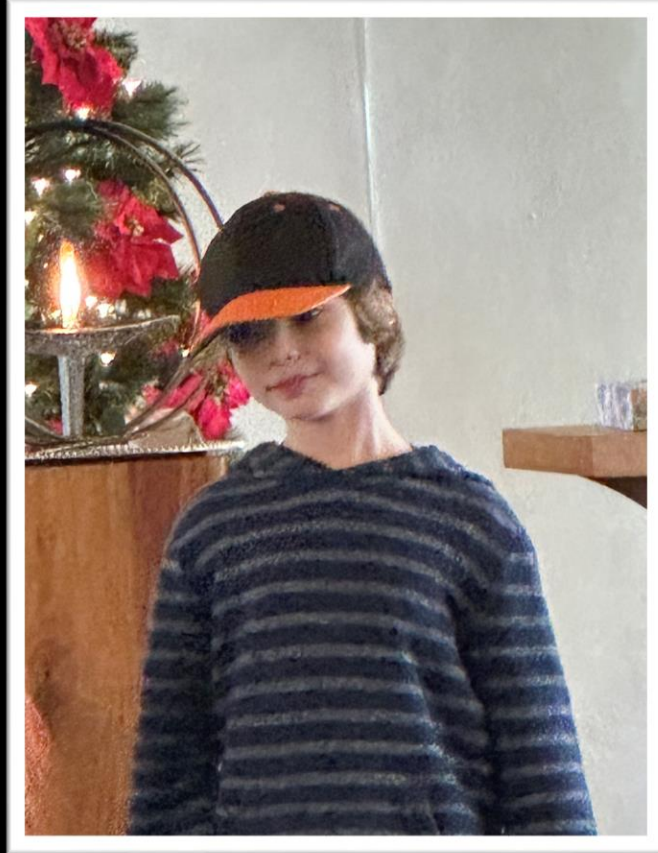
This year the teens went through the Coming of Age curriculum from Soul Matters titled *Becoming*. It is a new approach that we were able to participate in the pilot program, providing feedback for the next edition. It was wonderful to witness our teens go through the process of self-consideration and wrestling with the difficult questions of who they want to be as they grow into adulthood.

A favorite of students and volunteers alike has been the implementation of One Room Schoolhouse lessons. On these Sundays, all the students, from kindergarten through 12th grade, are together for an all-ages lesson of a topic. We've covered UU history and beliefs, Water is Life, Mindfulness, and more.

Kara has filled her mind with more information in such a short time than she imagined possible. She has attended classes focused on training DREs as well as OWL training to ensure we continue to provide this vital class. Lectures, conferences, as well as communing with other DREs has helped her learn this new position and inspire her to make it as engaging as possible for the students in RE classes and for everyone enjoying her Time for All Ages.







As a pet project, Kara has also taken to transforming the downstairs spaces (minus the nursery because it is already gorgeous). You may have noticed new furniture, beautiful rugs, and bright new art filling the space over the year. Beautiful spaces are conducive to learning and creativity. This is one of the many ways Kara is committed to providing an environment that encourages the children's spiritual and personal growth.

Next year promises to bring even more exciting adventures. Instead of traditional Religious Education programming, we will be interweaving discussions and lessons about Unitarian Universalist values with hands-on learning. The classroom will become a maker's space allowing the children to create their own vision of art and explore personal spirituality. We will call it **Making Faith**.





CONGREGATION LIFE...



Auction Event – Baltimore County Resource Recovery Facility



Auction Event – Avenue Bakery





Towson Unitarian Universalist Church – *A Welcoming Congregation*