



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
COMMUNITY CHURCH
of Santa Monica



REPORT ON PROGRAMS

Fiscal Year

July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

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REPORT ON PROGRAMS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2016-17

Leadership, Membership, UUA	4	Pipes Lecture	20
Report on Ministry	5	Membership	21
Director of Religious Exploration	5	Coffee Committee	21
Lifespan Religious Exploration	5	Caregivers Support Group	21
Developmental Ministry Task Force	7	fUUsion	22
Right Relations Task Force	8	Men's Group	22
Director of Music	9	Super Seniors	23
Music Committee	10	Fiction Reading Group	23
Church Administrator	11	Wednesday Night Writers	23
Finance Committee/Treasurer	12	Spirited Seekers	23
Investment Committee	12	Camp de Benneville Pines	23
Stewardship Team	12	Art Wall	24
Heart and Soul Worship Service	13	Bookstore	24
Heart to Heart Circles	14		
Dining for Dollars	14		
Facilities Development Committee	14		
Nominating Committee	15		
Volunteer & Communications Coordinator	15		
Second Sunday Supper/Kitchen Ministry	16		
AAHS	16		
Communications Team	17		
Project Dazzle	17		
Newsletter Committee	18		
Peace & Social Justice Activities	19		
Green Living & Sanctuary Committee	20		
Lunches for Bunches	20		



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2016-2017

President Ron Crane
 Vice President..... Jacki Weber
 Secretary..... Beth Brownlie
 Treasurer..... Kimberly Miller
 Past President Patricia Wright
 Member at Large Joe Engleman
 Member at Large Jerry Gates
 Member at Large Emily Hero
 Member at Large Kikanza Nuri-Robins

2017-2018

President To be elected May 21: Ron Crane
 Vice President..... To be elected May 21: Jacki Weber
 Secretary..... To be elected May 21: Beth Brownlie
 Treasurer To be elected May 21: Kim Miller
 Past President Patricia Wright
 Member at Large..... To be elected May 21: Norm Richey
 Member at Large..... To be elected May 21: Emily Hero
 Member at Large..... Jerry Gates
 Member at Large..... Kikanza Nuri-Robins

STAFF

Minister..... Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur
 Minister Emeritus..... Rev. Ernie Pipes
 Minister Emerita Rev. Judith Meyer
 Director of Religious
 Exploration..... Kathleen R. Hogue
 Church Administrator Nurit Gordon
 Admin & Finance Assistant Nancy Thompson
 Communications & Volunteers
 Coordinator Jackie Schwab
 Director of Music Zanaida Robles
 Church Accompanist Daniel Gledhill
 Weekday Sexton Kevin Roller
 Sunday and Rental Sexton Thomas Ahern
 Preschool Teacher Lizbeth Rivera

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

2016-2017

Barbara Gibbs
 Melinda Ewen
 James Witker
 Wendi Gladstone
 Beth Rendeiro
 Bob Dietz

2017-2018

Barbara Gibbs
 James Witker
 To be elected May 21: Linda Van Ligten
 Bob Dietz
 To be elected May 21: Liza Cranis
 To be elected May 21: Nalani Santiago
 Kalmanson



MEMBERSHIP

To become a member of the Church a person shall:

- Sign a statement of intent to participate as a member in the community life of the Church.
- Reside within the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD) of the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- Be at least 16 years of age or have successfully completed the Church's Coming of Age Program.
- Make a financial contribution of record, or a pledge to do so, to the Church.

Anyone who has been a member of the Church for 40 days is eligible to vote at church business meetings.

Written resignation, failure to make a financial contribution, or moving away from the PSWD area, causes membership to be discontinued.

A "Friend" plays an active role in our community, supports the Church financially, but has chosen not to assume official church membership.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION (UUA)

This church is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a voluntary association of autonomous, self-governing local churches and fellowships, and of the Pacific Southwest District of that association.

Information and contact with UUA offices and resources can be obtained at www.uua.org.



REPORT ON MINISTRY UU COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SANTA MONICA

Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur

And now the time has come to say goodbye. Since November, when I announced my decision to resign as your settled minister, we have had a chance to offer one another a compassionate, caring, and meaningful leave-taking. Thank you for “taking the long way around” in worship and in opportunities for reflection and celebration of my ministry with you throughout our life together. Thank you to the Farewell Committee, led by Cathie Gentile and Gretchen Goetz, for their beautiful planning and hosting of multiple community-wide events to mark this milestone together. And thank you, to all of you who have written notes of appreciation, shared stories and memories in “Open Hours” small groups or one-on-one, or presented me and my family with heartfelt tokens of gratitude. Please know how touched I am by your gifts, and how deeply they have affirmed the very best parts of my ministry with you over the past seven years.

This year, we welcomed Kathleen Hogue, our Director of Religious Education, and Dr. Zanaida Robles, Director of Music, to UUSM. These two caring religious professionals bring many talents to their ministry with us, and it was wonderful to welcome them to our church. We also welcomed our new RE teacher, Lizbeth Rivera, and are glad she is among us. Finally, we benefited from the continuity and commitment of all our wonderful staff members: Nurit Gordon, Nancy Thompson, and Jackie Schwab in the office; our sextons Tom Ahern and Kevin Roller; accompanist Danny Gledhill; and our choir section leaders Jyvonne Haskin, James Hayden, Gabriel Paredes, and Colleen Keene.

We remember and are grateful for the lives of Ralph Meyer and John Fels, whom we lost this year.

I appreciate your commitment to the practice of sharing our non-pledge offering each Sunday with organizations that do what we cannot do on our own. From July 1 to March 26, we gave away 40% of that non-pledge offering, totaling over \$7,200, to the following organizations: 826 LA: The Writing Center, Camp De Benneville Pines, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, LA GOAL, LA Community Action Network, Our House Grief Support Center, ThePeopleConcern (formerly OPCC Ocean Park Community Center), Safe Place for Youth (SPY), Turning Point, UCLArts and Healing, UU Service Committee, and Westside Coalition: Housing Hunger Health.

Now, it is time for me to pass the torch to your incoming minister, the Rev. Greg Ward. I have great respect for Rev. Greg and all he brings to this time in ministry with the congregation, which has such promise and potential. It has been an honor and an unforgettable journey to serve as your minister. Thank you for your courage, commitment, love, and trust in me, and many blessings on the new ministry you will soon take up with Rev. Greg.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION (DRE)

Kathleen R. Hogue

It has been an exciting and somewhat challenging year for me, having just come on board in September 2016. While some of the challenges involve the impending ministerial transition, others are just a reflection of the shift in the way that families “do church,” with more sporadic attendance across the board (regularly attending families often come 1-2 times per month, rather than 3-4 as once was typical) and reduced availability of volunteers to take on significant preparation and leadership roles. One of the changes that we made this past year was to offer only a multi-age class during the second service. This meant that we needed fewer volunteer teachers and it allowed for the teachers to experience more worship opportunities.

This year, 52 children and youth were registered (89 attending) with an average attendance of 25. We are serving 52 families. We currently have one staff member (preschool) and a paid childcare provider, and many additional volunteer assistants and helpers.

My role in Sunday morning worship this year included collaboration with Rev. Bijur on Intergenerational services for Day of the Dead, the Winter Pageant, our first-ever Blessing of the Animals, and three Christmas Eve services, including a family-focused service. I provided an entire worship service on the topic of Happiness that was well received by the congregation. We also provided an evening service following the presidential election that served many people in our wider community. I regularly attend and participate in the once per month (second Sunday) Heart and Soul service as well. We have dedicated children to the congregation this past year and will be dedicating several more on May 14th.

In May we'll celebrate LRE Sunday with a special focus on what it means to grow Unitarian Universalists. The service will include the Bridging of our high school seniors, and recognition of all of the volunteers who make our lifespan RE programs possible.

I have enjoyed working with the various people in our congregation to improve our RE program, for all ages and stages of life, and to provide leadership in our community. I appreciate the members and volunteers who so willingly and passionately give their time and energy in support of our lifespan RE programs. This is a vibrant congregation and it is a gift to serve as the Director of Religious Exploration here at UUSM.

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Kathleen R. Hogue

Religious exploration is a lifelong learning process, and the Lifespan Religious Exploration committee oversees program offerings designed to appeal to UUSM members and visitors of all ages. Members of the LRE committee belong to one of three subcommittees (Children, Youth, and Adult). Under the direction and guidance of our Director of Religious Exploration, we meet once a month to brainstorm, plan, and organize programs in our subcommittees. We come together occasionally for various events throughout the year.

Our visibility in the church continues to be enhanced by the presence of a weekly table in Forbes Hall staffed by committee members who answer questions about our programs and help with registration for classes.

Notably this year was the DRE Welcoming Celebration in which members were involved in providing programming and a reception. The RE Committee for Children and Youth once again provided a spectacular pancake breakfast for families that participated in our holiday pageant in December. We are planning a retreat over the summer for the committees to come together; we'll work on some ways to be more collaborative, clarify roles, and enhance spiritual

practice in our daily lives.

The Adult subcommittee seeks out, approves and reviews programming to be offered for each year. They have created a process that makes this a much easier task than it has been in the past. Members of this subcommittee are also often the ones facilitating programs.

RE FOR ADULTS

Thursday Night Centering Meditation: A group that chooses a word to say silently to yourself as you enter the silence followed by a brief time of comments, sharing and questions. Sessions ended with a guided Mindfulness meditation. Facilitator Bettye Barclay has led this group for two years and is stepping down. (4-5 regularly attending weekly).

Monday Meditation Group: An Enjoyable Dive into the Who and What We Are: This on-going, once a month class is presented to help participants master specific meditation skills. We endeavor to answer the questions Who am I? (attitudes and beliefs) and What am I? (Essence or True Nature). This class includes meditations which explore participants' spiritual goals. The monthly group meetings also focus on insights gained throughout the month. It is expected that participants have a regular meditation practice. (6 regularly attending) Facilitators: Bill Blake & David Watson

Bullying Workshop: This one-time workshop demonstrated through presentation, role-play, and discussion, effective methods for dealing with bullying in various life situations. The primary goal is to empower the victim with effective communication and thinking skills so they can stop being teased & bullied. (9 attendees) Facilitator: Linda Martens

"Sapiens" A Brief History of Mankind: A Common Read for our Community Written by Yuval Noah Harari, this book surveys the evolution of humankind from the Stone Age to the current century. He analyzes history in parts, and comes to a conclusion that our species dominates the world because it is the only species that can cooperate flexibly in large numbers, and can reason with things that are strictly within our imaginations. His claims are quite provocative, and do call for careful consideration and discussion. (14 Attendees) Co-Facilitators: Laura Matthews & James Witker

Writer's Group: Stretch your literary muscles! This group focuses on spontaneous creations and prepared personal compositions. The atmosphere is safe and supportive, and new members are always welcome. Time: 2nd Wednesday, 7:00- 8:30pm in Forbes Hall (for more information, see page 22). Facilitator: Lucy Hahn

Conversations about Death: After 18 months, the final meeting was in December 2016, as the group had run its course. We were a group that believed that love and service don't stop at the edge of life. Participants learned about and were supported in healing their relationship to death, so that they would not turn away at one of the most important times to be there for another.

Through workshops, sharing, and discussion, comfort replaced fear for all who came prepared for this major intimate, almost sacred, time of life.

History: May of 2015, Beth Rendeiro and Cassandra Christenson started the monthly gathering to learn about all aspects of end-of-life concerns. There was such interest among the congregation we expanded to twice a month sharing and supporting each other. March, 2016, Rev. Bijur dedicated the monthly theme to Mortality. Her sermons, together with poetry, music, congregational participation, and sharing, inspired the congregation to embrace various aspects of life ending. We were deeply moved by the number of people benefiting from the conversations and exploration.

We continued meeting the needs of the congregation's with workshops spaced throughout the year addressing some of the most important end-of-life concerns such as:

- 1) Creating our advance healthcare directive
- 2) Learning specific things to say and do when death is imminent

3) Conversations about Death evenings and workshops, reaching out to the greater community of Santa Monica.

Co-chaired by Joyce Holmen and Cassandra Christenson

"Canticle to the Cosmos:" "Canticle to the Cosmos" is a scientific and spiritual odyssey through the evolutionary origins of the universe, life, and humanity. This was a 12-part video/discussion course by cosmologist and religious naturalist Brian Swimme. After we had gotten more than halfway through, the group voted to discontinue and instead finish the class with a viewing of Prof. Swimme's much newer film, "Journey of the Universe." The "Canticle" series proved to be too much material, and not focused or clear enough to sustain interest. But we had a strong turnout of about 15 to the final screening of "Journey" for Earth Sunday, and reaction was very positive. (A total of 9 participants over the course of viewing 7 episodes) Facilitators: James Witker & Laura Matthews

Patio Chat: Leaders chose the topic (theme) of the month and met between services on the patio. There were some interesting and stimulating discussions and a few times we had 4 or 5 in the group. However, due to the timing, it was not well attended on a regular basis so the program was discontinued. Facilitators: Natalie Kahn & Leon Henderson- MacLennan

Reason as a Religious Source: Throughout history, humans have proclaimed the sources of their religious knowledge as a means to establish a basis of authority for their religious beliefs. The Principles and Sources of the Unitarian Universalist Association include human reason as an important Source of our living tradition. This workshop recounts some historical events and philosophical ideas that shaped the use of reason as a source of religious authority and tracks how this Source became ingrained in Unitarian Universalism. This workshop offered: a historical perspective on reason as a source of religious knowledge, the opportunity to consider the place of reason in religion, and introduced several Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists who upheld reason as a source of authority in religious thought. There were three sessions (12-15 regularly attended) Facilitator: James Witker

Peace Awareness Labyrinth: For this outing participants were invited to "Relax, Breathe, Let Go - And Explore Your Soul." Highlights were walking the labyrinth, reflecting and connecting in the meditation gardens, and a tour along with an extended sound meditation. This was truly a peaceful, revitalizing experience. Facilitator: Dan Patterson



RE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Programming for children and youth is made possible by more than 40 UUSM members who volunteer their time as teachers, assistants, event helpers, committee members and more.

Nursery/Childcare: Our nursery continues to provide extremely high-quality care for infants, toddlers and young children up to age 3, thanks to the reliability and dedication of Adrienne Silsbee. Adrienne also provides care for older children during church events and helps out in the classrooms as needed. We had some challenges following the loss of nursery supervisor ZaNyaa Lee which included some attempts to have an outside agency provide care. The agency turned out to be an unreliable source.



Pre-school- Due to lack of critical mass and not having a pre-school teacher, pre-school children were included with the K-2nd grade class this year. We now have a pre-school teacher, Lizbeth Rivera, who is helping out in this class this year and will be teaching pre-school next year. We will be offering Spirit Play next year.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade- “Spirit Seekers” written by UUSM member Sabina Mayo-Smith. Children engaged in sharing core stories of our faith, focusing this year on themes from our UUSM Covenant: Love, Service, Peace, Knowledge, Freedom and Building Community. Through stories and activities, children learned to make meaning of their lives, grow a strong UU identity, and create a spiritual community together that honors multiple learning styles and celebrates beauty in diversity.

3rd-5th Grade- “Spirit of Adventure” This curriculum was written especially for active 2nd - 5th graders. The program offered 35 sessions with unique themes, such as sports, medicine, architecture, science and food. It included active play such as circus arts, a “take apart party,” obstacle course, and a treasure hunt.

Middle School- “Traditions With a Wink” was 44 lessons, plus 10 Social Night Scripts to teach our U.U. story with fun and engaging themes. (The teachers did not find it to be engaging). The most engaging lesson was the belief survey that was handed out to the congregation. The class enjoyed charting the results and discovering the diverse beliefs that our congregants have.

YRUU- 9th-12th Grade- “Young Religious Unitarian Universalists” empowers teens, with the guidance of adult advisors, to create their own vision and mission for their program. YRUU youth explore what it means to be young and UU, how our UU principles inform how we live our lives, and what power young UU’s have to change the world. YRUU also takes part in social justice projects, organizes social gatherings, and plans and leads a Sunday worship service for the congregation. This year the UUSM YRUU group hosted a youth conference in which youth from the Pacific Southwest District engaged in worship, leadership, fun activities and a social justice project over the span of a Friday night through a Sunday morning. There were 30 participants at the Youth Con.

11:00 RE Multi-age Program- “Spirit Explorers” Children explored the UUSM monthly ministry themes through story, craft, song, movement and more. Each week began with the sharing of a story to help us enter into our theme, and then kids engaged in a craft or art activity that was related to the theme.

Coming of Age- The Coming of Age program for 8th graders is offered every other year and provides opportunities for youth to learn who they are and where they are on their spiritual journey, celebrate their gifts, learn about our church and how it works, and articulate their own personal beliefs within the context of our UU faith. The program culminates on Coming of Age Sunday (though not this year)

Faith in Action Sundays- We offered five Faith in Action Sundays this year, engaging children and youth in acts of service to the larger community. Projects included Heal the Bay Beach Clean Ups, Making Sandwiches at Turning Point Homeless Shelter, and making signs of our Faith for the Women’s March. In addition, there were two Sundays in which the children learned about homelessness and the Santa Monica Homeless Count. They presented their work to the congregation in a large display.

Seventh Principle Saturdays- To continue our social justice work

over the summer we are offering Seventh Principle Saturdays. This begins with a Church gardening day to install a rain barrel, a worm farm, and to plant some native plants. Scheduling is ongoing and will include a trip to a community garden, viewing of environmental films, more church related opportunities and possibly work with other organizations in the community.

Our Whole Lives is a very important element of our Lifespan ministry, and I am very proud that we are a congregation that offers five levels of the OWL lifespan sexuality education program! This is thanks to the long-term dedication and organization of OWL Coordinator Beth Rendeiro who is stepping down this year as coordinator but will continue as a class facilitator with children, youth and adults.

This year we offered the second half of Adult OWL during the fall with facilitators Sylvia & Steve Young, Karen Hsu Patterson, Beth Rendeiro and Buudha Quant. Thanks to all of them and to the twelve folks who enrolled and took advantage of this wonderful program. Spread across the church year was the central OWL curriculum offered to our 8th & 9th graders. We had 8 participants, three of whom came from the community, resulting in donations to the O.W.L. program. There is a concurrent parent program offered every Sunday, serving the functions of both education and support. Our amazing facilitators all year long were: Alan Brunell, Karen Canady, Leon Henderson-MacLennan, Buudha Quant, Beth Rendeiro and Amy Thiel. Thank you for their dedication for all these many years of service.

Additionally, the Grades 10 - 12 program was facilitated by Francois Bar, Kathy Cook, Dan Nannini and Beth Rendeiro. It is truly fulfilling to see 10th - 12th grade participants who began with K-1 OWL having taken every level. These will be the sexuality advocates of the future!

These classes call for a special commitment of time from teachers, participants and their families and we are indebted to all three groups for helping to support, nourish and benefit from the Our Whole Lives program.

Next year, we will offer Elementary OWL consisting of classes for 5th and 6th graders and Kindergarten and 1st graders OWL.

DEVELOPMENTAL MINISTRY TASK FORCE

Jacki Weber

The Developmental Ministry Task Force was created on the heels of Rev. Bijur’s November 2016 resignation announcement. The Task Force was charged by the board with selecting and hiring our next minister, and creating the congregational buy-in to support a successful transition.

Developmental Ministry is a new program run by our UUA, designed to help congregations with specific challenges to find a minister who will work with the congregation to work through those challenges on a time-bound basis, rather than as a settled minister. The hope is that after working with that minister, the congregation is ready for its next settled minister and the congregation will be in a place of thriving.

After meeting with congregants in small groups and speaking with church leadership and external resources (e.g., Nancy Edmunson, Courage and Renewal Facilitator, and regional UUA staff), we developed a set of goals for the coming years and desires in a minister.

At the highest levels, our goals are related to (1) grounding our congregation in covenantal relations; (2) reconnecting with and recommitting to a shared mission and vision; (3) revitalizing membership and leadership; (3) expanding what learning, connecting and caring look like in our congregation; (4) becoming stronger in stewardship of the programs and resources that fuel our mission and vision; and (5) addressing structural issues in governance that may make our congregational work harder than it needs to be. Full

information is online at <http://tinyurl.com/ministerialtransition> or in the church archive.

The Task Force completed its charge with the successful hiring of Rev. Greg S. Ward, who will begin serving the congregation on September 1, 2017.

We will continue to work as church leadership to press forward on realizing our goals and increasing congregational health.

The Task Force was comprised of Kim Miller and Jacki Weber (co-chairs), and the following team members: Ron Crane, Emily Hero, Kikanza Nuri-Robins and Patricia Wright.



RIGHT RELATIONS TASK FORCE (RRTF)

Vilma Ortiz, co-chair

Right Relations is a process of seeking healthy, life-giving, respectful, loving, and open relationships with one another and seeking a way of being that fosters full human flowering. Right Relations is a process because it is what we seek to be and not necessarily where we are now.

In May 2016 the Board of Directors appointed a short-term Right Relations Task Force to work with Nancy Edmundson, consultant, in proposing a longer-term process. The Board of Directors accepted that plan and convened the Right Relations Task Force in July 2016. The Board of Directors hired Nancy Edmundson to serve as Consultant to the Right Relations process.

TASK FORCE/TEAM MEMBERSHIP

The initial members of the Task Force were: Helen Brown, Leon Henderson-MacLennan, Emily Linnemeier, Vilma Ortiz, Margot Page, Beth Rendeiro, Sue Stoyanoff, John Sussman, James Witker, Tom Peters, Rev. Bijur; Nancy Edmundson, Consultant.

Several members were not able to continue with the Task Force and by January 2017, the Task Force members were: Helen Brown, Emily Linnemeier, Vilma Ortiz, Tom Peters, Margot Page, Beth Rendeiro, Sue Stoyanoff, and James Witker; Nancy Edmundson, Consultant.

In March 2017, the following persons were added to Right Relations Interview Team: Liza Cranis, Vicky Foxworth, Wendi Gladstone, Cindy Kelly, Alison Kendall, Audrey Lyness, Linda Marten, Kim Santiago-Kalmanson, Nalani Santiago-Kalmanson, Rima Snyder, Joe Straw, Linda van Ligten, Cassandra Winters, Patricia Wright, Steve Young, and Sylvia Young.

MEETINGS

The Task Force has met twice a month since August 2016. The expanded Team has met once a month in January, February, March, and April.

LISTENING CIRCLES

In October, we began holding Listening Circles facilitated by members of the Right Relations Task Force. Listening Circles offer church members a safe, respectful, and welcoming space to share their perspectives on congregational life and the experience of having their unique perspective listened to by fellow members of the congregation. Listening Circles provide the opportunity for participants to begin living in Right Relations together and to practice

deep listening, respectful sharing, and compassionate inquiry. To date, 13 Listening Circles have been held and approximately 150 persons have participated in them. The feedback from the Listening Circles has been overwhelmingly positive and we continue to offer them once or twice a month.

NOTES TO RIGHT RELATIONS

We have implemented use of a process tool: "A Note to RRTF". To date, we have received 21 Notes from UUSM members. When a Note is submitted, it is promptly acknowledged and a "triage team" of RRTF members reviews and responds. Since each circumstance is unique, responses vary from identifying who to communicate with, offering coaching for communication, offering a facilitated conversation, or identifying areas that need consideration or work outside of the scope of RRTF.

GROUND RULES

The Right Relations Task Force has developed Ground Rules for all of our gatherings (meetings, Listening Circles, Sharing Groups). Having Ground Rules has ensured that our gatherings are collaborative, respectful, and constructive.

PROCESS OBSERVATION

At the request of the Board of Directors, the Right Relations Task Force provided process observation for the congregational meeting held on March 5th. Subsequently we provided process observation for board meetings. We will provide process observation for the annual congregational meeting to be held on May 21st.

COMMUNICATION TO THE CONGREGATION

Nancy Edmundson held an information meeting about Right Relations for the congregation on October 12th. The Right Relations Task Force has published monthly articles in the church newsletter since October. We have distributed special electronic newsletters specifically on Right Relations. All of our materials are collected and available on our church website.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry provides a process and set of practices for seeing and viewing the strengths and values of human relations and interpersonal relationships. It is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. Appreciative Inquiry is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams are themselves transformational. It allows for a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation. It is a method of inquiry that seeks to locate and illuminate fundamental values that of appreciating the best of what is, what might be, what should be, and what will be.

Since Appreciative Inquiry builds on the positive, the differences between what is now and what might in the future can lead to the realization of the existing gaps and discontinuities which can provide motivation for change. The process is highly relational, builds on storytelling, and the payoff is creating a common vision for the future. At our church, we have utilized the Appreciate Inquiry model in two stages: Sharing Personal Stories of Meaning, which were held in February and March, and Sharing Stories of Conflict Transformation, which will be held in May and June.

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES OF MEANING

The purpose of Sharing Personal Stories of Meaning was to collect stories that illustrate a wide array of deeply meaningful, and transformative experiences for congregation members. As we gathered these stories, meaningful shared congregation values surfaced. Sharing of these stories and values are guiding our congregation in articulating and remembering what we aspire to be together. Participants responded to the prompt:

"Tell about a personal experience of meaning, growth, or transformation that you have had here in this congregation, an

experience when you felt especially connected to others in the church.”

We offered 10 groups in February and March where church members shared personal stories of meaning. We attended meetings of several existing church groups (such as, Green Committee, Men’s Group, RE classes) and collected stories. We heard over 100 stories and participants submitted approximately 60 stories in writing.

HARVESTING CORE VALUES AND THE CORE VALUES STATEMENT

Core values are the practices that emerge in our everyday interactions and that allow us to feel connected to each other and they are the essential and enduring qualities of our community. From the stories of meaning, we harvested the core values and developed the Core Values Statement (carried out in three sessions held in March and April). The Core Values Statement was approved by the board at the April meeting and is submitted for approval and adoption at the annual congregational meeting in May. .

SUNDAY WORSHIP

On Sunday, March 26th, the Right Relations Task Force participated in the church service providing a summary of our progress and sharing three stories of meaning, related to our Core Values statement. The Task Force accepted feedback on the Core Values from the congregation, and incorporated that feedback into our final proposed statement.

SHARING STORIES OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Our next phase of Appreciative Inquiry is Sharing Our Stories of Conflict Transformation. We will share these stories to show how we have productively moved through conflicts we have faced with one another. We will host events in May and June where church members can share their stories. In this stage, we will ask participants to respond to the prompt:

“Tell about a personal experience of a conflict or difference that you have had in this congregation and where you stayed connected and transformed the conflict. This may be from any program area or year, a one-on-one experience, or in a group.”

OR: “Think of a time when as a member of this congregation, you disagreed with someone or were in conflict with them, yet managed to work it out.”

COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

Sharing Our Stories of Conflict Transformation, together with the Core Values Statement, will help us to develop our Covenant of Right Relations. The Covenant will be presented to the congregation for feedback and affirmation in the fall.

A covenant of good (right) relations is a brief set of agreements made between members of a congregation about how they would like to live and work with one another, in good times and in difficult times. Covenants, unlike legal agreements, acknowledge our humanity and provide forgiveness and room to begin again if and when mistakes are made. Because of the historical religious significance of covenants these agreements are highly relevant in church communities.

IN THE COMING YEAR, WE WILL:

• Draft, with participation of the congregation, a Covenant of Right Relations;



- Articulate, in collaboration with the Board of Directors, Right Relations work into procedure and policy;
- Define and implement a plan for living within our Covenant of Right Relations, which will likely include Listening Circles, workshops, and Notes to RRTF;
- Work with our Developmental Minister and Board of Directors to support continued right relationships in all areas of congregational life.

We thank the many UUSM members who have engaged in the Right Relations process in the spirit of healing and good will. Whether you participated in a Listening Circle, shared a story, offered feedback, asked for support or coaching, or read and considered our newsletter articles, you have supported and participate in this process. Growing into a healthy and relational congregation that builds our capacity to respond to and transform conflict will involve all of us, and we are well on our way!

CORE VALUES STATEMENT:

Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica

As a congregation, we affirm our core values so we may live into them. In doing so we honor our past, engage with our present and walk together into our future. Our core values are:

- Cultivating community:
- Welcoming everyone into the life and work of our congregation
- Offering support in word and deed and caring for relationships
- Being intentionally inclusive
- Connecting across generations
- Accepting and celebrating each person’s authentic self
- Expressing generosity and gratitude
- Working for peace, equity, environmental and social justice
- Offering opportunities for service
- Cultivating spiritual and Intellectual Inspiration:
- Engaging in lifelong learning and growing
- Honoring the power of music
- Engaging in our democratic process
- Experiencing joy and having fun

These core values are not prioritized in any way. Collectively they represent the rich tapestry of our community. This is a living document that will be reviewed periodically in the life of our congregation.

Approved by the Board of Directors April 11, 2017

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC (DOM)

Dr. Zanaida Robles

UUSM has a long history as a place where great music happens. Hymn singing is a vital part of our UU Music tradition, and at our church there is ample opportunity for us to lift our voices together in song, singing UU hymns in a variety of styles and languages and from a variety of faith traditions. Anthems for the offering and music for the morning segments of the service are intended to reflect a monthly theme or relate to a specific aspect of the service. Anthems during worship represent our best effort to present our most highly skilled work in service and in gratitude for the sacredness that binds during worship..

Our six-person music staff consists of myself, Church Accompanist Daniel Gledhill, and Choir Section Leaders Colleen Keene, Jyvonne Haskin, Gabriel Paredes, and James Hayden. Each member of the music staff brings a wealth of talent, training, and experience in music performance. The choir is comprised of volunteers with varying musicianship skill levels. Anyone from our church community is

welcome to participate. However, the pace at which we learn music is quick, and basic sight reading and aural skills are helpful. Section leaders provide vital support needed for our volunteer choir members to confidently sing even our most challenging music with accuracy and finesse. Our music staff and volunteers not only provide musical support and leadership during congregational hymn singing, but we perform a variety of skilled solos and ensemble works in various styles through our anthems that serve to enrich the worship experience.

The Music Committee, comprised of volunteers from the choir and from the larger church community, meets monthly to discuss music department needs and plan for special events and fundraisers. A highlight of our year was when several members of our community went caroling for local nursing homes in December. Rima Snyder, an alto in our choir and an active member of our Music Committee, took the lead in organizing the event. The Music Committee also sponsored a Benefit Concert to raise money for our music fund in support our section leaders and other music program expenses. The benefit featured solo and ensemble performances by talented members of our church community. We are so grateful to Leslie Beauvais, our singer-songwriter Music Committee member who organized the entire concert and contributed to the magic of the evening with performances of her own fabulous music. The concert raised \$1,025 to support our church's music program.

The annual Remembrance Vespers is a time when we offer a major choral work from the classical genre. On November 6, 2016, our Remembrance Vespers featured Missa Pro defunctis by renaissance composer Antonio Lotti. It was a special evening of music through which we were able to turn toward that which we hold sacred. Through our music, we shared our stories of love, loss, and healing. For the 2017-18 program year, we plan to offer Requiem by W.A. Mozart.

The Kwanzaa service on January 1, 2017, successfully bridged our UU principles with the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Our choir and staff accompanist were away, so music was lead solely by the Director of Music. With help from Rev. Bijur and Rev. Kikanza, the music was woven seamlessly throughout the service. For the "Music for the Morning" anthem, I offered an original musical setting called Kuumba (meaning "creativity" in Swahili), which incorporated congregational singing with solo vocal improvisation. My vision is for this kind of Kwanzaa service to become a yearly tradition at UUSM, with participation from the full music staff and choir. It was an extraordinary experience in which our community should take great pride. My hope is that we might somehow share our Kwanzaa experience with other spiritual and civic organizations who would benefit from our inclusive, creative, culturally rich service. There are many more special memories from this past year. While not all of the highlights are mentioned here, it just goes to show how rich and full our musical life is, and how deeply blessed we are as a community of music-makers.

2016-2017 has been challenging as we transitioned through the newness that comes with embracing a new music director. But we have managed to build strong bonds of community through our musical experience. My goals for the coming year as Director of Music are to continue to engage the congregation with hymnody and congregational singing during worship; to continue the work of building community and improving musical skills within the choir; to work with the incoming minister to create a rich worship experience with music that comforts, uplifts, and challenges us; to utilize resources for bringing more instruments and stylistic variety to worship; to incorporate our children and youth more regularly as participants in the musical life of this church. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as Director of Music at UUSM. We would not be able to engage as deeply in our spiritual artistry if wasn't for the love and support we receive from this congregation. I look forward to the bright future that lies ahead for our wonderful music department.



MUSIC COMMITTEE

Diane Fletcher Hoppe and Cindy Kelly, Co-chairs

Music Committee Attendees: Leslie Beauvais, Joe Engleman, Norb Gallery, Kim Miller, Larry Howard. Rima Snyder, Diana Spears.

COMMUNITY APPRECIATION:

The Music Committee would like to thank the congregation for their generous support of the music program and their unending appreciation of our choir and all the events we do for the church. The Music Committee also thanks our outgoing minister Rev. Bijur for her support and looks forward to supporting our new minister, the Rev. Greg Ward. We would also like to thank and appreciate our Director of Music Zanaida Robles for her inspiration, dedication and hard work that makes our music program great.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

In July the choir decided to bring back the Music Committee and the board approved a charter for our committee. We have a Mission to support the Music Director and to raise our own funding for the music ministry. The Music Committee would like to thank Kim Miller for stewarding the idea and the application to charter our committee through the board process.

Our first meeting was held on October 16, 2017, our second meeting was held on November 20, 2016 and our third meeting will be held on May 28, 2017. For next year it has been proposed that we have set meetings that are put on the yearly calendar.

FINANCES:

Income:

- Directed donations
- Fundraising

Expenses:

- Section Leaders
- Sexton and parking for: Dining for Dollars, Leslie and Friends
- Printed sheet music
- Children's choir
- Purchase of musical instruments / drum and shaker
- Retreat expenses for facility and development speaker
- Repair of organ and piano

ORGANIZING CHURCH EVENTS:

Second Sunday Supper: and Sing Along for December 11. Food brought by the choir members and Holiday Sing Along led by choir.

Dining for Dollars Concert: Choir contribution to fundraising for the church. Music Committee organizes food and sexton (to be held in June).

Special Events Outside the Church:

- Benefit Concert for Syrian Refugees at Temple
- Beth Shir Shalom this event was organized by Rima Snyder, Music Committee member. Thank you, Rima.

Choir Retreat: February at the Santa Paula Unitarian Church. Music Committee under the direction of Zanaida Robles hired our paid music development speaker.

Caroling at neighboring assisted living homes in December. This event included any church members that did not sing in the choir but

wished to go caroling.

Singing on Mother's Day Weekend: The choir will sing at Sunrise Assisted Living on May 13, 2017. The congregation is invited to join singing oldies but goodies.

Fundraising for Choir: In August a directed donation fund raiser was put together by Kim Miller to to raise money for the music fund. Thank you, Kim, and all those who donated.

Leslie Beauvais and Friends: The committee sponsored two outstanding music fundraising events. One was held in the fall and one in the spring to help support our music program. The musical events were graciously organized by Leslie Beauvais, a committee member. The food, clean up and the hiring of the sexton/parking were organized by the Music Committee. There were many attendees and these events happened right after the Second Sunday Supper. A big thank you to Leslie who with her talent, talented friends, and church members made this wonderful evening for all.

FUTURE:

The Music Committee co-chairs anticipate that the committee work for next year will be:

- To revisit our Mission Statement
- To identify our goals and needs for 2017/18
- To further clarify Music Committee procedures
- To identify other ways to raise money for the Music Committee Fund.



CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Nurit Gordon

It has been a busy year for us at the office on all fronts with personnel changes, facility projects and unanticipated or recurring issues.

It has been a year of transitions and changes and we do our best to keep the church operations including administration and facility as smooth and stable as possible as things keep changing around all the time.

Everything that I do here is always work-in-Progress until the goal is achieved and the start point is always months ahead of time, such as working on the budget proposals, the annual meetings and other things as they arise.

I started working on the budget proposal in January of 2017 and eight drafts later, the proposal was ready and approved by the board for presentation to the congregation at the Annual Meeting.

Our net income has been fluctuating as we try to minimize expenses and increase income. We work really hard at the office to generate and accommodate as many rentals as possible without interference to church life and the results are showing. Rental income was \$23,530 when I started working at the church in 2011 and reached almost \$80,000 in 2015-16 with a similar income total projected this fiscal year. Nancy Thompson, our Finance Assistant is an important part of accommodating rentals and helping to increase the rental income.

Our annual net income has fluctuated in the past few years with the lowest being -\$3,358 and the highest at -\$59,818. Our 2016-2017 final net income will be available at the end of June and if there is no

unanticipated income or expense, it will be as budgeted.

This year we established an account with the UUA Common Endowment Fund as approved by the congregation according to the Committee of Money's recommendations.

On the Giving end, we have contributed \$7196 as of April 27th to varieties of organizations through the Generous Congregation contribution from members, friends and visitors.

We also raised \$8742 for the Legal Aid Fund established by the FIA committee and \$975 towards the Hunger Fund.

As of April 26, Art Wall income was \$2000, Dining for Dollars income \$30,736 and Other Fundraising, including the Arts and Crafts Fair and the Thanksgiving Feast, yielded about \$1600.

Pledge income is typically lower than the amounts pledged due to many factors which include members' resignations (which are usually balanced with new membership), members who end up contributing less than pledged or members who are lowering their pledge amount mid-year.

We were able to save some money this year by changing our electricity bill to a business account and by reducing the city trash pick-up frequency.

STAFF TRANSITIONS:

We had a few staff transitions this year when our Director of Religious Exploration and Director of Music relocated to other states. We welcomed Zanaida Robles as our new Director of Music and Kathleen Hogue as our new Director of Religious Exploration.

Both Zanaida and Kathleen proved to be great additions to our staff and a joy and pleasure to work with. The transition period was smooth and we are grateful to have them both on board.

BUILDING:

As for our building — there is never a dull moment. We have a busy facility with approximately 30 weekly and monthly rentals meetings, mostly 12-step groups, and about 20 weekly and monthly church meetings. Between on-going projects, maintenance and improvements there is always something that needs to be repaired or replaced. Kevin Roller, our weekday sexton proved to be a handy individual who can fix most of the stuff needing repair.

Our current on-going projects include the lighting, which is at its final stages and will need to be maintained, the Arizona and 18th church sign, Forbes plumbing and looking into the Arizona lobby soil to find out why the area is shifting and how it can be stabilized.

PROJECTS COMPLETED THIS YEAR:

Gutters/Arizona lobby: fabricated and rerouted.

Rain barrels relocated and installed in the Garden of Eternity.

We received a Green Sanctuary accreditation from the UUA thanks to the efforts and hard work of the Green Committee.

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS:

Reconstruct Forbes plumbing due to repeating stoppage and sewage issues.

The installation of a new sign on Arizona and 18th to replace the current one.

Play yard cover height to be adjusted, current one is too low.

Lighting in the courtyard shade structure.

Arizona lobby - work to be determined after soil testing.

Our Garden of Eternity memorial brick installation, which started in 2016, yielded a net income of \$12,964 so far. The last Memorial Brick order was received. We hope to receive additional orders this year as we are offering a special deal before having to remove all the bricks from the property of the engraver and bring them back here. Once we do that, the shipping will be more costly.

Our membership count has been fluctuating with 350 members prior to the lapsed membership in February. Membership Membership certified at 322 in February and increased to 339 as of April 2017.

FINANCE COMMITTEE/TREASURER

Kim Miller

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TREASURER/FINANCE COMMITTEE

I am completing my second year as Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. Our responsibilities include fiduciary oversight for the overall financial condition of our community. Throughout the year we review all monthly, quarterly and annual financial information and reports. We interact with our Church Administrator, Nurit Gordon, including responding to inquiries, requests or concerns regarding our finances, and education regarding Church finances. We are working to improve collaboration with all committees, teams and groups within the Church regarding how our finances are handled. We also review and recommend action on directed donations to the community, use or source funds to pay for requests and monitoring and auditing of all financial processes. We continue to work towards transparency, accessibility and cooperation with our entire community. Finance generally meets on the Second Sunday, prior to the Board meeting. I welcome questions and inquiries and my email address is kmillerlaw@aol.com.

DEFICIT SPENDING

We have an historical pattern of deficit spending. While the Church has no debt of any kind (other than temporary monthly credit card debt that is always paid off in full each month), we have relied on using our “savings”, “reserves” and/or extra generosity of members to augment our annual deficits in order to balance our budget. The projected deficit for 2016/2017 (for the end of our fiscal year on June



30, 2017), is less than \$20,000 and it appears that our deficit will not exceed that amount and may be less. However the projected deficit for 2017/2018 is above \$30,000. There are several reasons for the higher deficit including an increase in the payment of a full time employee’s insurance premiums, allotment of \$5,000 for the continuation of the Right Relations Consultant and a few smaller expense increases. In addition, Finance carefully reviewed the trend of actual pledge donations received verses the pledges promised. For at least the past 6 years, our community is pledging more than it is actually paying, and this amount is usually more than \$30,000. In other words if we all paid what we pledge, we would have no or very little deficit. Therefore while technically the pledges for 2017/2018 are more than \$292,000, Finance recommended to the Board that we work with projected actual pledge receipts of \$270,000 as a realistic number and the Board accepted and affirmed this recommendation. (A copy of the proposed Budget for 2016/2017 is available in the office or can be emailed upon request and will be voted on by our membership at our Annual Meeting).

Committee On Money (“CO \$”) resolutions and Endowment fund

We enacted the COS resolutions in February of 2016 and are striving to put them in place. All of the reserve accounts are set up as required. This year an Investment Committee was nominated and approved (as required by our by-laws).

First Endowment Fund was set up. There have been several

donations to the Endowment and other funds per the resolutions, through a non-directed bequest by Ralph Meyer, who remembered us in his will. There have also been other directed donations to the Endowment and other funds. We even made some interest on our endowment fund this year.

GOALS

We continue to work collaboratively with our Church staff and administration and other committees and members to make our finances more transparent and understandable. We worked collaboratively with our Personnel Committee throughout this past year and will continue to do so. We seek to further institutionalize the Committee On Money recommendations and several community members volunteered to do a report to determine what we are doing well and what still needs further work.

We hope to draft a financial policies manual in the following year that can be used as a permanent resource. We will also support and gratefully receive input, suggestions and participation from our Developmental Minister, Rev. Greg Ward who will join us in September. Further, finance would like to strengthen our ties to stewardship and fundraising in our Church – to me they are two sides of the same “coin” (pun intended).

THANK YOU

I thank Nurit Gordon for her endless patience with me, the Finance Committee and the entire community for their expertise and care along with Nancy Thompson. I thank the Finance Committee for their hard work, and sometimes having to deal with the “hard stuff,” even when we aren’t popular. Current finance members: Steven DePaul, Alice Koga, Vilma Ortiz and Steven White. We also welcome new member Kim Andres and thank Ron Crane for his input and support. Finance Committee members are “at your service” and we welcome your input, inquiries and participation.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Steven DePaul, Joe Engleman (co-chairs)

Members: Jamie Duckman, Jeff Ellis

2016 saw the inception of the Investment Committee, with a newly written charter, and members as listed above. It advises the Finance Committee and the board on how best to invest the monies in our newly established reserve funds. The bulk of our funds are invested in bank certificates of deposit (CDs), which have slow growth in returns, but are risk-free. Money in our UUSM Endowment Fund is currently being gradually invested in the UUA-run Common Endowment Fund, a conservative, balanced (stocks and bonds), socially responsible mutual fund. It offers a moderate rate of growth with low risk, and is intended for long-term growth.

As time goes on, our Endowment Fund will provide a significant new source of income for our church.

STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Gretchen Goetz and Kit Shaw (co-chairs)

Members: Beth Brownlie, Cindy Kelly, Kim Miller, Patricia Wright

HOUSE PARTIES

The Stewardship Team hosted House Parties in the fall to continue to work on building community and bring members and friends together to talk about supporting our community. We limited the number of events to 3 parties of 12 attendees each and recruited 3 church members to host. The parties were advertised in announcements, the Order of Service, and e-mail blasts. Sign-ups were voluntary and achieved by having Stewardship Team members staff a table in Forbes Hall after the services for several weeks. During this time, there were other activities at the church coinciding with

the House Parties (for example, Right Relations Listening Circles and Friendship Dinners) making turn-out for the House Parties low. Regardless, the 3 parties were held, and the responses from people who did attend were positive.

DONATION TO OPCC

Similar to last year, the team donated a portion of our operating budget to a non-profit organization as an incentive for members to turn in their pledge cards. The non-profit we chose was Ocean Park Community Center. The incentive was that for every pledge card turned in by Dec. 5, a donation of \$5 would be made; for every increase of 10-19% or more over the member's previous year's pledge, the donation would be \$10; and for every increase of 20% or more, the donation would be \$20. This incentive program raised \$525 for OPCC. John Maceri, Executive Director of OPCC, was invited (and came) to UUSM on Feb. 26 to accept the check at both services.



SECOND SUNDAY SUPPERS

Stewardship hosted the October 2016 Second Sunday Supper and used it as the kick-off event for our 2017 Pledge Drive. It was a good chance for the community to meet and know their Stewardship Team. We made pledge cards available for anyone who wanted to pledge early.

We hosted the March 2017 Second Sunday Supper, as well, and used the opportunity to welcome new members (people who have joined in the last 2 years). A special e-mail blast was sent out to a list of new members to invite them to the dinner and pre-printed name tags and orange carnations were available for new members so that they could be identified. We had about 12 new members attend the supper. Second Sunday Suppers are a good way for the team to connect with the church community.

THANK YOU TO PLEDGERS

We publicly thanked pledgers by publishing their names in the monthly newsletter for the months of December, January and February. The February list included members who were "roll-overs" from last year (did not actively turn in a pledge card, but continued to pledge through automatic deduction from their bank account). Additionally, hand-written "thank you" cards were sent early in the campaign (to members who actively turned in a pledge card).

IDENTIFYING CONGREGANTS WHOSE MEMBERSHIP HAD LAPSED

At the beginning of 2017, we were tasked with identifying members who had not made any contribution towards their 2016 pledge, and thus were at risk of being resigned from church membership and also of not being able to vote at the March 5 congregational meeting. The team made personal calls to each member who was on this list. Through these calls, we identified people who had forgotten to turn in their contribution (and later did so), people who had moved away or wanted to resign, and members who were financially unable to pay. No one was resigned because they were unable to pay. In one case, the member was given a "complimentary" membership (a new membership category with no voting privileges, which we encouraged the board to recognize), and in the other case, a voluntary donation was made on behalf of that person. The people whom the team could not connect with after repeated phone calls and/or e-mails, were sent the first "Zero Dollar letter." If the office still did not hear back after this letter was sent,

those members were resigned from membership.

SUMMARY OF THE 2017 PLEDGE DRIVE IN NUMBERS

The amount of money pledged this year is a little lower compared to years past.

	2017	2016	2015
Amount pledged	\$383,946	\$391,367	\$392,880
Number of households	276	269	274
Average pledge per household	\$1,391	\$1,445	\$1,434
Number increasing pledge amount	32	64	55
Number decreasing pledge amount	30	28	19
Number same as previous year pledge	65	63	42
New pledges	16	6	15
Rollover	133	108	143

CHALLENGES

Our biggest challenge remains engaging the congregation to support the church financially, in light of our current challenges/ internal conflict and the impending departure of Rev. Bijur. Although the church leadership has defined a way forward, uncertainty remains, which makes it difficult to engage the congregation fully.

An additional challenge is identifying and recruiting new team members. Stewardship currently consists of 6 women, 3 of whom are also serving on the Board of Directors. The team would appreciate new members, especially men, to bring diversity to the group.

GOALS

Our main goal continues to be to bring the congregation together to support the church financially. We would like to move towards aspects of building community and support for each other as ways to achieve this goal.

HEART & SOUL WORSHIP SERVICE

Kikanza Nuri-Robins, Joyce Holmen, and Karen Hsu Patterson

Heart & Soul is a monthly contemplative worship service series which occurs on the second Sunday of each month. It is designed to be a shorter, more intimate service than morning worship, with singing and instrumental music, statements and questions, silence and sharing. Each service is developed around a monthly ministry theme that complements what is done on Sunday mornings. Readings, poems, quotes, and music are drawn from a variety of sources, including Soul Matters Sharing Circle, our hymnals, and popular/folk music. The order of service is designed to be taken home for deeper reading and contemplation. We print extra copies each month to share at the Second Sunday Supper.

After an initial "pilot" series developed circa 2014 in conjunction with our Intern minister, Nica Eaton-Guinn, the Heart & Soul worship series was revamped under new leadership and returned as a recurring monthly series. Current Heart & Soul worship leaders are Kikanza Nuri-Robins, Joyce Holmen, and Karen Hsu Patterson, with additional support from Rev. Rebecca Bijur. Our first monthly service under this new model was in August 2016. Our goal this year has been to plan and conduct a service once a month so that people can plan on it and will begin to work it into their routines.

Attendance, now, is fewer than a dozen people per service, with consistent attendees who express appreciation for a more intimate and contemplative worship space, and with growing interest from new attendees each month. We have permission to collect an offering, and are now included in the budget. These resources will be used for worship materials.

Our goal for the coming year is to continue with our monthly service; we are concerned that if the Second Sunday Supper is discontinued, it may negatively affect attendance. On the other hand, there are other groups that meet on Second Sunday at the same time as Heart and Soul. We would like to coordinate scheduling so that people don't have to miss attending another group they enjoy in order to attend Heart and Soul.

HEART TO HEART CIRCLES

Leslie Beauvais, Heart to Heart Communications Coordinator

Our Small Group Ministry is called a Heart to Heart Circle because it's a group where hearts come together and hearts are shared. It is also one of the programs closest to Rev. Bijur's heart. To quote her, "I believe this is one of the most powerful and rewarding programs we offer here at the church." This truly describes the experience of what the group is all about, a powerful and rewarding time for connecting heart to heart. Through deep listening without judgment, a safe space is provided for all to share what is on their hearts, based on a monthly discussion theme. Each group runs from January through December of the calendar year.

In January 2016, a dinner meeting was held with Rev. Bijur and both new and returning facilitators. A discussion took place about the meaning of Heart to Heart groups, and training was offered regarding the logistics of these groups. Starting in February 2016, six Heart to Heart groups with a total of 63 participants held the first of their monthly meetings. Each meeting featured shared readings and a discussion on monthly themes, which included: Covenant, Healing, Story, Presence, Prophecy, Listening, Risk, Transformation, Embodiment and Zest. Each topic was a catalyst for the sharing of, and deep listening to, personal stories. Each group held its final meeting in December 2016, with a seasonal celebration of the program.

Heart to Heart facilitators attended two monthly meetings; the first, led by Rev. Bijur in preparation for the group meeting, where facilitators learned from each other, acquiring deep listening and sharing skills; the second, as discussion leaders of the Heart to Heart group itself, where they pass on their newly acquired deep listening skills to the participants in the circles they facilitate.

In 2017, 70 people signed up for five groups. Based on a survey of the 2016 groups, two major changes were made to the 2017 program. The biggest change is that we have discontinued the requirement for each group to perform one service to the church community and one service to the wider community. Over the previous few years, it was noted that service projects drained group leaders' energy and distracted from the program's primary focus, to cultivate deepened personal connections and a sense of shared responsibility. While the service requirement is no longer mandatory, if any individual group wishes to organize a service project, they are more than welcome to do so. If enough people express an interest in restoring this requirement, we can always bring it back into the program.

The second major change came partly out of necessity, as we are losing Rev. Bijur's leadership in June. Therefore, for the 2017 program, we have moved to a lay-led leadership model with shared leadership roles. Facilitators have taken on various tasks such as Chair and Co-chair, Note-takers, Registrar, Communications, and Table Managers.

We also discussed the need to clarify what is meant by 'refraining from crosstalk' within our discussion circles. To quote Rev. Bijur, "in our circles, crosstalk is commenting on, questioning or otherwise interrupting someone's sharing. The idea behind our commitment to 'refrain from crosstalk' is to help each individual feel safe when sharing and being able to share thoughts and feelings completely. Often topics have great depth and one can feel vulnerable in revealing one's self to a group. By eliminating any interruptions, one can feel safer in sharing, not being intimidated and express in a free-flowing manner a complete train of thought. Not commenting directly on what someone else has chosen to share allows for more openness by each member of the circle."

Each year at the close of the program, the planning team asks for feedback from participants. The majority of the participants report that, by the end of the program they feel that they are much better listeners, and that they better understand the meaning of deep listening. Most also report that they feel more connected to the wider

church community as a result of participating in Heart to Heart. Some of the memorable quotes from surveyed members were: "We are more alike than we are different"; "I can never really know a person until I listen to them, their story, [their] pain"; and, "I've learned to appreciate others and sense belonging and feeling at home in the community."

Thank you to Rev. Bijur, to the planning team, and to the facilitators, for their leadership in this essential program for our church community:

2016: Planning team: Rev. Bijur, Catherine Farmer Loya, Pat Gomez, and Rhonda Peacock. Facilitators: Catherine Farmer Loya, Pat Gomez, Rhonda Peacock, Abby Arnold, Denise Helton, JoAn Peters, Margot Page, Andrea Steffan.

2017: Planning Team and Facilitators: Kathleen Hogue, Abby Arnold, Leslie Beauvais, Norman Richey, Beverly Shoenberger, Pat Gomez, Natalie Kahn, Margot Page, and Rhonda Peacock. Rev. Bijur was on the planning team through March, and helped with the transition to shared leadership roles.

Shared Leadership Roles: Kathleen Hogue, DRE; Norman Richey, Chairperson, Leslie Beauvais, Communications Coordinator.

Also, many thanks to Nancy Thompson for her ongoing administrative support.

DINING FOR DOLLARS (D4s)

Farrokh and Garland Allen, Co-chairs

Dining for Dollars is proud to report that our expected income for this year's bidding will exceed \$30,000. On February 19 and 26 our silent auction featured 54 events, which included many fine themed meals at the homes of church members and friends, and several outings to diverse destinations in Santa Monica and Los Angeles. In addition we had 12 "Goods and Services" offerings which included tickets to professional music events, home stays, baked goods, hand knit items, and computer repair service. 860 winning bids were accepted. Collection of monies approached 100%.

Our events span the calendar from early spring 2017 through January 2018. These events build our community as members get to know one another one-on-one and in small groups. This social value is equally important to our church as the money raised for our general fund.

Our committee included Farrokh and Garland Allen (General Chairs), Melinda Ewen and Rebecca Crawford (Data Management), Carol Ring (Graphic Design), Cheryl Barnett, Barbara Gibbs, Emily Hero, Nancy Howell (Solicitors). In addition we had a team of over 20 people on the final bidding day who chose the winners, did data entry to digitize the handwritten data, and made us lunch. Lucy Hahn is the "reminder" who contacts hosts a short time before their event to make sure all goes smoothly.

We will kick off the 2018 season in November with a thank you party for our committee and get to know you opportunity for new volunteers. We are proud to support our church community!

FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Beth Brownlie and Bryan Oakes, Co-chairs

Active members include Rev. Bijur, Nurit Gordon, Brad Hutchinson, Dave Watson, Steve White, and David Olson. We have active representation on the board and give reports to the board.

THE FDC PROVIDES

- Advice on maintaining the functionality of all facilities
- Expertise and project management for facility improvement projects large and small
- Proposals to maintain the safety of buildings and outdoor areas

for staff, members and rental visitors

- Quick action on occasional needed repairs to buildings and infrastructure
- Research and proposals on sustainability goals for the church community
- Momentum toward a highly sustainable campus through energy and water savings: reducing waste overall along with our carbon footprint.

This year we continue to refine the Sanctuary Lighting Upgrade (SoUL) Project. This includes replacing the antiquated (and potentially hazardous) electrical wiring and upgrading all sanctuary light sources to energy-efficient LED, including a versatile lighting control system with simple user interfaces. We are nearly complete.

We have applied to the UUA for Green Sanctuary classification and we received our accreditation in March 2017. This was a collaboration effort with Green Living Committee.

Our goals for 2017-18 include improvements to our buildings, landscape and campus to bring them further in line with our values; particularly our seventh principle, which calls us to be in harmony with the Earth and all living creatures. Our funding model is changing, as well. The proposed operating budget for 2017-18 is the same and reduces funding for facilities by 60% compared to previous years. In the future we will draw from the newly established Contingency and Building Reserve funds, as appropriate, to pay for upgrades and repairs.

We are currently documenting all durable equipment, building elements and features of the campus with the help of Steve White. By assigning a useful life number to these items, along with an estimated replacement cost, we can better understand our financial needs to maintain the building and campus. Beyond housing our beloved community, 25 percent of our average operating income flows from rentals. It behooves us to nurture that income stream.

THE FDC GOALS IN COMING YEARS:

- Repair our plumbing system in Forbes Hall.
- Make upgrades to the Arizona Entrance at Forbes Hall to alleviate the subsidence of the Building.
- Review replacement options for our ailing HVAC system in Forbes Hall.
- Review options for placing a lift in Forbes Hall making all classroom more accessible to all.
- Replacing our Sanctuary Front Doors with more operable and accessible doors.
- Upgrade outdoor lighting to LED to make these spaces more enjoyable and safer for our community.
- Convert all interior lighting to LED to reduce our energy costs and avoid the environmental hazards of mercury-laden fluorescent bulbs.
- Once our building systems are all converted to the lowest practical energy usage, we plan for solar panels to be installed on Forbes Hall. The goal is to become a Net Zero Energy Building (a mandate of the California building code).
- Improve the indoor air quality of all spaces by placing walk-off mats at main entries, cleaning our carpets and floors more regularly and keeping dust at bay within our spaces.

The committee works well together. All members bring immense experience and expertise to the table, along with a thoughtful, inquisitive approach and deep affection for our communal space. We have worked hard at developing trust in our community through extensive communications: multiple town halls, e-blasts and newsletter articles. Project books – detailing budgets, quotes and plans for FDC projects – are available in the office.

We are always on the lookout for new members and ask that community members let us know about programs and features that would improve our connection to our UU values and improve the overall UU Santa Monica experience.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Bob Dietz and Beth Rendeiro, Co-chairs

Members: Barbara Gibbs, Wendi Gladstone, JoAn Peters and James Witker.

The Nominating Committee consists of six members, two of whom are elected every year for a single three-year term. The committee is responsible for nominating people to run at the Annual Meeting in May for positions on the Board of Directors and the Nominating Committee. We are also responsible for recommending people to fill positions on the Personnel Committee, the Investment Committee and the Finance Committee for ratification by the Board of Directors. We are not allowed to recommend or nominate anyone who is currently on the Nominating Committee for these positions. Occasionally we are asked to help fill positions on other committees. The details of these procedures are in the bylaws of the church.

We nominated all but one of the current Board members for another one-year term. We nominated Norman Richey as a Member at Large to replace Joe Engleman, who decided not to run for another term.

We also nominated three people to stand for election for the Nominating Committee. Two of the positions were for 3-year terms to replace Beth Rendeiro and Wendi Gladstone, who are completing their 3-year terms. Last summer we appointed JoAn Peters to fill a position for the rest of the current year. She replaced Melinda Ewen who had to vacate her position on the committee for personal reasons. This position is up for election to a 2-year term.

We recommended one new member to the Personnel Committee, Rebecca Crawford, and two new members to the Finance Committee, Alice Koga and Kim Andres. All of these people were ratified by the Board.

We want to thank Wendi Gladstone and Beth Rendeiro for fulfilling their three years on the committee with dedication and follow through. Wendi stayed active even though she had to drive in from Calabasas to make the meetings. Beth led the committee as the chair and as the co-chair for two years; she kept the committee on track.

Next year we plan to examine our process of selecting potential candidates for the positions we fill. We expect the new committee will do some work on this over the summer and be ready for action in the fall.

VOLUNTEER & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Jackie Schwab

Overall this has been a very productive and busy year in my role as Volunteer & Communications Coordinator. I have continued to coordinate creation of the Thursday emails and weekly Sunday Orders of Service. Publicity is currently in the front seat of tasks to take on, which has been a topic of discussion at the new incarnation of the Communications Committee.

Newcomer Orientation: has gone through, and continues to go through, transitions as we find ways to engage more visitors with the

church and hopefully get them inspired enough to join as members. The location of the meetings has moved throughout the last year from the traditional Sanctuary Alcove, to the Minister's Office, and finally to where the meetings take place now in the Cottage, NE room. Meetings are still held on first Sundays, however, we did have a hiatus of no meetings from January to March of 2017. We also experimented with having different volunteers and church staff attending various meetings. Going into the future, we are still working on flushing out a "program" of events that may include Newcomers, such as path to membership, but this is currently on the back burner as the Membership Committee is on hiatus from regular meetings.

Communications: Thank you to everyone that has attended and taken part in the Communications Team meetings, which I have been attending in part to help coordinate a FAQ on "getting the word out" about events, to be made available to the congregation at large. April 30th we had a very productive meeting, and we have tentative plans to create a webpage with links that will detail event publicity (both internal and external), so that there is less confusion and more efficiency.

This has definitely been a year of a lot of additional PR for various events and Committees (as we move closer to developing a more efficient system of publicity). From the creation of the Kitchen Ministry online coordination site, to the Right Relations Task Force special newsletter this Spring, it seems that everyone is so excited about their events and programs, I believe we definitely have a lot of passion for our causes here at UUSM!

I look forward enthusiastically to the next year at UUSM, and working with everyone and all of the Committee Chairs to help coordinate events. A huge "Thanks!" to everyone I have worked with over the past year.



SECOND SUNDAY SUPPER/ KITCHEN MINISTRY

Jacki Weber

Second Sunday Suppers are a monthly intergenerational potluck, hosted by different communities and committees in the church. They offer an opportunity for congregants new and old to join together over a meal.

Hosts select a theme and coordination promotion, setup, serving, and cleanup of the event. The outcome is a lovely evening of food, fun, and fellowship.

Thanks to the following groups for hosting 2016-17 Second Sunday Suppers: Heart to Heart Groups, Finance Committee, Board of Directors, Stewardship, Green Committee, Choir, Faith in Action and Adult RE Committee.

In fall of 2016, Second Sunday Supper committee members asked for help coordinating events. Members of the Board of Directors stepped in with support. Taking a viewpoint that cooking, serving, and cleaning up afterward is a form of service in and of itself, Kitchen Ministry was born.

Since December 2016, the Kitchen Cabinet (get it?) has helped to

coordinate Second Sunday Supper, along with memorial services and other church events, as well as gathering together to cook in our awesome kitchen at church.

Special thanks to Beth Brownlie, Barbara Gibbs, Kim Miller, Rhonda Peacock and Melinda Ewen for their leadership in relation to Second Sunday Suppers and special events. Thanks, too, to all the volunteers who have rolled up their sleeves to cook, clean, serve, and promote fellowship through food at church.

In the coming year, the Kitchen Cabinet will continue to coordinate and gather in support of Second Sunday Supper as well as all-church events. We may also explore other ways of serving our church community and our larger community through food.

Want to join us? Contact Jacki Weber (jacki.weber@gmail.com) or 310-849-5835

AAHS

Mark Warkentin, James Witker, co-leaders

AAHS (Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists, Secularists and Skeptics) was founded in the fall of 2011 by Len Harris and Ian Dodd to provide a specifically "theism-free" organization within our congregational family. More than 50% of our congregation have identified as Humanists or other non-theists. All are welcome at our meetings, regardless of theological beliefs or un-beliefs.

Current co-leaders are Mark Warkentin and James Witker. Steve White assisted with moderating and report writing.

Mark sits at the AAHS table between and after our services most Sundays. He explains the purpose of our group to new attendees, invites them to meetings, to sign up for the email list and chats with any church members that pass by.

James acts as a resource for written works on Humanism, current Humanist issues and how freethought ideas connect with and enhance our UU values.

Steve moderates our meetings when he is available and ensures all attendees have a chance to contribute to our monthly discussions.

AAHS provides a forum for discussion of important issues of our times (see list below) and has hosted several church events. We provide a welcoming and supportive group for visitors, newcomers and those outside our congregation who have come out as "god-free" and are seeking a welcoming community of like-minded individuals. We promote appreciation for modern Humanism's Unitarian roots and its role as a major influence on the development of Unitarian Universalism in the 20th Century and beyond. We welcome those who may have been ostracized from their families and communities after they took a stand on their rejection of belief in gods.

AAHS OUTREACH USING SOCIAL MEDIA HAS GROWN OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS.

- The AAHS mailing list has steadily grown from 147 as of April 2015, to 187 as of April 2017.

- Our Meetup list (which reaches out to the community beyond our congregation) has grown from 276 followers in 2015 to 556 followers as of April 2017. Meetup promotes awareness of UUSM and UU values in the community, especially to those who may not have heard of us. This outreach has resulted in several new attendees from our Santa Monica community actively participating that are not part of our congregation.

- Our Facebook AAHS group had 59 members last year, growing to 70 members by April 2017. This is a "closed group:" new members can be added by any current member.. Any invited member may post to this group, sharing a wide variety of subjects and ideas relevant to freethought and how we are connected to Unitarian Universalist principles. Membership is focused on UU members that have active Facebook accounts.

- Monthly meetings attract 15-30 attendees. Our meetings begin

with a presentation, video or a simple statement of an issue for discussion. The floor is then opened for attendee discussion and contribution.

OVER THE PAST YEAR, TOPICS OF DISCUSSION HAVE INCLUDED:

- Religious Naturalism - what it is and how you may be one as a Freethinker
- Coming out of the closet as a Freethinker
- Presentation of a new book by the author Tina Stearn "IF GOD EXISTS - The theory of Omnideism - An atheistic argument for the existence of God". Tina found our group through our MeetUp site and has been a regular attendee.
- Secularism and the New Administration - After Friday's Inauguration what are you feeling and thinking?
- Atheists in foxholes - As a freethinker, what do you do to find relief when overwhelmed by traumatic events in your life? Is there a substitute for prayer as a freethinker?
- Deism, the Enlightenment, UU and Freethought - James gave a presentation of the history of Deism through our UU roots
- Dualism or the mind-body problem - Are we more than the sum of our physical parts?
- Secularism - How important is separation of church and state? Is activist Secularism necessary in a non-theocracy country like the United States?
- Agnosticism - is it too wishy-washy? Or is it a basis for ALL freethinkers?
- Humanism and why it is important to all Freethinkers
- Skepticism, presented by Ian Dodd. Ubi dubium, ibi libertas - Where there is doubt, There is freedom
- Atheism: what is it and why are there Atheists attending this church?
- James Witker presented and led a discussion on the history of Religious and Secular Humanism from the late 19th Century to the present: how it developed within Unitarianism and liberal Judaism, the creation of Humanist Manifestos 1-3, the relationship between Humanism and the UUA today, the resurgence of Humanism with the post-9/11 atheist/secular/skeptic movement, and where Humanism and UUism may headed in the future.

AAHS HAS SUPPORTED THE CHURCH COMMUNITY IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS THIS PAST YEAR:

- Phil Ferguson speaking on "The Dangers of Denying the Science of Vaccines" in the sanctuary for the entire congregation.
- Hosted David Diskin, President of Camp Quest West, for a presentation about his organization. Camp Quest provides an educational adventure shaped by fun, friends and freethought, featuring science, natural wonder and humanist values such as empathy, creativity, critical thinking, and community.
- For the fourth year in a row, AAHS contributed to the Dining 4 Dollars silent auction with 25 people (10 more than last year) signed up for the Pastafarian Pirate Feast that will be given April 29.
- Promoted to our email and MeetUp groups Bart Campolo Sunday service on "A new view of the role and application of Humanism"
- Started a new discussion group meeting on Thursday evenings on Secularism and the New Administration
- Promoted and assisted with the food for "Faithful to the Future: Inspiration for Chaotic Times" presented by Michael Dowd in an afternoon event after he spoke at our Sunday services.
- A book study of "Sapiens - A brief history of Humankind" written by Yuval Noah Harari
- An RE course based on Brian Swimme's "Canticle to the Cosmos". This was a viewing of the video series followed by discussion.
- An RE course on "Reason as a Religious Source"
- Promoted the 25th Annual Ernest D. Pipes Distinguished Lecture Series on "Seeing the Garden, not just the Wall" by Dr. Bill Schulz. Dr. Schulz is former President UUSC: Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Amnesty International USA, the Unitarian Universalist

Association and American Humanist Association Humanist of the Year in 2000

- Film and discussion after Second Sunday Supper?
- David Olson has taken responsibility for overseeing the production of the Humanist banner that was approved by the Board last year. Key help is being provided by Joyce Holmen and Carol Ring in the design and research of the banner. Care and progress is being made on ensuring the banner is in keeping with the appearance and format of those already hanging in the sanctuary.

The AAHS fund stands at \$152.00. These funds will be used for printing brochures, supporting upcoming speaker events and other special events.

Jerry DeWitt, author of "Hope after Faith: An Ex-Pastor's Journey from Belief to Atheism" and a prominent member of the American Atheism movement sums up his definition AAHS:

*Skepticism is my attitude;
Freethought is my right;
Agnosticism is my humility;
Atheism is my conclusion;
Humanism is my worldview.*

AAHS welcomes all who want to connect with like-minded people and who share our interests and our curiosity about the diverse world of freethought ideas and issues.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Lois Hutchinson

After a year of maneuvering, the Communications Team was sanctioned by the Board of Directors in November 2016. Our purpose is to coordinate the various communication efforts of the church staff and volunteers; to use technology to communicate better to members; and to receive feedback from the congregation. We want to ensure that the church's public image projects our vision and our values, and that communications efforts overall serve UUSM's mission effectively.

Initial efforts include making PR efforts more available to committees hosting events, coordinating the newsletter and Thursday announcements more closely, and accessing a technology grant to promote events via social media. All are welcome to join the team and share their expertise – or just a willingness to help your community stay informed.

Active members include Bob Dietz, Lois Hutchinson, Liz Fuller, Pam Teplitz, Carol Ring, Charles Haskell, and Jacki Weber – all of whom are grateful for the assistance of staffer Jackie Schwab.

PROJECT DAZZLE

Bob Dietz

Project Dazzle is winding down. It is the last remnant of the CommUunications Committee, which was started by Beth Rendeiro in the Spring of 2010. We received a \$10,000 matching grant from the Spirit Level Foundation that was matched by more than \$10,000 from the Congregation. The funds were used to fund a website upgrade and to add some audio/visual equipment in the Sanctuary and Forbes Hall.

Project Dazzle's main effort has been revamping our UUSM.ORG website using Drupal. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Elizabeth Fuller with help from Pam Teplitz, this has been accomplished and the site remains one of the deepest and most comprehensive of any UU church. After six years, we feel that a new revamping of the website is on the horizon.

Project Dazzle's other large effort has been upgrading of the audio/visual equipment for the Sanctuary and Forbes Hall. The TV, amplifier, Blue-Ray player, ceiling speakers, and installation in Forbes were paid for by Project Dazzle with help from the Facilities

Committee. Thanks to the efforts of Bob Dietz with the effective volunteer Steven DePaul and with great support from Karl Lisovsky, Greg Wood, and the Facilities Committee consultant Alex Cohn, the sound board, speakers, projector, and screen were added to the Sanctuary along with the Camera, which feeds into the TV in the Forbes Hall.

All of the above was accomplished with \$3500 still left in the budget. We anticipate spending these funds on the following items by the end of 2017, at which time the remainder of the funds will go to the church.

- \$200-\$300 on updates to the website that will have immediate impact: A Facebook widget and an 'Announcements' box on the front page, and a re-configuring the YouTube box on the front page to automatically show new content when it's uploaded to YouTube.

- \$200 for an Apple TV installed securely in the sanctuary to make interfacing computers with the projector more efficient.

- A screen or Smart Board for RE for a classroom in Forbes.
- Other similar needs that come up between now and the end of the year.

It's been a fun and rewarding experience. Adios from the Project Dazzle Committee. Beth Rendeiro, Chair; Bob Dietz, Elizabeth Fuller, Pam Teplitz, Members

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Rick Rhoads

Our monthly church newsletter covered major, and in some cases, tumultuous, events over the past 12 months, including

- Resignation of our minister, the Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur
- Implementation of a process to restore right relations in the congregation, including hiring of a consultant
- Contested election for the Board of Directors
- Resignation of Music Director DeReau Farrar
- The arrest of one of our members in an anti-KKK demonstration in Anaheim
- Resignation of Director of Religious Education Catherine Farmer Loya

- Appointment of Dr. Zanaida Robles as Director of Music
- Ongoing campaign to indict Clifford Proctor, the LAPD officer who killed Brendon Glenn

- Establishment of an endowment fund
- Appointment of Kathleen Hogue as Director of Religious Exploration

- Defeat of the LV (Land Use Voter Empowerment) Initiative in Santa Monica
- Reactions to the election of Donald Trump as president, including many congregants participating in marches in LA and Washington
- Support for the housekeepers at Le Merigot hotel in their successful effort to gain union representation

- Decision to hire a Developmental Minister
- UU Santa Monica awarded Green Sanctuary designation by UUA

The past 12 months were also characterized by changes in the Newsletter Committee and in the newsletter.

STAFFING

With the resignation of longtime newsletter editor-in-chief Charles Haskell following the March 2016 issue, several people stepped into the breach. The April issue was a collective effort by the Newsletter Committee (as is always the case), without an official editor-in-chief. Jacki Weber served as acting editor-in-chief for the May and June issues. Rick Rhoads became acting editor-in-chief for a three-month trial period starting with the July 2016 issue, after which the Newsletter Committee appointed him editor-in-chief and his appointment was confirmed by the Board of Directors. Rick served as editor in chief through the April 2017 issue. He resigned following

his and Peggy's decision to move to Orcas Island, WA. Abby Arnold made a commitment to act as editor-in-chief for the May and June issues, which will give the Newsletter Committee time to search for a longer-term replacement. If you might be interested in becoming newsletter editor-in-chief, please get in touch with Abby or one of our art directors, Carol Ring or Pam Teplitz.

Other personnel changes: Rima Snyder resigned as an editor, as did Jennifer Westbay. Bettye Barclay, who served long as the provider of quotations related to the monthly ministerial theme, resigned, and Lois Hutchinson took over that role. In December 2016, Abby Arnold joined the newsletter committee as an editor, and played a key role in getting the February 2017 issue out, while Rick was recovering from an illness.

Committee members who did not change:

- Art direction: Carol Ring and Pam Teplitz
- Editorial: Laura Eklund, Elizabeth Fuller, and Joyce Holmen
- Calendar compiler: Laura Eklund
- Distribution: Elizabeth Fuller (online), Peggy Kharraz (print)

We should add that when the newsletter is ready to be posted online and printed, we send it for review to Rev. Bijur, Board President Ron Crane, Church Administrator Nurit Gordon, and Administrative and Financial Assistant Nancy Thompson. They sometimes catch errors that we correct, adding to the newsletter's value. (Based on stuff they catch, Nurit and Nancy must have sharp vision and intense concentration.)

LAYOUT

Through October 2016, the front page of the newsletter was almost always devoted to describing church services for the upcoming month. Subsequent pages would contain the minister's column, the DRE's column, and "Splinters from the Board." Big and/or especially interesting stories therefore might not appear until pages 4 or 5. We decided to devote the front page to those stories, put the service descriptions and the minister's column on pages 2 and 3, and move the DRE and "Splinters" further back, to allow more space upfront for additional especially interesting stories. The first issue with the new format was November 2016. That front page featured the 25th Pipes Lecture by the Rev. Bill Schulz and the launch of the Le Merigot organizing campaign. The December 2016 front page announced Rev. Bijur's resignation. "Friendly Beasts Capture Our Sanctuary" was the headline on this year's January issue, underneath a photo spread of the Holiday Pageant. The February front page welcomed Kathleen Hogue. March in one column announced a congregational meeting to authorize the Board to go ahead with its decision hire a Developmental Minister; the other column contained suggestions from the Peace & Social Justice Committee on "What's Next?" after the Million Women's March. The April front page also had two stories: "Members Endorse Hiring a Developmental Minister" and "UU Santa Monica Named a Green Sanctuary."

ADDED FEATURE: "ARE YOU AWARE?"

To motivate congregants to help make our church inclusive to people with disabilities, and to give them the knowledge and skills to do so, we've added a regular feature, written by the Discussion and Support Group for Persons with Disabilities, called "Are You Aware?"

COLOR VS. BLACK AND WHITE

Those of you who are church members with accounts at uusm.org and who read the full newsletter online in PDF format see it in glorious full color. It's quite a contrast to the black-and-white print edition. We asked Nurit to give us an estimate of how much more it would cost to print in full color vs. B&W. Here are the results of her study:

- B&W per month: \$153.02. Per year: 1836.24
- Color per month: \$306.02 Per year: \$3674.40
- Differential per month: \$153
- Differential per year: \$1838.16

Is somebody (or a group of somebodies) out there who would like to contribute toward getting out the print edition in the glorious full color of the online version?

Self-congratulatory afterword: We have been to other UU churches and seen their newsletters, and we have received reports from members who have visited other churches and from visitors from other UU congregations to our church. All conclude that our newsletter is at a qualitatively higher level than any others they have seen.



PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVITIES

Nora Hamilton, Peggy Rhoads and Roberta Frye

During the period May 2016 through April 2017 the Peace and Social Justice Committee continued its activities in the areas of peace focusing particularly on the Middle East, the economy and labor rights with emphasis on hotel workers, racism and police brutality, and immigration and immigrant detention. PSJ also worked with other groups such as the Green Committee on issues related to climate change. The following are some highlights:

- **May 22:** At the annual meeting of UUSM, FIA and PSJ presented a resolution to display the banner: Standing on the Side of Love: Black Lives Matter permanently rather than only during Sunday services. Following a spirited discussion, the resolution passed.

- **June 24-26:** At the UUA General Assembly, UUSM delegates and other UUs throughout the country presented a resolution sponsored by the UUs for Justice in the Middle East calling for divestment from companies profiting from Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. The UUA has divested from several of these companies but on a voluntary basis; the resolution would have made divestment obligatory. The measure received a majority vote, but fell short of the two-thirds majority required.

- **August 28:** PSJ co-sponsored an ACLU forum on bail bonds, which disproportionately penalize poor defendants.

- **September 4:** A panel sponsored by PSJ, "Muslim Women Speak: A Response to Bigotry and Hate," featured Soraya Deen of the Muslim Women Speakers Union and three other women presenting various aspects of Islam and the Muslim response to bias. The panel and subsequent discussion were well attended.

- **September 15:** A Faith Informed Perspective on the Santa Monica Land Use Empowerment initiative (LUBE), sponsored by CLUE, was held at UUSM. Various speakers pointed out the problems with the initiative, which was rejected in the November 8 elections.

- **October 17:** Several members of UUSM as well as other UU congregations attended a Town Hall meeting arranged by the ACLU as a forum for the public to engage with LA District Attorney Jackie Lacey. The meeting turned into a confrontation between Lacey and family members of some of those killed by police brutality, activists in Black Lives Matter and a member of First UU Church of LA. Lacey failed to address direct questions regarding the failure to prosecute the perpetrators of the deaths of Brendon Glenn and other young men of color. Lacey stormed out of the meeting before it was over.

- **October 29:** Members of the Santa Monica League of Women Voters' Speakers' Bureau presented information on numerous county

and city initiatives for the upcoming election.

- **November 27:** In a vote witnessed and certified by the National Labor Relations Board, workers at Le Merigot hotel, predominately Latina housekeepers, won union representation by Unite/Here. The vote was preceded by months of organizing, starting in secret due to intense harassment by management. Working with CLUE, FIA and PSJ, Rev. Bijur and other members of the congregation accompanied the workers at various stages in this process. Currently, the workers are in negotiations with management to determine the terms of their contract.

- **December 10:** PSJ film, sponsored jointly by the ACLU. "Profiled" depicts the fight back against NYPD harassment and brutality toward people of color, particularly young Black men, featuring the mothers and sisters of African Americans and Latinos who have been killed by the police. The film also reports on the racial profiling of minority students in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where their high school is located, and the multiracial organizing in response to this. 50 people attended and signed a petition to demand that Los Angeles County DA Jackie Lacey indict Clifford Proctor, the LAPD cop who killed Brendon Glenn in May 2015.

- **January 8:** PSJ sponsored Second Sunday supper. Our guests were Susan Burton of A New Way of Life and two of the women whom this program has helped to transition from prison to a new life in the community.

- **January 15:** Peace and Social Justice continued putting pressure on DA Lacey to indict Clifford Proctor, the LAPD cop who killed Brendon Glenn May 5, 2015. Our Martin Luther King Jr. service featured a talk by John Raphling, one of the attorneys who won a \$4 million settlement for Brendon's family in a civil case against the City of LA and the LAPD. Faith in Action Town Hall brought out church members committed to fighting for peace and social justice, defying the administration's plan to dismantle climate protection, and continuing UUSM's hunger programs and stand for LGBT rights.

- **January 16:** Several UUSM members attended the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside celebration in Santa Monica. At the community fair they showed the trailer from the film "Profiled"—about racial profiling by police in New York City.

- **January 20:** Several members of PSJ and of the congregation in general participated in the Million Women March in Washington, DC. Many more marched in LA with dozens of UUs from across the Southland.

- **February 12:** After Second Sunday Supper, we screened a December report-back from leaders of the Hands Off Syria Coalition, featuring a first-hand account by independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett.

- **February 25:** We Love Anti-Racists fundraiser. Our Valentine Party to raise money for the legal expenses of Hugo Contreras, Mark Liddell and Nikki Schop was successful. The three anti-racists face misdemeanor charges for protesting against the KKK in Anaheim last year. Our generous supporters gave over \$6000 to the defense fund before, during, and after the dinner. .

- **March:** The March Art Wall featured Frank Dorrel, author of Addicted to War and a producer of "S. Brian Wilson: Paying the Price for Peace", which will be shown in our Sanctuary May 20.

- **March 26:** Members and friends from UUSM and First UU Church LA joined Culver City Meets Venice CicLAvia to gather signatures on petitions for the indictment of LAPD cop Clifford Proctor, who killed Brendon Glenn. The CicLAvia's western terminus was at Windward and the Venice beach boardwalk, where Proctor killed Glenn.

- **April 2:** Twenty-five of our congregants gathered at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple for the Interfaith Solidarity March, joining anti-racists of many faiths to demonstrate against hateful rhetoric and crimes targeting Jewish, Muslim and other religious minorities. The march stopped at St. Basil Roman Catholic Church and Immanuel Presbyterian Church and ended at the Islamic Center of Southern

California.

• **April 8:** Several of us attended the now monthly meeting of jUJustice LA (meeting the second Saturday of the month at First UU), the countywide group of UUs working for social justice in Los Angeles. We will be organizing for justice for Brendon Glenn among other priorities, such as housing the unhoused, etc. Rev. Gordon Bailey is jUJustice LA's part-time paid organizer and will be speaking at area UU churches in the coming months.

GREEN LIVING & SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

Alison Kendall, Green Living Chair

Active members (20): Helen Brown, Hildreth Simmons, Linda Van Ligten, Greg Wood, Beth Brownlie, James Witker, Katie Malich, Rick Teplitz, John Zinner, Diana Spears, Cathie Richards, Dan Kegel, Stan Bemis, Steve White, Linda Marten, Haygo Salibian, Barbara Gluck, Spencer and Alex Michaelson, Alison Kendall, chair.

Regular meeting time and place: first Sunday of month, 12:30 (11:30 in summer) in SE Cottage

• **March:** UUSM received Green Sanctuary accreditation from UUA. This designation reflects 10 years of green living and sanctuary efforts at UUSM. Special recognition was given to our leadership in reducing single occupancy auto use for access to church events and our partnership with community services unlimited in south LA to promote affordable access to healthy food.

• Our environmental justice partner organization, Community Services United, worked with UUSM Green Living Committee to obtain a \$10,000 grant from us green building council of Los Angeles for their new community café, store, garden and classroom at the Paul Robeson Center on Vermont at Gage in south LA.

• **March-April:** Green Living also teamed with Peace and Social Justice to offer many climate action month activities.

• **March 19:** 3pm sanctuary speech by Michael Dowd, "Reverend Reality." CASM to help with outreach, greens reception + call to action table: Thanks to James Witker, Linda Van Ligten, Linda Marten, and all the folks who brought food and stayed to clean up.

• **April 9:** Potluck Second Sunday Supper "reduce waste dinner." Special thanks to organizers Linda van Ligten and Beth Brownlie, organizers. We had only 1 gallon of landfill waste reported and used personal reusable and compostable tableware.

• **April 22:** LA March for Science/Climate Action: Thanks to James Witker, Rick Teplitz and other marchers.

OTHER 2016 PROJECTS COMPLETED:

• UUSM green building education project: November 2016 Sunday supper event

• Haygo Salibian, task force chair, Beth Brownlie, Alison Kendall, Carol Ring, Rhonda Peacock made permanent labels for green features inside and outside and conducted tours of the campus highlighting sustainable features.

NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2017-2018:

• Seventh Principal Saturdays – a monthly hands on projects to promote sustainability with LRE and DRE Kathleen Hogue.

• **Climate Corps with Climate Action Santa Monica:** partner with local groups on internships for youth and educational outreach.

• **June 10, 2017 "seeds" veggie bus project kick-off:** UUSM EJ partner, Community Services Unlimited, begins green building remodel of Paul Robeson Center on Vermont/Gage in South LA. Rick Teplitz, liaison, to coordinate with Peace and Social Justice/Faith in Action. Addresses food insecurity.

• **City of Santa Monica Climate Action Plan:** input to update in fall community outreach on sustainability rather than city staff led only.

• **Coffee hour:** Green Committee "green action" table with info and products to help save energy, water, resources and living creatures. Please pick your project and contact Alison Kendall by email to

volunteer: alison@kendallplanning.com

• **Solar panel project:** Dan Kegel, subcommittee chair, with Alison Kendall and Nurit Gordon; Steve White of the Finance Committee, to work with Beth Brownlie and Alison on feasibility study.

• **Challenges:** Our green committee budget of \$250 is insufficient to fund all the programs we are tackling. We would love to see additional funding or a more effective way of fundraising for our green initiatives. We would also like to have energy and water efficiency programs which will save money over time prioritized by the Board and congregation for implementation. Replacing inefficient lighting and spray irrigation with efficient drip systems in Anderson Courtyard are among priority projects.



Our email list is very long but our active membership is only 20 members. We have had great success in combining events with Faith in Action's Peace and Social Justice group and with Religious Education but would love to see more collaboration to be able to offer more activities. Please come join us!

LUNCHESES FOR BUNCHES

Patrick Meighan

In 2016-17, our congregation bagged and delivered 100 sack lunches per month to OPCC: alternately to their Turning Point facility (on 16th Street) and to their Safe Haven facility (on Cloverfield). In any given month, anywhere between 8 to 15 UUSM members participate in the preparation and packaging of our sack lunches. Over the course of the year, perhaps 50 to 75 different UUSM members, friends and visitors have chipped in with this effort at least once: folks of all different ages and abilities, taking delight in the opportunity to work together to fill the stomachs of hungry people whom we'll probably never meet or see. What a great way to spend a part of a Sunday! As such, we truly believe that our Lunches for Bunches program benefits UUSM at least as much as it benefits the community we serve, and we're excited to continue L4B into 2017-18. For more information, call Patrick Meighan, 310-770-5564.

PIPES LECTURE

Diana Spears

2016 was a special year for The Pipes Distinguished Lecture Series because of its 25th year anniversary, Minister Emeritus Rev. Ernie Pipes' 90th Birthday, and his 60 years of Ministry at UUSM. Rev. Bijur tasked the Committee with making it a weekend to celebrate these milestones to honor Rev. Pipes.

On Saturday, October 22nd, with Gordon Pipes accompanying his father, the weekend began with a High Tea in Forbes Hall that brought many church members and special guests to salute Ernie. Guests included UU Revs. Anne Hines, Silvio Nardoni, Ricky Hoyt, and, arriving from New York, this year's Pipes Lecturer, Rev. Bill Schulz. This was Rev. Schulz's second appearance at the series as he had been the premier speaker at the Pipes Distinguished Lecture in 1992.

Also in attendance was frequent pulpit guest and friend Retired Methodist Minister Rev. Jim Conn. Emerita Minister Rev. Judith Meyer was unable to attend, but sent a video message as did Rev. Jonipher Kwong from our UUA Congregational Life Staff.

During the Tea many reminiscences were shared about Ernie which showed his lighter side. Rev. Schulz opened with a story about Ernie performing a wedding sans clothing. Rev. Hines shared a story about Ernie when she was the honoree and he surprised her by presenting much like a comedian at a roast. Many others shared their endearing stories about Ernie. When Ernie spoke he explained he performed the referenced wedding at a local nudist camp and would have been out of place had he been overly dressed. Joyce Holmen and Cynthia Kelly both brought photo boards of Ernie's long time involvement with their (her and cousin David Olson) family ceremonies. A memory book was presented to Ernie by Rev. Bijur.

Over the course of its 25 year history the Lecture Committee has decreased to two active members, Patrick McGuire and Diana Spears. Emeritus members include Ray Goodman, Elizabeth and Leonard Adler and Marguerite Spears. Past President Rob Briner had moved from the area and couldn't attend as had other prior members Katrina Thompson, Carolyn Berry and Teresa Castelli. Many people helped with the Tea to make it a wonderful, touching event celebrating Ernie's birthday and service to UUSM. We want to especially mention Kris Langabeer and Debbie Menzies who have for years assisted with the refreshments. Many other names were listed on the day's program.

On Sunday Rev. Schulz delivered the 9:00 am and 11:00 am services with hints of what his Lecture would be at 3:00 pm. After the second service the Pipes Lecture Committee with Patrick, Diana, Marguerite, Ray Goodman, Sue Stoyanoff. Stephen White along with Rev. Bijur and Ernie, and Gordon Pipes hosted a brunch for Rev. Schulz at a nearby restaurant.

At 3:00pm Rev. Schulz joined a long list of impressive speakers on timely topics. His talk, "Seeing the Garden, Not Just the Wall", focused on the strong UU philosophic element of being able to concentrate on the good, to accentuate and build from there a response to whatever presents itself. Schulz's well-known wit and insight were on display to a large and enthusiastic audience making this a fitting close to a great and memorable weekend saluting Rev. Ernie Pipes.

Our Committee remains grateful to the initial donors to the Pipes Distinguished Lecture Series, especially Dr. Ray Goodman, the driving force behind the series, and to all who have contributed through the years. This support allowed the Committee to cover all the expenses for the weekend including Rev. Schulz's trip.

As we go forward various suggestions of how the Committee can best continue honoring Rev. Ernie and Maggie Pipes while helping our congregation improve our community are being considered. Please join us — we would welcome anyone who would like to become a member to please contact Diana Spears or Patrick McGuire, co-chairs. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

MEMBERSHIP

Barbara Gibbs

The Greeter Team (an arm of the Membership Program) is led by chairperson Barbara Gibbs. Serving on the committee, in a once a month, Sunday service position in the 2016-17 year have been 5 regular members for the Sunday morning first service. They are Denise Helton, Dwight Flowers, Audrey Lyness, Kris Langabeer and Bryan Cahill. Karen Patch has served in a substitute position. One long time member, Kris Langabeer, has recently tendered her resignation from the Membership Committee.

Twelve regular and three substitutes filled the second service each Sunday. They have been Tom Foretich, Kim and Barbara Andres, Jila Tayefehnowrooz, Katie Malich, Roberta Frye, David Olson, Wendi Gladstone, Glen Howell, Michael Young and Steve Young. On the substitute list are Patricia Wright, Leonard Cachola and Beverly Alison.

Each member serves for approximately ½ hour on a rotating, once a month basis, arriving approximately 25 minutes before the service and remaining for 5 minutes after the service begins. First service team members set up and second service team members put away.

Welcome Table: This team serves behind the table set up on the lower patio for ½ hour following each Sunday morning church service.

Serving on a rotating roster, one or more Sundays a month, are Linda Van Ligten, Wendi Gladstone, Carol Ring, and Barbara Gibbs. Serving all this last year (and much longer) has been Kris Langabeer, who is replaced by new team member Sheila Cummins. In addition we are grateful to Carol Ring for preparing and supplying us with visitor packets available every week for pick up at the table.

COFFEE COMMITTEE

Nancy Howell

The Coffee Committee volunteers have continued to enjoy serving coffee, tea and cookies to the congregation after each church service. We also provide coffee service for special events. We are proud to continue being aware of our environment. We serve coffee and tea in ceramic cups. Upon the need for repair of our plumbing, we are presently using biodegradable paper cups until our problem is solved. Coffee grounds are put into the compost barrel. We serve sugar from a container rather than individually wrapped packages. We serve only fair traded coffee. We use cloth tablecloths rather than paper. Our napkins are made of recycled paper.

As coordinator, I would like express my appreciation for a great group of dedicated people on this committee. They are as follows:

Phyllis Kory, Sheila Bjornlie, Leah Moore, Kit Shaw, Alicia Van Ooyen, Linda van Ligten, Pam Teplitz, Peggy Rhoads, Sylvia Young, Sheila Cummins, Jila Tayefehnowrooz, Linda Marten, Deirdre Dietel, Eileen McCormack, and Rebecca Crawford. We welcome our new members, Jimmy Hogue, Susan Stahl, and Barbara and Kim Andres.

Our committee appreciates the numerous people who have donated cookies this past year, particularly those who have purchased Girl Scout cookies and have donated them to us.

Our goal for the next year is to remain flexible and continue the great coffee service. We would invite anyone interested to join our volunteer group. It is an enjoyable way to meet and greet the people in our church.

CAREGIVERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Joyce Holmen and Helen Brown

When this group began meeting 17 years ago, "family caregiver" was not a term that was commonly understood, and those who had such responsibilities bore them in isolation and confusion. Since then, many books, news stories, documentaries, websites, and



organizations are available to offer you insight or assistance. But there's nothing like the relief of having a warm, encouraging support group to help you navigate the troubled waters of providing care for a chronically ill family member or friend. In the Caregivers' Support Group we listen a lot and share strategies for coping with a host of medical, social, personal, legal, and practical details necessary for keeping a loved one safe and as healthy and happy as possible over the long haul. Members have developed expertise in taking care of loved ones with various situations including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, depression, heart problems – at home, in assisted living, in rehab or a nursing home, and in hospice care. Rev. Bijur also visits this small group occasionally with her kind and wise presence.

Caregiving is when you devote yourself to offering comfort and explanations, as well as patient advocacy, using special equipment, visits to ER, learning about new diagnoses, complex medication management, meeting dietary restrictions and insurance restrictions – all while adjusting to changes in family dynamics and finances, and often while trying to hold a job and raise children. It can be alternately depressing, rewarding, frustrating, and overwhelming. Successes can seem brief. Are you handling 24/7 care for a spouse or parent, part-time care, monitoring things long-distance, packing and moving, or stepping forward in a crisis? Please, tell us about it. This small group of people in the church community with experiences similar to yours might help you deal with such problems and with maintaining your own life and health. We invite you to meetings on the third Tuesday morning of each month – and to talk with us whether or not you can attend.

FUUSION

Karen Hsu Patterson

fUUsion is a social group for young adults, with a target demographic between 18-35 years of age. We strive to be a welcoming way to introduce new young adults and potential new members to UUSM, and to create an atmosphere for young adults to build and nurture friendship, spiritual growth, and community. We communicate via an email listserv of approximately 140 members, as well as via a public Facebook page with over 150 “likes” and supporters. We also have a Meetup page, aimed at reaching out to young adults who may not yet be familiar with Unitarian Universalism or with UUSM.

Despite the great number of people subscribed to the email listserv and supporting the public Facebook page, fUUsion active membership more accurately consists of roughly 12-18 people.

Historically, fUUsion has hosted and sponsored social events, spiritual events, and service projects. While most events are aimed at young adults at UUSM, several have been open to the wider UUSM community as well. Social activities include group lunches after Sunday services, movie nights, and potlucks. fUUsion members support and serve UUSM through committee work and are a vibrant part of the UUSM community. In addition, fUUsion is active in the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD). For example, fUUsion members attended and helped to staff the annual PSWD Young Adult weekend at Camp de Benneville Pines (September 2016). fUUsion members are also active in JUUSTICE LA, a regional UU group aimed at transforming oppressive systems and creating social justice and equality in greater Los Angeles.

Continuing challenges for fUUsion are related to the fact that core members of the group are “aging out” or circling out of its stated target demographic. As group members become older, it becomes more difficult to attract younger members who may not feel comfortable with a widening age difference. Another challenge in the past year has been in planning scheduled events -- much of the event planning has fallen primarily to the group coordinator, which means that when life demands attention in other ways, events are simply not

planned if no other group members take up this task.

Possibilities for reviving fUUsion could include: empowering bridging YRUU youth to organize for a new young adult community; building connections with UU students at UCLA and/or Santa Monica College; or redefining the group's purpose and/or goals.

After several years as fUUsion's group coordinator and primary contact, Karen Hsu Patterson is stepping down from her leadership role as of June 1, 2017.

fUUsion is currently seeking new leadership. We are open to input and suggestions to better define the group's purpose and goals. We hope that fUUsion continues to be a vital community for growing and nurturing connection and friendship among the UU young adult community, and beyond.

MEN'S GROUP

Richard Mathias

Our “work” consists of meeting the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month to discuss various topics that are hopefully of interest both to UU men and non-UU men. We may get together for other activities during the year.

Our average attendance is between 5 and 10 per meeting.

I would be hard pressed to rate one meeting above all others since most every meeting becomes a lively discussion. The successful hosting of the 2016 D4\$ Pancake Breakfast was a high point thanks to our Men's Group volunteers and others. Bob Dietz was very helpful. My observation and the feedback that I received was that people enjoyed attending and we raised over \$600 for the church.

The main challenge is to come up with new and compelling topics which is the responsibility of the leader, but suggestions are welcomed from the group members. A challenge is rarely trying to involve as many attendees as possible in the discussion without any one person talking too much. One unusual challenge was a woman showing up, on a Thursday, uninvited, who was reluctantly allowed to sit in, but who mainly talked about personal issues and



contributed nothing to the topic. Again this year, a major challenge will be hosting the D4\$ Pancake Breakfast in June and being sure that we have enough volunteers from both the Men's Group and from the congregation.

Our goals for the coming year are to continue discussing meaningful topics and to have another successful Pancake Breakfast, both enjoyable eating and making some money for the church. In previous years the Men's Group has: volunteered at the West Side Food Bank and at Step Up on Second, collected articles for donation to Good Will, done bicycling, bowling, gathered at member's homes for UCLA/USC basketball/football games and for Superbowls. We might do something like that again, or something different.

We would always like to have more members and all men in the congregation should consider coming and visiting the group. Maybe we need to promote it more by making an invitational announcement on Sunday mornings. We need to promote the Pancake Breakfast, and have at least one post Sunday service ticket sale in Forbes Hall,

and we need to appeal to the congregation for volunteers for the breakfast. Although we are a men's group, we have had women come and sit in on discussions, so we might consider such a request again as long as we don't have a repeat of the bad experience stated above.

SUPER SENIORS

Diana Spears

Once a month about 12 80+ year olds meet in the Sanctuary after the 11:00 am service to socialize and discuss the challenges of aging. They have had several lectures, for example from WISE, on helpful ideas to seniors.

One meeting, from church member Bruno Lacombe on gentle exercise, led to an offshoot group that meets regularly for exercise led by Bruno.

They value the sharing of memories, the friendship of exchanging experiences and have socialized as a group at a brunch hosted by the Adlers.

FICTION READING GROUP

Melinda Ewen and Lucy Hahn, Co-chairs

The Fiction Reading group met monthly to discuss selected novels. One recurring question we address is: "why do we read fiction?" One answer was to study the lives of literature characters to emulate the actions of their lives that made life meaningful and to avoid those that caused pain. Our group is open to all UUSM members and friends.

THIS YEAR WE READ:

- *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett
- *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan
- *A Conspiracy of Paper* by David Liss
- *Jamesland* by Michele Huneven
- *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese
- *Orphan Train* by Christine Baker Kline
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
- *Dear Life* by Alice Munro
- *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* by Jonathan Evison
- *Wool* by Hugh Howey
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple
- *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty

WEDNESDAY NIGHT WRITERS

Lucy Hahn

I was the leader this year of the ongoing Writers' Group, which gathers on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. With an average attendance of 6 people, we are continuing to meet for the coming year. We write on a variety of topics and share the results. A high point was when we chose to write about a world without the color blue; we had a lot of fun with that. We also wrote about deep topics such as children whose parents are incarcerated; one of our members accompanies children on a bus, often on a trip of many hours, to visit their imprisoned parents. We'd like to continue writing about what we think and feel, and accepting each others' offerings.

We are very comfortable with current meeting arrangements. Kevin Roller has been a wonderful, friendly presence, setting up our chairs and couches in an ideal pattern. Because of our meeting location, Forbes Hall, we often have the opportunity to welcome and direct people to their 12-step or other program upstairs or in the cottage—this is a pleasure, too.

SPIRITED SEEKERS

Sarah Robson

As Spirited Seekers we meet to share our curiosity and enthusiasm for all things spiritual. On the first Sunday of every month we delve into a specific topic; I prepare a reading and a film or presentation, which are followed by a few probing questions to spark group discussions. We meet on the first Sunday of the month from 1 to 3 pm. Because of conflicts with Town Hall meetings and other church events we only met twice so far this year. If the first Sundays continue to be bad days to meet, we'll change the time.

On January 7th we explored: "What Constitutes a Religion?" and on February 4th we explored "Who is Howard Thurman?" The members of our groups express their views well and are enriched by listening to others. For me, it was a great pleasure to introduce the members of the group to the life and writings of Howard Thurman and see their amazement at the influence of this author and pastor's books, sermons, and activism on the black civil rights movements from the 1940s through the 1970s. He helped found the first racially integrated, intercultural church in the United States in 1944.

Future groups will explore "An Introduction into American Shamanism" and "I Bring What I Love," a moving film on the practical application of sacred music. All are invited.

My goal is just to keep up. It's a lot of work to put together a guided 2 hour group! And this is my first time facilitating. I hope people appreciate what I am doing. We only require a good topic and some space. We'll probably move the couches in Forbes in front of the TV to watch the upcoming movie.

CAMP DE BENNEVILLE PINES

Jacki Weber

Camp de Benneville Pines is an amazing retreat center 100 miles east of our church in the San Bernardino mountains. It is a magical place where adults and children of all ages can get out of the city to recharge, recreate and reconnect with others, away from the busyness of our daily lives.

Camp hosts more than 60 retreats for UUs and kindred spirits throughout the year: summer and winter youth camps for elementary, junior high, and high school students; summer and winter family camps; themed camps for adults interested in yoga, art, singing, and playing music; plus a men's weekend and a women's weekend. Finally, there are dozens of congregations who have their own retreat weekends. Camps is open to all, but primarily serves the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD) of the Unitarian Universalist Association: Southern California, Southern Nevada, and Arizona.

Our Santa Monica congregation weekend is currently the third weekend in September. In 2016, 77 UUSM singles, couples, and families headed up the hill for a weekend to nurture our spirits in nature. We played. We sang. We discovered. We grew. We did tie-dye and archery. We journaled and meditated. We got to deepen our connections with our families and with each other.

Thanks to the many volunteers who helped plan camp and run workshops during the weekend, including: Beth Brownlie and Bryan Oakes, Linda Van Ligten, Elle Long, Patrick Meighan, Rick Rhoads, Dave Watson, and John Zinner.

Mark your calendar and head up to camp! Registration is open for the following camps. Scholarships are available for those with



financial need. Info and signup at uucamp.org unless otherwise noted.

- June 9-11, 2017 – we are invited to join Pacific Unitarian Church's family weekend (contact jacki.weber@gmail.com)
- July 9-15, 2017 – PSWD Elementary Summer Youth Camp
- July 16-22, 2017 – PSWD Jr. High Summer Youth Camp
- July 23-29 – PSWD Sr. High Summer Youth Camp
- July 30-Aug 5 – PSWD Summer Family Camp
- August 6-10 – Summer Camp for Adults
- August 12-16 – Social Justice Family Camp
- August 18-23 – Art Groove (for adults)
- September 1-4 – Young Adult Camp (ages 18-35)
- September 8-10 – Yoga Retreat
- September 15-17 – UU Santa Monica Family Retreat (contact jacki.weber@gmail.com)

- October 20-22 – Pine-Con Game Retreat
 - October 26-29 – Daughters of Diana Retreat
 - November 2-5 – Music in the Mountains Folk Music Retreat
 - November 17-19 – PSWD Jr. High Winter Camp
 - November 22-26 – Thanksgiving Family Celebration
 - December 27-Jan 1 – PSWD Senior High Winter Youth Camp
- 2018 retreats (not listed above) include Presidents' Day weekend PSWD Elementary/Family Winter Camp; Rainbow Family Camp (late March and mid-May); Men's Retreat (mid-April) and Women's Retreat (early May).

Want to join our camp planning group for September 15-17? It's a great way to meet new people at church, eat, drink, and help create an awesome camp. Contact Jacki Weber (jacki.weber@gmail.com) or 310-849-5835.

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ART WALL

Beverly Alison

Once again the Art Wall has presented a wide spectrum and interpretation of art.

We have shown contemporary imported African pieces and the work of local watercolor artists. Bettye Barkley has shared her exploration of fused glass sculpture with receptive congregation. There was a colorful show of "outsider" as well as an "insider" presentation of political anti-war subjects.

We had intimate, intense contact with local Latino work through Jose Ramirez and shared his view of the world with a high performing autistic artist. Yet to come: our childrens' presentation and the Faith in Action wall. Our committee goal is to feature, challenge and give pleasure, while inspiring thought and broadening perspective. Be excited about next year — we are.

Art Wall Team: Beverly Alison, Carol Ring, Bob Dietz and Pam Teplitz.

BOOKSTORE:

Sarah Harper

I took over the management of the bookstore from Mark Warkentin in September 2016. I kept the books free so there has been no income that I know of.

For next year I plan to reorganize the books along the lines of the 7 principles. I will enlist the help of YRUU to assist in this project. After the reorganization I will accept new donations and start "selling" the books again.