

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF VENTURA
2020-2021
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021



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IN MEMORIAM

MARCELLINE BURNS

JUNE 4, 2021

JO ANN KNOWLES

SEPTEMBER, 2020

2020-2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President Yukio Okano
Vice President Lisa Connolly
Secretary..... Silvia Hutchins
Treasurer Gary Norris *
Trustee at Large Ron Dallas**
Trustee at Large Xenia Young
Trustee at Large Kent Brinkmeyer

* Treasurer from June 14, 2020 to October 31, 2021

** Treasurer from January 21, 2021 to June 30, 2021



From Our Minister

We've made it through a full year of entirely virtual church.

We are surviving and even thriving, creating a lively community of possibility, serving our people in all sorts of new ways. We went from a quick pivot to a whole new form of church for the long haul. We took every program and event we could online, reinvented what we had to, created new things, and kept on going.

We learned to support and spell each other, weaving our efforts together. If someone was on the stressed-out-to-terrified side of the spectrum, someone else was on the hey-this-is-kind-of-fun end of the teetertotter. And we have made it.

A year later, we are still together, having figured out how to create meaningful worship on line, and to stay connected through cards and calls, playing Elf for one another, holding scavenger hunts, online Open Mic Nights, artists gatherings, transferring men's and women's and covenant groups to Zoom. This also meant that the newly named Activities and Programs Team did the same pivot we all did.

Together we made it through the presidential election. The UU the Vote program brought new people to our church, giving people an outlet and a deserved sense of accomplishment.

We have managed to pass a strong budget, supported by funds from outside sources offered due to the pandemic, and also by a strong sense of generosity and commitment by members and friends. Our Generosity Team lived up to its name by giving everyone cookies – as comfort, as thank you, as inspiration.

We have lived into our ministries, created new ones that we can sustain in the coming year(s).

We have a new configuration of staff that is working well together.

Membership coordinator Jimmy Vasquez' gifts in technology and as a database wizard have served us well in through the pandemic and beyond. He also spearheaded the UU the Vote campaign.

In the space of a year Fidelity Ballmer went from RE aide to RE Coordinator and now to Director of Religious Education. She kept our families and kids together through Zoom programming and created online children's worship.

Carolyn Bjerke brought us all sorts of new forms of music, and also co-facilitated a Wellspring group with me.

Jennifer Luce was as steady and on top of details online as in person, and always cheerful and helpful.

Yukio Okano's first year as president of the Board of Trustees was unusual, to say the least. Yet he has found his ground and is a joy to work with. Ron Dallas graciously stepped into the position of treasurer. I thank also trustees Xenia Young, Lisa Connelly, Silvia Hutchins, and Kent Brinkmeyer.

Worship Team.

Kitty Merrill and Brian Fortune are our rocks.

Our whole Worship Team went from working very well together to a level of collaboration that was mutually supportive and creative. Everyone stepped up and in, and learned to dance with the Technology Trickster Gods.

There were so many people and teams that held and cared for us all, working largely in the background, all the while loyal, steadfast, competent, capable, and mostly good humored.

Bryan Buck led a Reopening Team that was brilliant at gathering information, even as it was flipping and flopping. The team addressed the most important things all along, faithfully answering the question, "How do we do church safely and responsibly?"

We created a Safety & Security Team, led by Yukio, to address the issues that arose because our campus was empty day and night. It was good to know that so many sets of eyes have been looking out for us.

This includes the Pastoral Associates, Yukio and Madelaine Okano, Darryl Marquez, Kent Brinkmeyer, Silvia Hutchins, and Kris Langabeer. Together they tried to stay abreast of the biggest needs of our members and friends, and much of the small stuff, too.

A dedicated Personnel Team – David Henkel, Laura Fahr, and Shelley Sussman – made sure that the church remains a good employer, creating a format to be sure that we pay each staff member equitably.

There is much more, yet I will conclude now expressing my gratitude for the whole congregation's Holy Flexibility, patience, and kindness over weeks that dragged into months and more than a year.

Each day we are together we are creating a depth of community that is a blessing to the world.

What a ride!

With love,

Rev. Dana

From the President of the Board of Trustees

The past year has been extraordinarily challenging not only for UUCV, but for the entire world. COVID-19 hit full force in March, 2020, and the entire 2020-2021 church year has been impacted by the pandemic. We had to close our church building. There have been no in-person meetings or activities until recently.

We entered the past church year with many unknowns, including how the pandemic would affect congregation members, church membership, church programming, our financial status, and our sense of community.

We adapted quickly by using technology to create and broadcast meaningful weekly services. We maintained other church programming online. We called each other and provided shopping services. We helped each other in so many ways. We learned how to use Zoom to hold meetings and maintain our connection to each other.

Somehow, UUCV survived the worst of the pandemic remarkably well. The church community has been amazingly resilient and we have supported one another. The staff and congregation pulled together to survive all the obstacles that COVID-19 presented. Despite the crushing limitations and losses imposed by the pandemic, UUCV continued to function as a cohesive liberal church community. And we have continued to uphold our mission and values.

Our professional staff worked under drastically changed conditions. Led by Rev. Dana, our valiant staff (RE Coordinator Fidelity Ballmer, Music Director Carolyn Bjerke, Membership Coordinator Jimmy Vasquez, Congregational Administrator Jennifer Luce, and Audio/Visual Technician Brian Fortune) all pulled together to present amazing services in concert with our incredible volunteer Worship Associates and technical team.

Our ministries continued to reach into the community with programs supporting our homeless neighbors, supporting immigrant rights and climate justice. We sewed face masks to fill both local needs and to help Native Americans residing in Navajo Nation and Apache Nation. We wrote letters through UU the Vote to Georgia and Nevada during the fall election.

A silver lining in the pandemic has been how Zoom and Face Book have allowed us to connect in unforeseen ways. Members and friends who are far away can view our services. Viewers with transportation and health issues can participate as well. In breakout rooms, we can meet and greet in ways we never did in Berg Hall. We can visit each other's living rooms, dens, and kitchens. We can admire the art on walls and share our furry friends with everyone.

The pandemic has shown us how important our human connections are and what a central role UUCV plays in providing a place to gather and make connections. As we overcome COVID-19 and resume a more normal life, we will make use of what we have learned. When we start in-person services again, we will provide virtual options for those who cannot be with us or choose to stay at home.

As Board President, I have learned that church governance is a team effort. The members of the Board of Trustees have worked with Rev. Dana to check the pulse of the church and make decisions in the best interests of the entire congregation. Volunteers who make up the Finance Committee and Building and Grounds Team have played an especially important role during this difficult year.

There are too many people to thank individually, but I do want to acknowledge several people for their service:

First, as a new Board President, I had a lot to learn and understand in this role. I want to publicly thank our previous President, Bryan Buck, for all his help. He has generously offered his time and knowledge to help me during the past year. Thank you, Bryan, for all you have done.

I want to thank my fellow Board members for their service and patience in allowing me to lead them. They include Lisa Connolly as Vice President, Silvia Hutchins as Secretary, Kent Brinkmeyer as Trustee, and Xenia Young as Trustee. A big 'thank-you' to Ron Dallas for stepping into the Treasurer role when Treasurer Gary Norris moved out of state. Best of luck to Gary in his new surroundings! We will also miss retiring Board members Lisa, Silvia, and Kent.

I would like to recognize David Smith for his many years of service and dedication to UUCV. David served as chair of the Finance Committee for eight years. He is stepping away from the role. He has gone beyond the call of duty to help keep UUCV finances stable.

Finally, it has been a privilege and pleasure to work with Rev. Dana. I have come to realize and appreciate all the work she does, including what occurs behind the scenes. I thank her for her support and wisdom. Rev. Dana provides a 'big picture' view of the church and its capacity to transform lives. She is positive, optimistic, and looks towards what is possible.

With this remarkable church year completed, I am looking forward to the new year with cautious optimism that we will emerge from the pandemic with increased gratitude for our community and renewed energy to continue our good work.

Be well,

Yukio Okano

Board President

From the Chair of the Finance Committee

The charge of the Finance Committee (FC) is to prepare and monitor the annual budget, and along with the Generosity Team, identify funding for sustaining our congregation. Additionally, the FC provides advice on other financial matters to the Board of Trustees, such as fundraising, the structure of capital campaigns, building use agreements, and adult programs when fees are collected.

For the 2020-2021 church year, the committee included Claudia Silverman, Todd Collart, Sandy Atkins, Mark Gale, Reverend Dana Worsnop, Jim Waldron, Treasurer Ron Dallas and committee chair, David Smith. Board President Yukio Okano attended FC meetings this year. We thank Mark Gale and Jim Waldron for their many years of service on the FC, as they retired from serving on the committee this year.

Last year's budget year ended June 30, 2021, and our budget was prepared during the first four months of 2020. Our annual budget is our road map for the year ahead that identifies how we will pay for our robust program offerings in service of our mission, and for paying our employees fairly. It is important because we need a good guide to be successful. A successful budget can help us move forward instead of backward during the year. We want our budgets to be as accurate as possible. This gives us security as we move through each year and monitor our financial progress. The purpose of our budget is not to end up with a profit, but to support all of our services and pay all of our bills.

How close were we to accurately predicting our actual income, its sources and our expenses this last year? If our budget was a detailed map of how to get from Ventura to Washington DC, then we ended up in Juno Alaska. But it wasn't our fault. We were blindsided by Covid-19 and its concurrent recession. Surprisingly, our gas tank was still full at the end of our road trip and we did not run out of money. What happened?

Even though our total revenue dropped by 27% from year to year, based upon the

highest and lowest quarters, we were fortunate for the generosity of the Spirit Level Foundation, our members, and the federal and state governments for their grant programs. We ended the year with a surplus, even after fully funding the goals for major maintenance and sabbatical costs. In addition, our investments and cash grew this year, leaving us with the most financial resources we have ever had. So, during a pandemic, we have indeed been financially fortunate.

- Our normal annual revenue was 80% of our prediction but our expenses were only 82% of what we thought they would be.
- We received \$79,065 in special revenue from the federal and state governments and the Spirit Level Foundation, a southern California nonprofit for UUA churches.
- We had an 11% drop in pledge commitments by the end of the year, even after a Generosity campaign that increased our pledges by 8% from the year's low point.

The Finance Committee had lots of help in navigating this wild drive, but at the end we made it through the year without needing to decrease our programs or reduce hours or pay for our employees. In fact we increased the pay for them for the coming year, and for last year we added \$7,000 to our sabbatical fund and \$5,000 for major maintenance and still showed an annual gain for the year of \$9,864 while our budget projected a deficit of \$15,685. Let's hope this year's trip is as successful, but not so scary. Well, we can hope. It's one of the things we are good at.

The current FC has a good mix of members with good judgement and good skills for fulfilling the charges to the FC, especially when we have our minister and Board President assisting us and our synergism with the Generosity Team, led by Bryan Buck.

The word "spiritual" is often thought of as dealing with things that are in the ether, but if you accept a definition of the word that includes "activities that serve to improve your own life and the lives of others," then serving on the Finance Committee can be a heartwarming and deeply satisfying spiritual practice.

David Smith
Chair, Finance Committee

Unitarian Universalist Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- 1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;*
- 2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;*
- 3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;*
- 4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;*
- 5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;*
- 6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;*
- 7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

UUCV MISSION STATEMENT
FROM 5-YEAR PLAN, ADOPTED JUNE, 2020

- *Invite connections and diversity*
- *Spark and nurture free journeys of spiritual growth*
- *Reach out to create a more just and loving community, in harmony with nature*



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