

Valley UU Annual Report

JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021
STAFF, COMMITTEES, & TEAMS

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Minister's Report

Though now it is a cliché, the word 'unprecedented' truly applies to this report. Never in your experience have you had a year like this, and thus any report will be unlike any others. That said, this being the official record of the institution, I shall do my best to give you and posterity a full and accurate account of this most unusual year.

Administration

The most significant fact in the overall management of this institution was the departure of three staffers in the months prior to this fiscal year, including the minister and administrator. This meant there was a gap not only of work but of institutional memory. Lora Gustafson and I began work within days of each other, neither with any prior knowledge of VUU beforehand. Matthew Clark did his best to convey the information he had from Sue Ringler and [DeeAnne McClenahan](#) and Marci Beaudoin, but even then there was a lot Lora and I had to learn on our own.

That's the bad news. The good news is that VUU was able to continue operating and we have used this unplanned interval to assess management procedures and policies afresh. See the Recommendations section for the results.

Among the things done this past year are: recruiting new volunteers to help with financial and administrative tasks, upgrading internet service, replacing office equipment, setting up new email and storage accounts, organizing and storing existing accounts and passwords, gathering existing contracts with renters, personnel files, and other official records. These are ongoing projects.

A major part of administration is care for the physical plant overall. In the past year we have analyzed our physical plant for current needs such as repairs to AC units and new roofing on both our buildings. We have secured new landscaping service after the city of Chandler threatened to fine us.

Our relationship with I- Help grew when VUU offered its sanctuary as a shelter space, which continues now, though they are only in residence part of the time. I must add that as your interim minister this is among the most important choices you made, and one that I have boasted to other clergy.

A continuing task is consolidating and harmonizing financial records, as they were somewhat scattered. While our database - Breeze - is popular with congregations it is not without issues.

Ministries - Formation, Music, and Lay Pastoral Care are appended to this report. Social Justice is included here.

Social Justice rightly occurs across the congregation. In worship we have sought to be more consciously inclusive of diverse cultures in music especially. The interim minister has spoken to issues of the nation directly and indirectly, always trying to connect them to UU spiritual traditions and principles. Faith Formation has included both learning and action across age levels. Though limited by the pandemic, such as the loss of the annual work trip to Mexico, much of the curriculum raised such issues as LGBTQ rights, racism, and immigration. EAT has been very visible around food justice and resuming Green Sanctuary work. VIP and Paz de Cristo continue to be community efforts VUU contributes to. Thanks to UUAJAZ, we have been involved in local issues, and the BLM caravans were a creative response to the pandemic.

The most significant Justice work, in my opinion, was allowing I-Help to use our sanctuary for many months when we were absent. This was in addition to the established weekly shelter from before the pandemic.

Conclusion

As hard as the pandemic has been, VUU has weathered it very well, both institutionally and emotionally. This has precedent in your story, as there have been challenging times you have met and overcome. Odd as it may seem, the coming year may be harder with a combination of eagerness for the future and anxiety about it at the same time.

Faith Formation

Faith formation was able offer virtual programs for elementary and middle school aged youth as well as for adults. We are in the process of evaluating the possibility of offering hybrid faith formation classes Sunday mornings when we begin to meet in person.

- ❖ Preschool-aged children - 5th graders participated in CartUUn, a fun-filled program based on Disney and Pixar shorts. Hayley Wynne, faith formation assistant, put together monthly bags of craft supplies for families. During our Zoom class, we watched a short, had a discussion about the values represented and how the characters may have behaved differently. Parents let me know that they appreciated having a ready made craft bag even when they couldn't join us on Zoom.
- ❖ Middle School youth participated in a virtual comparative religions program. We incorporated YouTube video tours of places of worship and interviewed guests about each religion. I was able to include some hands on activities for the youth, I think the sand mandalas were the most popular.
- ❖ We had 96 children and youth registered for our virtual Sunday morning classes, a significant decrease from our in person registration but not unexpected.

🌐 **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH** – Pacific-Western district and national LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Assoc) both offered virtual opportunities for religious educators to work together and learn from each other.

- ⊕ **COMING OF AGE** – The inability to meet in person and the very real idea that we would not be able to travel to Boston in June brought about a delay in starting our program. The payoff for 7 resilient youth (and their families) is that we have now begun the program. We will meet on Zoom through the middle of June then in person through the end of September.

6 of the youth, together with the facilitators (Carl Anderson, Jodi Cicerello & Marci Beaudoin) will travel to Boston for our Heritage Trip October 1-6, 2021.

- ⊕ **OUR WHOLE LIVES** –2 of our OWL programs were cut short last spring and another was delayed. We are fortunate to have 4 trained and vaccinated facilitators ready to start the delayed OWL for 5th & 6th graders (youth who have now finished those grades!) in June. More trained, vaccinated facilitators are ready to help us offer 4 OWL programs later in the program year.

Back by popular demand: Our Whole Lives for “Older Adults” (50yrs +)

- ⊕ **ADULT FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS** - Programs that have continued in a virtual format include Spirit of Life Reading Circle, Dalai Lama and Friends workshops & the Page Turners book club.

We were thrilled to see many families with children participate in our “all congregation” in person events including luminaria decorating & lighting, drive-through Easter with parking lot coloring, and Flower Communion.

-Submitted by

Marci Beaudoin, Director of Faith Formation

Music Ministry

2020 – 2021 marks another year of big transitions in our Music Ministry! In the first quarter, in July, I officially became your permanent Director of Music Ministries. Immediately, there was a lot to learn with a new Administrator and Interim Minister and pending needs to organize and produce new musical content for our zoom services. First, I created and grew an online music library, creating as many music videos as possible (videos that could be used via zoom). Secondly, I organized all the music resources into one location for ease of use and better security. Thirdly, I created and trained a Music Committee to be able to support my job responsibilities while I was away on maternity leave.

Second quarter, I was on maternity leave. I am very proud and thankful for the work the Music Committee accomplished while I was on leave. They did an excellent job choosing meaningful music and completing the essential tasks my job entails. Noell Hyman, Rebecca Riggs, Mary Rothschild and Barbara Metz, thank you for your dedication, time, work and love you gave serving on the Music Committee! Thank you also to Benjie Messer, UUCP’s Music Director, for including our choir members on choral projects while I was on leave. And a huge thank you to all of you who gave money, baby clothes and food to support me and my family when Gavin arrived. Thank you to many of you who also helped us move and clean out our rental home. We are blessed to be a part of this community!

Third quarter, I returned from leave and focused on catching up. I made sure our reports for our copyright licenses were completed and submitted, I meet with Joan Bundy, the Bell Choir Director and

began an online vocal choir experience in collaboration with Benjie Messer. The Bell Choir produced and financed several music videos that we are blessed to have. Messer and I led vocal choir rehearsals two-three times a month and produced a music video every month. Thank you to our bell and vocal choir members who attended zoom rehearsals and learned the necessary tricks and technologies required. Thank you to Messer for mentoring me on how to produce such videos and thank you to Izzy Hyman for your excellent work on editing our videos. Thank you to Joan Bundy for all your work in making our Bell Choir virtual! Choirs, I know it is not the same as making music in person, but I have enjoyed seeing what we can accomplish in trying times. We will continue to use the technologies and strategies we have learned well into our future and hold on to the new friends we've made working with other congregations.

Fourth quarter, I revamped and asked for more funding for our Music Program for our next budget year and am working on improving our sound and video quality for both online and in-person. Producing virtual music is a larger financial expense so I requested a bigger budget and included new line items such as the Bell Choir expenses and updates to our sound equipment. I purchased a new keyboard, excellent transportable speakers and recording software to improve our sound quality and capabilities. I've created a Video Editing Committee of volunteers who will learn how to edit music videos from Izzy Hyman and have met with various congregants who are ready to record and share their talents. I am excited to expand our quality in music and means of connection, finding a hybrid model for music that includes both online and in person. Thank you, congregation, for entrusting me with our music program and thank you to all who have been involved in making meaningful music online. What a talented congregation and what a year!

Tech Team

The 1st quarter of 2021 marked Valley Unitarian Universalist congregation's transition to Zoom. We could no longer meet in the Sanctuary, so our challenge was to adapt the Sunday Service to a digital space where congregants can connect from their homes. Zoom was ubiquitous from the outset throughout the world because it is free and can network hundreds of people at once, so we sensed it was the obvious platform of choice.

The domain of Zoom Worship presented new obstacles. First, the complexity of Zoom was an uncomfortable environment for the majority of our Worship team, so we added a round of rehearsal before Sunday Service. The benefit of rehearsal is that it gives the Worship team a better idea of what is going to happen, so we feel prepared when Worship begins. Sometimes the technology itself hits a point of failure, such as a computer dropping connection. This happened a couple times, once during a large holiday service. That pain helped us learn to distribute the important content to multiple Worship Volunteers and computers with Google Drive, so that the team can apply its network effect and adapt for a dropped node.

In person, we were used to live music performances and dance. To work around the technological constraints of online live instrument audio streaming, we recorded music videos ahead of time. I like to draw parallels between the old way of doing things and the new Zoom world; our music videos fill the role of the lyric slides we would use on in-person Sundays to supplement the live performance. Now it's

combined into a recorded package. We are slowly building up our library of song videos while we also reach out to other congregations for permission to use their music content.

The more we practice online Worship, the better we get. We test different ways of recording/editing/distribution, sometimes for specific problems and other times out of curiosity and opportunity. We get feedback from the congregation. Our next challenge will be hybridizing the Sunday Service, so it exists digitally and brings some of our innovations back into the Sanctuary for in-person worship.

The Board of Trustees

The Board's shared read this year was Susan Beaumont's *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season...* She says, "You cannot resolve liminality by planning your way through it. You must *learn* your way through it. Guide your leaders through cycles of observation, experimentation, adjustment, and iteration."

Observing, learning, and iterating was indeed the process we followed this last year. No sooner were we elected as a body – and before our first meeting - than our beloved Senior Minister resigned. His resignation followed the losses of our 28-year Music Director and our Office Administrator six months and a month before. In the early days of the pandemic, it felt crushing.

We quickly rallied and hired Rev. Dr. Fred Wooden who, with his Transition Team led by Linda Horton, helped us to focus not on the details and decision-making, but on observance and adjustment. Calm and deliberate stepping through the liminality rather than wishing it away became our way of being.

We set the following goals, each of which required observance, adjustment, and deliberate and careful work:

- 1. Realizing that the world of worship and social action has changed permanently, the Board will promote and support staff and volunteer efforts to transform VUU into a fully virtual *and* physical presence in our communities.**

We will have met this goal when: Staff and volunteers report that the board has supported their efforts to transform VUU into a fully virtual and physical presence. We will have ongoing check-ins from the minister relative to this goal.

May 2021 Update: We have supported the staff and volunteers to transitioning toward a fully virtual and physical presence. Aware that our virtual presence has given many the opportunity to attend worship and other events more often, and to bond more intimately with other members, we fully intend to continue working toward this goal.

- 2. The Board will work with the congregation to consider how our virtual presence, long-term world change, and changed ministries may affect capital improvement plans and the Capital Campaign.**

We will have met this goal when: The Board, with input from the Capital Campaign and the Capital Planning Committees will communicate with the congregation about the Capital Plan. This may be delayed beyond this fiscal year.

May 2021 Update: The Board has proposed deferring the new building Capital Campaign and replacing it with a Capital Campaign to renovate the current property, and to create a Recovery Fund to support the operating budget into the 2-3 years following the pandemic.

- 3. Having success in creating a stronger partnership during the early months of Covid-19 with I-Help (and their parent organization, AZCEND), The Board will work with AZCEND to cultivate a fuller ongoing relationship with the organization and their efforts to promote literacy, health and housing in our local community.**

We will have met this goal if/when: Our Sr. Minister has designated an accountability system to attend to our relationship with AZCEND.

May 2021 Update: VUU's relationship with AZCEND has been cultivated during this year, and the Board proposes that AZCEND be suggested to the congregation as the designated charity (for special collections during the coming year). The Sr. Minister is working toward designating an accountability system to attend to this relationship.

- 4. The Board will support and work to drive the two-year transition process that is meant to evaluate our current and future vision, assess and create change, and prepare ourselves for new settled ministry in 2022. (This goal extends two years).**

We will have met this goal *for the current year* if/when we have elected a ministerial search team who have determined and begun their processes, the congregation has determined and stated our vision/mission and ends, and the staff report they have been able to make the changes deemed necessary to effectively administer the ministries of the congregation.

May 2021 Update: The congregation has elected a ministerial search team who have begun their processes, and the congregation is in the process (via the Transition Team) of determining our stated vision, mission and ends.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation Board of Trustees

DeeAnne McClenahan, President

Debi Grande, Vice President

Mary Wolf-Francis, Co-Secretary

Linda Stenholm, Co-Secretary

Libby Bean, Treasurer

Kevin Guhman

Pam Swan

Finance Committee Annual Report 2020–21

submitted by David Sheh

The primary role of the Finance committee is to:

Monitor VUU finances, discuss and analyze pertinent financial matters and to perform a thorough review of the congregation's finances for the prior month and year-to-date.

Recommend a budget for the next Fiscal year to the Board of Trustees.

Update financial policies and recommend to the Board of Trustees.

To achieve these goals we met and reported to the Board monthly. While most Finance deliberations are done out of sight of the congregation, the committee's role is critical to the continuing success of VUU. The accuracy of the congregation's actual results to budget, even given disruptions due to Covid-19, reflect the dedication of the members of the Finance team and VUU staff, the thorough application of sound budgeting principles and practices, and the consistency of our congregation's historical fundraising, spending, and giving habits.

The Finance Committee was chaired in 2020-21 by David Sheh. Committee members included Elisabeth Bean (Financial Analyst), Kevin Guhman (Board Representative), Linda Horton (Recording Secretary), Anne Schneider (Budget Compiler), Garry Klepser, Diane Hansen, Lora Gustafson, Church Administrator (Congregational Administrator ex officio), Rev. Dr. Fred Wooden (ex officio). Brenda Patton of JDP Accounting is our part time bookkeeper.

Special thanks go to Elisabeth Bean for all her dedicated work in maintaining detailed income projections and to Anne Schneider for serving as budget compiler, allowing this committee to have a clear and detailed analysis of accounts receivable and the budget details.

There was no internal Audit or policy review this year, and actions from last year's audit have not been followed up on as the shutdown has not yet ended. Finance met virtually at least once a month in this congregational year, and our focus has been to remain on top of the rapidly evolving financial situations as COVID-19 has made its impacts felt at VUU and around the world.

Finance helped develop the budget for next year. Budget priorities as per the 5-year plan seem a distant memory as the main priority for the 2020-21 budget was to conserve cash and protect core staff positions. These objectives were clearly met. The 2021-22 budget shows a return to normality, with sizeable increases in spending.

This did not come without cost. There has been considerable deferred maintenance, much of which must be performed before VUU can reopen. And COVID-19 has opened up a sizeable structural operating deficit in excess of \$50,000 per year largely due to loss of revenue from reduced pledge income, the impossibility of holding a socially distanced VUUND auction during a pandemic, and reduction in rental income.

All these lost sources of revenue can and hopefully will be restored. However, the hard financial realities are that unless revenue exceed pre-pandemic levels before PPP and VUU Recovery Fund monies are exhausted (estimate 2-3 fiscal year timeframe) difficult budget reductions (i.e. layoffs) will be required. The good news is that we have time, let us make the best of it!

Shown at the end of this report is a summary of the May Tracking Report covering the period July 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021, reflecting year-to-date actuals with comparable budget amounts. This is part of the regular report that has been recommended to the Board of Trustees for its approval.

For this fiscal year-to-date (through April), the congregation's revenue is \$T (Well ahead of the budgeted revenue of \$594,698). Expenses to date are \$D (well below the budgeted \$594,446). The low expenses are largely a result careful conservation of cash by everyone. Pledge income is coming in above budget, evidence of the extreme generosity of our community even in the face of hard times. Thank you to everyone who is continuing to give through the COVID-19 pandemic! The FY2020-21 operating budget was set at \$594,446.

We do anticipate an End of Year (EOY) operating surplus thanks to the 2020 PPP funds that have been forgiven. We will have a carry forward of \$91,000 to cover the deficit in the 2021-22 budget. Please stay tuned for the 2021 Stewardship campaign for 2022: this will be the first step in in restoring a balanced budget.

Finance is always looking for new members and will have a new chair in 2021-22. Anyone interested in serving VUU and learning about the money and how VUU operates, please contact any member of the finance team.

The committee has nominated Anne Schneider and Linda Horton for Finance Committee terms 2021-22. Our thanks to Kevin Guhman who served on Finance this year. Next year's Board will choose a Board Representative for the next congregational year and hopefully Libby will continue a Financial Analyst.

Transition Team Annual Report

The Board appointed a Transition Team of congregational leaders to assist Rev. Wooden in achieving the many tasks that lie ahead of us. This team consisted of Evan Anderson, Jodi Cicirello, Jenni Echols, and Jamila Miqbel, with Linda Horton as Chair. (Since January Jenni has moved to Sydney, Australia, and has left the team.)

At our organizational meeting we began the work of answering the following questions:

1. Where has our VUU congregation been?
2. Where we are now?
3. Where we are going?
4. What community resources do we need to successfully make this transition?

During the month of December, we focused our efforts on Question One. To this end, we asked all VUUers to share their memories of VUU: What brought you here? What can you tell us about a significant time or in our congregation's history? What kept you here? What are your most vivid personal memories of events at VUU? How did this become your congregational family? Stories and pictures were sent to History@vuu.org.

We collected stories all month. In January, we shared a slide show based on the stories we received, and we still request further submissions as fill-ins. The experience was fun and informative. Debbe Simpkins has agreed to compile the full-length stories into an "extended" document.

In March we began the Appreciative Inquiry stage of the discovery process. Beginning with elected committees (Board, Special Funds, and Leadership Development) and the Program Council and Transition Team, we shared memories of a time that we felt particularly proud of VUU and what that reveals about our shared values. The participants in this process became the facilitators of similar Zoom breakout groups as part of the April 25 service. This data is being compiled into a summary that will be shared, paving the way toward our new VUU Vision.

We appreciate Fred's leadership in this process and the help of all the leaders and Transition Team members who have contributed to this work. We look forward to what emerges from it.

Ministerial Search Committee Annual Report

The seven members of the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC), Carl Anderson, Janice Miller, Barb Quijada, Adam Romney, Mary Rothschild, Chris Sar, and David Sheh were selected by the Congregation during the January 24th Congregational Meeting (on Zoom).

The committee held our first meeting on February 2nd, and we have been meeting on the first and third Monday of each month (always on Zoom) since then. Guided by the UUA Transition Office's official Settlement Handbook (all 104 pages of it!), the MSC's first order of business was to reach out to the UUA's Transitions Program Manager and convince her to allow us to schedule a Search Committee Retreat ahead of the traditional UUA Search Committee Timeline.

Since our initial meeting in February, we have

- Prepared an MSC budget request for the Finance Committee and the Board • Begun design of the MSC webpage to be included on VUU's website
- Initiated contact with The UUA Compensation Consultant and begun work on the Ministerial Compensation Packet (Janice Miller)
- Assigned and then clarified Roles and Tasks using the UUA "Ministry Search Process for Congregations in Search for August 2022" spreadsheet
- Been assigned a Transitions Coach and successfully completed our two day Search Committee Retreat
- Assisted Rev. Wooden and the Transition Team with the Appreciative Inquiry Sunday service • Presented MSC reports at three Congregational Conversations
- Appointed MSC Co-Chairs for Communication (Barb Quijada) and Project Management (David Sheh), Meeting Facilitator (Janice Miller), Treasurer (Chris Sar), and Web Page Manager (Carl Anderson)
- Created the Congregation Survey instrument to administer this summer. (Adam Romney) • Added "Minister Job Specifications" to our task list (to synthesize Transition Team Input, the Congregational Survey, and insights to be gained from Cottage Meetings) • Started planning for Pre-Candidate Visits and Candidating Week (Mary Rothschild) • Initiated planning for a Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop and worship service • Begun study of requirements for the Minister Search Packet which will include a Congregational Record and Documents Packet

The Committee anticipates sending out the Congregational Survey in early June and encourages all VUU Members and Friends to complete the survey as quickly—and yet thoughtfully—as possible, as we will be using the results of the survey to plan our next step: Cottage Meetings.

We thank Rev. Wooden, the Transitions Team, the Board, and the Congregation for the support and the trust you have extended to the Ministerial Search Committee.

Special Funds Committee

The Special Funds Committee consists of Joel Sannes (President), Rick Hinrichs (Secretary), Joanne McGrath (Treasurer), Anne Schneider, and Carl Anderson.

The Committee operates under a Charter last amended May 20, 2018 as approved by the Congregation at the 2018 Annual Meeting.

The Committee meets monthly, generally the second Tuesday of each month. An agenda is prepared before the meetings with Committee member input. Meetings are open to staff and the Congregation.

Before each meeting, the Treasurer prepares a monthly report in a format that has been consistent since at least 2014. The report is taken directly from information accessible from online access to the Special Funds investment account with Vanguard Financial. In March of 2020, the Treasurer prepared weekly reports to monitor the investment account during a sharp decline in the U.S. and global stock markets. We are now receiving reports every two weeks.

As of May 11, 2021, the holdings in the investment account totaled \$580,174.37. The principal investment since inception of the endowment is \$198,607.98. The Committee has remained committed to a consistent investment blend of domestic and international investments, a social index investment, bonds and a money market account. When totals in any given category exceed 3% of the target range, the Committee rebalances by reducing one category to increase another. The total above includes \$9,829.89 specially accounted for as the Bunny Clark Leadership Fund.

Also of note, the Special Funds Endowment is fully divested of fossil fuel energy investments following a commitment requested by the Board of Trustees and the Green Sanctuary Committee.

Under the Charter, the Committee is able to provide annual grants as follows:

Distributions and loans may be made for major capital improvements or repairs to the buildings and grounds, or to debt reduction of the Valley UU Congregation.

Other distributions or loans may be for outreach to the community including, but not limited to, grants to UU camps and conferences, theological schools, local social service agencies or institutions to which this congregation relates, and to special programs designed for those persons in our community who are in spiritual or economic need.

Distributions or loans may also be made for the wider mission of Unitarian Universalism including, but not limited to, grants to the UUA for new Congregation development, professional leadership, educational ministries, world mission, and capital financing. Distributions may also be made as scholarships or grants to members of the Valley UU Congregation for the purpose of attending college; theological, nursing, or medical school; for UU-related camping and leadership conferences; or such other training which enables members of this congregation to grow in faith and service to Unitarian Universalism.

The amount available for granting is the lesser of 4% of the total endowment at the end of each fiscal year or the average income (growth) over the past three years.

For fiscal year 2020-21, a total of \$18,647.97 has been distributed from grants, which is 4% of the total endowment as of June 30, 2020 (\$466,199.36). Grants given for fiscal year 2020-21 included: (1) new computer for administrator (\$2,000.00); (2) community garden (\$8,100.00); (3) holiday music (\$700.00); (4) upgrading VUU online presentation technology, (\$8,000.00); (5) bell choir holiday music (\$440.00); (5) a \$1,600.00 grant to UUJAZ for Day at the Legislature; and (6) \$1,042.50 toward purchasing a keyboard for use by Katie Seiferth, Music Director, for online music. The total grants (\$21,882.50) included a refund of a grant given in the 2019-20 year for Andy to attend an international conference that was cancelled, resulting in a return of \$3,234.53 that was added to the FY 2020-21 grants available.

Our estimate of funds available for grants in FY 2021-22 is \$23,026.00 (Estimate only).

Over the life of the endowment, \$107,904.48 has been provided in grants.

The Special Funds Endowment is funded by donations from members and friends. Much of the principal balance was funded through Estate bequests. Another source of funding is the annual Recognition Sunday event. This year, the Recognition Sunday event honoring Mary Rothschild totaled \$5,618.82.

Leadership Development Committee

The LDC accomplished two major tasks in the past fiscal year. First, we presented the congregation with nine well qualified candidates for the Committee to Recommend a Minister (the Search Committee). A special election was held via zoom meeting on January 24th which resulted in the selection of the 7-member committee. We expect great results from this top-tier team. Our second accomplishment was the assembly of a slate of candidates to run for four open positions on the Board of Trustees, three positions on the LDC, and two openings on the Special Funds Committee. Assuming all goes well through June, we will have fulfilled our mission to replace all the vacant positions on each committee.

We were fortunate this year to have had zero resignations for any of the 19 elected positions at VUU. In previous years appointing replacements and dealing with the election rules around appointees has complicated the work of the LDC. We also had a relatively easy time recruiting the Search Committee candidates as several people self-nominated and many more were eager to serve.

This year, as in years past, the LDC has set a goal to nominate the minimum required number of candidates plus-two for each elected committee. That way the congregation is given a real choice when they vote. This year we were unable to fulfill that goal for any of the three committees. We blame the double whammy of Covid and the ministerial transition. Besides the general detachment caused by the Covid isolation, the board also appointed a Covid Committee to manage our response. The resignation of our settled minister resulted in the forming of a Transition Team as well as the Search Committee. These 3 ad-hoc committees depleted our pool of leadership talent available for the regular committees. We have also experienced some reluctance from people to run for an office when they had run for office in the past and lost. This is one of the downsides of making the elections competitive and the committee is going to reconsider this policy before next year's recruitment effort. One other source of frustration for us was to have an able and willing candidate who did not qualify to run because they had not transferred their membership from UUCP to VUU at least one year before the election. After debating the issue, we agreed to adhere to the bylaws as written, and may consider proposing bylaws changes in the future.

The LDC decided to forgo conducting any lay leadership development efforts this year, as the bylaws specify, due to the extra effort required to elect a Search Committee and the inability to conduct workshops in person. We expect to see this effort resume going forward, either face-to-face or via zoom.

Lay Pastoral Care Associates

Lay Pastoral Care Associates (LPCA) at VUU:

Carl Anderson

Melissa Bush

Janet Cantley, chair from Dec 2020 to present

Joyce Donahue

Randy Galbraith, chair from 2018 to Dec. 2020

Rosaland Hawkins

Dan Schulte

Lisa Bonine, liaison for Voices Lifted
Bev Rogers, liaison for Caring and Concerns
JoAnne Smith, liaison for Caring and Concerns
Lauree Perry, liaison for Caring and Concerns (emeritus)

Congregants served by LPCA from July 1, 2020 to May 25, 2021: approximately 30
Many of these members have sustained/long-term relationships with LPCA. These were self-initiated requests or referrals by staff or members.

During COVID-19 we initiated check-ins with members by dividing up the VUU directory between the team and calling or emailing to check-in. Part of the service was to make sure people knew about online services, social media resources, and logistic challenges (ordering groceries, etc). Later it was to follow up on emotional health and dealing with isolation.

We hold monthly meetings to conduct business and discuss shared readings. One meeting we had a presentation, part of on-going training, by congregant Leon Webber, who discussed *On Ministering to Families*.

Two of our team are developing a class to be offered to the congregation. In the past, LPCA have provided workshops or classes. The schedule and details for the class in development are to be determined.

Recently, we have coordinated with the re-imagined Caring and Concerns Team. We attend meetings and provide guidance in terms of the division of labor between Caring and Concerns and Lay Pastoral Care. One of the early successes of this collaboration is the implementation of Joys and Concerns during this time of remote services. Members can share major events in their lives through a form on the VUU website, and request the news be shared with the congregation through the weekly Happenings electronic newsletter, or they can be put in touch with Lay Pastoral Care or Caring and Concerns associates.

Program Council Annual Report

VUU's Program Council consists of committee chairs and other leaders and staff. We meet to coordinate communication of the recent work we have been doing, in hopes that we will be able to help each other and the VUU community achieve our missions.

We met last year at this time, chaired by Andy, to consolidate our plans for the summer months. Some of the items that were emphasized were:

Covid Discernment Team formed to review science and guidance from community and other faith communities. UUA wants congregations to be prepared for one more year. We may have to worry about a false sense of security if we start moving forward too soon.

Adobe is working on a plan to reopen in June. Nefesh Soul is still with us but not meeting.

- A. What do we see as we wait for the mud to settle?
1. "Political benefits"
 2. Importance of human connection and new ways of achieving it.
 3. Ability of everyone to use electronics.
 4. Importance of unexpected gifts.
 5. Importance of participative music.
 6. Importance of time to just sit and reflect.
 7. Spiritual nourishment
 8. May want to do Zoom meetings from VUU meeting rooms
 9. We lose new member recruitment; it's hard to welcome new people. Online membership class; delay signing membership book
 10. VUU may be losing 30% of pledges; need to plan for reduced income. Losing the importance of cash?
 11. How to do RE????
 12. Subgroups by zip code with a Theme of the Month. Gather when it is allowed. Then combine groups as allowed. Should we be gathering grouped by interest?

Not realizing that Andy would be leaving, we planned to meet again in September. Everything changed during the summer months (June-August, 2020) when both Andy and Sue resigned their positions to accept other employment. Since then we have learned that Sue has become very ill and Andy has moved to Cleveland to work in pastoral care supervision.

In August Rev. Dr. Fred Wooden joined us as our Interim Minister to guide us through the process of (re)defining who we are and where we are going, in preparation for calling a new Executive Minister in a year or two. Members of the Program Council met on March 15 via Zoom to participate in the Appreciative Inquiry process that will help us through those steps. How we proceed in the future will depend on the outcome of this analysis.

Capital Planning Committee (CPC)

Committee Members: Jim Horton, Roberta Baker, Mary Erickson, Nancy Egly, DeeAnne McClenahan, Rick Hinrichs, Debi Grande, Beverly McCormick, Mark Beehler, Ada Beehler, Anne Schneider

The CPC took a break this year as the capital campaign was on hold. We met again in May and made the decision to move forward with the building repair and renovation plans. Toward that end, we prioritized and re-listed the priorities for the project. Once the capital campaign and recovery funds are recommitted, we will engage the architect and contractors to begin work anew.

Capital Planning Priorities - Revised May, 2021

Immediate capital needs:

- New roof for west buildings
- ~7 new A/C units for sanctuary

ADA/disability/accessibility:

- Code compliance
- Desired accessibility upgrades

From Capital Campaign 2019:

Intergenerational connective social space:

- Sanctuary, fellowship, education and outdoor spaces connected
- Nursery – 5th grade near fellowship/sanctuary

Fully serviced code-compliant spaces for rental / co-share, including:

- Commercial kitchen
- Renovated indoor restrooms
- Showers for community outreach

Renovation of sanctuary/fellowship hall/foyer – possibilities:

- Flooring
- Chairs (including armchairs for improved accessibility)
- Choir Risers (improved layout/accessibility)
- Pulpit / Music
- Technology booth/technology upgrades
- Exterior scrim (for exterior hallways)

Deferred:

- New sanctuary
- Parking reconfiguration

Other:

- Washer/dryer
- Playground on east side of campus*
- Create capital reserve fund*

*added by the Board of Trustees 5.12.2021

Caring and Concerns Committee

First of all, thank you to Lauree Perry for 20 years of service as Chair of the Caring and Concerns Committee. During that time many people have benefitted from her team's commitment to helping others during their times of need.

Going forward, JoAnne Smith and Bev Rogers will act as co-chairs with JoAnne serving for one year and Bev serving for two years. When JoAnne finishes her term of service someone else will take her place committing to serve for two years. Likewise for Bev. It is hoped this staggered commitment of co-chairpersons will provide the committee the continuity it needs to fulfill its purpose of caring for members and friends of our congregation.

Other members of the committee include Johnnie Clemens May, DeeAnne McClenahan for tech support, plus Janet Cantley and Joyce Donahue from the Lay Pastoral Care team. JoAnne Smith acts as liaison to the Lay Pastoral Care team by attending their monthly meetings.

Much work has gone into organizing our congregation, members and friends, into 16 neighborhood groupings of no more than 25 households. Each neighborhood will have a coordinator who will initiate and maintain contact with each household so that when needs arise members and friends will feel comfortable calling on their coordinator for assistance. A bank of congregational volunteers will be established to draw upon for help.

Additionally, a Joys and Concerns website is being set up so VUU members and friends can submit for publication in “Happenings” information about major life events they want to share with our congregation.

It is hoped that by August 1st all neighborhoods will have coordinators in place and ready to contact their households, a bank of volunteers will be established, and the Joys and Concerns website will be functioning.

Submitted by Bev Rogers

Personnel Committee

During the last year, the Personnel Committee welcomed two new members: Steve Grams and Lynn DeMuth. We worked with both Rev. Andy and Rev. Fred to hire the new Office Administrator and have assisted with the onboarding of the Director of Music Ministries and, of course, the Office Administrator. We will spend the next few months updating the personnel policies and job descriptions in preparation for the new minister.

Submitted by,

Nancy Harrell, Chair

Lynn DeMuth

Steve Grams

Rick Hinrichs

Sharon Osborn Popp

EastVUU Annual Report

The EastVUU group went virtual this year, meeting twice a month in Zoom sessions, helping each other cope with the stress of the pandemic and a difficult political climate. Our attendance online has ranged from 16 to 28 people per session, out of about 45 participants. We meet on the second Thursday evening each month for a discussion about spiritual questions or social justice, and on the fourth Thursday evening of each month for a fun social gathering.

Our mission is to enable fellowship, spiritual growth and progressive social justice. The group was founded more than four years ago by VUU residents from the east side towns of Mesa, Gilbert, Tempe, Queen Creek, Apache Junction and Gold Canyon. Our virtual meetings have attracted attendees from other parts of town, so we are planning to maintain an online presence beyond the pandemic to be a more inclusive community.

This year, we expanded our social justice work to include anti-racism and climate activism, as well as refugee support. We held three discussion sessions on how to be an anti-racist, led by Beverly McCormick. This work culminated in a decision to adopt a school in Mesa, Adams Elementary, where we have made financial contributions and intend to volunteer to mitigate some difficulties faced by disadvantaged students.

We held two sessions on Climate Justice led by Sandy Whitley, including an examination of the intersection between climate, health and social justice. We shared methods for individuals to take action to protect the planet, joining efforts with the Citizen's Climate Lobby. We also continued our support to immigrants, in partnership with Refugee Aid, including a toy and clothing drive at Christmas, as well as food and produce distribution, thanks to the leadership of Sharon Kopina.

Our gatherings on the fourth Thursday of the month are strictly for connection and fun. Perii Skolnick has found many creative ways for us to socialize on Zoom, including games like Name that Tune (with DJ Jerry Martin), Scavenger Hunt, and Toilet Paper Crafts. Our goal is to return to in-person social nights beginning in June with Pizza & Wine.

We have a core group of volunteers and participants who actively contribute their time on a monthly basis to make the EastVUU experience welcoming, thought-provoking and meaningful. This has created a UU village which is very loving. Together, we grieved the loss of our dear John Kopina to Covid, inspired by his courage. This year, we had members who Zoomed on Thanksgiving and Christmas to avoid isolation. We are bonded together and really care about each other.

We welcome all members and friends. We will continue to Zoom our programs on the second Thursday each month, 6:30 to 8p. In June, we'll begin meeting again in person on the fourth Thursday each month at the Apache Wells Activity Complex in NE Mesa for social nights. Check VUU Happenings for more details. Or for more info, email Margaret Stewart at mjs.ontheroad@gmail.com.

Submitted by Janice Miller, EastVUU Facilitator

Environmental Action Team

The Environmental Action Team at VUU exists to address the UU 7th Principle: Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part.

Its purpose is to:

- Provide opportunities to increase knowledge of what is happening environmentally in our world and to
- Provide opportunities for the VUU congregation to take action on climate.

The structure of the Environmental Action Team and current status of each component is as follows:

Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) was the first team started 3 years ago. VUU congregants decided to have their own chapter of CCL which is dedicated to the passage of a carbon pricing policy in Congress. We are currently seeking new leadership and the chapter is inactive right now.

Food for Life and the Planet: In the fall of 2019, several congregants expressed interest in learning more about plant-based eating, and the Food for Life and the Planet group was established. Classes on behavioral changes were held that were helpful in making a change in dietary habits. The group has been meeting weekly.

Green Sanctuary and Community Garden is an offshoot of the Food for Life and the Planet team. A small, dedicated group of Congregants has been devoted to developing a working, productive garden and produce has been given away to some organizations/peoples in need. The garden is reaching the end of its spring growing season at this time. The summer will be dedicated to planning for the fall planting season.

7th Principle Faith Formation Class addresses contemporary every-day issues like plastics, genetics, non-toxic household products, etc. Classes are on hold for now pending new leadership.

Topics of Environmental Interest: Special interest topics for presentation and discussion, including fracking in AZ, the Rio Tinto Mine, pandemic preparedness, intensive animal farming, solar for the VUU Campus, water issues in Arizona. This group is currently gathering information relative to solar for the VUU Campus.

Providing information for action is the ultimate goal – everyone wants to do something to make a difference, and those actions can be:

- Small personal steps
 - Composting food waste at home to bring to the Community Garden
 - Stopping use of single use plastics like straws
 - Joining an Environmental Action Team, attend meetings, using your voice
- Medium personal or congregational steps
 - Personally, switch to vegetarian or vegan diet, purchasing an electric vehicle
 - Installing solar in your home
 - Converting Congregational buildings from fossil fuels to solar
- Large Personal or Congregational Steps
 - Congregationally divest from fossil fuels - DONE!! That is huge!
 - Become a net zero* campus by a specified year (Net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. Net zero is reached when the amount added is no more than the amount taken away. Restoring forests, regenerative farming, carbon capture and storage are steps that can be taken to get to net zero).

The Environmental Action Team is seeking new leadership to take over administration and planning for the monthly meetings and to propel activities. The group will continue to meet during the summer with the goal of planning for an on-site fall Earth-Day event to offer an opportunity for Congregational re-engagement in environmental action activities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandy Whitley, Interim Group Leader for the Environmental Action Team

Valley Interfaith Project (VIP)

VUU is a dues paying member of the Valley Interfaith Project, a broad based, non-partisan organization committed to building relational power through organizing people for sustainable social and economic improvement. VIP's 40 member institutions include congregations, schools, unions, and non-profits.

Denise McLeod, VUU's liaison to VIP in 2019 and 2020 helped lead the effort to get Proposition 208—The Invest in Education Act—on the 2020 Arizona ballot and then approved by Arizona Voters. VUU volunteers gathered more initiative signatures than any other VIP institution and played a huge role in the Get Out the Vote! campaign that followed. We continue to be involved in the work necessary to be sure the funds guaranteed to Arizona's Public Schools and Teachers by Prop 208 actually get there.

After the successful Invest In Ed campaign, Barb Quijada agreed to become VUU's liaison to VIP. She and other VUU members have been attending virtual "House Meetings," leadership training, and "Civic Academies" to develop leadership and build relationships with other VIP institution. Together, we are identifying and researching issues, including understanding the Arizona Budget system and its effect on funding for Public Education, working to bring first Covid-19 testing and now vaccinations to underserved neighborhoods in Maricopa County, and advocating for affordable housing and other family friendly legislative policies.

Immigration Team

Members of VUU's Immigration team helped successfully lobby the City of Phoenix for permits to open a Welcome Center for asylum seeking families, supported by many denominations and volunteer organizations who had been providing temporary shelter in their churches (like VUU in the summer of 2019) and homes. Administered by the International Rescue Committee and housed in a vacant Phoenix Elementary School, the Welcome Center got off to a slow start due to harsh Administration border policies and then the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Starting in the spring of 2020, as new border policies are being worked out and vaccines have become available, the IRC Welcome Center has once again begun to offer temporary shelter and transportation assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. Though VUU's official Immigration Team is no longer functioning as a group, individual VUU volunteers continue working with other organizations (primarily Phoenix Rescue Project and Refugee Aid) to make service our prayer, and we look forward to coming together again as a VUU team in the future.