

It has been another year of fulfilling shared ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia! I am writing this report early as I prepare to be away on Parental Leave, and submit it with my love and gratitude for our community. I am so fulfilled by our meaningful work together.

**Highlights of Our Year**

After the retirement of Desi Long last Spring, we have engaged the beginning of an exciting and transformative interim period in our **Music Program**. With the great work of a **Music Search Team** made up of Kara Braudis, Cande Iveson, Pack Matthews, and Neil Minturn, we were able to bring on board an excellent Interim Director of Music Ministry in Marques J. Ruff. Marques has helped push our musical repertoire, our musical assumptions, and our expectations, and has brought a whole new spirit to our worship services together. We've also benefitted from the fabulous musical gifts of Arun Garg as accompanist. Marques will be with us for another year as we reflect upon what we're learning and begin the search for our permanent director.

Our **YRUU Youth Program** under the direction of DRE Jamila Batchelder hosted a truly fantastic social justice youth conference for more than 60 UU teens from across the region. The leadership of our own teens and the volunteer efforts from a wide cross-section of the congregation were inspiring.

Our **OWL Program** is also expanding under Jamila's direction, with our church hosting a region-wide training and expanding the number of trained teachers in our congregation. A pilot this spring for the K-1 curriculum will help our congregation imagine what is possible in expanding to serve more age levels and more children with this important comprehensive sexuality education curriculum.

Our **Member Connect** team has been working on a process to better connect new and long term members alike into the ministries of our church, to help our ministry teams create clear service opportunities, and to increase the culture of volunteering and service in our congregation. Trained *Connectors* have had meaningful conversations with new members and dedicated visitors and now provide a clearer pathway into deeper involvement in the church.

Our **Auction Team** and **Stewardship Team** held fabulous community-building events/campaigns this year that raised money for the church while deepening our experience of connection and fellowship with one another. Fun *and* fruitful!

Our **Social Action Team** re-organized themselves around a new team mission statement and continued important relationships of service and solidarity with Room at the Inn homeless shelter, which we hosted for two weeks in our sanctuary, Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen, Faith Voices of Columbia, and other like-minded organizations.

Our **Green Sanctuary Team** submitted our formal application for Green Sanctuary status – the culmination of a lot of great work – and continued providing us with

opportunities for learning, action, and transformation regarding sustainability and environmental justice.

After last year's vote to become a **Sanctuary Congregation**, our newly formed **Sanctuary Team** laid incredible groundwork for our ongoing engagement – raising money, undertaking our bathroom renovation to add a shower, out-reaching to build relationships of solidarity with vulnerable communities through know-your-rights trainings and other means, and participating in sanctuary network work accompanying vulnerable migrants to ICE appointments and more.

### **By The Numbers**

**19** is the number of new members who joined our church since our last annual meeting.

**274** is our number of adult members, and **163** the average number of adults and children we serve on a given Sunday.

**\$11,342** (*As of April 1. Final number will increase*) is the amount of money we have given to causes we care about through our Faith-to-Action collections under the leadership of our Social Action Team.

### **Upcoming Work**

The following work lies ahead of us in the 2018-2019 program year:

- Hire and support a new Administrator.
- Hire and onboard for our permanent Music Director position.
- Continue our building needs discernment and move toward decision regarding our facilities.
- Launch new weekly Adult RE program.
- Add opportunities for connection in new affinity groups.

### **Gratitude**

Let us give thanks for our incredible staff: Kathie Bergman, Jamila Batchelder, Marques J. Ruff, Arun Garg, and April Rodeghero. Their work has made ours possible this year in so many ways, and the gifts they bring to our community are innumerable.

We give particular thanks this year to Kathie Bergman for her more than 25 years of service as Church Administrator as we prepare to celebrate her upon her retirement in the fall.

The volunteers that make this church run are too numerous to name individually, but I hope that we can each make time to give thanks weekly to volunteers who clean and organize the kitchen, take out the trash, fold the orders of service and newsletters, provide us with music, teach our kids, lead our youth, teach us, lead our chalice circles, run our small groups and activities, usher and greet on Sunday, organize our committees and classes and programs, provide compassionate care to one another and more. It takes all of us to make church happen, and I am grateful to each of you.

## **Honoring Those Now Gone**

We remember the following church members, who died over this past church year. We mourn their loss but carry them with us always in memory and love.

Michael Byrne (1972-2017)

It is with deep gratitude, love, and respect that I submit this report to you.

In Faith, Rev. Molly Housh Gordon