

UU Church of Columbia, MO

2018-2019 Annual Report



Highlights of Our Year

I am so grateful for this community of courageous love as we work together to create radical welcome, deep connection, and healing for our world. This is work that never ends, and it has been another year of fulfilling shared ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia. Here are some of the high points!

Worship & Music

Marques, Arun, and Molly worked together on several versions of a new **Evensong** alternative worship offering that was musical, contemplative, and meaningful. It provided a chance for our folks to explore different prayer practices in an ongoing way.

Our **9am Service** moved a bit closer to critical mass with average attendance around 30. We're hoping to grow it to 50 in the coming year.

New Programs

We launched a well-received new **Adult Religious Education series** on Tuesday evenings, with dual-track semester long classes and mini-mester offerings during the holiday and spring seasons. This year we offered classes on class consciousness and UU theology, anti-racism and spiritual practice, book studies on social justice strategy and environmental justice, and reflections about the holidays and end of life preparations. Fifteen different UU Churchers volunteered to teach, and dozens of UU Churchers partook.

Our new **X-Ennial Supper Club** began meeting in January to provide critical connections for younger adults in our congregation, and is averaging 15-20 in attendance each month.

Our new status as a **Teaching Congregation** has proven wonderful and enriching for us all! Our **Intern Minister** Alexis has been ably leading us in worship and learning opportunities, providing pastoral care and connections, and helping our Welcoming Team update our greeting practices.

Our new **Non-Toxic Masculinity Group** is meeting every Monday evening to provide critical connections and support for cisgender men seeing to reimagine masculinity and resist the pervasive impact of white supremacy and patriarchy in their lives and in the world. Deep, important work happening here!

Children, Youth, and Families

Our excellent **Our Whole Lives (OWL)** comprehensive sexuality education program grew this year as we offered our first K-2nd grade class to great success and offered our most well-attended ever High School OWL.

Our RE program and YRUU program were also the site of excellent **community building** for our congregation, hosting well-attended and fun events like Pumpkin Carving, Simple Gifts Workshop, Valentine's Day Dance, and Easter Brunch.

Our children and youth engaged in monthly service projects as well as additional **social justice work**: a 4th of July Justice Poetry reading, a bake sale raising money for Arch City Defenders, and an LGBTQ educational panel hosted by our Coming of Age class.

Our **YRUU** high school youth program helped our teens grow in leadership, sending two teens to the UU Midwest Leadership School and three teens to peer chaplaincy training.

Social Justice & Living Our Faith

Our **Sanctuary Team** dedicated our new shower, in order to be prepared as a Sanctuary Congregation, after generous giving from the whole congregation, and hard construction work led by Larry Lile and Kevin Fritsche. They also led us into a **Congregational Sponsorship with a Honduran Asylum seeker** to whom our congregation is connected through our Honduras Team's ongoing work in the Congrejal River Valley. A Tamales and Tales from the Border event raised more than \$2000 for Edler and Gaby's asylum case and educated many from our community about the inhumanity of our immigration system.

Our **Honduras Team** supported the health clinic in El Pital and funded life-changing educational pursuits for local leaders with whom they have a long standing relationship. They are busy with plans for their next trip in 2020!

Our **Green Sanctuary Team** advocated against CAFOs with the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, worked on a Stream Team monitoring the health of a local stream, provided several educational opportunities to the congregation, and began a project of helping us connect with nature inside our Sanctuary space with beautiful seasonal arrangements of flowers, branches, and other natural items.

Our **Social Action Team** supported many excellent direct service and justice-making organizations through our robust Faith-to-Action program, turned out en masse for the Faith Voices of Columbia Moral Agenda, and sponsored several advocacy events and marches. They led us in hosting Room at the Inn, where we provided life saving winter shelter for dozens of our neighbors and staffed almost every volunteer shift from our own congregation.

Our **Faith Voices Voter Engagement Team** organized dozens of UU Church members to reach out to hundreds of voters with Faith Voices of Columbia by canvassing and phone banking in advance of our November election. They engaged with disengaged voters in low turn out areas to increase participation in the democratic process, and they helped get wins on Minimum Wage Increase, Ethics Reform, and Gerrymandering while they were at it!

Stewardship, Hospitality, and Community

After a Stewardship drive that saw a \$50,000 budget shortfall for 2019-2020 due to unforeseen circumstances, our community came together in short order to raise a truly incredible \$40,000 in pledge increases to bridge the gap, in increments anywhere from \$40-\$1000 for the coming year. Thank you to our **Stewardship Team** for an excellent campaign and Herculean follow up effort, and thank you to our entire congregation for showing us what it means to live into covenanted, interdependent community. Wow!

Our **Auction Team** raised more than \$4000 for the church at our now-annual Founder's Day auction event, all while providing a fun atmosphere for fellowship and connection.

Our congregation saw the attendance of more than two dozen members at our annual **UUA General Assembly** in Kansas City, Missouri, where they learned, worshiped, and connected with thousands of other UUs from across the country.

By the Numbers

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

280 is our number of adult members, **93** is our number of registered children, and **160** the average number of adults and children we serve on a given Sunday.

Upcoming Work

The following work lies ahead of us in the 2019-2020 program year:

- Decide upon our building project, engage a capital campaign to raise funds for our new elevator and the other projects that we prioritize with our architects' help.
- Update and streamline our staff and volunteer workflows with new database.
- Improve our practices of leadership development and new visitor connection.

Gratitude

Let us give thanks for our incredible staff: Suzanne Clark, Jamila Batchelder, Marques J. Ruff, Arun Garg, Alexis Engelbrecht, 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 particularly thank Marques & Arun for their incredible musical gifts as they move on to their next adventures!

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 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.

Abe Eisenstark
1919-2018

Dawn Pumphrey
1923-2018

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

In Faith, Rev. Molly Housh Gordon