

# Valley UU Annual Report

JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022  
STAFF, COMMITTEES, & TEAMS

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## Minister's Report

I began my report last year with these words: "Though now it is a cliché, the word 'unprecedented' truly applies to this report."

It ended with these words, "Odd as it may seem, the coming year may be harder with a combination of eagerness for the future and anxiety about it at the same time."

I was right about the first and wrong about the second. This past year has gone smoother than expected, though not without its own challenges. What made it better was a textbook search process, that succeeded in a year when more congregations than usual did not. I cannot thank and praise the search committee enough for their work. They were exemplary.

The challenges came early as it became evident that the administrator hired the same time I came was not a good fit for VUU. She realized it as well and resigned in September. That led to a search which seems to have found in Todd Sirrine someone far better suited to our culture.

The weeks between Lora leaving and Todd arriving were wonderfully staffed by volunteers, some of whom continue to support the office. It was also an opportunity to take stock of physical and organizational matters, such that Todd arrived at a more organized office.

As said last year, a major part of administration is care for the physical plant overall. Thanks to the work of the Capital Fund Committee we were able to reroof the administrative and educational buildings (subsequent to a serious leak), repaint and refloor the board room, do further landscape improvements, and more.

Financially, we were fortunate to be able to refinance the mortgage, saving \$20,000 annually. The annual campaign did well, and those plus our use of government pandemic grants leaves with a cash surplus which finance has recommended using over a period of years.

The CPC did two other things of note this year: funded AC replacements in the sanctuary, and upgrading the AV system, which was adequate for in person worship but has proven inadequate for multiplatform worship in the long haul. It was my plan to arrive at a decision on how to remedy that and that has been done. After many months of consulting with various experts and our own volunteers, I chose a firm to do a complete overhaul of the system, one that will accomplish three things:

- a) Be able to unite in person and virtual congregation reliably
- b) Be able to work in our current and future sanctuary
- c) Be usable by non experts

I believe we have that in the firm we hired. It is my hope that they will be in the final stages of installation and training by the time your new settled minister is present.

I believe you need to do a comprehensive security review, with serious consideration for an overall security system that goes beyond fire protection to include intrusion and monitoring. In addition, there should be more training for ushers and others in CPR and intrusion response. Let me add here that Covid

is not leaving, and recommended health protocols should continue to be in force indefinitely. This year I reviewed all staff job descriptions with the staffer and a representative from the Personnel Committee; this to make sure they are accurate and complete when Rev Sarah arrives. Jobs evolve. Expectations need to evolve with them.

Our relationship with outside groups who use our space has changed. I- Help went from living 24/7 in our sanctuary to where they were before the pandemic. We have also begun hosting “One in Ten,” an LGBTQ+ support group. We continue to house both Adobe Daycare and Nefesh Soul.

Ministries - Formation, Music, and Lay Pastoral Care are appended to this report.

Final Notes:

- While pastoral ministry grew in size and scope, with a partnership between LPCA and Caring Neighbors, there was no membership process this past year.
- The choir has begun to sing again, but we will not have a paid accompanist for the foreseeable future.
- Plan for Covid to be part of our lives from here on, and that means responding wisely.
- Social Justice needs a form or structure, be that a lay committee or a staffed coordinator. There are four principal ministries in a UU community - worship (including music), education, social service/justice, and pastoral care. Social Justice is the only one without a structural component in VUU. Consider it.

As this is a formal record, I shall save my personal thoughts for my concluding Sunday. I will say it has been an honor to serve you these past two years. Thank you.

Fred Wooden,  
Interim Minister

## Faith Formation

- **CLASSROOMS**

- ❖ We returned to in person faith formation classes on Sunday, October 17, 2021. Total classroom attendance for the 7 months of classes was 1007 children & youth.
- ❖ Our theme this year, for all ages was Unitarian Universalism. Preschool curriculum worked on connections, Kinder – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes had lessons connected to our principles, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders looked at aspects of faith. Our middle and high school aged youth dove deeper into their understanding of what it meant to be a Unitarian Universalist.



A HUGE Thank You to our exceptional lead teachers!! Preschool: Cynthia Billotte, K/1<sup>st</sup> grade: Skylar Barnes 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grades: Bethany Bastert, 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grades: Sharon Hagen, middle school: Dave Merrill and high school: Deborah Chesney

- **COMING OF AGE** – The pandemic caused a delay in the start of this program. We met April – September 2021, virtually at first then masked and distanced in rooms 1 & 2. Seven high school aged

youth participated in workshops, team building and created a worship service which they presented on September 26<sup>th</sup>. Carl Anderson, Jodi Cicerello and I led the program and 7 members of the congregation acted as the youth's mentors. 5 of the youth journeyed to Boston with Carl and me the first week of October.

- **OUR WHOLE LIVES** – After several delays and interruptions, we successfully graduated 3 OWL classes: 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders on Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> graders on Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> graders on May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **EASTER EGG HUNT AND PARTY** - We were excited to return to our “pre-pandemic” Easter tradition this year.
- **ADULT FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS** - Dalai Lama and Friends workshop met virtually during the pandemic. In October they added an in-person option every Sunday. Spirit of Life reading circle and the Page Turners book club have continued to meet virtually.
- **FAITH FORMATION ASSISTANT** – Hayley Wynne resigned from her position as the Faith Formation assistant, to pursue her career in trauma counseling, in February. Mid-March I hired Skylar Barnes as our next assistant. In addition to working in the office during the week and helping to prep the classrooms Sunday mornings, Skylar continued to teach in the kinder/1<sup>st</sup> grade class through the end of May.

-Submitted by

Marci Beaudoin, Director of Faith Formation

## Music Ministry

2021 – 2022 marks another year of big transitions in our Music Ministry! In the first quarter, in July, I began educating our leadership on the need to update our audio and video technology and met with various AV engineers to draft proposals on how to do so. This began what's been a yearlong conversation and process that will come to fruition in the next coming months. COVID gave us the push we needed to provide a better audio and visual experience to both our congregants in the sanctuary and online. I am excited to see this move forward! Thank you to Libby Bean, Mike Anderson, Mark Schufletowski, Mark Foote, Jim Bennett and Jim Horton for sharing your time and expertise on this project.

Second quarter, with our COVID team's approval, we allowed live music back in our services. First, the Chalice Ringers, our Bell Choir, began rehearsing and performing their beautiful music in a time where singing was still not safe. Thank you, Joan Bundy, for your leadership in the Chalice Ringers and thank you ringers! Next, with COVID rates decreasing, we allowed small mini choirs of no more than 15 people to meet. We rehearsed in homes and either performed wearing singing masks or recorded videos singing together as one group. The Chandler Mini choir had two performances and the Teakwood's choir produced several videos. Our Virtual Choir continued to meet online and thanks to Izzy Hyman, we produced several videos as well. New musicians and old also returned to our services providing piano, cello, and flute music. Thank you to our many talented musicians for going the extra mile to make meaningful music!

Third quarter birthed a new Music Team to support new music opportunities and further enrich our music program. The Music Team is compiled by a variety of gifted members including Linda

Horton (pianist, choir member), Ken St. John (choir member, cabaret organizer), Joan Bundy (choir member, Bell Choir Director), Paul Schneider (band member, drummer, instrumentalist), Corissa Ruggiero (FF parent and volunteer who loves music), Loyd Means (choir member), Garry Klepser (choir member), and Noel Hyman (previous Music Committee member, choir member, WA and soloists/song leader). Their first event is our Ice-Cream Sing-along, June 11 (see Happenings for more info). I also created an Accompanist Team to support accompaniment for our Sunday services and other needs. Our Accompanist Team is comprised by our own talented pianists: Lynn DeMuth, Linda Horton and Sue Keen. Thank you, Music and Accompanist Team members, for sharing your gifts and ideas. It's a joy to work with you! Our mini choirs and Virtual choir continued to give us incredible music as well-thank you singers!

Fourth quarter, our choir and band resurrected. Our Choir returned as one choir, in-person 25 months after COVID started. Rehearsals have been pure joy getting to sing together again. The band has also expressed enthusiasm playing in our Sunday services again, which has allowed for a diversity of songs each Sunday. We still experience limits in our music program due to the real limitations from our dated AV equipment. However, we are looking forward to this improvement coming soon as more musicians and singers return to making live music. I love leading our choir, leading our band, supporting our bell choir and especially hearing our congregation sing! Thank you for entrusting me with our music program and thank you to all who have been involved in making significant music. What a talented congregation and what a year!

-Katie Seiferth, Director of Music Ministry

## The Board of Trustees

This year, the board's accomplishments were shaped by the continuation of COVID-19, the two-year transition process to prepare for and call our new minister, and considerations about our repurposed capital planning campaign.

First, the world of worship and social action has changed permanently and the use of virtual ministry has greatly expanded. So one of our first goals was to continue to promote and support staff and volunteer efforts to transform VUU into a fully virtual and physical presence in our communities. **This goal is ongoing.**

Second, the Board in partnership with the congregation will continue to consider how our virtual presence, long-term world changes, and changed ministries may affect our capital improvement plans and the Capital Campaign going forward. **This goal is ongoing.**

Third, having had success in creating stronger partnerships during the early months of Covid-19 with I-Help (and their parent organization, AZCEND), the Board will continue to work with AZCEND to cultivate a fuller ongoing relationship with the organization and their efforts to promote literacy, health, and housing in our local community. **This goal is ongoing.**

Fourth, the Board worked to drive the two-year transition process to prepare ourselves for a new settled ministry in 2022. This included evaluating our current and future vision and ends, electing a ministerial search team/ negotiating team who successfully met all their benchmarks, supporting the staff to make the changes deemed necessary to effectively administer the ministries of the congregation, and holding a successful vote of the congregation to Call our new minister: Rev Dr. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan. **This goal was accomplished.**

Other major accomplishments.

- Board Meeting Room beautifully renovated.
- Capital Planning: We have voted to continue with the architect who has several concepts for the expansion and improvement of the current Sanctuary building. Will include updated kitchen and bathroom facilities to facilitate overnight IHELP guests.
- HVAC units in the Sanctuary will be replaced.
- Technology in the sanctuary will be upgraded.

## Finance Committee Annual Report

Prepared by Anne L. Schneider, acting chair

### **The finance committee is responsible for**

- monitoring and revising VUU policies and procedures concerning the accounting and handling of money
- reviewing and interpreting financial reports from the Financial Analyst, accounting and bookkeeping staff monthly to assess VUUs financial status
- reporting to the Board monthly and to the congregation annually or semi-annually on VUUs financial situation along with proposed courses of action, as needed
- preparing and recommending an annual budget to the Board
- authorizing audits as needed and responding / implementing recommendations

**Membership** – The **finance** committee began the year with five regular members: David Sheh (Chair), Anne Schneider, Linda Horton, Diane Hanson, and Garry Klepser. In addition, voting members include the financial analyst (Jim Horton) and a Board Liaison (Kevin Guhman). During the year we invited DeeAnne McClanahan and Bill Elliot to become non voting members. David began as chair and then stepped aside to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee and Anne became acting chair.

**Monitoring policies and procedures** - We determined early in the year that the Accounts policy needed to be updated and that we needed a written “money handling” policy. DeeAnne drafted these policies and they were reviewed, revised, and approved by the committee and the Board. The committee in 22-23 needs to confirm that the money handling policy was the final version approved by the board and then get these new policies and other associated documents posted on the VUU web page under finance committee policies <https://www.vuu.org/resources/policies/> . The final copies as approved by the committee and the Board are at this google link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p9T27LNz6vIw93U0er6Z37zYiFrUZn-N/view?usp=sharing>

**Reviewing and Interpreting Financial Reports** – The committee reviewed and forwarded the financial analyst’s monthly reports to the Board along with relevant documents from accounting/bookkeeping. Beginning approximately half-way through the year, the committee adds an “expected end of year” column for both income and expenses to insure careful stewardship through the year. The committee held a training session for new members of the Finance committee and the Board on “how to review and interpret VUUs financial reports.”

**VUUs financial status** - There was concern throughout the year because of the sharp drop in income that occurred during the pandemic when VUU was closed (except for zoom) for almost two years. Pledges, for example, dropped from a high in 2018 of \$425,000 to an expected \$374,000 in 21-22 and that target is not likely to be achieved as VUU opened for regular services in late 2021 but still has a much-reduced attendance. Contributions (plate and named contributions from non-pledgers) dropped from about \$45,000 pre-pandemic to less than \$20,000. Thus, contributions including pledges, plate, and named contributions dropped from about \$465,000 to approximately \$394,000. To get through this downturn, two pandemic forgivable loans of 78,062 from the federal stimulus program were applied for, received, and forgiven. One was received in Fiscal 2021 that (along with savings) produced a significant carryforward for FY2022 of \$91,000 and the second was received in FY2022.

Projections to the end of June, 2022 show that VUU probably will finish the FY2022 fiscal year with a surplus (currently estimated at somewhere between \$15,000 to perhaps as much as \$40,000). This was achieved, however, with the use of almost \$170,000 in “one time money” from the pandemic grants and savings from being closed. The good news, however, is that we have enough funds from savings and from the “recovery fund” to bridge the gap for two or three more years until our income increases. The other good news is that we have not had to cut staff hours or personnel, and in the 22-23 budget have been able to add paid positions for the challenging technological positions that we need for multi-platform services.

The “recovery fund” is from the congregational decision last June to NOT build a new sanctuary and instead to use the capital campaign funds that had been collected and the continuing honoring of pledges either for capital improvements on the current sanctuary or operations to “bridge the gap.” Donors were/are able to designate what percentage of their donations should go to the “capital campaign planning committee” for capital improvements and what percent can go for operations to get through the pandemic downturn. The recommendation was about 75% to capital improvements and 25% for operations.

**Budget for 22-23** – The finance committee has completed its work on a proposed budget for 22-23 (see budget memo, attached), and it has been approved by the Board for recommendation to the congregation at the June congregational meeting. The budget anticipates expenditures of just over \$666,000 and continuing income of almost \$544,000 for a deficit of over \$122,000. However, we have sufficient one-time savings (from using the Pandemic forgivable loans) and money from the “recovery fund” of about \$222,000 which can not only cover this shortfall but almost \$100,000 will still be available for 23-24 and 24-25 until we have a continuing income sufficient to cover continuing expenses. To make this plan work, we need pledges to increase from about \$405,000 to about \$490,000 within three years, and other income categories to increase by about 6% or more, per year. The budget memo is on this google drive <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lgiF82eXmEAODqvzKm0WQ2uxoq0PvQgl/view?usp=sharing>

and the budget spreadsheet is on this drive:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-gTMP29EY9gXO4GT92OWUIE7i5zu4mZqE8E7jkPOoCo/edit?usp=sharing>

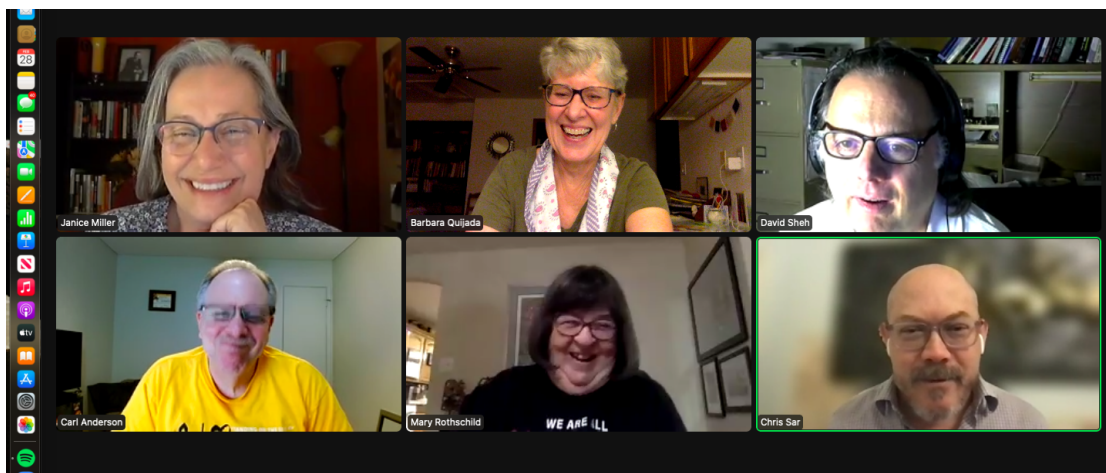


Annual Report submitted, June, 2022. Questions? Contact [anne.schneider@asu.edu](mailto:anne.schneider@asu.edu) or [sdavid471@cox.net](mailto:sdavid471@cox.net)

## Ministerial Search Committee Annual Report

Elected in the Fall of 2020, the seven members of the VUU Ministerial Search Committee, Carl Anderson, Janice Miller, Adam Romney, Mary Rothschild, Barb Quijada, Chris Sar, and David Sheh were already hard at work when the official UUA Ministerial Search season kicked off in late spring of 2021. Following guidelines in the UUA Settlement Handbook, we decided which tasks would be each member's primary responsibility, and agreed that all of us would help each other with our assigned tasks as needed. David and Barb served as Co-Chairs, and Janice facilitated meetings. Tasks included

- Project Management (David)
- Communications (Barb)
- Treasurer (Chris)
- MSC Webpage Management (Carl)
- Congregational Survey (Adam)
- Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop (Barb)
- Cottage Meetings (Chris)
- Search "Packet"
  - Congregational Record (Barb)
  - Documents Packet (David)
  - Redesigned and Updated VUU Website (David & Barb)
- Compensation Packet (Janice)
- Ministerial Records Review (All)
- Video Interviews (All)
- Pre-Candidating Weekend (Mary)
- Contract and Benefits Negotiations (Janice and Negotiations Team)
- Selection of Candidate (All)
- Candidating Week (Mary)



The MSC met every other week during the summer and fall of 2021, and weekly starting in January 2022. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we met on zoom, never in person, until our Christmas mini-retreat, and we would not meet again in person until greeting our visiting pre-candidate in April. (We became a committee of six when our colleague Adam Romney moved to LA in January.)



### **SUCCESS!**

VUU's search for a new minister concluded on May 1, 2022, when the congregation voted nearly unanimously (99.4%) to call the **Reverend Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan** to be our settled minister. Rev. Sarah will officially begin her shared ministry with VUU on August 1, 2022.

### **Thank You!**

Without the help of the VUU Congregation and Staff, the MSC would not have been able to successfully complete our search. In particular, The 2021-2022 VUU Ministerial Search Committee wishes to thank:

**Rev. Fred Wooden** for his wise counsel and patience. **Anne Schneider, Linda Horton, and Jamila and Damian Pulliam** for helping get the VUU History "Our Story, Our Journey 1963-2021" up-to-date. **Izzy Hyman** for creating the video of the VUU included for the Documents Packet.

**Mark Foote and Tricia Amato** for the [VUU.org](http://VUU.org) website make-over, and Mark for working with the MSC to create our Documents Packet and keep our webpage updated as the search progressed. The **VUU Committee and Group Chairs** and others who updated their VUU webpages with pictures and information. **Nick Carr** (and set-up crew members **Ryan Sar, Frank Quijada, and Evan Anderson**) for coordinating set-up of Candidating Week receptions, the Faith Formation picnic, and the Pizza & Cake Party. **Mikaela Young** for coordinating the facilities clean-up before Pre-Candidating Weekend and Candidating Week. **Anne Schneider** for the use of her beautiful desert home during Pre-Candidating weekend. **EastVUU**, especially **Margaret Stewart, Linda Rand, Randall Casillas, Sharon Kopina, Perii Skolnik, and Joan Carver**, for hosting the Welcome Reception. **Dianna Farmer, Linda Stenholm, and Frank Quijada** for serving at the Dessert & Wine Reception—and to all who brought desserts to share. **VUU Choir Members**, especially **Linda Horton, Anne Schneider, Denise McLeod, Joanne McGrath, Margaret Stewart, Lynn Demuth, Beverly McCormick, and Barbara Face** for coordinating the Pizza and Cake Party after the Congregational Meeting's successful vote to call Rev. Sarah to be our Settled Minister. The **VUU Board of Trustees** and the **Leadership Development Committee** for working with and supporting the MSC and the Congregation on the long and winding road from selection of a search committee to coordinating the Vote to Call. **DeeAnne McClenahan and Pam Swan** for representing the Congregation and the Board on the MSC Negotiating Team. **The VUU Tech Team** for their continued efforts to make VUU look good on Zoom, on YouTube, and in the Sanctuary, and for pulling off the first hybrid vote in VUU history. **VUU Administrator Todd Serrine** for his calm and rapid responses to MSC requests, and for helping **Marci Beaudoin** arrange the Zoom links for Candidating Week. **Marci Beaudoin and Katie Seiferth** for working smoothly with Rev. Sarah to coordinate the Candidating Week Sunday Services. The **VUU Band and VUU Choir** for providing live music

for the Candidating Week services. **Janet Nash** for keeping MSC events up-to-date on the VUU calendar. **Barbara Face** for her skilled design suggestions and wise editing of MSC Happenings up-dates. **Lloyd Harrell** for guidance on developing the MSC budget from the last search committee. Members of the **VUU Special Funds** team for helping us to put forward the most competitive compensation package possible. The **MSC team's partners and families** who granted us the time, space, and support we needed to complete our work.

Finally, the MSC thanks **Members and Friends of the VUU Congregation** who

- Completed the Congregational Survey
- Attended the Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop
- Attended Cottage Meetings
- Helped the MSC answer Congregational Record questions
- Attended Candidating Week meetings and receptions
- Gifted the MSC with trust, patience, and enthusiasm throughout the Ministerial Search Process.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Barb Quijada, MSC Co-Chair

## Special Funds Committee

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

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

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

Before each meeting, the Treasurer prepares a monthly report in a format that has been consistent since at least 2014. The report is taken directly from information accessible from online access to the Special Funds investment account with Vanguard Financial.

As of May 10, 2022, The fund value is \$516,133.63, a decrease of \$43,395 over the value per the last report dated April 12, 2022. This is the lowest value since October 2020 and reflects how investments are performing generally in the economy. The investments are held in a diverse portfolio that is free of fossil fuel investments. The Committee has set allocations for the percentage of the fund that is held in a particular portfolio. The Committee monitors the investment and makes occasional adjustments to manage allocations among portfolios to remain in a 3% range of the allocated percentage. The total above includes an amount of \$8,744.85 specially accounted for as the Bunny and Bob Clark Leadership Fund.

**The Committee encourages grant applications.** The amount available for granting is the lesser of 4% of the total endowment at the end of each fiscal year or the average income

(growth) over the past three years. The amount available for grants from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 was \$23,610.17, the Committee awarded grants totaling \$22,975.09, leaving a balance of \$635.08 is still available for grants this fiscal year.

Grants given for fiscal year 2021-22 included: (1) grant to the Ministerial Search Committee of \$15,000 as additional one-time compensation for the Minister; (2) grants to the Board for \$5,275.09 to upgrade the conference room technology and add wi-fi access to the Education Complex; (3) grant of \$2,500 to Faith Formation for the Coming of Age semi-annual Boston trip; and (4) \$200 to the Environmental Action Team for a speaker on waste management.

The Committee is involved in managing a Trust bequest to the Congregation. The process has been somewhat complicated. At this time, the outcome is uncertain. However, the Committee anticipates receipt of the bequest in an amount of approximately \$335,000.00 in June or July of 2022, which will be added to the endowment total.

## Leadership Development Committee

This has been another interesting and challenging year for the LDC. We have been meeting monthly via Zoom and have tried to work on building relationships with more members of the congregation. We did have a request from the Board of Trustees in November for feedback on a replacement member due to a resignation. The LDC experienced two resignations of our own in December and January. We only filled one of those positions to finish out the congregational year. We started working towards a slate of candidates in February through Happenings and did have a few candidates self-nominate for opening positions. The LDC did participate in some testing for online voting for the May 1<sup>st</sup> meeting to call a new minister and was responsible for that vote. We have gathered and presented a slate of candidates for open positions for the annual meeting. We look forward to working with Rev. Sarah in the next year and making more connections with the congregation now that we're more back in person.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Laskowski

Chairperson, LDC

## Lay Pastoral Care Associates

Carl Anderson

Melissa Bush

Janet Cantley, chair from Dec 2020 to present

Joyce Donahue

Rosaland Hawkins

Carlin Knight

Dan Schulte

JoAnne Smith  
Claudette Wassil  
Michael Woomer  
Nancy Woomer  
Lisa Bonine, liaison for Voices Lifted  
Bev Rogers, liaison for Caring and Concerns

With the multi-platform Sunday services and increased time commitment for LPCA, we increased the number of members from 7 to 11. We conducted training May 15, 2022.

Congregants served by LPCA from July 1, 2021 to June 5, 2022: approximately 50  
Many of these members have sustained/long-term relationships with LPCA. These were self-initiated requests, in person or on the zoom chat on Sundays, through emails or Joys and Concerns submissions on the website, or referrals by staff or members. We work closely with Caring Neighbors and Voices Lifted in striving to be the caring and supportive community we want to be.

We hold monthly meetings to discuss concerns or questions that might arise from congregant contacts, and plan programming we may offer the community. Our meetings allow us to engage as help-seekers, as well, as we provide support for each other as LPCA members. We share readings and discussion that relate to LPCA issues. We continue to add to our resource directory for referrals. Recently, Melissa Bush provided a suicide resource for the group.

In addition to supporting individuals in the congregation, we also provide support through classes or workshops, in coordination with the VUU Faith Formation program. In April two LPCA members (Dan Schulte and Joyce Donahue) offered a class online, *How to be Helped*.

A page was added to the VUU website in late September to define the Lay Pastoral Care program. We have been contacted by two congregations—Tri County UUs in Summerfield, Florida and All Souls Unitarian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana—to provide information about our pastoral care program at VUU. We appreciate serving as a model for other congregations!

## Program Council Annual Report

The Program Council is our “committee on committees” which meets quarterly for three hours to give the committee chairs and staff the opportunity to share and coordinate activities. For this fiscal year, the Program Council was chaired by DeeAnne McClenahan. We met in November, February, and May by Zoom with more than twenty VUU leaders attending each meeting, and were able to talk through various coordination and other issues to help the whole to function better and more cooperatively.

## Capital Planning Committee (CPC)

The Capital Planning Committee was chaired by Jim Horton and DeeAnne McClenahan this year. Our function was to determine how to prioritize and spend the capital funds from the Capital Campaign which was begun several years ago, derailed somewhat by the pandemic, and to shift our focus from plans for an additional new building to enhancing the sanctuary and taking care of deferred maintenance issues. During the year, we were able to bid, install and pay for new roofing for the education complex. We bid and have on order eight new air conditioning units for the sanctuary (there are 13 total); we hope to have this work done during the next couple of months (supply-chain issues pending). We contributed a substantial amount to help fund new audio/visual tech-booth equipment to enhance our multi-platform services and other events. This work has also been bid and ordered, and is pending installation. We are working with our architect to plan for sanctuary improvements, which have been designed and scoped and are in the process of being bid. We expect for the remaining costs to be beyond the funds that have already been committed, and will report to the congregation shortly our recommendations for additional fundraising and/or the scaling back of the planned enhancements.

## Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee has been working during the last year to aid the Interim Minister as VUU prepares for the arrival of our new settled minister. The Committee has been involved in supporting a variety of hiring activities, wage and salary recommendations, job description updates, and administrative procedural reviews of wages and benefits for both full and part-time employees. A revision of the Personnel Policies is underway.

Nancy Harrell, Chair  
Lynn DeMuth  
Steve Grams  
Rick Hinrichs  
Sharon Osborn-Popp

## EastVUU Annual Report

The EastVUU group was formed in 2016 to create connections on the east side of the East Valley. Our mission continues: to enable fellowship, spiritual growth and social justice. The group includes about 40 active participants, with average attendance of 20 people per event.

We're grateful that we continued to meet twice per month throughout the past year and through the pandemic. We benefited from the mutual support! On the second Thursday evening each month, we have held discussions about spiritual challenges or we have learned about social justice topics. In particular, we focused on four areas of social justice: racism, immigration, climate, and protecting democracy. In 2021, we launched a new project to assist marginalized school kids (exciting details below).

We thank all our attendees over the past year, as well as our most frequent VUU guest speakers, including **Beverly McCormick, Sandy Whitley, Anne Schneider, and Sharon Kopina.** **Reverend Fred Wooden** has also been a wise and comforting speaker and presence.

We continued to hold our social event on the fourth Thursday each month, led by **Perii Skolnick**, who has found ways to keep us entertained and relational, even on Zoom. We recently resumed our potluck game nights, hosted at the Apache Wells Community Center by **Bonnie Phillips and Denny Drake**—we are excited about more face time with friends!

Two EastVUU women's groups were also formed several years ago, and those continue to thrive as an additional resource for fellowship and support. Led by **Margaret Stewart and Shari Melton**, both women's groups meet bi-weekly.

**EastVUU Team: Janice Miller, Perii Skolnick, Bonnie Phillips, Randall Casillas, Margaret Stewart, Sharon Kopina, Terri Guest**

### **Partners in Education (PIE)**

In 2021, EastVUU initiated a new project we call Partners In Education (PIE). This project resulted from workshops led by Beverly McCormick on white privilege and black history--we felt the need to put our UU values into action.

PIE is a group of caring individuals dedicated to equality in Education and committed to serving the local community. We chose Adams Elementary in Mesa as our focus school because it has a very diverse student population including Hispanic, African American, Native American and children experiencing shelter insecurity.

Our goal is to improve the school's overall performance and the quality of life for the students, parents, teachers and administrators. To that end, **EastVUU and the entire VUU congregation has contributed over \$10,000 in donations and supplies, including \$7,000 in Tax Credits.** Additionally, we have contributed school supplies, books, craft materials, art supplies, clothing, food for Teacher Appreciation Week, many gift cards and teddy bears.

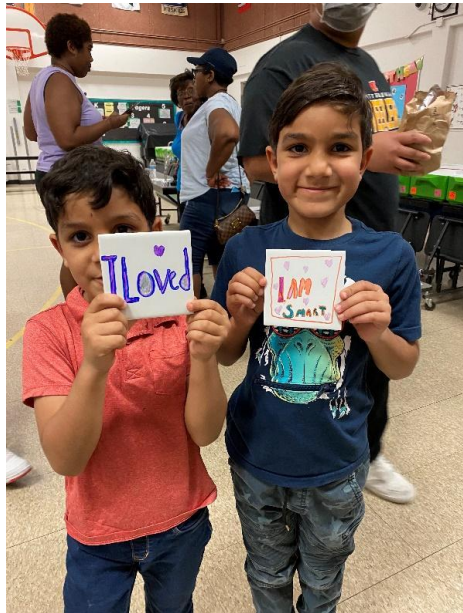
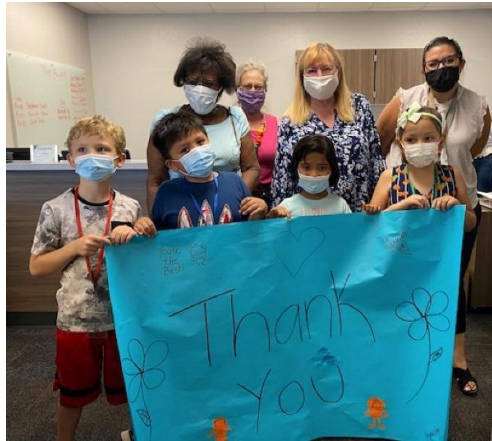
**With the tax credit funds, Adams was able to offer its first after school literacy enrichment program to 21 third grade students and also pay the tuition for 48 sixth graders to spend 3 days at Science Camp in Prescott.** With our continued support, Adams is planning to expand these opportunities in the next school year.

As Covid fears lifted, **PIE added a volunteer presence at Adams.** We participated in the school counselors biannual report to the community. **We co-sponsored a wonderful evening program, The Kindness Project, that promotes positive thinking, problem solving and self-confidence.** Our members have volunteered and provided gift certificates for parent participation. We hope to expand our volunteer efforts with reading and art appreciation activities too. We look forward to greater congregational involvement and thank everyone who has made this a successful year.



**PIE Team: Beverly McCormick, Perii Skolnick, Jeanne Gerber, Linda Stenholm, Adrienne O'Donnell and Frances Campos-Outcalt**

**Adam's School Pics**





## **Immigrant Support**

Since its inception, the EastVUU group has provided immigrant support, under the leadership of **Sharon Kopina**. Our membership as a whole has supported Refugee Aid through donation of needed clothing, food and supplies. Several EastVUU members are volunteers at the International Rescue Committee welcome center in Phoenix providing direct and ancillary service to asylum-seekers. Several of our members participate weekly at Borderland Produce to supply a local underserved Latino church that operates a food pantry and feeds asylum seekers traveling to family members across America.

**EastVUU Immigrant Support Volunteers: Sharon Kopina, Suzy Distaso, Judith Harper, Rebekah Kendrick-Thomas, Bonnie Phillips, Randall Casillas, Junette Brock, Kathryn Carver**

## **Environmental Action Team**

Prepared by Denise McLeod

### **EAT**

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EAT has temporarily shifted its strategic focus from environmental action to getting out the vote (GOTV). The rationale for this direction shift was the realization that without the right legislators in office, none of our current concerns will be sufficiently addressed. And those concerns are many and dire: climate change, education, gun control, abortion rights, immigration and the most important, the existential threat to our democracy.

Of note is that Arizona has been designated as a priority state in the November elections due to the fact that we face critical threats of voter suppression, partisan gerrymandering and on-going disinformation campaigns.

This past Sunday, we announced a call-to-action to recruit all VUU congregants to join in a non-partisan effort being organized and implemented at the national level by UU the Vote and on the regional level by UJAZ. A seven-point list has been developed that includes letter writing, phone calls, texts, door knocking, and other GOTV volunteer activities. The completion of four of these earns VUU the status of a “Good Trouble” congregation, a designation inspired by the words of the late Congressman John Lewis to take action when we see injustice.

We want VUU to be a “Good Trouble” congregation and frankly, we feel that, with the enthusiasm that defines VUU, we can complete all seven activities. More importantly, we feel that putting our energy behind the vote at this point in time is critical and will make a difference in the November election’s outcome.

Sandy Whitely presented VUU the Vote last Sunday at the Congregational Conversation and EAT had a table at the back of the Sanctuary for people to sign up. We hope to have an information table at as many services as possible up to November. Call-to-action announcements will also be placed in the Happenings each week. Our hope is for maximum participation.

## **Citizen's Climate Lobby (CCL)**

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### ***Report from Sandy Whitley:***

Citizens' Climate Lobby continues to communicate with Members of Congress regarding the need for strong and effective climate action. CCL volunteers will be convening in Washington DC mid-June to lobby Members of Congress. Virtual meetings are scheduled for Congressmen Stanton and Biggs. A very small bipartisan group of senators is meeting to discuss climate action but there have been no breakthroughs as of June 6<sup>th</sup>. Senators are also working on resuscitating the climate portions of the reconciliation bill. CCL is hoping for some climate action by the end of July, after which the prospects for any climate action this year are greatly diminished.

## **Food For Life and the Planet (FLP)**

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FLP has resumed meetings on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at 10am. The first meeting of the month is a discussion organized around a specific topic related to plant-based diets. The second meeting is "Hot Topics" during which attendees can bring to the group any related topic that is on their minds. ZOOM meetings have been well-attended but we're hoping that eventually, we'll be able to resume in-person gatherings.

There are two hot items on our agenda right now. The first is to increase interest among VUU congregants to reduce their consumption of meat or to give it up all together. It is the single most effective way an individual can have a positive impact on the environment and saves animals from suffering, both strongly aligned with the UU Seventh Principle. The second is to ensure that at least one vegan option is available at every VUU social gathering where food is served, including at Faith Formation.

## **The Green Sanctuary Garden**

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Spring harvest was exceptional. For the first time, each row was "adopted" by an enthusiastic gardener who planted half the row for VUU and the other half for their own use. To date, we have contributed fresh vegetables to those in need at iHelp, Matthew's Crossing Food Bank, the Kyrene Family Resource Center and the Tempe Community Action Center. On a recent Sunday after service, we had a "farmer's market" table set up out on the patio and provided free vegetables to VUU congregants. We had a jar for donations and although we didn't ask (just hinted a bit...!), our members supported us with \$133 in contributions for future garden needs. Very generous!

We ordered and planted an Arizona Ash by the benches so that in a couple of years, maybe sooner, a visitor will be able to sit in glorious shade while enjoying the peace and serenity of our beautiful garden.

Gardeners and Marge Brodrick, our master gardener member and consultant, met last Saturday to discuss summer and fall planting. We will shut most of the garden down in the summer to preserve water—and ourselves from the heat. We will plant cow peas in each row to restore nitrogen to the soil. Two weeks before fall planting, we will nourish the soil with compost and plant again with the same strategy we employed in Spring—and with hopefully the same success.

Thank you!

## Valley Interfaith Project (VIP)

VUU is a dues paying member of the Valley Interfaith Project, a broad based, non-partisan organization committed to building relational power through organizing people for sustainable social and economic improvement. VIP's member institutions include congregations, schools, unions, and nonprofits. (See <https://www.valleyinterfaithprojectaz.com>)

VUU Member Bill Elliott helped lead VIP's efforts to put Prop 208 on the AZ ballot—an effort which successfully gathered enough signantres but was subsequently overturned in a ruling by the Maricopa County Superior Court. The measure would have boosted the income-tax rate for high income earners by 3.5 percentage points, with the money directed primarily to salary increases for teachers and school support personnel.

VUU and VIP are currently cooperating on Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns focused on the November '22 elections, with the hope of electing representatives at all levels who are more in line with our progressive values and concerns.

## Immigration Team

Though no official VUU Immigration Team is currently active, individual members and friends continue to volunteer with other organizations—primarily Refugee Aid and the International Refugee Committee's Phoenix Welcome Center—to provide assistance to asylum seekers and other refugees in the Phoenix metroplex. Tasks include delivering produce from Borderlands Produce Rescue to small, mostly Hispanic congregations; weekly laundry runs for the Welcome Center; and collecting donations of toiletries, clothing and shoes, and “traveling food” at VUU for delivery to organizations working with refugees. EastVUU has been particularly active in supporting this work under the guidance of Sharon Kopina.

In late May, VUU was invited to work with a couple from Afghanistan who are hoping to be reunited in AZ. The rapid response to this call for help has resulted in the creation of a VUU Afghan Refugee Sponsor Circle, chaired by Laura Cherington.

## Worship Associates

Having a lay presence in the pulpit each week is a long-standing VUU tradition and VUU Worship Associates are honored to be part of such an important role, which we take seriously. This year worship at VUU mirrored the larger culture's ups and downs of the pandemic. Beginning in September 2021, we began offering blended services that combine interactive zoom with in-person services. We learned how to be welcoming and inclusive to everyone. For example, looking at the camera so that our online attendees feel welcomed while also being aware of folks in the sanctuary. We're learning more each week about how to foster community in this new normal we're forging.

We have so appreciated working with our Interim Minister the Reverend Doctor Fred Wooden. His leadership has allowed Worship Associates to continue to grow and present personal reflections on the service topic. We met with Reverend Wooden every month to review past services, plan future services, and consider issues - usually technology issues - for resolution. We are richer for his guidance. As in years past, we offered our annual Thanksgiving Harvest Communion albeit pandemic style: outside on the patio after the service. Also as usual, the Worship Associate committee members have presented sermons on Sundays when Reverend Wooden is out of the pulpit. We are responsible for planning and presenting the services for July and part of August and look forward to hearing from guest preachers and VUU members. We also added a new Worship Associate to the team.

The Worship Associate committee members met with Reverend Sarah during her candidating week in May 2022 and were inspired by her plans for worship at VUU. We look forward to collaborating with her to plan and present services.