

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF VENTURA
2021-2022
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022



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IN MEMORIAM

BOB JONES

OCTOBER, 2021

JOE HUTCHINS

FEBRUARY, 2022

2021-2022 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President Yukio Okano
Vice President Xenia Young*
Secretary..... Cassie Tondro
Treasurer Ron Dallas
Trustee at Large Ray Escobedo
Trustee at Large Rebeca Fassett
Trustee at Large vacant

* Appointed as Vice President by the Board of Trustees on August 19, 2021. Peggy Anders was elected as Vice President on June 13, 2021 but was unable to serve.



From Our Minister

No, the pandemic isn't done with us (and the whole world) quite yet, though we have managed to do more than make the best of it. We have learned, grown, and adapted. It's not clear quite how church will look AC – After Covid. Yet, the practice of Holy Flexibility that we have taken up (or has been forced upon us) has revealed the resilience, power, and necessity of community.

What will we look like in 2023 or 2025 and beyond? We'll know when we get there.

Heaven knows how we will get there, yet we know we will.

A few highlights for the year – Church Staff

Our Congregational Administrator Jennifer Luce had a baby – Ruby Jeanne! Jen took several weeks of Parental Leave, including some time to ease back into work. A whole crew of people stepped in to help to cover the office duties each week, and David Henkel came through in a very big way, taking up the bookkeeping part of her job. And while he was at it, he updated some of our systems so that both Jen and our accountant can work from home.

This was our first full year with Fidelity Ballmer as our Director of Religious Education. She started with us as an RE aide for the first summer of the pandemic, then she worked not-quite half-time as an RE coordinator during her senior year of colleges. She started at 35-hours a week DRE July 1, 2021. She has been wildly flexible in preserving programs for our children and youth as kids and families' needs and schedules kept morphing.

Jimmy Vasquez began as our Membership Coordinator just 4 months before we shut down. Though it's an unusual way to join a new church community, we have actually had 13 people join us through the Covid Time. More than half of them only meeting us on line.

Music Director Carolyn Bjerke is now the longest serving member of the staff – having been hired by Rev. Jan Christian. She has remained flexible and committed to bringing wonderful music to the church – both in person and online. She started seminary online this year at United Theological School in St. Paul, MN. It has been a delight to see her deepening in ministry and as a musician. Including composing her own tune for singing the words of Rev. Theodore Parker.

A few highlights for the year – Committees and Teams

- We have reorganized the Finance Committee and will have a full contingent – Treasurer and FC Chair, letting David Smith step down after 10+ years steadily at the helm.
- Finances remain amazing by one measure and still unnerving by another. We have more than half a million dollars in various reserve funds. Yet we still have significant year to year deficits. I am so grateful to the Generosity Team, led by Bryan Buck these past two years. I appreciate their innovations and vision in figuring out how we can use all the resources we do have to grow our generosity in so many ways, including bringing in UUA consultant Kay Crider.
- What an amazing Worship Team we have developed with the Worship Associates and our Tech Team. We have one of the most effective hybrid systems now in the sanctuary. Many to thank here, though a particular shout out to Kitty Merrill, Geoff Dann, and Brian Fortune.

Looking ahead.

- All churches are moving into a new reality. And we have our own version of the Great Resignation. One way it is manifesting is that people are less thrilled about long term commitments on committees. I hear tell that some churches are even abolishing their whole committee structure. With going on 30 years as a UU, this boggles my mind.
- I say again and again that we create our community out of nothing. That won't stop happening though it will not look the same. Here are some ideas for ways to help on a short-term, occasional basis.
 - o Join the Tech Team, including creating our MAGIC images. These tasks are done during a week or just on Sunday. And our new TV studio is great fun.
 - o Be a greeter on some Sundays.
 - o Help with Coffee Hour
 - o Be a non-parent who teaches RE – 1-2-3 Sundays a month.
- Shared Ministry, I have been talking this year about Shared Ministry and that two ways for us all to share the ministry of the church are to take up a personal spiritual practice and to join a small group.
 - o Next year we will offer at least one Wellspring Group, 2-3-5 Covenant Groups, perhaps a writer's group. Women's and Men's groups. And More.
 - o We'll have another UU the Vote effort.

- We'll continue our consciousness raising and anti-oppression efforts. All are ways to share our ministry.

Looking a little farther out.

- I will be taking a Sabbatical in 2023 from mid-to-late March through July. The Board is already in conversation with a wonderful sabbatical minister. You won't see this expense on our budget because it will be paid from a fund that has been accumulating for the last 7 years.
- The Board has also approved the idea of having an Intern Minister who would start in the fall of 2023. Before the pandemic the Board directed me to convene an Intern Minister Search Committee who started work this past spring. You'll be hearing more and more about this through the fall and winter.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dana Worsnop

From the President of the Board of Trustees

We have survived another challenging year. COVID hit full force in March, 2020, and my entire tenure as your Board President has been impacted by the pandemic. As someone told me, “You have been the pandemic president.”

In the summer of 2020, a few months after the pandemic started, the Board created an Annual Vision of Ministry, basically a goal for the 2020-2021 church year. This vision stated:

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura Board of Trustees will guide the congregation through the current COVID-19 situation to come out on the other side healthy, engaged, and vital. We will be flexible and open to what a healthy, engaged, and vital church will look like in a new post-coronavirus reality.

Little did we know that the pandemic would continue far beyond 2020. We have experienced wave after wave of COVID variants and it is still not completely over. I think most of us thought the pandemic would last a few months and we would be back to normal.

Although we are not fully through COVID misery, we have survived the worst of COVID and have reason for optimism. In fits and starts, we have reopened more fully. We have adapted to changing conditions and maintained our sense of community. As a church, we have shown great resilience. We are not back to pre-pandemic normal, but we are defining a “new normal.”

I think we will look back a few years from now and realize these were historic times. With crisis comes both danger and opportunity. We have the opportunity to make UUCV a stronger and more vital place as we have learned to cope with the ups and downs of the pandemic.

What have we achieved this year?

- We continued to adapt quickly to the challenges of COVID, focusing on maintaining safety for worship services and other church activities.
- We have developed sophisticated technology to create meaningful hybrid worship services. Our in-person worship numbers have increased and we are able to reach people at home.

- Despite the ups and downs of COVID waves, we have safely reopened to up to 140 people in-person for worship services and maintained a sense of community. We even held several outdoor worship services.
- Our professional staff has continued its dedicated work during another year of the pandemic. They have been flexible and creative in guiding the work of the church.
- We have maintained many of our church programs. We are gradually making more and more use of our church building.
- Led by our Generosity Team, we had a successful pledge campaign. We also had another successful online auction that included an in-person kickoff event.

Many to Thank

There are so many people to thank. Church governance and ministry are team efforts. We have wonderful, capable staff. Led by Rev. Dana, our valiant staff includes:

- Fidelity Ballmer, Director of Religious Education
- Carolyn Bjerke, Music Director
- Jimmy Vasquez, Membership Coordinator
- Jennifer Luce, Congregational Administrator
- Brian Fortune, Audio/Visual Technician
- Russell Seveney, Safety Monitor

We have many volunteers. There are too many volunteers to name all, but I want to especially recognize a few people.

Bryan Buck, our previous Board President, has continued to be a wonderful support to me. He has been a great sounding board and provided advice and encouragement. Thank you, Bryan, for all your help. Bryan has also continued to chair the Reopening and Generosity Teams this past year.

Board members

- Xenia Young – Vice President; Xenia stepped up to be our Vice President when Peggy Anders moved away shortly after the church year started.
- Cassie Tondro – Secretary
- Ron Dallas – Treasurer
- Ray Escobedo – Trustee at Large

- Rebeca Fassett – Trustee at Large

I especially want to recognize Ron Dallas, who will be leaving the Board. Ron stepped up to fill a vacancy in the Treasurer role in January, 2021. He has done an outstanding job in this role and is also a member of the Finance Committee. Ron has been part of this year's Budget Team as well. We are fortunate that he will continue to be a part of the Finance Committee for the coming church year.

And speaking of the Finance Committee, I would like to acknowledge and thank David Smith for his leadership as the chair of the Finance Committee for the past 9 years. We thought David would be stepping down last year, but it has been difficult to find a new chair until recently. Of course, we will never be able to replace David as a person. He has helped shape the budget for many years and has been the heart and soul of the Finance Committee.

It is happy news that Joe Osborne has agreed to assume the role of Finance Committee chair starting this new church year. Joe has an excellent background in finance, has been an active member of our church community for years in various roles, and will be a terrific leader for the Finance Committee. Thank you, Joe, for taking on this important role.

Most of all, I want to thank Rev. Dana. And because I am leaving my role as Board President, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to work with Rev. Dana during the past two years. It has been a privilege and pleasure to work closely with her.

- She is the center of our church community.
- She is positive, optimistic, and enthusiastic. She envisions what is possible
- She provides a “big picture” view of the church and its capacity to transform lives.
- I appreciate all the work she does, a lot of which goes on behind the scenes and that no one knows about.
- Thank you for your support, Rev. Dana!

With gratitude,

Yukio Okano

Outgoing 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, and other financial matters.

Thanks to the diligent work of our finance committee, the federal and Spirit Level grants we received this past year, and lower expenses, it looks like we will end the year with a surplus. As of this writing and our May financial statements, it looks like we will have a surplus of approximately \$40,000 instead of a deficit of \$21,314 as projected in our annual budget for the year ending June 30, 2022.

As the 2021–2022-church year ends, the committee includes Claudia Silverman, Todd Collart, Kathy Swift, Sandy Atkins, Ron Dallas, Joe Osborne, David Smith, Chair, and Reverend Dana Worsnop. Board President Yukio Okano also participated in the FC meetings. Thank you all for your time, energy, creativity, generosity, and commitment to the goal of having a strong finance committee to strengthen and sustain our church.

It strikes me as ironic that the finance committee is healthier than it was before the pandemic. Yes, we struggled to find funds to pay for our programs and avoid decreasing the hours of our employees. The pandemic did not decrease the generosity and commitment of our church members, but it did cause income disruptions for some of them, and for three years our number of new members per year decreased for circumstances you are already familiar with.

So why is the finance committee in good shape when there is so much chaos everywhere you look? We had to plan for an end to the era of the Davids as the core of finance committee operations for many years. David Frank, David Henkel, and me. Two of the Davids had retired from the committee in past years and now it is my time to retire as the chair of the committee after 9 years.

Our committee is stronger now than before because of Reverend Dana's observation that we needed to reorganize the duties of its chair so that the committee work is spread among more people. Thank you, Reverend Dana! We wrote new job descriptions for the Chair of the FC, the Treasurer of the Board, and the Budget Team Leader.

Then we searched for good candidates for each of these jobs and the rest is history. Sandy Atkins stepped up first because she has had lots of experience with budgets and creating them and has been an involved UU for many years. She subsequently volunteered to be church Treasurer for a two-year team. (Who said there are no UU angels?) This is remarkable generosity with her skills, time, and energy for the benefit of our congregation. Thank you, Sandy!

One more stroke of good luck needed to occur for this to be the end of an era of Davids. By now you already know that Joe Osborne generously volunteered to be the Chair of the FC for 2022-2023. His business management and non-profit board experiences make him an excellent choice for the chair of the committee. Thank you, Joe!

I feel confident that the finance committee's other capable members, led by Joe and Sandy, are up to the task of maintaining a capable, thoughtful, and creative committee for the near future.

It has been great for me to have meaningful work for the nine years since my retirement. It is creative and fulfilling work, and I hope our new leaders love helping this community as much as I have. I am grateful for interesting work that is also good for others. Thanks, UUCV, for our continuing journey together.

David Smith
Outgoing Chair of the 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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