

# Valley UU Congregation

## Settled Minister

Chandler, Arizona | Pacific Western Region

## About Valley UU Congregation

## Contact Methods

**Website:** <http://www.vuu.org>

### Meeting Address

*Same as mailing address*

### Mailing Address

6400 W Del Rio St  
Chandler, AZ 85226-  
1764

This Congregation **has** a 501(c)(3) status of its own

## Congregation Life

### **Describe your Congregation and its culture:**

Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation has offered an open and welcoming liberal voice in the East Valley of Metropolitan Phoenix since our founding in 1963. The congregation draws members from a wide geographic area, encompassing more than 20 separate zip codes. We are committed to shared ministry, including a strong lay presence in Sunday services, pastoral care, leadership development, and community outreach.

We are a singing congregation and place a high importance on our music ministry, ranging from adult and children's choirs to a small group dedicated to singing bedside at Hospice of the Valley. Though much of our music program was curtailed during the pandemic, we've carried on virtually and are anxious to begin singing again in person as soon as it's safe.

Our Faith Formation ministry is exceptional, offering programming for Sunday morning PreK-HS classes, Our Whole Lives/ Human Sexuality, Coming of Age, Multi-Generational Service, Youth Groups, and Adult Programs.

VUU members engage actively in Social Justice work across the spectrum: LGBTQ+ Rights, Environment Justice, Homeless Outreach, Legislative Advocacy, Public Education, and Racial Justice. Members plant our Green Sanctuary Garden every fall (because we live in the desert!) and we open our sanctuary as shelter for unhoused individuals once a week (24/7 for more than a year during the worst of the pandemic).

Fellowship plays a big part in VUU's community life--from book groups to circle suppers, knitting club to singles group, we find ways to enjoy each others' company. VUU Caring Neighbors volunteers make sure special needs are met when trouble strikes someone in the congregation. Even fund raising is focused on FUUNd, where we bid to attend events created by members for members. When we weren't able to get together in person, we created online Connection Circles--and most have decided to continue even when the shutdown ends.

As of October 2021, we've carefully begun to meet again in person, following precautions laid out by our Covid Team. It feels great to be together again. We can't wait to have a new settled minister in our pulpit and with us as we live out our mission: Love is our doctrine. Service is our prayer. Justice is our calling.

**Your Congregation's mission:**

<https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/VUU-What-Guides-Us.pdf>

**Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:**

Working with a I-HELP Chandler, we have opened our sanctuary for 5+ years as a homeless shelter on Monday nights, including dinner on the 4th and 5th Mondays of the month and arranging for other Chandler congregations to bring dinner other Mondays. For a year during the worst of the pandemic, we turned the sanctuary over to I-HELP to use as a homeless shelter 24/7. Starting in January 2021 we've transitioned back 24/7 two weeks a month, and now we are back to Monday nights only.

Members prepare and serve meals to the homeless and others in need on the 2nd Friday of every month at Paz de Cristo Community Center in Mesa. When we meet in person, the plate offering goes to Paz every other month.

We are a Welcoming Congregation, a Green Sanctuary Congregation, and we endorse Black Lives Matter and have participated in BLM marches and rallies, including organizing three covid safe BLM car rallies during the summer of 2020.

Our EastVUU group has just created Partners In Education (PIE) and is building a relationship with students, staff, and families at Adams Elementary School in Mesa.

We are active in advocating for Immigration Reform, twice opened our sanctuary as a welcome center for asylum seekers and refugees in 2019, and continue to recruit volunteers to work at the IRC Welcome Center in Phoenix.

Our Environmental Action Team (EAT) has created the Food for Life and the Planet (FLP) group, manages the VUU Green Sanctuary Garden, works with Citizens Climate Lobby, and has created a task force to investigate bringing solar energy to the VUU campus.

At the beginning of the pandemic we created online Connections Circles to be sure we stayed connected when we could not meet in person. New friendships have blossomed and old ones been strengthened and we will

continue meeting online even when in-person gatherings recommence.

### **Link to your Safe Congregation policy:**

We have a Safe Congregation policy, but it is not available online.

### **Worship service schedule:**

Beginning mid-October 2021, we are starting to meet again in person, transitioning from Zoom only Sunday services to a hybrid model of in-person and zoom. Services begin at 10:30. The link to join the service is posted on our website <https://www.vuu.org> and in Happenings, our weekly email that goes out every Thursday. More information about Sunday services, Faith Formation classes, and child care is available at <https://www.vuu.org/sundays/summer-programming-children-youth/qa/>.

## Personnel

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Paid Hours per Week</b>	<b>Year Started</b>
James Horton	Financial Analyst	Volunteer	2021
W. Frederick Wooden	Interim Minister	40	2020
Marci Beaudin	Director of Faith Formation	40	2008
Katie Seiferth	Music Director	30	2020
Joe Martin	Maintenance	15	2015
Hayley Winn	Faith Formation Assistant	20	2018
Mary Wolf-Frances	Board President	Volunteer	2021

Pam Swann	Board Vice President	Volunteer	2021
Elizabeth Bean	Tech Booth Supervisor	10	2021
Todd Serrine	Congregational Administrator	40	2021

**Additional personnel notes:**

Faith Formation employs a nursery attendant and lead teachers on a part-time basis when we are meeting in person.

## Congregation History

**Provide your Congregation's founding history:**

In 1963 a group of Unitarian Universalists from Tempe began meeting as a discussion group on Sunday mornings at the Village Inn Pizza Parlor. They formed an organizing committee and over a few pizzas and beers decided there should be a UU presence in the East Valley.

With Artnoll Wegner as Chair, the group met in the Arizona State University Nursing School office of Virginia Kagy and for many months afterward in parks, schools, and other churches. The Tempe UUs were mentored during this time by the Rev. Ray Manker, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix (UUCP).

On October 17, 1965, fifty-nine charter members signed the Valley Unitarian Universalist Church membership book.

One year after being chartered, VUU called Rev. Jesse Roberson as an Extension Minister and two years later called him as a full-time minister. Rev. Roberson served until 1970, by which time the membership had grown to 105.

Also in 1966, VUU purchased a small meeting house from the United Church of Christ at **1016 S. River Drive in Tempe** where they would remain until 1984.

For PICTURES & more

detail: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VObvZiuxkziNS0Ftsm-tJ\\_I0ioe4U078/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VObvZiuxkziNS0Ftsm-tJ_I0ioe4U078/view?usp=sharing)

**Date founded:** 1/1/1965

**Describe important events in your Congregation's history:**

1963—Founding members begin meeting as a discussion group in the Varsity Inn Pizza Parlor in Tempe, AZ, mentored by UUCP minister Rev. Ray Manker and “interim” Rev. Lester Mondale.

1965—Valley Unitarian Universalist Church is officially chartered by the UUA. There are 59 members.

1966—VUU acquires its first building at **1066 S. River Dr in Tempe, AZ** (referred to as our “River Road” church).

1967-1970—One year after being chartered, VUU called Rev. Jesse Roberson as Extension Minister. Two years after that Rev. Roberson became our full-time minister. By 1970 membership had grown to 105.

1970—1976 Rev. Jeremy Brigham was ordained at VUU Church and became VUU’s settled minister. Religious Education classes began. Rev. Brigham was instrumental in forming a long range planning committee to begin the process of finding adequate building space.

1976—1978 Rev. Arthur Hover served the VUU’s settled minister.

1979 - 1984 VUU reverted to UU Fellowship status—a congregation without a settled minister. Even though the River Road church had been expanded to add a religious education area and a social hall, the space was just too small. The congregation decided not to hire a full time minister, and instead to marshal their resources with the intent of building a new home. During the fellowship period, lay leaders planned the worship, directed the religious education programs, and handled administration.

1980—A group of VUU members formed an investment group and eventually purchased property on Warner Road in Chandler. The group would later deed the property to VUU.

1984—Rev. Scotty Meek agreed to serve VUU as Extension Minister for five months. Construction began in February, and on September 9, 1984, the VUU congregation moved into its new home at **1700 West Warner Road in Chandler, AZ.**

1986—1990 Increased attendance created a desire for expansion, and the congregation decided to call another Extension Minister. The Rev. Jim Norman began his ministry at VUU having been newly graduated from Starr King School for the Ministry after a career in government. He was ordained and installed at VUU, and within three years will become our settled minister. Rev. Norman helped us make the transition from a completely lay-led church to a congregation with growing membership and programming, especially Religious Education. Also during Rev. Jim's ministry, VUU was one of the first churches within the denomination to be certified as a Welcoming Congregation.

1991 — Almost immediately after moving into the church on Warner Road we outgrew the parking lot and religious education classrooms. A building committee formed, plans were drawn, a short (and inadequate) capital campaign was conducted, and a new classroom building opened in the fall of 1991.

Also in 1991, talented musician Kellie Walker and her young family joined the congregation. Kellie volunteered to work with the music program, gradually transforming it into a locally and nationally recognized program. (She will eventually be ordained as VUU's Minister of Music.)

1994—1995 Following the departure of Rev. Norman in June 1994, Rev. Lex Crane served VUU as Interim Minister for a year, challenging VUU to lose our "fellowship mentality" and adopt a "program church mentality." Even before Rev. Norman left, VUU was struggling financially, due to an inadequate capital campaign and too-large mortgage on the new RE building. In the spring of 1995 the Board organized a one-shot capital

campaign called "Miracle Sunday." That day the congregation raised more than \$117,000—enough to pay off the RE building mortgage and finance the search for our new settled minister.

1995—2000

- Having overcome many of our financial problems, VUU began a period of deep spiritual and community growth guided by a new settled minister, The Rev. James Ishmael Ford, who introduced VUU to Buddhist worship and meditation.
- Kellie Walker's importance to VUU was officially recognized when she becomes VUU's Director of Music Ministry.
- The Rev. Dr. Joyce H. Smith and Rev. Scotty Meek, both recently retired, joined VUU as an Affiliated Ministers.

2000 - 2001 Rev. Linda Bunyard served as Interim Minister for one year between Rev. James Ford and Rev. Lone Jensen.

2001—VUU called Rev. Lone Jensen to be our settled minister. She will tend to the congregation's growth—both in the sheer number of members, as well as the administrative approach needed to effectively oversee a mid-size program church.

2002—Beginning as early as 1997, VUU realized that the church on Warner Road was never going to be big enough, and the congregation created "Space Committee 2001" to find a solution. It took four years, but in December 2002 the congregation learned that St. Benedict's Catholic Church in Chandler is going on the market, and in 24 hours VUU raised \$20,000 for the earnest money.

2003—This was a year of scrambling for money and congregational support, financing ups and downs, and the sale of the Warner Road property. Helping VUU make the purchase of our new property possible, VUU's long-time leasee, Adobe Montessori School, decided to move their business with us and continue our strong relationship. Congregation members formed loan groups to lend money to the church, and as soon as the congregation voted (almost unanimously) to support the move to the new property, VUU began a three-year capital campaign.



2004-VUU moved into our present facilities at **6400 W Del Rio St, Chandler, AZ**, and on January 18th held the first worship service on Del Rio Street. It's an auspicious street name, meaning "from the River" in Spanish, and indeed, we did come from the original River Drive location many years ago!

2006—VUU implemented stringent screening procedures for the RE department, passed a Behavioral Covenant, and created a "Conflict Resolution / Safe Environment Team." (These actions followed incidents of criminal sexual activity that raised concerns about congregational safety.)

2008—2010 The congregation (as well as most other UU congregations and churches) encountered serious financial difficulties due to the economic downturn. AT VUU, painful budget and staff reductions followed. Many of the responsibilities for operating VUU were handled by volunteers in lieu of a full-time minister and other paid staff.

2009—The congregation voted overwhelmingly to adopt a new name "Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation," honoring our history and making us more inclusive. Our new mission statement became "Love is our Doctrine, Service is our Prayer, Justice is Our Calling," for the first time emphasizing "Justice" as well as Love and Service. During the year, Karla Brockie served as Intern Minister working alongside Rev. Jensen.

2010—On Valentine's Day 2010, Worship Associate Mary Rothschild introduced the UUA Standing on the Side of Love Campaign to VUU. Originally envisioned as support for LGBTQ rights, VUU's SSL involvement came to include protest against Arizona's anti-immigration law, SB1070. The summer was filled with calls for non-violent protest on the streets of Phoenix and within the VUU congregation—a degree of political activism that made some in the congregation uncomfortable. The fledgling SSL movement became divisive at VUU, but deep dialogue ensued, allowing confrontation to soften and personal expressions of social action to come together under the SSL banner.

2010-2011

- Economic recovery at VUU was realized. The congregation refinanced our mortgage, cut expenses, and raised revenues to achieve a balanced budget in 2010-2011 during the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression.
- Rev. Lone Jensen departed.
- Director of Music Kellie Walker was ordained as Minister of Music.
- Marci Beaudoin became our permanent Director of Lifespan Religious Education.
- Rev. Gary Gallun served for one year as Interim Minister as VUU began its search for our next settled minister.

## 2012

- The Rev. Earl Holt, Interim Minister, guided VUU through year two of our Ministerial Search.
- VUU members helped host the UUA Justice GA in Phoenix in June.
- The Rev. Andy Burnette was welcomed in August as VUU's new Settled Minister.

## 2012—2015

- Fellowship and Social Action flourish at VUU under the leadership of Rev. Andy Burnette:
- The Nominating Committee was formally renamed the Leadership Development Committee and given additional responsibilities.
- The Endowment Fund grew to nearly \$400,000 and the Special Funds Committee honored the Children of VUU with its 2014 Outstanding Contributors Award.
- Members marched in the yearly Phoenix Pride Parades and for Immigration Reform.
- The Board of Trustees made progress in its transition to Policy Governance.
- VUU families went to camp together in the Prescott Pines, and VUU youth traveled to Agua Prieta, Mexico, on a Spring Break work project, and to Boston in the summer to explore their UU Heritage.
- The VUU Green Sanctuary Garden sprouted as an Eagle Scout project.
- Special donations were used to build the sound booth / video equipment in the back of the sanctuary and to hang two large projection

screens at the front. An anonymous donor contributed \$50,000 and others chipped in to fund deferred maintenance: fixing the roof, re-paving the parking lot, painting, and extending the patio.

- VUU developed a strong Our Whole Lives / Human Sexuality program and Adult Religious Education programming grew to include Dalai Lama and Friends, Spirit of Life Reading Circle, Beloved Conversations, and Theology on Tap, among others.
- In February 2013 VUU began working with I-HELP Chandler to provide shelter for 20 individuals every Monday night, and collaborating with other Chandler congregations to make sure a hot dinner meal greets guests each time they arrive.

2015— On April 12th **VUU celebrated its 50th Anniversary** with a Jubilee! Service attended by UUA President Peter Morales. The combined Adult and Children's choirs sing "Song of the River," commissioned especially for the occasion by Music Minister Kellie Walker, and more than 300 members and friends enjoyed a celebratory Jubilee! Picnic after the service.

2016—**EastVallyUU** began meeting twice a month to provide programming and social events for VUU members who live on the far east edges of the Valley and aren't always able to drive to Chandler on a regular basis.

2017

- Rev. Andy Burnette resigned as VUU minister to accept the position of Regional Lead for the UUA Southern Region. His hiring set off upheaval in the UUA, eventually resulting in the resignation of the UUA President and other top UUA officials. Rev. Andy rescinded both his acceptance of the UUA position and his resignation from VUU, and the congregation welcomed him back to continue his work as VUU's Settled Minister.
- VUU endorsed the Citizens' Climate Lobby, beginning a new era of climate justice work at VUU, with new member Sandy Whitley leading the Environmental Action Team (EAT).

2018—VUU members endorsed Arizona teachers' Red4Ed movement, hosted informational forums, marched with thousands to the state capital, and gathered signatures for a constitutional initiative calling for increased state funding for public education.

## 2019

- The new VUU Immigration Team educated themselves and the congregation on immigration law and treatment of migrants on both sides of the US/Mexico border. In spring and early summer, VUU twice opened our sanctuary as a temporary shelter for asylum seeking families released by ICE and awaiting transportation to their sponsors around the country.
- In response to the killing of Trayvon Martin and the rise of the BlackLivesMatter movement, members of the congregation began a period of discernment and action. We raised our BLM banner, formed reading and film discussion groups, met with community leaders, and led conversations with students at a local high school.
- With congregational approval, the Board appointed a Capital Campaign Committee (CCC) and a Capital Planning Committee(CPC) to begin implementation of their vision for an improved VUU campus, including building a new sanctuary and remodeling our current sanctuary as a multi-purpose fellowship hall.
- VUU's long-time and much loved Music Minister, Kellie Walker, retired. Katie Seiferth was appointed acting Music Director.

## 2020

- The Covid-19 pandemic overtakes the world. Following the advice of our newly appointed Covid Response Team, VUU transitioned to all virtual programming—zooming Sunday services and all business and committee work.
- Katie Seiferth became VUU Music Director.
- Sue Ringler, VUU Administrator for 5 years, resigned to take her “dream job” with the City of Tempe, advocating for services for unhoused individuals.
- The Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette resigned after serving for nine years as VUU's senior minister.
- Due to financial pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic and an unrealized Capital Campaign, plans for a new building and renovation of the existing sanctuary were put on hold.
- A Transition Team was appointed by the Board, and Rev. Fred Wooden

was called to serve as Interim Minister.

2020-2021

- VUU offered our unused sanctuary to shelter I-HELP guests 24/7 during the worst months of the pandemic.
- The congregation elected a seven member Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) which begins the two-year process of finding a new settled minister.
- Online “Connection Circle” groups were formed to help keep congregation members connected while they are not able to meet in person.
- VUU members stay active remotely, carrying on the business and fellowship traditions of the congregation.

October 2021 – The congregation begins a slow transition back to being together face-to-face. Board and committee meetings and Sunday morning worship services resume, using safety protocols and a hybrid model that allows congregation members and friends to attend in person or online. The congregation learns to practice patience as technology upgrades are instituted and volunteers trained to make hybrid our new reality.

For Testimonials and PICTURES: <https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/VUU-HISTORY-Timeline.pdf>

## Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2020	Now	Interim	W. Frederick Wooden	Interim Minister
2012	2020	Called	Russell Burnette	Sr. Minister
2011	2012	Interim	Earl Holt	Interim Minister
2010	2011	Interim	Gary Gallun	Interim Minister

2001	2010	Called	Lone Broussard	Minister
1997	2006	Called	Joyce Smith	Affiliate Minister
2000	2001	Interim	Linda Bunyard	Interim Minister
1995	2000	Called	James Ford	Minister
1997	1999	Called	Alexander Meek	Affiliate Minister
1994	1995	Interim	John Crane	Interim Minister
1986	1994	Called	James Norman	Minister
1976	1979	Called	C. Arthur Hover	Minister
1971	1976	Called	Jeremy Brigham	Minister
1966	1966	Interim	R. Mondale	Interim Minister

### **Describe any important Lay Leaders:**

VUU has an active and engaged congregation with many lay leaders who willingly volunteer their time and talents to leadership, worship, music, pastoral care, finance, social justice and fellowship groups. To name all the individual lay leaders who keep VUU running and working in the larger community would result in an enormous list of names: suffice it to say, we are a faith community that has active lay leadership in all our endeavors. Names and contacts of leaders throughout the congregation can be found on our website and in the weekly Happenings bulletin which can be accessed on the website. <https://www.vuu.org>

## **Membership & Finances**

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Avg.</b>
--------------	--------------	--------------	-------------

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pledge Income</b>	<b>Operating Expenses</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
2021	\$467,488	\$518,721	302	85	
2020	\$425,466	\$543,789	328	127	252
2019	\$427,932	\$525,977	348	188	277
2018	\$403,000	\$470,068	332	142	244
2017	\$360,428	\$479,534	322	146	241
2016	\$360,999	\$503,705	341	139	251
2015	\$355,073	\$495,951	309	130	237
2014	\$365,910	\$461,480	319	124	216
2013	\$341,033	\$451,953	331	156	192
2012	\$325,646	\$455,967	331	114	182

## Demographics

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

1-4%

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?**

10-24%

**Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation**

Estimates from our Congregational Survey: Female 70%, Male 28%, Transgender 1%, Other 1%.

**What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?**

0

**What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?**

3

**What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?**

1

**What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?**

Our Faith Formation Director and Assistant completed "Beloved Conversation, Within" Spring 2021.

Leadership Development Committee has reached out to BIPOC members of the congregation as they recruit candidates for elected committee positions.

## Accessibility

**Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible?** Yes

**Wheelchair accessibility details:**

We are a single floor building and we have a ramp up to the front of the Sanctuary

We have an automatic door opener to the women's bathroom

**Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems?** Yes

**Assisted listening system details:**



Audio Loop system, prior to Covid-19 it was always on and in working order.

We have an audio induction loop that works with T-coil hearing aids to help those who are hard of hearing

**Describe other ways your congregation has dealt with accessibility:**

As of fall 2021, the Capital Planning Committee and Facilities Committee are working together to contract for immediate critical repairs to office roof, to A/C units across the campus, and to the landscape irrigation system. ADA compliance and accessibility in the multi-purpose sanctuary are next on the list of priorities to be addressed in our campus renovation plan.

Upgrades to our audio visual system and other technology applications during our time of meeting online due to pandemic closures will continue as we transition to meeting in-person. These are making remote access to worship services, education programming, and committee meetings a reality.

## Resources & Programs

**List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:**

Welcoming Congregation

Green Sanctuary

PSWD Chalice Lighters

Beloved Conversation, Within (Staff)

UUA Transitions Team

Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop and Worship Service

### **Describe your religious educational programs:**

We have a robust Religious Education department (now called Faith Formation) that offers PreK-HS classes and programs, is a leader in the UUA OWL / Lifespan Sexuality Education program, and offers lay-led adult programming. For links to all the FF program details, go to <https://www.vuu.org/sundays/summer-programming-children-youth/>

### **Describe your youth and campus ministry programs:**

Our youth programming includes YRUU, Coming of Age, OWL, and a Multi-Generational Service Trip. We sponsor a Trip to Boston to conclude Coming of Age classes and a Bridge Ceremony for youth graduating high school.

## **Surrounding Community**

### **Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:**

VUU members come to our Chandler campus from a large area known locally as the “East Valley” (of the larger Phoenix Metroplex, the “Valley of the Sun”). Phoenix's population in 2021 is estimated to be 1.62 Million, the fifth largest city in U.S with an area of 519.11 sq miles (1,344.50 sq.km).

The East Valley includes parts of south Phoenix, Tempe (pop. 181k), Chandler (pop. 276k), Mesa (pop. 504k), Gilbert (pop. 268k), and more. VUU's campus is in the City of Chandler.

EastVUU is a very active group that meets twice a month in the far East Valley, once a month for a social gathering, and once a month for an informative program. Some East VUU members regularly attend VUU Sunday services (in person before covid), others only once in-awhile because of the long drive.

The average household income in Chandler is \$101,559 with a poverty rate of 8.51%. The median rental costs in recent years was \$1,246 per month, and the median house value is \$285,000. The median age in Chandler is 35.6.

The racial/ethnic communities in the area served by or close to our congregation include:

**Chandler (VUU's home city)** - White (73.3 percent), Hispanic or Latino (21.9 percent), Asian or Pacific Island (8.2 percent), African American (4.8 percent), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.5 percent)

Source: <https://www.chandleraz.gov/explore/living-in-chandler/community-profile-and-demographics>

**Mesa:** White (73%), Black / African American (4.3%), American Indian (2.6%), Asian (2.6%), Pacific Islander (0.4%), Other Race (13%), Two or More Races (4.1%)

Source: <https://www.selectmesa.com/business-environment/demographics>

**Tempe:** White (68.3%), Black (6.9%), American Indian and Alaska Native (2.5%), Asian (9.0%), Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander (0.4%), Two or more races (4.6%), Hispanic or Latino (22.2%), White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino ( 56.7%) Source:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tempecityarizona/RHI625219#RHI625219>

**Guadalupe:** White Alone (30.5%), Black or African American alone (0.6%), American Indian & Alaska Native alone (36.1%), Asian alone (0%), Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone (0%), Two or More Races (2.4%), Hispanic or Latino (71.4%) , White alone, not Hispanic or Latino (4.6%)

Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/guadalupetownarizona>

**Ahwatukee Foothills (Suburb of Phoenix):** “Based on 2016 estimates, the Ahwatukee Foothills Village has 83,464 residents. 83% of the population are White, 6.5% are Asian, 5.6% are Black or African American, 1.6% are

Native American and 3.3% identify as some other race. 12.3% of the population is Hispanic.” Source: Wikipedia

**Phoenix:** White (45%), Hispanic (41.3%), Black (6.6%), Asian (3.3%), Native (1.7%), Islander (0.2%), 2 or More Races (1.9%), Other (0.1%)  
Source: <https://opengov.civicdashboards.com/embed/818c25>

At <https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/About-Phoenix-metro-area.pdf> you'll find descriptions and links to some of our favorite places and things to do in the Valley of the Sun.

**Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:**

We offer an active liberal voice in East Valley with a strong interfaith presence.

We share our facilities with outside community groups such as the Dali Lama and Friends group, Adobe Montessori school and we are the home of Nefesh Soul (a liberal Jewish community).

We are active in education reform, lobbying the state Legislature, temporary sanctuary for the homeless (I-HELP), supporting Black Lives Matter, working with East Valley NAACP, collaborating with the Islamic Community Center of Tempe, and we have a regular contingent that actively participates in marching in the annual LGBTQ Pride March.

VUU is a dues-paying member congregation of Valley Interfaith Project (VIP), which is affiliated with the Industrial Areas (IAF), the oldest and largest national organizing and leadership development network in the United States.

**Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.**

When asked on our survey, "In addition to Unitarian Universalism, what other faith traditions currently influence your spirituality (check all that apply)?" the spiritual traditions with the highest percentages were

Humanist, Buddhist, Earth Centered, Christianity, Pagan, and Judaism, in that order.

From its founding, our Congregation has always been a predominately Humanist congregation, but we accept some "God" talk and are remarkably broad and accepting of our congregants' differing beliefs, which is why we changed our name from VUU "Church" to VUU "Congregation" more than a decade ago.

Our survey shows what we knew intuitively: we are older, whiter, more highly educated, and more affluent than the general population of our area. We are predominantly heterosexual. We skew to the left politically, but millennials in our congregation remind us that some of them are registered Independents and certainly we do have members who call themselves centrists rather than liberal or progressive.

VUU became a UUA Welcoming Congregation the first year of the program, has an active LGBTQ+ group, and is in the process of updating our Welcoming Congregation certification. We've been a Green Sanctuary since 2010. We have embraced Black Lives Matter since its inception. We've actively worked for immigration reform since before the days of SB1070, have invited DACA recipients and other DREAMERS to speak from our pulpit, and have provided refuge for asylum seekers.

During the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop in October 2021, attendees expressed an openness and interest in continuing dialog and educational programs on racial issues.

## Position Basics

**Anticipated Start Date:** August 2022

**Term:** N/A

**Percent Time:** 100% Time

**Minimum Salary + Housing:** \$90,000 | Experience, qualifications and prior compensation level will be considered in finalizing the compensation package.

**Benefits:** Self-employment offset tax; Retirement Plan; UUA Health Plan; Disability Coverage; Term Life Insurance; Dental; Professional Expense Allowance

## Questionnaire

### **Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff**

The Senior Minister serves as Chief of Staff of Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation, responsible for hiring, development, performance management and morale of the team. Staff members include the Senior Minister, the Director of Faith Formation Ministry and the Faith Formation Assistant, the Music Director, the Administrator, and the Maintenance Technician, as well as several part-time employees, most of them connected to Faith Formation. The Sr Minister is seen as the CEO of the non-profit that is Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation. (The role of the Minister in relation to staff is formally spelled out in VUU's Governance Documents in the Board Policies Section II.01.01 sub paragraph c. Specific Senior Minister limitations are spelled out in Section II.05, .06, and .07 and other parts of Board Policy. The formal relationship between the Senior minister and the Board of Trustees is defined in Article IV of Board policy.)<https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/policyboardcurrent-06302019.pdf>

### **Primary areas of focus for the minister**

Sunday Morning Experience. Strongly presented, intellectually stimulating sermons coordinated with music, readings, and Time for All Ages that create Sunday worship experiences that inspire VUU members and friends to think deeply, act upon their values, return Sunday after Sunday, and give as they are able to support the staff and programming of VUU.

Good Management of Administration and Finance. As we've grown in membership and activity—and confronted the challenges of the last two years—the Board of Trustees, leaders of our Program Council, and many other members of the congregation have become more aware of the need for ministerial strength in this area. Generally there is an understanding that a growing congregation needs someone who knows how to lead and make decisions and run the business side of the enterprise.

Support for the lay leadership of the many VUU committees and community outreach / social justice groups. Our minister is the public face of VUU in the Phoenix Metropolitan area, cultivating community relationship that inspire VUU members to step into public roles that further our vision and mission. The exact focus of those efforts will be of the new minister's own interests, and do not have to be the same as what we've done. But people now do expect a minister to work with lay leaders and groups to be more engaged with social justice issues in the larger community.

Pastoral Care. Empathy for the spiritual and counseling needs of individual members of the congregation. We expect that the minister will work with VUU's Pastoral Care Team and Caring Neighbors Committee to be sure these needs are tended to.

### **Desired strengths of the minister**

Sunday Morning / Sermon: Our survey indicated that the strengths we desire most in a minister are skilled sermon writing and public speaking, combined with excellent interpersonal and communication skills. In cottage meetings the congregation consistently expressed a desire for a high-quality Sunday morning experience centered around memorable, challenging sermons. We desire well planned Sunday worship experiences that showcase the minister's and worship associates' abilities to coordinate the sermon's theme with music, Time for All Ages, meditation/prayer, and technology. Good communication and organizational skills on the minister's part will help assure a positive professional experience for all involved in making this happen — Minister, Worship Associates, the Music Director,

and the Director of Faith Formation. We will continue to have Sunday participants who wish to remain virtual. The new minister will need to develop proficiency in delivering a high-quality hybrid service.

**Administration and Financial Management:** Probably no other part of the settled minister's job at VUU is less well understood by the overall congregation than the role of chief of staff of the non-profit business that is Valley UU. The Board of Trustees, the Financial Committee, and VUU staff certainly understand and appreciate the importance of this facet of the minister's work. They have all, in one way or another, had to take up the reins of this role during the past two years. Combined with three turnovers in VUU's Congregational Administrator position in the last year and a half, we've suffered from the lack of full time, settled ministerial leadership. We desire a minister who recognizes the importance of this part of ministry and who has the skills and experience to manage the business of the congregation.

**Community Outreach:** Cultivating community partnerships ranked significantly high in the Congregational Survey and we know our lack of a settled minister and Covid-19 restrictions have lowered VUU's profile outside the congregation. We are looking for a settled minister interested in reinvigorating our social justice relationships in the wider community, a minister with the communication and interpersonal skills to facilitate that work. This would be facilitated by a minister who is comfortable and active in social media as well as public speaking.

**Lay-Led Committees / Social Justice:** As you will read throughout our Congregational Record, VUU is proud of our work for social justice in the areas of homelessness, welcoming LGBTQ+, anti-racism, immigration reform, environmental justice, and others. Organizing congregational support for this multifaceted work sometimes begins with members. Other times it has been the minister who brings the congregation's attention to an issue and motivates members to organize action teams. In both cases, lay leaders recruit others willing to act. We desire strong motivational leadership from a minister to magnify our work from the pulpit and roll up their sleeves to help as their time permits.

**Pastoral Care:** The difficulties presented by our numerous staff changes



and the Covid 19 pandemic combined have created a longing for pastoral care led by a professionally trained minister (assisted by our experienced and well-respected Pastoral Care Team and the Caring Neighbors coordinators ). There is a subset of people in the congregation who feel pastoral care has been overlooked in our rush to encourage social justice and more outward ministries (political activism, Homeless services, immigration/border issues, etc). Cottage Meeting conversations indicate that VUU wants a minister who is “able to strike a good balance between nurturing the people (inward care) and a commitment to social action (outward care).”

### **Ongoing momentum we would like to continue**

VUU is proud of the progress we’ve made in the past decade in our work for social and environmental justice. We feel we’ve moved beyond talk and into action, and we expect our minister to stay in communication with the various committees and groups dedicated to this work. We hope the minister will provide insight into ways we can continue to grow in this work and will help us continue to form community partnerships that further justice at local, state, and national levels. Explore the Social Justice links on our website to see more. <https://www.vuu.org> You’ll also read more about VUU’s social justice work now and in the recent past in our answer about how VUU lives our values.

Other areas of momentum include a strong Faith Formation program for children and youth as well as a Capital Campaign and Capital Plan for developing the campus. These are areas where sustained momentum is essential to our future. VUU has also been known for a wonderful music program, which was limited short-term by the pandemic but still considered an essential foundation of the VUU experience.

### **Programs and traditions we want to maintain**

VUU values our strong tradition of shared ministry, on Sunday mornings and beyond. We appreciate and support the VUU Worship Associates who work with the minister to help design meaningful, successful worship services. Worship Associates assist when the minister is in the pulpit, and are accustomed to taking a larger role on Sundays when the minister is out of the pulpit. The congregation is glad to offer our free pulpit to worship associates and members of the wider community when the minister is absent. <https://www.vuu.org/worship-associates/>

VUU's music program is loved and supported by the congregation. We hope our new minister will encourage and support the rebuilding of our excellent music program which has suffered from not being able to make music in person together during the pandemic. We want to return to being a "singing congregation" as soon as possible—inviting the participation and performances of all VUU members who want to make music in some form or another. <https://www.vuu.org/music/>

VUU's PreK-12 and Adult Faith Formation Programming is supported by the congregation, and we expect it to be embraced by our minister. Having children in the sanctuary at the beginning of Sunday services and for the whole service during periodic intergenerational services is important to us. VUU's youth are very engaged in the life of the congregation—from joining us on Sunday mornings for the Time for All Ages, to planning and presenting the entire Sunday worship service at the conclusion to their Coming of Age classes. We are especially proud of the VUU's O. W. L. program which serves as a model for progressive sexuality education in this conservative state. <https://www.vuu.org/sundays/summer-programming-children-youth/>

One of the most valued traditions at VUU is that of Lay Leadership—another form of shared ministry. We are an eclectic group with three distinct areas that draw people in: spiritual, social justice, and fellowship. We encourage members to take an active role in the congregation and present many opportunities for personal and community growth. Most of our committees and groups are self-governing and self-perpetuating—the minister is not expected to coordinate all this activity, but we hope they will

notice, celebrate, and help publicize it. Following the links to Social Justice and Fellowship at <https://www.vuu.org/> is the best way to see examples of lay-leadership at VUU.

### **Participation of children in the worship service, and the frequency of inter-generational services**

Pre-Pandemic: Children ages preschool through 5th grade join their families at the beginning of every 1st thru 4th Sunday worship service. The children's participation is coordinated with the Worship Associate for that Sunday. Each Sunday a child (whose birthday was that week) is invited to light the chalice. All children are invited to come to the front of the sanctuary to listen and participate as our Director of Faith Formation shares a story related to that Sunday's theme. Children are sung out of the sanctuary under a "bridge of love" and escorted to their Faith Formation classes. If there is a 5th Sunday in the month, the service is a multiage intergenerational service coordinated with the minister and worship associate, with only nursery childcare provided.

Other intergenerational services traditionally held at VUU include a Youth Led service in the spring (in celebration of the conclusion of Coming of Age or HS Bridgers) and the Holiday Pageant in December.

When the campus was closed and VUU gathered online for Sunday services during the pandemic, either DFF Marci Beadoin or her assistant reminded families to gather for the Time for All Ages story shortly after the service began. Faith Formation classes were provided online in the afternoon. We are in the process of transitioning back to in-person Faith Formation programming and exploring the possibilities of hybrid online and in-person offerings. For the most up-to-date information go to <https://www.vuu.org/sundays/summer-programming-children-youth/>

### **Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning**

Christmas Eve - Early for families with young children. Later candlelight service with lots of traditional music.

Longest Night - Third week in December. A quiet, contemplative service (on a weeknight) to support those who find the holidays emotionally difficult.

Maundy Thursday Service — A lay-led and lay-written Unitarian Universalist service celebrating the Last Supper, with Communion. Small, intimate, and meaningful for those who choose to attend.

Easter Sunrise Service - obviously still on a Sunday, but not the regular service. On the grounds in front of the sanctuary, which are usually in full, glorious desert spring bloom. A fundraising breakfast put on by Faith Formation follows this early service.

Winter Solstice and Summer Solstice Pagan/Wiccan Services — Led by VUU member Lisa Bonine: “There were 25 - 40 people at each. Mostly members with a few non-members who came. Anyone not a member heard through word of mouth. The celebrations were held outdoors in the courtyard of the education building. Rev. Andy and I had discussed adding a Samhain (Halloween) service prior to his leaving.”

Seder—Members Irene Rosenthal and Jerry Robin have hosted Passover Seder dinners at VUU, on the patio or in the sanctuary, attended by members of the congregation—sometimes as many as 50—who appreciate learning more about the custom and enjoying the fellowship. Jerry and Irene would like to do this again in the future, but need more help with planning (and especially with set up and take down).

### **Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation**

Yes, we have been a Welcoming Congregation since the program started in 1990. Leaders of VUU Spectrum are presently at work on updating our Welcoming Congregation certification. <https://www.vuu.org/spectrum/> And they note: “We are working with one-n-ten, who used to have a satellite youth meeting at VUU pre-pandemic, to get that started again. They are thrilled to have us offer our space to LGBTQ teens, and we also offered to provide some financial literacy programming, so getting to work on that ...” <https://oneten.org>

## **Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation**

Yes. VUU earned Green Sanctuary certification in March 2010. We have an active Environmental Action Team (EAT) which includes Citizen's Climate Lobby (CCL), Food for Life and the Planet (FLP), and the VUU Green Sanctuary Garden groups. Members are aware of the new Green Sanctuary 2030 initiative and will consider reaccreditation when they are able to meet again in person. <https://www.vuu.org/environment-action-team-eat/>

## **Other ways in which the congregation lives its values**

VUU hung our first BlackLivesMatter banner in 2013 and replaced it several times —once with an ecumenical gathering to bless and support our witness to our Chandler neighbors. We have not had to replace the banner since tracing it when it was stolen to a home in our neighborhood. Instead of advocating for prosecution of the culprit, our minister met with them to explain our UU covenants and reasons for advocating for BLM and to invite them to attend services. During summer 2020, VUU members organized three Sunday afternoon car parades in Chandler and Tempe to show support for **Black Lives Matter** following the murder of George Floyd.

VUU Staff, Board members, and many committee chairs completed the original **Beloved Conversation** Workshop in 2014 and followed up with BC adapted workshops (we called them "Difficult Conversations") led by VUU Congregation members (who had completed the UUA led workshop) for members in 2014 and 2015. We held Film and Book Discussion groups revolved around racism in 2016 and 2017. VUU Page Turners book group has included books by Black authors and on immigration / border issues during the last two years. VUU staff members (Administrator, Music Director, Director of Faith Formation and her assistant) completed "Beloved Conversation, Within" training in Spring-Summer 2021.

**EastVUU** <https://www.vuu.org/eastvuu/> has been particularly active in discussion around anti-oppression in the last two years. They have held five sessions facilitated by member Beverly McCormick. The sessions included a virtual visit to the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia in Michigan and reviews of 100+ artifacts of history in Beverly's personal collection (books, posters, photos and other items). They learned about little-known historical events, including the Tulsa massacre and listened to videos of Kendi and D'Angelo and held discussions on how to be an anti-racist. Beyond raising their own consciousness, EastVUU decided to put their commitment to anti-racism into action by adopting a local elementary school. <https://www.vuu.org/pie/> Other EastVUU causes include climate activism and support to agencies that serve refugees. All VUU members are invited to attend EastVUU meetings and participate in events they sponsor.

Along with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix (UUCP), VUU played a crucial role in starting **Unitarian Universalist Justice Arizona (UUJAZ)**. <https://www.uujaz.org/> **VUUJAZ**

<https://www.vuu.org/vuujaz> meets monthly to connect and advocate for their varied groups and allies. VUU members participate annually in the **UU Day at the Legislature**, and work on campaigns for state legislators, city councils, and school board candidates. Recently we've joined other members of **Valley Interfaith Project** to attend local school board meetings to advocate for racial and gender equity and to speak against bias in school policies and curriculum.

<https://www.valleyinterfaithprojectaz.com> VUU members have traveled to Washington, DC to advocate for Climate Justice. One member served twice on the Tempe High School Board and her daughter, a grown up "VUU kid," is currently running for Tempe City Council. We march as a group in the yearly **Phoenix Pride Parade**. In 2015 two VUU congregants joined Rev. Andy in Selma, Alabama, for the 50th Anniversary of the march from **Selma to Montgomery**. Groups of friends from VUU marched in the historic 2017 Women's March locally and in Washington, DC, and have attended protests at ICE offices and detention centers, on native lands

targeted for a new copper mine, at the Phoenix airport to protest Muslim travel bans, and at the State Capital in support of gun control legislation and abortion rights.

VUU “stood on the side of love” during the days of **AZ SB1070**

<https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-arizona-law-20160915-snap-story.html> and worked with our local elected officials to overturn the law and recall state legislators who passed it. Along with other UUs in the greater Phoenix Metropolitan area we became known as “those people in yellow” who show up as allies when undocumented and other marginalized people are harassed or threatened. We participate in interfaith worship services, rallies, and protests—and invite leaders of the groups we are in community with to speak from our pulpit and to advise us on best practices for our social justice work.

Before the departure of our last settled minister / covid closures, we had an active Immigration Team working to bring issues of **DACA, undocumented people, and asylum seekers** to the congregation’s attention. In May and June of 2019, VUU opened our sanctuary on two separate occasions as a temporary shelter for asylum seeking families. Members of the congregation gathered clothing, food, cots, toys, backpacks and traveling supplies, coordinated calls to sponsors, and provided transportation to the bus station and airport. We were preparing to do this monthly when southern borders were closed and the arrival of asylum seekers slowed. Currently members of the congregation are volunteering individually at the IRC Welcome Center <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/phoenix-az> and with Refugee Aid and other local groups, and donating supplies and money.

For the last 5+ years, VUU has opened our sanctuary every Monday evening to 20-25 guests of **I-HELP (Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program)**, <https://forourcitychandler.org/i-help> providing a safe place to sleep, clean bedding, and a hot meal for adults experiencing homelessness. When we stopped meeting in person because of the Covid-19 Pandemic and other churches also closed their doors, VUU turned the sanctuary into a 24/7 I-HELP shelter. We’ve transitioned back to hosting I-HELP guests one night a week as we begin meeting again in person, but

our commitment to the program and its work “to connect individuals to resources needed to regain stability and break the vicious cycle of homelessness” remains. On the 4th (and 5th if there is one) Mondays of every month, volunteers hook up the shower trailer, provide dinner, join our I-HELP guests for a meal shared in friendship, and make sure there are clean sheets for everyone’s mattress.

For 30+ years VUU volunteers have served as the 2nd Friday dinner crew at **Paz de Cristo Community Center** in Mesa, <https://pazdecristo.org/> preparing dinner and serving 150+ homeless and otherwise in-need guests. Before Covid this involved 20 volunteers each month, during Covid when Paz transitioned to take-out dinners, 8 volunteers have served each month.

Guided by the UU 7th Principle, VUU’s **Environmental Action Team (EAT)** has dedicated themselves to providing opportunities that increase knowledge of environmental issues and call for action. This includes Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL), Food for Life and the Planet (FLP), Meatless Mondays, and the Green Sanctuary Garden.

<https://www.vuu.org/environment-action-team-eat/>

The **VUU Green Sanctuary Garden** was originally the Eagle Scout project of the son of our Faith Formation Director. The Garden’s mission statement is: “Guided by the Unitarian Universalist 7th Principle, VUU seeks to cultivate a sustainable community-focused garden that nourishes the body through nutritious organic produce, the mind through education, and the soul through connecting with others and nature.” VUU gardeners planted their fall garden in September and plan to have produce at a table after Sunday service for a donation. Recipients of the produce from past seasons have been I-HELP, Tempe Community Action Association, Streets of Destiny Church in Phoenix, and Kyrene Resource Family center.

<https://www.vuu.org/green-sanctuary-garden/>

VUU members working with **Valley Interfaith Project (VIP)** have three times in the last six years been leaders in gathering initiative and referendum petition signatures to place questions on AZ State election



ballots advocating for increased funding for Public Education. We have hosted Red4Ed and InvestInEd information forums, VIP zoom “house meetings,” and petition signature drives. <https://investinaznow.com>

**VUU Caring Neighbors** is the latest iteration of VUU’s Caring and Concerns Committee. Volunteers have just reorganized to serve as Neighborhood Coordinators across the many cities that VUU serves. They offer to arrange help to run errands or provide meals or transportation to doctor’s appointments should a member of the congregation need assistance. <https://www.vuu.org/joys-concerns/>

VUU shares our Sanctuary with the **NefeshSoul Jewish Congregation** <https://nefeshsoul.com/> twice monthly for Shabbat services. We have rented office space and classrooms to **Adobe Montessori** school for as long as we’ve been on Del Rio Road.

### **Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation**

Yes, we have been an honor congregation for over 25 years, however in the last 2 years we have not increased dues as much as the UUA suggested we should. The shift from membership to expenses based dues hit our congregation with a 30% increase, and there does not appear to be the congregational will to meet it at this time.

### **Lessons the congregation has learned about nurturing ministers and ministry**

In the past, Worship Associates have had someone with a “generic” sermon ready so they could cover if an emergency involving the minister or their family arose at the last minute. The minister needs to know that we “have their back” in critical times. WAs covered a few Sundays in this way at short notice for Rev. Lone Jensen when her husband became seriously ill. We covered several weeks for Andy Burnette so he could take time to deal with traumatic events in his ministry.

Meal trains were organized for Rev. Jensen when her husband Bruce was ill. They were also done for Sue Ringler (a former church administrator) when she was sick, and for Katie Seiferth (our new music director) after the birth of her child.

Rev. Andy Burnette and his family were supported when their son transitioned to female. Later, Andy and Sasha gave a joint service on transgender issues both personal and political, which the congregation stood and applauded.

Committees (especially Pastoral Care and Caring Neighbors) take on responsibilities so our minister is not spread too thin.

As a congregation, we are respectful of the minister's days off on a weekly basis and during extended vacations, study leaves and sabbaticals. We recognize the need for space, respite and recovery to protect the health and morale of our minister.

### **How the congregation has evaluated its ministry and its history with ministers**

The minister is evaluated via yearly performance reviews including self-evaluations by the board and minister, plus written responses to those self-evaluations. The annual congregational survey provides feedback from members and friends on how well we are doing in the organization and reaching out to the community. In addition, we monitor metrics of performance, such as membership, attendance, children enrolled in FF, revenue v. budget, endowment growth, participation in groups, etc. Each year, there is a written Annual Report to the congregation which includes a recap of the year's accomplishments written by the minister, the Board and the leader of each ministry, committee, or group.

### **What cottage meetings and surveys tell about the congregation**

Our Congregational Survey provided substantial information about the demographic makeup of our congregation, their expectations for a new minister, and their ideological expectations for Sunday services. From survey responses we learned that VUU's congregation is aging; compared with the 2011 Congregational Survey, the median age of the congregation has increased by eight years indicating a relatively stable membership roster without much addition of younger members. We learned that VUU is largely made up of well educated professionals, that our congregation heavily prioritizes the sanctuary experience, and that our congregation prefers services that de-emphasize traditional religious themes. The MSC has used the results of the Congregational Survey to help determine what additional information we needed to clarify our understanding of the VUU and its visions for the future. (Our Documents Packet includes the complete survey and a more complete summary.)

From Cottage Meetings we learned that the VUU congregation has high expectations and demands for our incoming minister. They expect a minister who will meet our internal, pastoral needs, and challenge us with sermons that are both intellectually challenging and inspirational. They want a minister who is engaged with the community and aspires to be seen as a leader on social justice issues. They want a minister who is actively engaged with all aspects of VUU, from our music program, to our Faith Formation educational programs; someone who can handle our front office needs, and work well with paid staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. They want a minister who appreciates our strengths and helps us address our weaknesses. The congregation acknowledges that their expectations will not be easily met, and at the same time they assured the MSC that they stand ready to support that minister, and work together to achieve the lofty goals and ambitions of our congregants. (Our Documents Packet includes a more complete summary of our Cottage Meeting process and insights.)

### **The work that the minister(s) is expected to do on their own**

The lists of minister's work are long and multi-faceted (see Board Policy Article IX, answers to question #2 above, summaries of cottage meetings and the congregational survey, and answers to questions 37-47 below).

What stands out at VUU is that, except for sermons, staff supervision, and required reporting to the Board of Trustees, there is almost nothing else our minister is expected to do completely on their own. We expect to have a shared ministry—one that helps our settled minister do their very best work so we can do ours. The Board of Trustees, lay leaders of committees and task forces, other staff members, and all the members of VUU want and need a minister's leadership to keep us on task and moving forward—but we don't expect them to do that work alone.

### **The work that the congregation is expected to do on their own**

VUU has structures and trusted lay leadership in key positions in place to help keep VUU afloat. We've been doing this work with and without ministers for 56 years, and we know we're always better at it when we have a settled minister at the helm. On Sunday mornings lay leaders welcome visitors before the service and host a visitor's circle to answer questions after the service. Lay leaders and volunteers provide hospitality after Sunday services and for special occasions.

Writing and updating Board Policy and Bylaws and calling and running annual and special congregational meetings are the work of the congregation that we expect to do on our own. Our lay-led committees welcome the support of their work by the minister, but function independently. Likewise, the annual Stewardship Campaign, other traditional fundraisers, and Capital Campaigns do not require work by the minister, but their support is appreciated.

### **The work of the congregation and minister(s) that is shared by both**

The congregation and the minister share the work of Sunday worship, pastoral care, financial planning, and community outreach. Though the Leadership Development Committee and Membership Committee have functioned without ministerial input in the past, both are hoping our new settled minister might offer guidance and new ideas.

Our interim minister has worked with the Transition Team to help reestablish the Program Council, and he suggests that VUU needs to work on organizational clarity, especially to help strengthen how our governance policy works.

### **Work of the congregation done by other staff**

Congregational Administrator: Oversees accounts/bookkeeping, deposits money, coordinates use of space and facility needs, publishes weekly Happenings (online newsletter), keeps office equipment maintained and office supplies stocked, coordinates the work of office volunteers, supports the Board and committees. Hires and pays maintenance contractors as needed, with support from Maintenance Tech and Facilities Committee. Provides physical and virtual office coverage, greeting people in person, via phone and email, and responding to myriad needs of members, staff, and the public.

Director of Faith Formation: Plans and implements Faith Formation (Religious Education) at VUU. Chooses curriculum and organizes Faith Formation classes PK-HS, assisted by FF Assistant. Coordinates staffing and work of paid Sunday Faith Formation staff, including nursery attendant and lead teachers for P-HS classes. Coordinates volunteers for O. W. L. and Coming of Age groups. Coordinates Adult RE offerings. Works with Worship Associates and minister to plan Time for All Ages and other Faith Formation participation in special programs.

Music Director: In charge of the total music program with assistance from Music Committee. In pre-Covid times, services included a large choir, a pianist, a worship band, various musicians or vocal soloists, a children's choir or a bell choir. The Music Minister taught the congregation to sing and every service included congregational singing. There was also a choir which sang to people in hospice. During Covid, the Music Director performed songs on video, acquired videos from other UU churches and worked with a tech editor to create choir videos.

VUU Maintenance Technician: Building and landscaping maintenance is performed by VUU Maintenance Technician and paid contractors as necessary in coordination with the Congregational Administrator and the

Facilities Committee.

<https://www.vuu.org/vuu-staff/>

## **Description of a typical Sunday at the congregation, including a typical Sunday worship service**

### **Typical Sunday at VUU Before Covid-19 Closures:**

Faith Formation Classrooms (on the west side of parking lot)

- Nursery opens at 8:00. OWL classes begin at 8:30
- Dalai Lama & Friends 9:00 - 10:00 in Classroom 1&2.
- Middle School and HS classes meet in their classrooms at 10:30
- Parents sign in P-5th graders in the sanctuary where they stay with their families for Time for All Ages, then are escorted across the parking lot to FF classrooms.
- Classes in session until 11:45. Parents are expected to pick up Nursery-P-5 children by 11:45.

Sanctuary (east side of parking lot): 9:45-10:30

- Tables set up on patio outside Sanctuary to highlight various activities connected to social justice, environmental concerns, social events, etc.
- Visitors table always set up to greet newcomers/visitors
- Music Rehearsal
- (Committee meetings)
- The minister often will greet people as they enter the sanctuary

Service begins at 10:30 in the VUU Sanctuary <https://www.vuu.org/oow-february-2-2020-2/>

After Service

- “Coffee hour” on the patio to encourage people to stay a while and visit/connect with others in the congregation
- The minister greets members of the congregation as they leave the sanctuary
- Visitors Circle to more intentionally get to know visitors and answer

questions

- A Pastoral Care associate available for anyone who needs to share problems or concerns
- Different groups often circle chairs around to hold committee meetings

### **Typical Sunday at VUU During Covid-19 Closures: Live streaming on Zoom & YouTube**

9:00 Tech Team meets with Minister, Worship Associate, Music Director, Faith Formation Director, and anyone else involved in the service to rehearse.

Service begins on Zoom and YouTube at 10:30. <https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OOW-20210919-Did-Someone-Say-SIN.pdf>

As of October 2021, VUU is in the process of transitioning to hybrid services, in person in the sanctuary and on zoom for those who prefer to attend from home.

### **Religious education and exploration in the congregation for children, youth, and adults**

Please visit “Faith Formation” on the website <https://www.vuu.org> and follow the links to see the amazing work being done by our Director of Faith Formation, Marci Beaudoin and her assistants.

The VUU Faith Formation ministry is one of which the VUU Congregation is most proud. From Time for All Ages during Sunday service to service work in Mexico, UU heritage trips to Boston, and robust O.W.L and Coming of Age programs, Faith Formation at VUU robust and wide-ranging.

We also acknowledge that the VUU Faith Formation ministry is not complete. Cottage meetings with Faith Formation staff and other groups point to a strong desire for more adult programming and acknowledge that programming for Young Adult is currently lacking. Several groups pointed out that strengthening these areas could lead to growth in membership. We recognize the need to bring in younger people with and without families and we know to do this we will need to reckon with time and financial limits these members may face.

## **How the congregation defines good preaching and worship**

Our Congregational Survey indicates that the ministerial responsibilities most vital to our congregation are spiritual leadership and intellectual and educational leadership. And survey results say the most important personal quality the MSC should consider is intellectual depth and rigor, followed by empathy and sense of humor. Combining those elements—intellectual depth, rigor, and leadership with empathy, humor and educational leadership—would appear to define what VUU considers good preaching.

Most of congregation says that the Sunday morning experience is the prime reason they come to VUU and what they believe attracts visitors and inspires them to return and, eventually, to become members. While we don't expect the minister to carry the entire burden of providing great Sunday worship services, we agree that the sermon is the focus. Framing the sermon, we expect and celebrate great music, lay participation (primarily but not exclusively by VUU Worship Associates), and involvement children and youth.

## **Things a prospective minister should know about the theologies of the congregation, including where to find inspiration, comfort, and conflict**

Both the Congregational Survey and Cottage Meetings point out that this congregation does not want a minister who focuses on Christian / Biblical teaching, preferring instead sermons and worship services that include a wide range of humanist and spiritual ideas—but don't exclude Christianity altogether. In the survey, responders said they are influenced by Humanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Atheism, Agnosticism, and Earth Centered traditions. And that they are likely to be most interested in the minister discussing Buddhism, Secularism, Humanism, Social Justice, and Eastern Philosophies.

## **Ways the congregation handles conflicted situations**



When members of the congregation pointed out a decade ago that they sometimes felt unprepared to make important decisions, the Board of Trustees began hosting quarterly Congregational Conversations. At these conversations held after Sunday service, Board members and committees currently involved in work that will impact the whole congregation present updates and solicit members questions and concerns. The discussion is often lively and has resulted in committees going “back to the drawing board” or agreeing to do a better job of communicating in a more timely or transparently manner.

We encourage people in conflict to handle the issues directly with each other. If they want a 3rd person to mediate whom they both can agree on, we can escalate to a mediated agreement. If that fails, we bring in the minister; this might result in a written agreement between the parties. If that fails, one or both of the parties, or the Board may invoke the Conflict Management Conflict Resolution (CMCR) policy standing up a 3 person independent team to perform an investigation and to make recommendations to the board as to resolution. The Board then votes to accept these recommendations or not. The CMCR is spelled out in detail in Board Policy: <https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/policyboardcurrent-06302019.pdf>

In serious cases in the past, involving possible felonies, the parties were asked not to come to VUU, the civil authorities were involved, and the cases were typically escalated at once to the Board.

In general, conflict in the congregation has been rare or minor. Members do a good job of respecting one another and working through any disagreements.

### **Role of music and the arts in the life of the congregation**

VUU has had a vibrant and varied music program for more than a quarter of a century led by the Rev. Kellie Walker Hart, who retired at the end of 2019. The heart of the music program is actually the congregation itself, as we are a “singing congregation,” with a large repertoire patiently taught by Rev.

Walker over nearly a decade, with a “hymn of the month” program. We sing out and we sing well and we have deeply missed congregational singing since covid hit. We are not “performance oriented,” rather we are “congregational singing” oriented, with music deeply embedded in our worship itself.

When our Minister of Music retired, in addition to our strong congregational singing, we had a vibrant forty-person choir, a children’s choir, a bell choir, a hospice choir that sings at bedside, a house band, a professional pianist and myriad musicians who play a wide assortment of instruments, as well as musicians who sing solos, duets and quartets. A high point of every year was an “All Music Sunday,” almost always sung with the choir of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix and a full orchestra. We also sponsored a Choir Festival Day for all of the UU congregations in Arizona. The day was a time to meet up with UUs from all over the state who love music, have a meal together, sing, work on technique, and get to know people from the other congregations.

Music has been completely woven into our Sunday services, and varies widely from beloved hymns in the grey and teal hymnals to folk songs Rev. Walker taught us to sing by ear. We also have some important rituals around music. Probably the most beloved is the Bridge of Love in which we all stand, form a bridge over the aisles and sing our children out to their classes. According to the Cottage Meetings, it is the most missed of our traditions that can’t be done on zoom.

In addition to our “Sunday music,” we have an annual cabaret, which is a fundraiser featuring the excellent and varied musical talent in the congregation, and we have for years had a concert series, mostly with UU musicians like Peter Mayer, Jim Scott, Namoli Bennett and Emma’s Revolution, though we haven’t had any concerts since early 2019.

In early 2020, just as we hired a new music director, Katie Seiferth, almost immediately the entire music program essentially shut down because of covid. Everything switched to zoom and we learned how to find music from other congregations, made a few small videos of duets and quartets and joined UUCP’s video choir to jointly produce five large choir videos at the kind invitation of Benjie Messer, the Music Director at UUCP. Recently, a

small subgroup of the choir has been meeting in person to sing once a week, but without direction. We may begin singing in small groups outside soon, but our covid committee has restricted all group singing at this time. <https://www.vuu.org/music/>

Rebuilding our music program will be a large task and one which will require considerable work, but it is clear from the Cottage Meetings and comments that the entire congregation wants that to happen and the choir is aching to begin singing again.

The role of visual arts has been more haphazard at VUU than the music program. The frontispiece in our sanctuary was designed by a member who is a professor of art at Arizona State University to reflect our desert home and was painted by more than 150 members of VUU, including several classes in Religious Education. Children also painted a grouping of paintings on one wall of the sanctuary. Our chalice and pulpit were made for our sanctuary by local artists and reflect the frontispiece and the historical importance of copper in Arizona.

Our former minister was quite frank that he was not interested in the aesthetics of the sanctuary and he disbanded our Aesthetics Committee, turning over any questions about aesthetics to the Worship Associates Program. Although some Worship Associates have worked to beautify the sanctuary and set up a schedule to provide flowers and decor for various holidays, the visual arts have not been a strong force in the congregation in recent years.

### **The governing structure of the congregation and how the minister is a part of this structure**

VUU is governed by a 7-person Board of Trustees, elected by the congregation for two-year terms, with a maximum of 6 consecutive years. In 2005, VUU adopted a version of policy-centered governance based on the model being used by the Unity Church-Unitarian of St. Paul, Minnesota – a model also adopted by several dozen other UU congregations. Policies

become official once adopted by the appropriate entity and then posted on the web. <http://www.vuu.org/resources/policies/> Since that time, VUU has modified its Board Policies to adapt to our own particular circumstances, while staying true to several basic principles of good governance. These include:

- Governance is based on policy, rather than case-by-case decision making by the Board or unconstrained discretion.
- Governance is mission-based. The Board, in partnership with the Minister and professional staff, is responsible for periodically leading the congregation in an exercise to articulate VUU's expanded mission. VUU's mission (the "ends" in our Board Policy) was last updated by the board in 2017 following a series of focus groups involving the entire congregation.
- Decentralization is used whenever feasible, with authority, responsibility, and trust placed in the hands of those with the greatest expertise and day-to-day operational experience.
- A clear distinction is made between Board authority and Ministerial authority; but there is no "wall of separation." A vibrant partnership and communication flow is expected in relation to several shared aspects of governance and ministry.
- Board work is mainly "big picture" work (e.g., fiduciary responsibility, policy development, "big decisions," "where are we going now," oversight) with authority for "ministry work" belonging to the Senior Minister, who is responsible for all of VUU's ministries.
- The Board is assisted in performing its responsibilities by several standing and ad hoc committees, such as finance, stewardship, capital planning, policy, and facilities. Board committees, however, do not advise or supervise the work of the Senior Minister, staff, or committees that report to the Senior Minister unless specifically asked.
- VUU's ministries are organized into clusters of related activities and all report to the Senior Minister. Some are led by the Senior Minister, Music Minister, Director of Faith Formation, the VUU Administrator and others are lay-led. With the exception of facilities, stewardship, and finance and those that are elected by the congregation, all other entities report to the Senior Minister who has the authority to review, reorganize, and change their organizational arrangements.

- Ministers, staff, and the ministries / committees that report to the Senior Minister do not need to “seek permission” from the Board. The Senior Minister is responsible for Sunday and other services, supervises staff; and is empowered to determine the best means to achieve VUU’s mission — within broad limitations established by Board Policy.
- The Board of Trustees and the Senior Minister work in partnership to insure VUU’s future as a vibrant force in the lives of members and the larger community.
- The Board is committed to honesty, transparency, and integrity in all of its work for VUU.

For a deeper dive into the governing structure of VUU go to

<https://www.vuu.org/about/board/vuu-governance/>

The seven member Leadership Development Committee (LDC) supports the mission of the congregation by identifying qualified candidates willing to serve on an elected committee. Those committees include the Board of Trustees (seven members), the Special Funds Committee (five members), the Leadership Development Committee itself, and, currently, the Ministerial Search Committee (seven members). The Leadership Development Committee will also advise on non-elected committee positions as requested by the Board. Traditionally the Board President and Minister have helped identify potential committee chairs, but far more often the chair is chosen by the group interested in a particular activity.

Recently the LDC has experienced difficulty recruiting enough members qualified to stand for election to various open positions. They recognize a need for more robust leadership development within the congregation, and are working to establish greater visibility and connection to the congregation. They will be looking to the new minister for advice and new ideas in this important

ministry. <https://www.vuu.org/leadershipdevelopment/>

## **How the work of the congregation happens**

Like they say on social media: It's complicated. We expect so much from our minister, from the staff, from lay leaders, and from the congregation as a whole. And we get so much done! But just how it all gets done sometimes feels like a mystery. Some of us love working in groups; some would rather work alone. Some need recognition for their work; some prefer to be anonymous. Some are quick to notice the contributions of others; some seem oblivious. Some find it easy to ask for help; some find it difficult. And some are wounded by criticism while others take it in stride. When things go well we celebrate with each other and offer sincere thanks; when we get frustrated we cite the 20% of the people do 100% of the work "rule," and take conversations out of the room and into the parking lot. But we strive to do better and be better.

VUU Congregation really believes in our Mission Statement and our Vision and Ends Statements, and we try very hard to live up to them:

**What guides us?** Love is our doctrine, service is our prayer, and justice is our calling.

**Our Vision & Ends Statements:** We are a vibrant, inclusive community, inspired by many spiritualities and theologies, caring for one another through life's challenges, and bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice.

- We challenge each person to discover, experience, and be transformed by the deep and mysterious.
- We cultivate our inclusive community through radical hospitality and nurturing.
- We prioritize intergenerational experience through increased investment in the faith formation of the next generation.
- We engage in partnerships to counter systems of oppression and create a just, sustainable and healthy world.
- We are an innovative congregation, growing Unitarian Universalism in covenant with our UUA partners.

**Recent successful work of the congregation**

Staying Connected—Despite the retirement of our long-time Minister of Music in the fall of 2019, the resignation of our Congregational Administrator in the spring of 2020 (and two subsequent turnovers since then), and the unexpected resignation of our Settled Minister in July of 2020, not to mention a pandemic that stopped all in-person gatherings almost overnight, we’ve managed to stay connected as a community. Our Faith Formation Director and Board of Trustees, working mostly via Zoom and email, created and maintained programs that have held us together under what appeared to be impossible circumstances. Our pandemic inspired online **Connections Circles** <https://www.vuu.org/connection-circles/> have created new friendships and strengthened old ones in ways we never could have imagined before we were forced connect online or not at all. We’ve discovered we’re resilient in ways we’ve never imagined we’d have to be—and we’re proud of ourselves.

Pastoral Care—Our Lay Pastoral Care Associates have continued to offer compassion and a listening ear even when we weren’t meeting in person. They’ve reached out online after Sunday services, and by phone, checking in with members and connecting those who need assistance with the newly reorganized Caring Neighbors Committee and our Interim Minister. <https://www.vuu.org/lay-pastoral-care/>

Technology—We’ve Zoomed Sunday worship services and Faith Formation activities and committee meetings galore, and though there are still minor and sometimes major glitches, our tech team continues to improve our tech capabilities with the intention of providing hybrid services going forward.

## Social Action

- We’ve become more active and respected in the community as we’ve advocated for the homeless, including turning our sanctuary into a 24/7 shelter during the worst of the pandemic.
- We’ve increased our environmental sensitivity and awareness, including dropping all fossil fuel investments, and have a group actively working to bring solar energy to the VUU campus.
- EastVUU has taken their social justice / anti-racism work to a higher level, creating Partners In Education (PIE) and “adopting” an Adams

Elementary School in Mesa. They are encouraging EastVUU and VUU members alike to donate money directly and through the AZ Tax Credit program, to solicit supplies and gift cards from Mesa merchants, and to work with the staff and teachers at Adams Elementary to advocate for students and their families.

## Financial

- VUU is meeting our financial obligations with the help of PPP funds that we obtained to help us through the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic. We've continued to build a robust endowment fund and used 2020-2021 grant monies from the endowment to purchase a new office computer, music, online technology for zooming worship services and committee meetings, necessities for the Coming of Age trip to Boston, and more.
- We've reimagined the Capital Campaign that was halted due to unsureness about long term financial effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The congregation voted to re-direct part of our capital campaign funds to building maintenance and a Recovery Fund, which will be used to cover deficits for FY22-24, 23-24 and if needed FY24-25. The Capital Planning Committee is hard at work prioritizing projects for repairing and renovating the sanctuary and other buildings on the VUU campus.
- The annual Let's Have FUUNd Together Auction raised \$25,000 in 2020 —the most successful fund raiser in the history of VUU. The events which were auctioned have been delayed by Covid, but are now being organized again, and congregants are grateful to assemble in small groups after such a long hiatus in fellowship.

## **The work within the congregation which is slow, stuck, or not attended to**

We lack a well-functioning Membership Committee. Various staff and committees have tried to serve in the capacities that would otherwise be addressed by such a committee, but to date have not found a winning formula.



The Leadership Development Committee is looking for inspiration to help them fuel enthusiasm for lay leadership on the Board of Trustees committees, both volunteer and elected. While VUU appreciates the hard work of the many members who've volunteered to lead for years, we also recognize the need for new ideas and new ways of being in community that come when new volunteers with new energy decide to step forward.

The music program needs a lot of work to revitalize after the struggles of the pandemic. Our new music director did not have time to "get her feet wet" and then gain traction before Covid and her maternity leave. For a "singing congregation," the inability to be together and make music has been particularly trying.

Obtaining and learning to use the technology needed to integrate virtual and in-person worship seems slow, although we are learning as we go. To really make progress, we'll need paid staff head up this work.

Returning pledging to pre-pandemic levels and bringing the FUUNd back. We have lay leaders who are working on these areas now; success in both of these areas will go a long way to restoring a sense of collective victory.

### **How money is raised within the congregation**

Most money raised at VUU comes from membership. There is an **annual pledge drive** run by the Stewardship Committee that reports to the Board. The active part of the drive is in the last quarter of the calendar year, as pledge years are calendar years. Budget is on a fiscal year beginning 1 July. This gives the pledge time to follow up with phone calls and bring in a solid estimate as the budget process is starting.

The second largest source of revenue is from **rental income**, most of which comes from Adobe Montessori school with whom VUU has a 25+ year relationship. We also host a Congregation NefeshSoul which rents our sanctuary building twice a month.

Sunday morning **offering plate**. This source of income has been significantly reduced during our months of meeting remotely. We expect that it will go back up once we begin meeting again in person. In the past, 1st Sunday plate offerings were earmarked for our designated charity, Paz de Cristo Community Center, six months a year, and to special projects within the congregation the other six months.

The annual **Let's Have FUUNd Together Auction** is always our top fundraiser. The auction originated as the Heart and Hand Auction more than 30 years ago and has been an important community building event ever since. Members and friends have missed these FUUNd opportunities to connect with friends and make new ones, all while raising money for VUU. We're looking forward to bidding again soon!

The **Special Funds Endowment** is funded by donations from members and friends. The endowment and grants from the earnings are managed by a 5 person standing committee elected for that purpose. Much of the principal balance was funded through Estate bequests. Another source of funding is the annual Recognition Sunday event where VUU members and friends are asked to make donations to the Endowment Fund in honor of a person of note in the congregation. This year, the Recognition Sunday event totaled \$5,618.82. The estimate of funds available for grants in FY 2021-22 is \$23,026.00.

**Capital Campaign** (Revised) for Building Renovations. While the campaign is on hold due to Covid-19, only a few pledges were rescinded and the rest continue to be paid on time.

### **The most recent capital campaigns in the congregation**

In 2018 the Board formed a Capital Project Committee (CPC) and a Capital Campaign Committee (CCC) to create and fund a new Sanctuary and a set of RE rooms and separate Social Space. CCC engaged professional help in setting realistic goals for this project; the consultant estimated that we could raise about \$1.3 Million. The architect's estimate for this project, however, was closer to \$3 Million. We set up a viable Capital Campaign, running it jointly with the annual Operating Campaign, and the committee

became the Combined Campaign Committee (still CCC). We raised pledges for close to the consultant's estimate, and CPC began working with the architect to modify the plan accordingly.

Then Covid struck, and all plans were frozen. The Capital Campaign is currently on hold. The Capital Planning Committee has reimagined its plans and received permission from the congregation to use funds raised in the Capital Campaign for repair and renovation of our existing multipurpose sanctuary and other buildings on the VUU campus. Immediate needs identified in May 2021 include a new roof for the office building, 7 new A/C units for the sanctuary, and ADA code compliance and accessibility upgrades to the sanctuary.

### **Debt that the congregation has**

There is a mortgage on the property, latest financials list it as \$570K.

### **How the congregation feels about its stewardship**

The current chair of VUU's Stewardship Committee, Linda Horton, has served in this capacity many times. She says: "There are certainly many answers to this question. Some people think that we waste too much time raising money; others think we need a more personal (and time-consuming) approach. But despite these different viewpoints, VUU members and friends are very generous in their support."

At the fall 2021 Program Council meeting, the Stewardship Committee reported that their focus during the coming year's Stewardship Campaign will be to highlight the work of the congregation that our pledges support. Well-informed members will have a level of concern around finances, given that we are running a deficit budget this year and operational deficits will likely continue for the next couple of years. Most members will not think about stewardship at all until they have to.

Re-establishing a membership team, helping to recover membership numbers and assisting Stewardship in fund raising will be areas the new minister will need to support in first 1-3 years at VUU.

### **Role of the minister(s) in stewardship**

From the Stewardship Committee Chair: We ask the minister to pitch stewardship on Sundays, make difficult announcements at times, and sometimes we have asked the minister to approach individual members. We need and expect enthusiastic support from the pulpit.

### **The ten largest pledges within the congregation**

Operating (in \$K) \$20, \$12, \$10.8, \$10, \$8.4, \$8, \$7.2, \$6.6, \$6, \$6, \$6

Capital (in \$K) \$100, \$60, \$60, \$50, \$50, \$50, \$50, \$45, \$40, \$33

### **What a prospective minister should know about the building and grounds for the congregation**

In 2002, having outgrown our previous buildings and eager to expand, VUU purchased property and buildings from a Catholic congregation that was moving to a larger property. We moved into our new home in January 2004. Located on seven acres at 6400 W Del Rio St in Chandler, the VUU campus includes a multi-purpose sanctuary, an eight classroom education complex with adjacent children's playground, and an extensive office building with offices for staff, two meeting rooms, and the administration office of Adobe Montessori School to whom we rent six of our eight classrooms during the week. The sanctuary and office-classroom complex are separated by our parking lot. A small contemplative memorial garden occupies a quiet corner behind the office building, and VUU Green Sanctuary garden thrives during fall, winter and spring in the southwest corner of the property.

The multi-purpose sanctuary truly lives up to that moniker. It includes a small "comfort room" for folks needing respite during services; a small library; a tiny minister's counseling room; storage rooms on each side of the sacristy, one used by the choir and one for everything else; and a kitchen that we all agree is woefully too small for all the multitude of activities occurring at VUU outside of Sunday morning worship services.

Set up for fellowship activities in this multi-purpose sanctuary requires moving and rearranging seating—and then moving everything back in order to be ready for Sunday services. A tech booth was added to the back of the sanctuary when we modernized to add big screens and better microphones at the front of the room. Though an important upgrade, the

booth took away some of our space for socializing at the back of the room. Luckily our location in the desert Southwest means that for majority of the year we are able to socialize outdoors, and we make great use of our expanded covered patio before and after social activities and Sunday services alike.

Our grounds are desert landscaped and we have plenty of land on which to expand when membership growth and the necessary financial resources warrant. In 2018 and 2019 two ad hoc committees, a Capital Campaign Committee (CCC) and a Capital Planning Committee (CPC) were established by the Board of Trustees to work with an architect towards improving our campus. We debated building a new sanctuary and repurposing the current multipurpose sanctuary to be our fellowship hall or renovating the current building to better serve both purposes. Planning is currently underway to use monies pledged to the Capital Campaign to Improve the VUU Campus to upgrade and renovate the sanctuary. (See answer to the following question for more information about these plans.)

Video Tour of VUU campus: <https://www.vuu.org/jwjl1e2szko/>

### **The condition of the buildings and grounds**

As of October 2021, we are in the midst of replacing aging roofs (office and classrooms) and A/C units (sanctuary, classrooms and office). After too-long delayed maintenance on these projects, it will be a relief to be able to take these jobs off the to-do list. In the sanctuary the most immediate needs are flooring and paint, along with truly deep cleaning and organizing after a year and a half of being closed to the congregation (though the sanctuary was used for almost a year of that time as a 24/7 homeless shelter).

Our grounds and landscaping have been similarly neglected—suffering through both the hottest summer on record and the wettest monsoon season in more than a decade. The recently re-established Facilities Committee is in the process of evaluating our aging irrigation system to decide if it can be repaired or needs to be completely replaced, and contracting for that work and on-going landscape maintenance should be complete by the end of October.

The Facilities Committee anticipates working with the Financial Committee to assure that funding for on-going maintenance is included in budgeting for 2021-2022.

The Capital Planning Committee is at work on establishing priorities for spending monies already pledged for the reimagined Capital Campaign.

### **Expectations of the congregation for a minister(s) around pastoral care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation**

Some members of the VUU congregation have strong expectations that the minister will be available and proactive about pastoral care: including home and hospital visits. Although this may be a relatively small group at present, pastoral needs may ultimately be greater post-Covid. This may be especially true taking into account the staff losses we've experienced in the last two years. However, VUU has a strong, well-functioning, and well-respected Pastoral Care Team, and a recently reactivated Caring Neighbors Committee to help connect members who need support with those who are able to help. We expect the minister will provide training and support to both of these teams, and use them as a way to stay informed about serious personal emergencies requiring direct pastoral support.

<https://www.vuu.org/lay-pastoral-care/> and <https://www.vuu.org/ joys-concerns/>

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around children and adult religious education**

We believe that our wide range of excellent children's religious education programming is one of the things that draws and keeps families coming to VUU. We expect the minister to support and promote the excellent programs coordinated by our Director of Faith Formation and her assistants.

From Cottage Meetings and other congregational conversations, we sense a desire for enhanced adult religious education programming. Current adult faith formation groups include the Page Turners Book Group, the Dalai Lama and Friends Group, and Spirit of Life Reading Circle. We hope that

the minister might offer adult RE classes when time permits, and at the very least will work with the Director of Faith Formation to increase the number of adult religious education

offerings. <https://www.vuu.org/sundays/summer-programming-children-youth/adult-faith-formation-programs/>

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around community building / facilitation skills / coffee hour and social times**

The congregation expects the minister to participate in social time after services and interact with parishioners. We hope that the minister will attend and participate in VUU social / community building events, such as our annual member-drive party and annual auction fundraiser. Unless invited to do so, we do not expect the minister to facilitate meetings other than those for committees under the minister's direct supervision.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around committee / task force work**

VUU has strong lay leadership who do not expect or need ministerial guidance. We do expect, however, that the minister will be in good communication with lay leaders of committees not directly under the minister's direct supervision; will attend meetings when invited to offer perspective or guidance; and will promote the efforts of committees and task forces from the pulpit when appropriate.

The minister's perspective is helpful in integrating or coordinating the efforts of diverse committees or ministries. In the past, the minister called together the Program Council on a quarterly basis to ensure the leaders of the various committees and ministries are aware and supportive of the efforts of other groups and staff.

The standard UUA contract contemplates minister attendance at most, if not all, Board of Trustee meetings.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around leadership development**

Our survey, cottage meetings, and conversations with lay leaders all point to a need for improvement of Leadership Development at VUU. We are looking for a minister who will help the existing Leadership Development Committee provide formalized leadership training and recruitment. We want and need to find ways to get more members involved in the work of VUU, eventually creating a larger base of members willing to volunteer for positions of leadership and run for elected offices when asked.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around membership and membership growth**

The congregation believes ministerial leadership for membership growth is crucial. We want to have a bigger impact, serve more people, and spread our costs over a larger donor base. The primary venue for achieving these goals is excellent Sunday services with inspiring sermons that draw in visitors and make them want to return. We do not have a functioning Membership Committee at this time, and expect a minister to participate in reestablishing this important ministry, new member classes, and the welcoming of new members to the congregation.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around staff relations and supervision**

The congregation has an expectation that Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation, as a non-profit organization, will function efficiently and transparently. After experiencing loss of staff, and other stresses of the past two years, we recognize the need for a minister who is able to take on the significant financial and staff management roles of a senior minister. We are a 300 member congregation with a \$600,000 yearly budget, five regular and many more part-time staff people, and several buildings on a \$3MM piece of property. Members of our current staff are young and dedicated, with opportunities for mutual growth with a new minister. We have a



mortgage, a significant property to manage, and substantial fundraising requirements—we need a minister willing and able to be our CEO as well as our spiritual guide.

Expectations around staff relations and supervision are detailed in the Governance Summary and Board Policy.

<https://www.vuu.org/about/board/vuu-governance/> The Senior Minister is chief of staff, and is the supervisor for all VUU employees — either directly or through core staff members. Recognizing fellow staff members as professionals and colleagues dedicated to fulfilling the mission and vision of VUU is crucial (including young, part-time Faith Formation staff with tremendous growth potential).

The minister is responsible for hiring supervising, evaluating, and, when necessary, firing staff members. The VUU Personnel Committee is appointed by the Senior Minister and serves at their discretion to offer advice on personnel matters when requested. Our current Director of Faith Formation, Marci Beaudoin has added this clarification: “ [Rev] Andy [Burnette] assigned me the power to interview, hire (and if needed fire) the faith formation staff. I don't know if this is addressed in the policy manual or a decision Andy made for our circumstances.” The MSC believes it is not codified in the policy manual but reflects good management practice. Marci is a highly tenured, experienced professional who handles her area of responsibility quite capably; the new minister can give her a great deal of autonomy.

In their staff specific Cottage Meeting, current staff communicated the following:

- Minister should know the names of staff, including the sliver employees —be aware that we have three young adult employees in their early 20's who have been with us for several years and are helping us grow a strong future.
- Congregation needs to understand that staff recognizes that the minister is the CEO/leader and will handle management, communication, organization, and conflict resolution.
- Staff wants a minister who can mediate between upset congregants and staff.

- Staff expects to be held accountable to UU and VUU values.
- Staff values a minister who will provide clear direction, training, and conflict resolution concerning lay leadership and staff relations.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around anti-oppression work / social justice / social action**

The VUU Congregation is extremely committed to having a minister dedicated to social justice and social action work— while recognizing that other congregational needs (intellectual rigor/growth and pastoral needs) should not be left wanting. Building upon many years of congregation-led work, VUU extended our social justice and social action work under the guidance of our last minister. In order to continue the momentum and connections to the wider community, we expect a minister willing to nurture those connections and inspire us to aim even higher.

The congregation has less historical experience in the area of anti-oppression. However feedback from our Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop and our cottage meetings reveals a real interest in developing programming on these topics. We don't expect our minister to do this work alone, but to work with us, question us, and prod us to live out our vision and principles.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around interfaith / community work**

The congregation is committed to continuing our work and leadership in interfaith work in the larger community. We expect our new minister to build on our existing connections and help us strengthen our community presence—including but not limited to I-HELP <https://azcend.org/i-help/> and Valley Interfaith Project (VIP). <https://www.valleyinterfaithprojectaz.com>

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around denominational activities**

VUU does not have an interest in the minister having a strong denominational presence. We expect to be notified when delegates are needed at cluster, regional and UUA events and that the minister will have knowledge of what is going on in the denomination. We recognize the need for collegiality among ministers and around denominational affairs, but expect that management of VUU's spiritual and organizational needs will have a high priority in the minister's management of available time. Our minister and several members of the congregation have been active in the Pacific Southwest District's denominational activities in the recent past, and we expect this will continue. <https://www.uua.org/pacific-western>

In addition, the Ministerial Search Committee feels it is important that prospective ministers be aware of two incidents involving VUU and the UUA in the relatively recent past:

The first incident involved VUU directly: In March 2017, our settled minister, the Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette, tendered his resignation in order to accept the position Regional Lead for the UUA Southern Region. His resignation was accepted by the VUU Congregation with genuine sadness, and we started to gear up to begin a new search process. The ensuing national controversy over the hiring of Rev. Andy, a white man, over that of another UUA trustee who is Chicana Latina, ultimately led to a complete shake up of the UUA leadership, including the resignation of then UUA President Peter Morales, and a prolonged—and continuing—examination of UUA policies and practices and how they have reflected systemic racism.

Rev. Andy ultimately decided to rescind both his acceptance of the Southern Region position and his resignation from VUU. VUU happily accepted Rev. Andy back as our settled minister. Janice Miller, who was President of VUU's Board of Trustees at the time, recalls that, "When Andy asked to rescind his resignation, I asked the members of the congregation to write emails to the board about their feelings. In the week that followed, we got 90 letters from members and they were 100% unanimous/joyous that Andy was staying. Not one member dissented or even complained

about restoring Andy to his position.” And that, “In the following 3 years, Andy continued to lead numerous new initiatives...[and]...continued to perform in his role to the satisfaction of the board and congregation.”

This conflict within the UUA involving our minister was very difficult both for him and for our congregation. Many members felt their minister had been treated unfairly, and this contributed to some later dissatisfaction with the UUA's adoption of the term white supremacy culture to describe the larger organization. Importantly, our congregation is deeply committed to maintaining and welcoming a diverse community. The Congregational Survey, Cottage Meetings, and the discussions in our Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop demonstrate that our members are strongly interested in continued dialog and educational programs on racial issues. However, some members feel this new terminology unfairly evokes white nationalism instead of the open-minded spirit of Unitarian Universalism. Although our members willingly acknowledge the existence of unconscious bias and systematic racism, many have felt purposely associating the congregation with white supremacy is offensive and unwise. In 2019, these tensions were further heightened when Rev. Todd Eklof was sanctioned. Some of our members continue to feel disappointed with the approach of the UUA on these issues. Ultimately, the congregation supports the overall aims of the national organization, but does not uniformly approve of the UUA's framework and approach around dismantling white supremacy culture. Our congregation will be supportive of a new minister leading efforts in this area.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around other areas not already addressed above**

We recognize that all the expectations detailed in previous questions are above and beyond what one minister can or should be expected to accomplish alone. And we know that our new minister will need to be firm in establishing boundaries around self-care. We expect excellent sermons, social action leadership, recognition of our strong lay leadership and music and faith formation programs—and strong business management! We know we'll need pastoral care to help us restore what's been damaged over

the last two years: community, a sense of purpose beyond survival, and a strong financial footing. We want to work with you to accomplish the goals.

### **How trust is built between the congregation and the minister**

As the minister and the congregation get to know each other, if we extend empathy and humor to each other, and act with respect for our policies and style of governance and devotion to our shared mission and vision, trust will grow. The congregation will trust a minister who is authentic, transparent, and competent in performing the key roles of the job. As a congregation, we will strive to gain our new minister's trust by fulfilling our covenant "to dwell together in peace; seek knowledge in freedom, and serve humankind in friendship."

### **Why people leave the congregation, and why new visitors do not return**

We wish we knew the answer to these questions. We do understand that people move out of the area for job and personal reasons, or don't find their spiritual needs fulfilled at VUU, or haven't made meaningful connections, or sometimes because of disagreements about policy or priority decisions of the congregation. Beyond Categorical Thinking led us to wonder if we've unintentionally made people feel unwelcome or not accepted for their real selves. As a practical matter, people who leave simply do so rather than participate in a formal exit interview. As a result, we don't really know the answer to this question.

### **Any expectations there might be about a minister's family and personal life**

The congregation has few expectations about the minister's family and personal life—though we welcome family members to be as involved in the life of VUU as much as they want, and we will celebrate their presence when they choose to be with us. We know we cannot expect the minister to always be available, and thus expect the minister to communicate their boundaries early and firmly.

## **One mistake a minister could make that would seriously affect the ministry**

- Behave publicly in contradiction to the 7 principles.
- Not recognize and support our Faith Formation programs.
- Make assumptions about the congregation based on what you hear from one group or another or even surmise from our survey data. We come from different communities all over the East Valley and from many different religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Focus sermons on one theological stance, negating the theological diversity of the congregation.
- Make major changes without communicating and building support.
- Not acknowledge how we've stayed together through earlier ministerial transitions.
- Move out of trust.

## **Questions the congregation would have liked to have been asked which were not included here**

What makes your UU congregation unusual for the denomination?

Answer: That we are a congregational singing community rather than a performance-oriented community; that we have a strong (almost professional) Worship Associate program; and that our hybrid policy governance structure is unique compared to most UU congregations.

What's great about living in Metropolitan Phoenix?

Answer: Use this link to access our favorites: <https://www.vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/About-Phoenix-metro-area.pdf>

## **Trust in the congregation**

Congregational trust is high in both our ministerial and lay leadership, which is strongly tied to competence in both. Congregational trust among congregants is exceptionally high. Members generally assume that they have each other's best interest at heart, even when they disagree on

individual issues. This represents a high level of mutual social capital that forms the backbone of a congregation that is able to remain in covenant with each other.

### **How is technology currently used in your congregation and what are the expectations of the minister around that?**

Expectations around technology have changed since March of 2020. We expect that virtual attendance by some members will continue and hybrid models for Sunday services, social activities and committee meetings will be expected going forward.

Office and Classroom Technology: Internet access (wifi and hardwire) was installed in all classrooms in early October 2021. Dual platform capability is now available in all classrooms except nursery and preschool. Internet access in the office has been upgraded, but still is not optimal.

From the Technology Team: How is tech currently used? (What do we have — what are we doing?)

- Two projection screens above the stage, one on the back wall
- 3 remotely controllable PTZ (Point, Tilt, Zoom) cameras
- 32 channel analog mixing board with wired and wireless mics
- Currently working on an audio upgrade to a digital mixer
- Currently reviewing video technology for needed upgrades
- Integrating Zoom with Sanctuary A/V technology
- VUU currently Zooms and live streams, and will continue into the future
- Recordings of past services are available on YouTube
- Staff meetings are conducted on google meets and in person
- Staff collaborates through google drive

What are the expectations of the minister around technology? (What does a prospective minister need to do?)

- Ability to use/manage personal use of Zoom and google apps
- Comfortable with a lapel or ear-set microphone
- Comfortable with own image being projected on screens
- Providing sermon A/V content, if used, days in advance

- Monitoring and directing content quality and improvement
- Somewhat knowledgeable about complications of A/V system and patient with the time it takes to accomplish specific tasks. Able to provide ample time to troubleshoot accordingly
- Comfortable with idea of mobility features of A/V system and open to creative service features (i.e. performing parts of service outside of the sanctuary)