

# **Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura**

**2022 – 2023  
Annual Report  
June 2023**



Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura  
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**In Memoriam**

**Doug Tate**

February 15, 2023

**Don Gardner**

April 23, 2023

**Conny LaFerriere**

May 20, 2023

# 2022-2023 Board of Trustees

- President ..... Jim Merrill
- Vice President ..... Xenia Young
- Secretary ..... Cassie Tondro
- Treasurer ..... Sandy Atkins
- Trustee at Large ..... Ray Escobedo
- Trustee at Large ..... Gudrun Eastham
- Trustee at Large ..... Don Henniger

## From the President of the Board of Trustees

Dear Members and Friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura,

The 2022-2023 church year has seen our congregation face challenges and embrace new opportunities as we emerge from the years of pandemic.

This Annual Report for 2022-23 includes a return to updates from some, but not all, of the many groups who have helped to keep our congregation vital and have served to enrich our community life in the past year. Several individuals and groups not represented here have also kept us on the path to re-grouping as well as building a new way.

With Much Grace, Muchas Gracias,  
Jim he him Merrill, President, UUCV Board of Trustees

Well, when I was in discernment about whether to accept the nomination to serve as president of the church board of trustees, one thought I had was, “This could be a time that I can do something wonky that I’m good at – bringing our policies and procedures up to date.” In addition, Rev. Dana said to me, “We could have fun!” Having served in this role once before, I considered that this would be “Presidency 2 point Oh no!”

Church life took a slightly different turn from what I expected.

We as a community went through a lot this church year. We saw the abrupt resignation of our Director of Religious Education at the same time that we were slowly creeping out of pandemic shutdown mode. Extraordinary volunteers worked every Sunday to keep a basic religious education program in place for our little ones. At the same time, a group of committed individuals answered the call to serve on a children’s religious education advisory group to help steer the way forward.

Your church board of trustees had other things on its plate, as well. We studied and approved hiring a Contract Minister, the Reverend Carolyn Price, to augment our worship program for a few months. When Rev. Dana made clear her intention to take an overdue sabbatical leave from March to August, 2023, the board deliberated and contracted with Rev. Carolyn to be our two-thirds time Sabbatical Minister, with an emphasis on congregation-facing activities: she has preached on a full-time schedule and engaged in other congregant-involved activities. Some of Rev. Dana’s pastoral care responsibilities have been picked up by others, as have daily administrative duties, especially by our amazing Church Administrator, Jennifer Luce.

In March, we also said goodbye to our beloved Membership Coordinator, Jimmy Vasquez. He leaves us with fond memories, as I hope we do with him.

Our DRE's departure left us a challenge, to examine with open hearts how the inherent role of patriarchal culture exists within our own church community and how we can model a new way. This process was hard for some and welcome for others. We held open conversations and listening circles. Ultimately, an Equity Ministry Team formed, to address broad societal inequities, both known and subtle, as they affect our own church culture, and to provide opportunities for us to learn and grow.

The religious education advisory group came to your board with a proposal for an acting full-time Director of Family Ministry, and the board agreed that this would be a step toward the future. This – this - brings the “back of the house” and the “front of the house” into balance. Our Acting Director of Family Ministry – Lily Rappaport - has been working in hybrid mode. We are delighted to see her in person, and more often from the other side of the continent. She has been highly engaged online with worship and with families and youth. We look forward to her impending move to California and to seeing her in person more often.

Here's something fun to look forward to. Camp de Benneville Pines has taken on the mantle of organizing Pacific Southwest Service Area Assemblies, emulating the annual assemblies of the former PSWD. This past April Camp held a successful gathering in San Luis Obispo at the end of April. And at the end of April 2024, we will host the next assembly right here in Ventura!

And I did get to do just a little wonky policy reframing and have some fun with my colleagues.

# Enriching Our Shared Lives

## ***Caring Team***

Team members are: Corine Barksdale, Joyce Sattler, Yukio Okano and Madelaine Okano.

This team reaches out via cards and telephone to members who are ill or have suffered a recent loss. Team members also assist with occasional rides or meals. As well, the team helps with memorial service and wedding receptions held at the church. Because of the Covid epidemic, no services or receptions have been held in 2021, 2022 or 2023 to date.

*Madelaine Okano*  
*Caring Committee Coordinator*

## ***Equity Ministry***

We do the spiritual work and service of the church *together*. A “ministry” gives that work definition and direction. UUCV's Equity Ministry began this year with the goal of providing the congregation with opportunities to recognize and confront inequality in all areas - sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and all the other ways we divide ourselves. Unequal power dynamics influence the way we think, behave, and interact. Our Equity Ministry works to root out this kind of “us/them” thinking.

Learning about those dynamics together-- and finding ways to change them-- helps us to grow spiritually and in community, enhancing our capacity for love, compassion, and understanding.

The work of tackling inequality has no end point. The **Equity** Ministry was created to ensure that this work continues and is given support. While the commitment to create a compassionate, aware and equitable church culture belongs to everyone, the team is tasked with ensuring that there are meaningful activities and resources to help with the journey. Examples of offerings this year include:

- Listening Circles: To explore desires for change, to listen deeply, and to build understanding
- Book discussion group: *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* by Toni Morrison: Using art to deepen understanding of power dynamics in the broader culture
- Julica Herman de la Fuente presentation: UUA expert on helping congregations with the work of becoming anti-racist
- Between Sundays articles “Reflections on Equity”
- Culture Talk: An interactive dialogue about experiences with inequality, challenges with change, and what kinds of interactions we’d like to see us all get better at.

- Resource library

Equity Ministry Team Members for '22-'23: David Henkel, Diana Kubilos, Kitty Merrill, Neal Ortenberg, Kathleen Wheeler, Gary Zinik

### ***Health & Safety Ministry Team***

The origins of the Health & Safety Ministry Team go back to at least 2017, when a Safety Team began meeting to identify and address safety concerns and to prepare for the possibility of external threats. Chaired by Jessie Austin, this team met regularly to address the many topics that affect the well-being of staff, church members, youth and children, and visitors. The Safety Team also began the work of creating a comprehensive safety and security document.

The Safety Team did not meet after the onset of the 2020 pandemic and the closure of the UUCV building. After the building closed, trespassing, vandalism, and drug use on the property increased. A new Safety & Security Team, chaired by Yukio Okano, was formed in the summer of 2020 to address these issues. Interventions facilitated by the team included additional night patrolling by Securitas, volunteer grounds checking during the week, tinting of building windows by the church office, inside parking for the administrator, installation of security cameras, creation of an outdoor use general policy (approved by the Board in July, 2020), replacing defective building lights, working with Building & Grounds to repair property damage (e.g., graffiti, broken outdoor faucet, broken locks), and holding a meeting with the Ventura Police Department (January, 2021).

As UUCV began to reopen its building in May, 2021, trespassing and illegal activity on the church grounds continued to be problems. In-person services started on a small scale in September, 2021. Russell Seveney was hired as our first Sunday Safety Monitor in November, 2021. His role included coming early on Sundays to check the grounds and identify any safety hazards. At the time, our Religious Education program was restricted to outdoors activities and use of the garage.

After the Reopening Team retired in mid-2022, the Safety & Security Team monitored the Covid pandemic and made Covid-related recommendations to the Board. The Safety & Security Team was re-organized as the Health & Safety Team in August, 2022. The new name acknowledged the addition of members from the retired Safety and Reopening Teams to address health and safety issues more comprehensively in one group.

In October, 2022, the term “ministry” was added to the team name to reflect the shared ministry nature of the team’s work. The newly named Health & Safety Ministry Team sent out a survey to better understand how the congregation was coping with the pandemic and preferences regarding reopening of the church. This survey helped inform recommendations to the Board about how many people to allow in the building and the use of face masks. The team



tried to address the challenge of balancing the desire to reopen and normalize church life with the dangers of Covid.

Another focus of the newly named Health & Safety Ministry Team was to review and update the draft safety document created by the pre-pandemic Safety Team. The revision of this document resulted in the first UUCV Safety Manual. This manual clarifies policies and procedures to promote best safety practices at UUCV. The document was presented to the UUCV Board and approved in February, 2023.

Approval of the Safety Manual is only an initial step. We believe it should be reviewed on a regular basis and changed as needed. Additional information can also be added over time. Further work will be needed to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures. The Health & Safety Ministry Team meets monthly to monitor and make recommendations regarding the many health and safety issues that impact UUCV. Current major concerns include the continuing public health threats posed by Covid and the ongoing problems from trespassing, drug use, and vandalism on the church property. The team will continue to work closely with the Building and Grounds Team and consult with other church groups as needed.

During 2022-2023, the members of the Health & Safety Ministry Team included: Michael Akseven, Sherry Anderson, Jessie Austin, Bryan Buck, Gudrun Eastham, Mark Gale, Sharon Kufeldt, George Naugles, Madelaine Okano, Yukio Okano, Cassie Tondro, and Ray Vargas.

*Submitted by Yukio Okano, Chair, Health & Safety Ministry Team.*

### ***Kitchen Cabinet***

For many years, our small church kitchen was the Berg Hall hub for many potlucks, parties, and rental affairs as well as coffee and tea after each service. Sheila Wilgus and Tessa Weeks led the “Kitchen Cabinet” when we often fed more than 150 people. The pandemic led to the closure of the building from March, 2020, until September, 2021.

As in-person services reopened slowly, first with only 20-25 people, we began efforts to normalize the experience of coming to church. With face masks required inside the building, we started holding after-service coffee hours outdoors in an abundance of caution due to Covid. Tables, chairs, and a coffee cart were set up in the parking lot outside the front entrance. As the number of people allowed inside the building grew to over 100 by April, 2021, the after-service coffee hour moved to the roomier parking lot outside the back entrance. Finally, by October, 2022, Berg Hall was reopened with face masks optional. This allowed for a return of coffee hour indoors for the first time in over 2 ½ years.

While a few potlucks have been held since the beginning of the pandemic, food services have been mostly limited to serving coffee and bagels after each Sunday service. Our local Noah’s Bagels has generously resumed donations of bagels. Our current hospitality service is provided

by a Coffee Team and a Bagel Team. Left-over bagels are donated to local homeless shelters. Our thanks go to Coffee Team members Ruth & George Owens, Kathy Swift, Xenia Young, and Madelaine & Yukio Okano. Bagel Team members include Cary & Dave Davis.

*Submitted by Yukio Okano, Coffee Team chair*

### ***Leadership Development Committee***

The purpose of the Leadership Development Committee is to:

- 1) Identify new and emerging leaders among the membership.
- 2) Nominating members to fill vacant positions on the Board, Leadership Development Committee, and Memorial/Endowment Funds Committee.
- 3) Provide leadership training.

This year the committee streamlined its business and focused on nominating qualified members to serve on the board. The business included:

- Interviewing board members whose terms were expiring to review their board experience, the challenges of serving on the board, and if they wanted to serve another term.
- Successfully recruited candidates to filled vacancies on the board and Leadership Development Committee

This year terms ended for two members of the five-member Memorial/Endowment Funds Committee. Because this committee is largely inactive and has not met or conducted an official business for many years, it was decided not to fill those two positions. The committee will continue at present with three members, which appears consistent with the requirements of the Bylaws.

Members of the Leadership Development Committee: Caroline Briggs, Gudrun Eastham, Yukio Okano, Gary Zinik, chair.

*Submitted by Gary Zinik*

### ***Program and Activities Coordinating Team***

The Program and Activities Coordinating Team (PACT) continued to meet monthly thanks to Zoom while the church was shut down. Our primary project during that time was helping update the church website so that it was more user friendly for those looking for programs and activities. There were many people involved in that work in addition to PACT.

Some formerly active church groups went on hiatus during COVID and it remains to be seen if they will be revived. There were no new programs proposed during the time of lockdown although that is starting to change. Recently there have been inquiries about possibly starting a Birding Group if there are enough people who want to participate. A new People of Color Caucus is off to a promising start.

The Watercolor Group has just recently started to meet in person again in Berg Hall. A notice was put in UUVC This Week trying to find someone willing to organize Circle Dinners. A proposed new queer group is in the planning stages and folks seem enthusiastic. There will be monthly gatherings over dinner at some favorite restaurants. The Green Room Gallery is full of art once again.

The success of many groups and activities depends on several factors including having a leader willing to get things off the ground. There are many things we'd like to see offered if possible. PACT's role is to support and publicize what the congregation proposes and is willing to put the time into. PACT does not implement programs. It does strive to find opportunities for members and friends to engage in church affairs, programs, activities and events.

### ***Pastoral Associates/Pastoral Ministry Team***

The Pastoral Associates team was created in 2017 to assist Rev. Dana in meeting the pastoral needs of the congregation. As a lay pastoral ministry, the team seeks to support church members in times of need, sorrow, illness, and transition.

Church members may self-identify as having needs or may be referred by others in our church community. A dedicated email "Warm Line" can be used to communicate directly with the Pastoral Associates team.

In 2019, a formal mission statement was created to help define our work. In 2023, the Pastoral Associates team was renamed as the Pastoral Ministry Team to further emphasize the shared ministry nature of our work.

#### *UUVC Pastoral Ministry Team Mission Statement*

The Pastoral Ministry Team works in partnership with the minister in helping create a community of caring and support. It helps respond to pastoral needs that arise within the congregation.

The Pastoral Ministry Team seeks to be a confidential, compassionate, and listening presence. Our work is based on our Unitarian Universalist Principles which affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, compassion in human relations, and the interdependent web which connects us all.

Our covenant with the congregation is:

- to visit the ill at home or in the hospital,
- to support those in personal transitions or going through a life crisis,
- to maintain contact with those unable to attend church due to illness or physical challenges,
- to support friends and family involved in care giving,
- to comfort the bereaved,
- to provide a compassionate ear and a willingness to enlist the help of others.

Pastoral Ministry Team members for 2022-2023 included: Kent Brinkmeyer, Amy Cherot, Gary Hansen, Kris Langabeer, Darryl Marquez, Madelaine Okano, Yukio Okano, Rena Pezzuto, and Cathy Puccetti. In addition, Pat Hansen served as a consultant on services for the aging.

*Submitted by Yukio Okano, Pastoral Ministry Team convener*

## **Publicity Team**

During the past church year, the Publicity Team became more active and focused on publicizing the church as a whole, as well as providing promotion to church events. Its work includes online publicity design, creating flyers, posters, banners and other physical promotional materials, as well as design and update of the church website. Team members: Linda Lovullo Dooley, Kate Higgins, George Naugles; Sandy Atkins, Kitty Merrill, (staff support from Jennifer Luce, and Jimmy Vasquez)

### Physical Plant Highlights

- Design and creation of banners to promote the church to passersby on Ralston. These were displayed for 6 months (temporarily removed after damage due to vandalism.)
- Re-established use of the church wayside pulpit (marquee) with messages updated on a regular basis.

### Social Media Highlights

- Established an Instagram page for UUCV
- Developed a schedule of posting days and topics for the church's official Instagram ([uuventurachurch](#)) and Facebook ([Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura](#)) pages (Monday: Programs and Activities, Wednesday: UU Issues or Memes, Friday: Upcoming Service Elements)
- Set up a system for posts to be reviewed prior to their going live.
- Established team member expertise in use of Facebook Meta Business Planner (allows pre-programming of a full week of FB and IG posts) and some analysis of posting results.

## Web Highlights

- Update of the website information on activities and programs and addition of contact forms to each of these (using information provided by with the Programs and Activities Coordinating Team (PACT)).
- Creation of new online pledge form on the website

Events the team supported in the past year include: External - Craft Fair, Internal - Church Auction, Cluster Camp, Listening Circles, Toni Morrison Book Group, Don't fret ukulele group, DBSA Support Group, SMART Recovery Support Group, Artist's Chat Group, Writing Support Group, Religious Education, Friendship Sangha of the Heart, Art Show, Building and Grounds Events, Sunday Services, Friday Movie night/discussion. These were promoted primarily through social media with some posters and flyers. In addition, an Equity Ministry logo was created to help brand EM activities and develop awareness of the new group in the congregation.

*Submitted by Kitty Merrill*

## ***Religious Education & Family Ministry***

In mid-February, I joined the congregation as the Acting Director of Family Ministry. In the first few months, my focus had been to support the existing Sunday morning religious education program and to help develop programming for the middle and high school youth. A secondary focus has been to begin the process of defining what Family Ministry is and its shape at UUCV.

The idea of family ministry is a broad concept and encompasses religious education as well as the ministering to the whole family. In defining what exactly family ministry is and our hopes for the future, there were several online conversations on "Our Future RE Story" where people were invited to discuss the congregation's unique religious education identity and provide their thoughts and desires for future family ministry programming. Some of the questions we discussed were, "What is Family Ministry?", "What are some wishes and hopes for RE?", "What are things we do well and what are some things we might do differently?" and "Why does RE matter?" We learned that a central part of Family Ministry is the congregation's ministry to children and youth, but that an important extension is to minister to the needs of parents, caretakers, and various different kinds of family units. There is a strong desire to build a vital and growing community of lifelong faith development for all.

On Sunday mornings, we followed the Religious Education Advisory Council's charge of providing connection, ritual and play. This year's curriculum was called "Feel Your Best Self" a collaborative initiative out of the University of Connecticut, which centers around how we feel in everyday moments and how we can improve our overall emotional well-being. Children made their own puppets for role playing and learned strategies within three themes: to calm themselves, to catch their feelings, and to connect with others.

In March the middle and high school youth were invited to gather to brainstorm ideas for group activities, This spring we organized a fun evening of bowling at Buena Lanes and the very first (of hopefully many) game of Dungeons & Dragons. Also a highlight in May was the Bridging Service for our three graduating high school seniors.

Special thanks for the leadership of our Sunday morning program. Laurie Lemson, Cheryl Gilbert, Cary Davis and Barbarella West. Their love and dedication to the children are the foundation for this year's creative and meaningful learning experiences for all children each Sunday. Also deep gratitude to Janice Frank and David Henkel for their care and commitment in creating programming for the youth.

I am looking forward to next year and to working collaboratively with the Worship Associates, the Equity Ministry team, *Lift Up Your Voice* and other committees to help develop Religious Education programming that integrates children, youth, and all families into the life of the greater congregation.

*Submitted by Lily Rappaport, Acting Director Family Ministry*

### ***Religious Education Advisory Council***

In August of 2022 an ad hoc group was formed following the departure of Fidelity Balmer who was the Director of Religious Education at the time. The members consisted of Krista Mendelsohn, Francesca Ferrara, Erica Duffy, Paul Grabowski, Kimberly Prieto, Laurie Lemson and David Henkel. Reverend Dana often joined our meetings so that she remained informed about our RE offerings as well as the challenges that we faced. Our charge was to provide Connection, Ritual and Play for the children and their families during a time of transition as we searched for a new Religious Education professional. We made a conscious decision to limit formal curriculum and invite all children on Sundays to reestablish their friendships with other children and youth and the community at large. We relied heavily on the work of Laurie Lemson, Cheryl Gilbert and Cary Davis to create meaningful activities for any children who came to church on Sundays. These three continue to form the core of our volunteer teachers and our heart goes out to these loving and dedicated members of our community.

Our first desire was to connect with parents to determine what we could do to support families and their children who represent the future of our community. To accomplish this we prepared a short questionnaire and contacted parents by telephone to get responses and to "listen in" to their concerns. We gathered responses and shared them with the Board of Trustees.

In January we formed a search team consisting of Rev. Dana, Kimberly Prieto and David Henkel to find and hire a new Religious Education professional. This group worked with the Personnel Team, Finance Committee and the Board in getting approval to expand the Religious Educator position to  $\frac{3}{4}$  to fulltime. A complete analysis was prepared that showed the budget impact of realizing a goal set by our Five Year Plan years earlier.

We created an updated job posting with welcome letters and links to our website. We posted this to the LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) and interviewed two candidates. We remained flexible to hire an Interim or Acting Religious Education professional that could be converted to a permanent position. After thoroughly interviewing two highly qualified applicants we hired Lily Rappaport, assuming the title of Acting Director of Family Ministry. Lily came with more than 25 years of experience in various UU settings and began on February 15th working remotely until she can relocate to our area in the Summer of 2023. She has family in the area and is pleased to be in closer proximity.

We also decided to create several events to engage families in a way that involved the entire community:

- In September we sponsored Pickleball lessons in the lower parking lot
- In October we offered an outdoor “Kick Off BBQ” and grilled burgers, hot dogs and vegan patties with all the trimmings for all to enjoy. Bounce houses were well used by the children and there were plenty of outdoor games. The event was well attended by children and adults alike.
- In December we created a Holiday party complete with dinner and carols led by the Don’t Fret ukulele group
- In March we offered a catered lunch in Berg Hall to welcome our new Acting Director of Family Ministry, Lily Rappaport. Once again, Don’t Fret offered lively, sing along entertainment.

As Lily says, we are in liminal times and are exploring, remaining curious about how we might support Lily as we reimagine what Family Ministry looks like in our beloved community for the years ahead.

### ***Welcome Team & Greeters***

In the Time Before, the Welcome Team (6 members) and Greeters (39 volunteers) were performing radical hospitality before, during, and after Worship Services: welcoming all persons coming into our building, distributing Orders of Service, making nametags for visitors and guests, offering Visitor Packets to those interested, taking up the offering during Worship, and standing at Welcome Table #2 in Berg Hall to chat with visitors and guide them to the Connecting Center Table, and the refreshment tables.

As the church began opening-up more in recent months, the Welcome Team (2 members) sprang into action, reinvigorating the Greeters and inviting the Connecting Center Table team to re-open where visitors are encouraged to drop by and chat. Greeters' tasks have been reduced slightly to friendly welcoming before and after Services, the Order of Service is available online and the weekly Offering is collected in a basket at the back of the Sanctuary after Services as well as online.

Welcome Team, Greeters and Connecting Center Table team continue to serve in tandem with high enthusiasm, joy and inspiration.

*Submitted by Gudrun Eastham and Kathy Swift, Co-Chairs*

### ***Worship Associate Ministry***

This was an important year for the Worship Associate Ministry as we continued navigating from presenting all the Sunday services via zoom and YouTube to offering hybrid services with both online options as well as in-person services in the sanctuary. Initially, everyone in the sanctuary was required to be masked, but in March, the masking requirement was lifted for all but the section closest to the windows, where masks are still required.

With our own Rev. Dana Workshop at the helm at the beginning of the church year we forged on. On the Sundays when Rev. Dana was not in the pulpit, there were some excellent guest speakers, as well as some fabulous lay led services created by worship associates with members and friends of the congregation. Reverend Carolyn Price also stepped in as our contract minister.

In March Lily Rappaport Joined UUCV as Director of family ministry. She has been an asset with the Time for the Child in All and is encouraging more youth to attend and participate in services. In May we will have our first bridging ceremony since we closed our doors during the pandemic in 2020. Here our senior high school students will speak to the congregation before they head out to whatever is next for them in their lives.

Also, in March Rev. Dana began her overdue sabbatical. Rev. Carolyn Price became our sabbatical minister, serving in the pulpit approximately twice a month.

The Worship Associates continue to craft services with either guest speakers or members of the congregation when Rev. Carolyn is not in the pulpit. Another event not to be missed in this report is the Worship Retreat that was held at the church in January. Here the Associates were able to discuss important issues about being a worship associate, and they were able to receive and edit a Worship Associate Handbook which can now be accessed online. Out of this retreat came an expressed need for more understanding of how to use technology in our services. Kitty Merrill did an excellent job of providing training to meet these needs.

All in all the Worship Associate Ministry remains strong and dedicated to providing excellent, meaningful services to our congregation.

*Respectfully submitted by Celia Ortenberg*



# Reaching Out

## ***Inreach/Outreach Committee***

The Inreach/Outreach process has been led this year by a committee chaired by Sue Brinkmeyer and supported by Diane Wamsley, Mary Kay Lambert, George Naugles, Bob Newman, Shelah Wilgus, Stephanie Tiffany, Teresa Zdanowich, and Tessa Weeks.

The congregation nominated organizations to receive our offerings and voted each four months during the year, resulting in 20 different organizations receiving offerings between July 1, 2022 and March 26, 2023. The average offering during that period was \$723, which resulted in a total of \$31,846 being distributed to help folks in our own church or in the broader world.

Most offerings were for local organizations seeking to build a more equitable, just and sustainable world; however, we also donated to help folks suffering due to the proliferation of guns throughout the U.S., the war in Ukraine, and the earthquake in Turkey. The program is on course to distribute a total of over \$38,000 by the end of this church year, a total which is still below our pre-pandemic level, but which appears to be growing in recent months.

## ***Lift Up Your Voice to End Homelessness***

Lift up Your Voice (LUYV) to End Homelessness is an action advocacy group for our neighbors without shelter.

Our Programs Include:

- The Memorial for our Unsheltered Neighbors honored 157 people who died unsheltered in Ventura County. We are now coordinating the event with Oxnard. Ruth Owens lead the effort with clergy arrangements by Rev Dana. Gale Naylor will take the lead next year.
- Moving In – We turned three years old in April and we have served 503 people in 293 households. Between 1/1/2023 and 3/10/2023, we furnished 38 households of 77 people (including 32 children). One of our first clients just passed three years in her apartment. Kathy Powell coordinates with the case workers and the other interfaith groups supporting this effort. Roy Foster round up the interfaith Seniors in Action crew to move the furniture and household goods
- Family to Family is an interfaith community effort to feed people lunches. Sue & Kent Brinkmeyer served lunches as soon as they restarted after COVID. The following people help with Family to Family: Chris L., Debbie M., Jayne T, Jane O, Lee M, Martha K, Mary Kaye L, Celia & Neal O, Don H, and Trina H. We partner with the Ventura Center for Spiritual Living to serve on the first Monday of the month.
- Safe Sleep – We moved away from cars to RV's only. We only had 2 of 5 slots filled due to

Ventura's rigid entry requirements. Neal Ortenberg coordinated that effort with the Salvation Army. Neal stepped down after over 10 years of leading; we are in search of a new coordinator.

- Advocacy – Yukio Okano served on the Oxnard Commission on Homelessness. Kappy Paulson serves on the Homes for All Committee, Rob March is the Secretary for the Ventura Social Services Task Force (VSSTF), Kappy also serves on the VSSTF Faith Subcommittee.
- Motel Fund – Kathy & Sue manage an emergency hotel fund for people who need an emergency one-time, very short-term room before they get into a shelter or permanent housing.

## Caring for Our Space

### ***Aesthetics Ministry***

As the church opened up in November 2021, after the long pandemic, a group of congregants noticed that our church space seemed to be caught in time, left just as it was when the building was vacated in March of 2020. There was an obvious need for some updates and we felt that there were even greater possibilities to bring beauty into our beloved church home.

With the blessings of the Minister and the Board of Trustees, we began to create beauty throughout the building. Non-essential furniture was removed from the entrance, for instance, and beautiful original art went up, creating a more welcoming and inviting space. Original art was also added to the Sanctuary, as well as a change to the backdrop behind the altar. Chancel chairs were switched out to create a more harmonious look. The Ministry also sponsored the Green Room Gallery, where Members and Friends are encouraged to display their creative talents and contribute to the beauty of the church. With an official Charter, the Aesthetics Ministry hopes to continue to enhance our building with ideas that include both the interior and the exterior.

We anticipate working in collaboration with various committees, including but not limited to, the Welcome Team/Greeters, the Publicity Team, Building and Grounds and the Worship Ministry.

There are currently four members serving: Xenia Young, Cassie Tondro, Gudrun Eastham and Celia Ortenberg, chair.

### ***Building and Grounds***

While the Building and Grounds Committee has not been able to meet consistently during this church year, dedicated volunteers continue doing the work. Monthly work days have continued on the third Saturday of each month, with sometimes a robust group of volunteers, and sometimes a handful. In addition, some folks have come in to accomplish tasks on their own schedules in between monthly work days. Some congregants have even begun to pitch in before or after services on Sundays.

All of these contributions of time and talent are appreciated. And we invite and encourage many more members of our church community to join us in our work, as the opportunities never end.

*Submitted by Jim Merrill, Board President*

## **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