

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing



Join the Journey.
Open to You.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

**Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing
268 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560**

Phone: (609) 737-0515
E-mail: uucwc@uucwc.org
Website: www.uucwc.org

Church Staff 2020–2021

Senior Minister	Rev. Kimberly Wildszewski
Director, Lifespan Faith Engagement	Robin Pugh
Director, Music Ministry	Caryl Tipton
Congregational Administrator	Susan Irgang
Office Assistant	Rachel Hansen
Accompanist	Steve Ryan
Interim Sexton	Roberto Santiago

Board of Trustees 2020–2021

President	Nathalie Edmond
Vice President	Sue Saddlemire
Treasurer	Jim Sanders
Secretary	Colleen McCourt
Trustee	Jamie Evanini
Trustee	Michael Howe-Smith
Trustee	Patrick Kahney
Trustee	Jeff Lang
Trustee	Michael Waas

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Table of Contents

UUCWC Executive Staff Report	3
Board of Trustees	9
Adult Faith Engagement	10
Archives Team	11
Auction Team	12
Building Committee	14
Capital Campaign/Project Steering Committee.....	15
Denominational Affairs	16
Earth Ministry	17
Endowment Committee	19
Faith Action Ministry (FAM) of the Council for Faith in Action (CFA)	20
Faith Expression and Funding Team (FEFT) Ministry of the Council for Faith in Action (CFA)...	21
Faith Forward Program	22
Family Ministry Team	23
Food Ministry	24
Fundraising Chair.....	25
Grounds Committee.....	26
HomeFront Tutoring	27
Kinship Circles	28
Nominating and Nominating/Leadership Development Task Force.....	29
Personnel Committee	30
Racial Justice Ministry of the Council for Faith in Action	31
Stewardship Committee	32
Technology Team	33
Worship Associates	34
Worship Tech	35

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

UUCWC Executive Staff Report

***Presented at UUCWC's Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 6, 2021***

Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Senior Minister

Before we get to the business piece of this, I need to begin with gratitudes that are truly too large and numerous for words. It is an understatement to say that this congregational year stretched every single one of us in different ways. For some of us, it was a time of growth and health that we won't relinquish when things "return to normal." While for others, it was a time of disconnection and loss, and we would gather up "normal" in a heartbeat. But for all of us, it was a time unlike any other—and in that uncommon, uncomfortable, uncertain time, UUCWC was a holding. You, for others—and others, for you—were a people who made and *make* this time possible.

Nathalie Edmond, every President has different challenges and things that have to be learned on the job. But you have ushered this congregation through intentional and unexpected lessons that required the enormity of *your* heart, *your* skill, *your* clarity, and *your* leadership. As the first person of color serving as Board President, we know that your time could have gone otherwise; that it has for other people of color in other congregations. I honor your bravery, your commitment, and your trust in your congregation to say yes to this service.

And an equally quick word about our staff: I am constantly telling our Worship Associates that we are striving for connection, not perfection. But this team that I am lucky enough to work alongside has been flawless. Committed, creative, persistently finding ways and working out ways to keep this congregation connected and healthy, while they were also within the trauma of this time.

I could say this about each space: The way the Council for Faith in Action ministry teams continued to serve. Food Ministry's hundreds of meals made in cold garages. And Faith Action Ministry's thousands of postcards—Jamie Evanini, let us sing her name!

The way the Right Relations Committee reminded committees and ministries of the faithful and theological ways and whys of doing work in a church. The Leadership Development Task Force, who creatively revamped how we invite people into the work of the congregation, and also set out a new vision grounded in relationship (rather than in positions to fill). The Personnel and Finance Committees, who worked tirelessly to reimagine sustainable and responsible volunteer and paid positions. The Capital Project leaders, who continued to work relentlessly to imagine and reimagine and rework our dreams into something that will soon be tangible, despite all of the hurdles.

And let's just pause so that we might erupt with applause for the Worship Tech Team. These volunteers who learned and learned and helped us learn how to connect with one another in this time. On Sundays, yes, but also for memorial services and committee meetings—and also when

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

the Capitol was being taken over, and the night after the election, when it was all still uncertain. I may have given the words, but *they* gave us the platform, the building we didn't otherwise have. I could go on and on. You will hear from some folks today who I haven't lifted up. You won't hear from others. There was so much that happened this year, and every single piece of it has been remarkable.

Celebrate Life

Let me say just a bit more by the numbers.

This year, we welcomed (on average) 166 people to worship each Sunday—a celebration that we continued to welcome visitors in this pandemic virtual time! Our congregation consists of 285 Members, 19 Friends (people who financially commit to the congregation, but who have not signed), 38 Participants, and 27 Attendees. You come from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but also Long Island, Minnesota, Ohio, Maryland, and Oregon.

This year, we welcomed 14 new Members, 3 of which are official Virtual Members, and 10 waiting to see what virtual or hybrid congregational life will mean.

And we celebrate those among us who have been members of this congregation for over 40 years: Jo Millner, 63 years; Mary Ann Sprenkle, 57 years; Betsy Young, 56 years; Terry Caton, 54 years; Beverly Railsback, 51 years; Bernie and Bonnie Ruekgauer, 45 years; and Ruth Samsel, 43 years.

But it hasn't all been growth. We lost Richard Knight and Tony Catanzaro this year, and we have yet to memorialize others.

Robin Pugh, Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement

Create Community

In August, the Board affirmed my request for a change of title to Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement. "Faith Engagement" is the name of the UUA office that supports faith development for children, youth, and adults. And it better describes how UU's grow in their faith: by engaging with it. Additionally, "Faith Engagement" does not limit where faith development occurs. It is not only in the classroom. We engage with the Unitarian Universalist faith in all that we say and do in our congregation.

In this pandemic year, our Board and Rev. Kim encouraged us to practice "Simple Church" to clarify and simplify how we engage with UUCWC. They named three areas that are essential to congregational life:

1. **Celebrate Life** through worship.
2. **Create Community** by joining a small group.
3. **Change the World** by serving in a deeply purposeful way, one that is inspired by our experiences in worship and small groups.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

As Director of Faith Engagement, I worked especially hard this year encouraging people to join small groups. Small groups form relationships and create community—so important in a year where we had to be physically distant.

I'll place in the chat many of the small groups that have been meeting this year:

- *Lectio Divina* class and weekly practice
- Chalice Circles
- Wellspring
- Racial Justice monthly forums (information emailed)
- *Coming into Connection* pairings
- Theme-based Reflection Groups
- Family Chalice Circles
- *Tending the Flame* UU parenting class
- Crossing Chorale
- Racial Justice as a Spiritual Practice

For our adults, we tripled the number of Chalice Circles this year. We now have nine groups with 72 people in them—that is 25% of our membership. The growth of Chalice Circles has been a silver lining during this year of virtual church.

Numerical growth is good, but what we're really aiming for is measurement of a different kind. Not only do the circles offer a reflective and caring space, they teach us to practice our covenantal faith. You don't pick who is in your small group, yet everyone remains in right relationship because the Chalice Circles have a structure and a covenant. Thus, Chalice Circles let people experience what it means to be in a covenantal community—a crucial part of being a Unitarian Universalist.

For our families, we offered two programs:

- Family Chalice Circles, where families were paired or tripled up for the year, and together on Zoom, celebrated a mini-worship service and learned a lesson.
- A monthly parenting class called "Tending the Flame."

Faith Formation begins at home. I've been wanting to offer programs that offer parents tools for practicing UU at home for years. Our closed church building, and the postponement of our regular children's program, gave me an opportunity to do this.

I had some videos of parents to share during my presentation, but we had to cut them in the interest of time. I will post them on the UUCWC Facebook page this week. But I want to quote from some of the videos about these two programs.

This is what Anne Godlasky, one of our virtual members, said about the parenting class:

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

“I signed up for *Tending the Flame: The Art of UU Parenting* not knowing how on Earth I’d make room for it—worn out from working, schooling, and parenting under the same roof, with no end in sight; already feeling behind in every arena without the weight of a new commitment. But how to be the kind of parent I want to be, a UU parent, was need-to-know information. I raised my virtual hand immediately, for my children’s benefit. But it ended up being for my own.”

Later, Anne continues:

“I told my wife: I love these people. I chose to invest time, attention, energy, and emotion. I got back so much more. *Tending the Flame* was a way of tending to myself, as I, like many moms, seldom do. And my teachers/classmates had a way of renewing my faith in the goodness of people, as UUCWC always does.”

Jess Tavlaris, a parent with three children under 8, shared in her video about her time in a Family Chalice Circle with the Ciccolini family. She says: “Family Chalice Circles connected me to another church family on a deeper level, in a way that is difficult when we meet in person.” The words her children used when they were asked to describe their time in the circle were, “Love and Laughter.”

These two classes were a gift during our time of not being able to meet in person. We will continue to offer ways for parents to connect virtually in the future.

For our teenagers, thanks so much to Scott Drew and Barbara Jensen, who made it possible for our teens to complete the OWL class that was started in 2019-20 on Zoom.

The title change to “Faith Engagement” also reflects my new additional role in working with Kim on Membership Ministry (connecting opportunities for long-term and new members.) This role is a natural extension of my work promoting adult learning opportunities. It is all Faith Engagement.

On Sundays, I am in the background of our Zoom services, noticing who is in the room. What I’ve learned is that frequent visitors need to be nurtured like a seed. So I personally encourage our visitors to get to know us and themselves better. After attending services, they are invited to a small group that is designed for visitors.

Kim revised the *Path to Membership* class. It is no longer a lecture (albeit a good lecture) on UU history and theology. Instead, the class focuses on what it means to be a modern UU. All long-term members who took the class shared that modern UU is different from what we all once learned. Next year, I will encourage all of you to do some meaningful continuing education and take this class.

As I finish up my twelfth year at UUCWC, I want to thank you for showing up week after week with so much love during a very tough year. UUCWC was, and is, a lifeline for me and many others. You make that lifeline real.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Susan Irgang, Congregational Administrator

Change the World

In this year like no other before, I continued to have the privilege of collaborating with many teams, whose efforts dovetail with my work here at the church. I'd like to lift up some of what we have been doing, during and despite the building's closure:

- Our Building Team kept our facility clean and secure, tending plants and keeping systems running. Roberto Santiago stepped in as Acting Sexton to help with this work.
- Our Grounds Team, working with Earth Ministry, enhanced our property with new picnic tables, new plantings, and a clean-up day.
- Our Capital Campaign Team (from whom you will hear later) were creative, flexible, and undaunted in their work to improve our space—seemingly against the odds.
- Our Reopening Task Force met regularly to review the criteria, statistics, and protocols required for a safe return, using both science and our UU values to inform our work. Board Trustee Michael Waas will give you more information about Reopening later in the meeting.
- Our Communications Team continued to connect us with emails and newsletters, slides and website posts. I've also been working with a special team to give our website its first major update in over four years, to be unveiled later this summer. Rachel Hansen returned, and now collaborates with me on social media postings and website maintenance and updates.
- The Treasurer Transition Team consolidated dispersed financial tasks into a single accountable role of Bookkeeper, which next year will be refined into a future staff position.
- Our Worship Tech Team worked with other experts and advisors on upgrades and purchases for the Sanctuary, which will enhance and expand our ability to offer multi-platform services (Zoom and live).

This is just a sampling of the work of our community to “change the world,” inside as well as outside our walls. The official Annual Report about the accomplishments of all our teams and ministries is a work in progress, and a working draft is available on our website.

After 11 years here at UUCWC, my work continues to grow and change and challenge in new ways; and it is collaboration with others that transforms the journey into an adventure.

Rev. Kim Wildszewski

There's of course more. There's always more. I'll close by reminding everyone that you are in the excellent care and leadership of rev. yadenee, who is another celebration of this year. Our first minister of color, and a skilled, caring, presence.

In a bit, members of our community will receive awards for their service this year. You likely know that Board members are not able to be nominated for, or to receive an award, while

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

serving. But as a staff, we felt it was imperative that we named two Board members who served this year in ways that deserve bending the rules.

The first is Jamie Evanani, who through her work on Faith Action Ministry gave us a meaningful way to serve and stay connected during this last election. Inviting people to Zoom parties where they could write postcards, distributing and collecting thousands of postcards to Georgia and other essential states—Jamie was creative, committed, and persistent. Jamie, for you, we are bringing back the Big Cookie from the days of Rev. Charles. You deserve so much more!

And the second: Nathalie Edmond. I've already spoken a word of praise for Nathalie earlier, but I want to reiterate that the time that you have served as Board President is truly unprecedented and cannot be repeated. My sabbatical, the pandemic, Malcolm's death, saying nothing of the way you led us in visioning work before and after. Rewriting the bylaws, consensus voting, shared leadership... There is so much more that you leave as a legacy. It could have gone otherwise—but it didn't, because of you.

This upcoming year, like this last year, will be a learning year. A few weeks before my leave began, Nathalie asked the Board to check in with a hope that we had for the congregation for the coming year. Each of us said something of the same: patience, generosity, kindness. Check-ins such as this express hope, but also concern—how will we navigate this next season, and will we do so together? I believe we will. I ask that you help make it so.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Board of Trustees

Group Leader: Nathalie Edmond, President

Group Members: Sue Saddlemire, Vice President; Jim Sanders, Treasurer; Colleen McCourt, Secretary; Patrick Kahney, Jamie Evanini, Jeff Lang, Michael Waas, Michael Howe-Smith, Trustees

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We continued to meet via Zoom for our meetings. We looked at finances and made decisions about keeping the church closed on a quarterly basis. We worked with various ministries and committees to have a collaborative approach. We continued to work on consensus building in decision making.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We learned that it is helpful to have various different talents and abilities on the Board and committees. We continue to struggle with filling key roles, such as Finance roles. We learned that there are some conservative approaches to finance that may inhibit growth and staffing needs while keeping us financially healthy. It takes a number of months for new Board members to feel comfortable stating their opinions, which speaks to perhaps a need for a different onboarding process/leadership development.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We are hoping for the opening of the church in phases, expanded staffing and technology to meet the needs of hybrid church and to get clarity around the next steps for the capital project.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Adult Faith Engagement

Group Leader: Robin Pugh

Group Members: Susan Colket, Peter Doyle

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We adjusted very well. All classes were virtual.

We followed *Simple Church* and focused on small groups for the congregation.

In the yearlong classes: Six new Chalice Circles were formed. Six new facilitators were recruited and trained. Three different Wellspring classes took place: *Sources*, *Deep Questions*, and the alumni group.

Additionally, we offered classes taught by Rev. Kim: *Coming into Connection*, *Learning to Pray*, and *Lectio Divina*.

For the people who chose to participate, Adult Faith Engagement was key to keeping the congregation involved and connected during this pandemic year.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We saw how important Adult Faith Formation is in forming relationships in the congregation and modeling how to “do” Unitarian Universalism. Since the facilitators are modeling how to “do” UU, they must be trained.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We will offer Chalice Circles in both virtual and in-person formats (but not for the same group).

We will offer UU parenting classes, key to developing faith formation at home.

We will continue to offer Wellspring.

We are looking for several Anti-Racist, Anti Oppression, Multicultural (AROMAC) classes to offer next year, that meet people where they are on the spectrum of AROMAC work.

We need more facilitators besides Rev. Kim and Robin.

We are thankful for the work of Susan Colket and Peter Doyle. When we are back in person, we will recruit more people to be on the committee.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Archives Team

Group Leader: Parker Cohen

Group Members: Ronnie Dobrowolski, Betsy Young

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We are on total hiatus. We are not allowed to do any of our work because we are not allowed in the building due to safety concerns. The archives is still there, and people in the congregation occasionally ask me questions. So I have faith that we will be able to reform and continue once we are allowed back. I feel that we do matter, because of those questions and because we are invited to Church Council meetings.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We didn't learn anything new and no work was possible.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope to get back into the building, to find a time to work together, to find additional congregants that are interested in the archives, and to be able to answer congregation members when they have historical questions about the congregation.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Auction Team

Group Leaders: Barbara Drew, Connie Schofer, Lori O’Neil, Lynda Shapiro, Lynne Quinto, and Marcia Wittmann, Co-Chairs

Group Members: Chris Piatek, Bonnie Gilbert, Joan McCloughan, Leslie McGeorge, Mike Muccioli, Simone Niemczura, Lori Rahn, Karen Scheick, Roger Shapiro, Jackie Thomas, Linda Vogt; Wendy Stasolla as Fundraising Chair; others are copied on our emails.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

Teamwork, coordinating via emails and Zoom, and volunteers who have had years of assisting with various aspects of organizing the auction helped our ministry survive. We had one year of experience with an online auction to give us a good foundation for improving.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

There was nothing unexpected. We knew that many aspects of organizing the auction work better in person, whether it is presenting info in the lobby or Crossings Room, or holding the event in person.

The highlights of this year were:

- Successfully raising a projected amount of \$35,000 in net proceeds, thereby meeting and exceeding the target budget amount of \$31,050 (originally set at \$37,500 and reduced due to this year’s surplus). This enabled a contribution to Bucks County Opportunity Council, the social justice group designated by the Council for Faith in Action as the recipient, all thanks to our many contributors, buyers and bidders.
- Hosting our second online auction with improved features and smoother logistics, and superb graphics for each and every one of the items (over 250 total).
- Sponsoring a preview party, with how-to demonstrations, musical entertainment by RUNA and Juan & Sara del Castillo, and a congregational “PetPourri” slide show.
- Successfully soliciting businesses and receiving donated gift cards from 21 different businesses—most of which were due to efforts by Joan McCloughan.
- Preparing weekly announcements with a unique message most weeks, with the assistance of Christine Piatek, and posting information on Facebook.
- Having both new and continuing personnel: Marcia Wittmann assisted with the database contribution entries as well as *CrossCurrents* articles; Christine Piatek assisted with weekly announcements; Lynne Quinto assisted with the website, online information custom content, and booklet proofing; Lori O’Neil provided many custom graphics for the items online and produced the booklet; Lynda and Roger Shapiro coordinated the Auction Preview Party; Connie Schofer advised on all aspects and assisted with database entries; and Barbara Drew coordinated all team aspects and database entries.

The challenges this year were:

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

- Involving all the willing team members in meaningful ways, due to limited tasks available and more administrative database tasks.
- Reaching out and soliciting contributions online in a still-uncertain environment. Donors and buyers were somewhat discouraged with postponed events, making new events challenging to host as well as attend.
- Communicating the auction message without any in-person explanations, relying strictly on emails or occasional announcements during the service.
- Distributing auction winnings with the church facility closed.
- Enabling Connie Schofer to transition off the auction leadership team after 13 years of excellent service!

What are your hopes for the year to come? We will:

- Continue to utilize online bidding, for the ease in financial accounting and other record-keeping, and for increased equitable access to buyers and bidders.
- Explore ways to hold some form of in-person celebratory gathering.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Building Committee

Group Leaders: George Faulkner

Group Members: Task volunteers as needed.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

The adjustment was easy, since the building was closed and needed minimal maintenance. Plus, some tasks were put off in the expectation of construction starting for the capital expansion project. The support of our congregational administrator being available for any necessary vendor visits and providing onsite observation of any potential issues made things easier as well.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

None.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope:

- To find another chairperson, or at least a co-chair, for Building.
- To start construction on the expansion, and that it does not produce unexpected complications in relation to the desire to get back to using the building.
- To be able to manage the reopening of the building while maintaining any cautions still needed due to the gradual end of the pandemic (e.g. cleaning, especially related to classroom use for faith engagement classes, and good ventilation).

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Capital Campaign/Project Steering Committee

Group Leaders: Jayme Trott and Susan Vigilante

Group Members: Farzad Shadzik, George Faulkner, Steve Saddlemire, Mary Acciani, Susan Irgang

With Additional Input From: Jim Sanders, Roger Shapiro, Ed and Janessa Urwin, David Schumann, and our Board Liasons, Jeff Lang and Michael Howe-Smith

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

As with other groups, our meetings occurred via Zoom rather than in person. We relied heavily on the expertise of individual members (especially Mary, Steve, and Farzad) to interact with engineers and the architect as we continually made changes to plans in order to find workable solutions to fit our budget. Additionally, we were fortunate to have George overseeing the finances and keeping us up to date on pledge income and expenses. Susan and Jayme tried to keep the board and congregation informed through meeting updates and monthly *CrossCurrents* articles.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We didn't anticipate the effect that the pandemic would have on construction costs and materials availability and timing. Although this didn't change our purpose or the way we work, it has created frustration. It's a bit Sisyphean - every change we make to narrow scope is met with a counterweight of increased anticipated materials costs and extended timelines. We continue to rely on each other to maintain our optimism and enthusiasm in spite of these realities.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope to finally have workable plans, aligned with the church's strategic direction. We hope to break ground and complete construction within the year. And mostly, we hope that the congregation will be pleased with the renovations to our "new," larger, more accessible, and beautiful church home!

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Denominational Affairs - Liaison

Group Leader: Holly Bussey

Group Members: None, as this is a liaison position.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

I used electronic communication extensively to keep members up-to-date with events happening outside the UUCWC community.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

Facebook posts work very well. I took many communications from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and posted them to the general UUCWC page and the social action page. *CrossCurrents* articles were also helpful.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

I hope to continue to grow awareness of denominational developments, and connect more members to UUA's annual General Assembly and understanding what our faith is doing as a whole. Maybe also to attend GA in person, and get involved in other ways beyond UUCWC's walls.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Earth Ministry

Group Leaders: Al Johnson and Barbara Drew, Co-Chairs

Group Members: Bunny Aicher, Kerryn and Laura Brandt, John Fowler, Janet Hubbard, Geri Koblis, Leslie McGeorge, Christine Piatek, Penny Rodgers, Steve Saddlemire, Wendy Stasolla, Sandy Unger, and others who are copied on our emails.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We pivoted to meeting via Zoom, and “survived” by increasing our focus on outdoor activities, i.e. enhancement to the grounds through native plantings.

Here are some of our achievements from the year:

Received:

- River-Friendly Partner Award, Gold level, from the Watershed Institute.
- Two grants for native plantings for wildlife habitat and aesthetic improvements to the parking berms: a grant for \$1,760 from the Endowment Fund, and a grant of plantings valued at approximately \$500 from Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve. Twenty-three trees and shrubs were planted.

Continued:

- Managing the organic garden with a simplified planting plan focusing on a fall harvest (instead of weekly lettuces for HomeFront meals). Donated harvests were: 14 pounds of onions and 23 pounds of carrots to the HomeFront Distribution Pantry; 180 pounds of carrots and 50 pounds of butternut squash to Rolling Harvest food bank.
- Addressing 7th and 8th principles in our activities.
- Participating in the Facilities Management Team, coordinating with the Grounds and Building Committees in particular to ensure environmentally sound practices.
- Selling off any remaining inventory of organic products.

Initiated:

- Special Earth Day 51st-anniversary events: Mindful Meditation Walk of grounds, led by Sandy Unger, and distribution of native tree and shrub saplings, initiated and coordinated by Jessie Boehm. Of the 150 trees and shrubs ordered, 27 trees and shrubs were planted on church grounds, mostly at the entrance and along the woodland side of the driveway. The remainder were Earth Day giveaways.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We had plenty of meaningful projects without having to be in person. We were undaunted! We worked well via Zoom, and wanted to be together for our shared purpose. In addition to focusing on the grounds, we increased our preparation of articles for *CrossCurrents*.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope to continue implementing our 7th and 8th principles by:

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

- Exploring and expanding virtual educational opportunities via remote technology.
- Continuing to advocate for Earth Day services in April, as well as other times of the year.
- Increasing the articles for *CrossCurrents* whenever possible, to encourage environmentally sensitive lifestyles in church and in our homes.
- Exploring setting up the special recycle boxes offered by TerraCycle whenever feasible.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Endowment Committee

Group Leaders: Bonnie Gilbert & Meghan Horn, co-chairs

Group Members: Maria Baratta, Kerryn Brandt, Mike Hanson, Janet Hubbard

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

In the past, we usually met 3-4 times a year, at least 2 of them in person. However, this year we only met twice on Zoom. We sent out emails for the balance of the information sharing. We did not have any real problems switching to Zoom, since we only have active business to take care of from late January to early April. Endowment Committee continues to be happy to give grants which meet our guidelines, as long as the growth in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF) funds enables us to do so.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

Nothing discernable. The portfolio increase in the calendar year 2020 was about \$28,000. We offered \$11,000 in grants this year. We funded: the Sanctuary Zoom system - \$8,000; Music Ministry - \$1,000; Nursery enhancements not covered by Capital Campaign - \$1,050; and meditation bench - \$500. We agreed that grantees could begin to utilize the funds immediately, instead of waiting until July 1.

Because of COVID-19, not all 2019-20 grants were completed. As of February 18, 2021:

- The Gaga pit to supplement playground equipment, \$808: Robin Pugh reported that the plan was to do it by Oct 2021.
- Two picnic tables, Grounds Committee, \$1,500: Steve Saddlemire reported that the plan was to use the grant in the next 4 weeks.
- The fee for noted speaker Brittney Cooper, Racial Justice Ministry speaker series, \$5,000: Regina Podhorin Zilinski reported that the plan is to use it by Oct 2021.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

Hopefully the pandemic will be greatly reduced, the building will be able to open, and we will have in-person meetings. Also, hopefully there will be enough growth in the UUCEF funds to be able to offer a similar amount of grants for 2021-2022.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Faith Action Ministry (FAM) of the Council for Faith in Action (CFA)

Group Leaders: Elizabeth Downie, Jamie Evanini, Barbara Schroeder Jensen, Gina Turner

Group Members: Elizabeth Downie, Jamie Evanini, Barbara Schroeder Jensen, Gina Turner

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We survived the pandemic part of the year by using the momentum created during the previous, non-pandemic part. The election efforts and the provision of food for the English as a Second Language (ESL) families were critically important, so motivation was easy. We were further motivated by the successes that we had, and the assistance we had from congregants who had already connected with us at the Action Table. Alas, without those alarming needs, and without the connections made at the Table, our spirits floundered. We have survived the last few months only by having regular in-person meetings/support groups.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We learned that FAM was working very well because of the in-person foundation that we had built prior to the pandemic. Simultaneously, our day-to-day family obligations are now constant. Without the single focus of the presidential election, it is harder to stay engaged. It is also all but impossible to teach survival-level ESL over Zoom. This, however, has given us an unexpected opportunity to collaborate on something new. We are now providing higher-level ESL to asylum seekers, and this is going surprisingly well. We have also learned that our ministry, as is, is not sustainable in the long run without an influx of new leaders.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

That we will return to the Action Table! That we will be able to have weekly in-person connections with our congregants, and listen to their ideas on how to put our faith into action. That we will be able to continue our plans for a fundraising dinner to benefit St. James. That we will again be able to offer congregants opportunities to live our 8th Principle. In doing so, we will be able to expand our current efforts and find new ways to serve.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Faith Expression and Funding Team (FEFT) Ministry of the Council for Faith in Action (CFA)

Group Leader: Holly Bussey

Group Members: Bud Johnson, Steve Saddlemire, Jim Sanders, Dan Tuft

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

Our ministry did just fine and preferred meeting via Zoom. It fit our schedules much better, and we were VERY productive and moved strategy along. We used virtual communication to our advantage and were able to include other groups from UUCWC in presentations. We also invited outside groups to provide us information on their organizations, with the hopes of creating new alliances when we return.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We had many “a-ha!” moments about how to best utilize and release CFA funds. We also developed a collaborative approach to evaluating organizations. It is a four-bucket approach: 1) Main identified causes; 2) “Regular” legacy giving; 3) Emergency contingency through the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA); 4) One-off donation or project funding assistance based on overall goals and mission of CFA and UUCWC, or that fit into the above mentioned. We’re not closed off from other projects, but it’s also not our main focus. Other CFA members may institute that moving forward as well, to help focus the energies of each CFA ministry. We also welcomed Food Ministry to the CFA ministry.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

Having had CFA as a group agree with our giving approach, we look forward to stronger communication between CFA ministries and the congregation. We also hope to create stronger alliances with targeted groups in both PA and NJ, as opposed to spreading ourselves all over and limiting our impact. CFA is the group responsible for coordinating efforts at “making a difference in the world.” We have clarified how to coordinate with both new and existing members, to help them gain access to volunteer opportunities. FEFT ministry will act as a reference center for all inquiries, to ensure consistency and clarity in communication.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Faith Forward Program

Group Leaders: Robin Pugh and Marcia Wittmann

Group Members:

- **Facilitators:** Holly Bussey, Penny Gardner, Joan McCloughan, Linda Vogt, and Marcia Wittmann
- **Presenters:** Members of RJM, CFA, Caring Ministry, Right Relations Ministry, Rev. Kim, Marianne Alt, Kevyn Malloy, Worship Associates, Robin Pugh, and Board Members
- **Tech Support:** MJ Hansen

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

Due to the pandemic, the *Faith Forward* program was interrupted from March through August of 2020. The program resumed in a virtual format in September 2020, and four cycles have been presented. A ninth session, Racial Justice, was added to the *Faith Forward* program in January 2021.

Faith Forward was able to adapt to a virtual world because of the flexibility and dedication of our presenters and facilitators, as well as expert tech support.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

Although we were concerned about the challenges of a virtual format and our ability to attract participants without face-to-face contact, we were encouraged by the number of visitors who attended the Faith Forward program without ever having been to our physical church. Of the fourteen new members who joined the church during the pandemic, eight had attended at least one Faith Forward session. Participants were very engaged and were eager to learn about Unitarian Universalism and UUCWC.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

Once we are back to physical church, we hope to expand our pool of facilitators and find new ways to appeal to visitors as well as current members.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Family Ministry Team

Group Leaders: Robin Pugh

Group Members: Jen Couchoud, Steph Golski, Colleen McCourt, Andy Snyder, Jess Tavlaris

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We did not have Faith Engagement for Children this year, except for Junior Youth Group and the completion of the 2019-20 *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) 8th-9th grade course.

Instead, we offered Family Chalice Circles and *Tending the Flame*, a UU parenting class. Since Rev. Kim and Robin were in charge of all Faith Engagement offerings, the Team focused on advising Robin about the state of family life during the pandemic.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

The biggest thing learned was *how difficult* this year has been for parents with younger children. Having the Family Ministry Team as a sounding board helped Robin to be OK with the decision not to offer classes for kids on Zoom this year.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

This will be a big year of experimentation and change for children's Faith Engagement. The feedback and advice from the Family Ministry Team will be crucial.

We will have hired lead teachers (and recruited volunteer assistants) in the younger grades (age 11 and under). As of this writing, we think that the year will be about building community, learning how to be back at church, and social justice. We are planning small events for this summer to encourage children to return to church.

For our older kids (6th grade and above), we plan to use standard curriculum—*Neighboring Faiths, Our Whole Lives, Coming of Age*—and volunteer teachers. We neither know when the building will be open, nor how the building renovation will affect classroom space. This uncertainty calls for flexibility, and perhaps offering these well-loved programs in new ways.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Food Ministry

Group Leaders: Michael Muccioli, Rollie Rahn (co-chair in perpetuity), Adam Czerwonka

Group Members:

- **Food Ministry Administrative Team:** Adam Czerwonka, Michael Muccioli, Nancy Neff, Lori Rahn, Bonnie Ruekgauer, Bernie Ruekgauer, David Schumann, Jackie Thomas, and Marcia Wittmann
- Plus, the many members who help with food and financial donations, cooks, kitchen helpers, and delivery personnel.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

The COVID-19 challenges forced the Food Ministry to rethink the methods used to supply nutritious meals to our recipients. While the hot food preparation was no longer an option, we moved to focus on donations of shelf-stable products. We have been able to supply many different nonprofits with canned goods, as well as financial support. The Food Ministry has also provided well over 1,000 individual meal bags to Luther Arms of Trenton this year.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

The dedication of the Food Ministry Administrative Team is outstanding! That, coupled with the generous support of the UUCWC congregation, proves that we, together, can overcome any challenges.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We are still exploring other methods of meeting our clients' needs, as well as expanding our reach to better help serve our community.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Fundraising Chair

Group Leader: Wendy Stasolla

Group Members: This group typically has no members, although I'm hoping to recruit people for specific tasks going forward.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

As chair, I wanted to facilitate fundraisers that others were doing. In that spirit, I helped Laura Brandt and her crew of crafters and bakers to set up a webpage for the virtual Craft Fair last fall.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

There was nothing unexpected, since it's just me. But I was able to use my time with the Finance Committee to work with Mary Baltycki on getting a nonprofit status with the IRS. We learned that this is necessary in order to be listed on Guidestar, a database of verified nonprofits. This in turn will allow us to sign up for Amazon Smile and collect a percentage of purchases from those who designate UUCWC as their beneficiary. (We had to leave the Amazon Affiliates program in 2020, and were hoping to replace this income with the Amazon Smile program.)

What are your hopes for the year to come?

I hope to recruit a few people to help with a new (and then ongoing) fundraising effort that involves something called Scrip. With this program, members of a community buy gift cards at face value for grocery stores, clothing, sporting goods, restaurants, etc. and a percentage (average 5%) of the value goes to their organization. I've run this in the past, and once people get used to planning ahead for their grocery cards and more, the money starts to add up pretty quickly.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Grounds Committee

Group Leader: Steve Saddlemire

Group Members: Bodo Baltycki, Denny Rodgers

This pandemic year, we asked all of our ministries, committees, and teams these questions:

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

There were several actions that Grounds took to address the building closure:

- The snow-plowing contract was restructured to plow only when requested by UUCWC. Since there were no activities at the church, plowing was done on an as-needed basis.
- Fewer efforts were made to manicure the church grounds, as a way to avoid crowds and save money spent on utilizing outside services.
- We conducted a clean-up day in mid-April of 2021, which finally (after a year) brought church members together in an outdoor environment.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

- The turnout for the clean-up day was surprisingly robust and accomplished a lot of work.
- Grounds has developed a close relationship with Earth Ministry and collaborated on several important projects. These included earning a certificate from the Watershed Institute and securing a grant from Bowman Hill Wildlife Preserve for plantings on the grounds.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

The Grounds Committee is being turned over to a new group of hardworking, dedicated members, who will not only keep the current effort going but expand the reach of this committee.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

HomeFront Tutoring

Group Leaders: Sarah Burke

Group Members: We did not run the program this year.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

Unfortunately, we were unable to run the tutoring program this year. HomeFront wanted to hold live sessions and asked us to host at a different location. We did not feel as though this was safe due to COVID-19.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

No.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope that we can continue with the program in some capacity. Due to the construction and inability to use the Crossings Room, we would have to figure out a way to restructure the program.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Kinship Circles

Group Leaders: Penny Gardner

Group Members: Anthony Panzetta, Kevyn Malloy, Lori Rahn, Ronnie Dobrowolski, Nancy Cox

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We stopped trying to form new groups and worked on supporting the existing ones. Some continued to do well; others were negatively impacted by the physical separation. The Coordinating Team continued to meet monthly via Zoom to keep apprised of relevant activity and enjoy camaraderie.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We really enjoy getting together, even when there is little ministry work to discuss.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope we can start to look at forming new circles, with a special emphasis on outreach to new people.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Nominating and Nominating/Leadership Development Task Force

Group Leaders: Sandy Muccioli and Marianne Alt

Group Members:

- **Nominating:** Sandy Muccioli- Chair; Terry Caton, Nancy Cox, Colleen Horn, and Nick Mellis.
- **Nominating/Leadership Development Task Force:** Marianne Alt and Sandy Muccioli-co chairs; members of the Nominating team; plus Maria Baratta, Ed Dobrowolski, Kevyn Malloy, Jerry Scheick, and Regina Podhorn Zilinski.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We had a large, dual purpose this year: both to create the leadership slate for the coming church year and to reimagine how Nominating can function in a more inclusive and sustaining way. Zoom has been a great tool for convenient and productive meetings for this thoughtful and engaged team.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We tried a new approach to bringing awareness to leadership possibilities by hosting “Expect the Unexpected” sessions after the Sunday services. Both in these breakout presentations and in our own interactions, we learned how having a diverse set of skills enriches every group. In every case, this was the unexpected element in each group's presentation.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

The Nominating/Leadership Development Task Force has created an exciting new umbrella group that will be called “Congregational Engagement.” While the purpose and mission of the Nominating Committee will remain the same, the task will be enhanced by a process of reaching out to all UUCWC members and friends to learn of their interests and passions. From there, connections can be made to groups in need of compatible assistance. In addition, a process of leadership development will be created for incoming leaders. For outgoing leaders, a program is being developed to offer respite and rejuvenation as they are appreciated for their service and as part of our beloved community.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Personnel Committee

Group Leaders: Shared leadership

Group Members: Mary Baltycki, Scott Drew, Marty Friedman, Lynne Quinto, Sue Saddlemire (Board liaison), Joe Schenk, Rev. Kim (frequently)

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

The Personnel Committee, like other UUCWC groups, met via Zoom this year. There were not the opportunities for casual collaboration that occur when we are all at church on Sunday mornings, so we had to be more deliberate in making sure that lines of communication were open with other groups. The main thing that helped our ministry survive and thrive was the fact that we really enjoy working with each other. We also had a very full and engaging agenda this year, with significant interaction with the Board, to monitor and evaluate the staffing needs of the congregation and ensure that UUCWC is a fair and ethical employer.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

As our staff is such an integral part of the functioning of our community, the purpose of our group remains the same as what it means to “do church” continues to evolve.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We expect to work closely with Rev. Kim, the Board of Trustees, Treasurer, and Finance Committee in planning for new hires in 2022-23.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Racial Justice Ministry of the Council for Faith in Action

Group Leaders: Regina Zilinski and Chris Marietti

Group Members: Maria Baratta, Dan Tuft, Mike Gianella (left in about January due to other obligations), Sallie Dunner, Denny Rodgers, Kelly Benson

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

We effortlessly switched to holding Zoom meetings once a month. There was plenty of work to do, so we made sure to only take on what we could manage well and put off tasks that could wait.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

We learned that the congregation needs opportunities to discuss racial justice issues in community, not just learn about them. Our main function in the last year has been to engage members in conversation that is non-judgmental, but helps to move them along the continuum from awareness to action.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope that we can finally continue our speaker series and invite the broader community in. It has been, and will continue to be, important to have internal conversations with members. But it is also important to do this work in public. We also hope to ensure that prospective and current members recognize their part in this work, and are eager to see it as an integral part of their spiritual journey.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Stewardship Committee

Group Leaders: Shared leadership model

Group Members: Bob Alt, Ron Iannacone, Andrew Kidd, Joan McCloughan, David Schumann

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

The Stewardship Committee contributes to UUCWC by ensuring that we have the financial resources needed to live our mission—to Create Community, Celebrate Life, and Change the World. This is not possible without the support of our full congregation. We continued to use and leverage what worked from the previous year: an informational brochure, themed approaches to the year-end gift and annual campaigns, and frequent communications and reminders during the services. We hoped that this familiarity would maintain congregational pledges without the ability to engage face-to-face.

For this current fiscal 2020-2021 year, we budgeted \$418,000 and are projected to end the year a bit short at \$400,000. Our 2021 holiday year-end gift campaign was extremely successful, with UUCWC receiving \$30,000. The 2021-2022 campaign pledges stand at \$414,000 pledged, versus our target of \$424,000. If you have not yet submitted your pledge, it's not too late!

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

UUCWC is a very generous and caring community, and this has also been reflected in its financial commitments to our community. We knew this going into this year's campaign, but we were pleasantly surprised by the generous year-end gifts we received. We found that we were able to maintain our efforts virtually with surprisingly successful results.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

Our hopes are that we can see and engage one another in person for the coming year, and also to find new members who wish to contribute to the Stewardship Committee. We use a collaborative leadership model so we can all contribute and leverage each other's strengths. Please contact one of us if you're interested.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Technology Team

Group Leaders: MJ Hansen

Group Members: MJ—Worship Tech and any tech committees/teams should fall under Tech.

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

The commitment to the church for Sunday Services, Zoom meetings, and upgrading of the network and equipment to serve the community and help make the shutdown easier.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

There were challenges for those not as technical as others. As leader, I didn't expect to learn Zoom, video/photo editing as intensely... and then train others. I found there are not a lot of self-starters.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope for more organization of technical teams and committees.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Worship Associates

Group Leaders: Scott Cullen

Group Members: Jen Couchoud, Lauren Shallish, Greg Pontier, Mike Gianella, Noelle Kahney, Gina Turner, Mae Crane-Bolton, Daniel Lownie, Chris Piatek

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

After a rocky start with the virtual services in the Spring of 2020, the Worship Associates (with the guidance and assistance of the Worship Tech Team and Rev. Kim) have overcome the early challenges of presenting virtual services. It has been particularly gratifying to see the new members, most of whom joined during the summer of 2020, adapt and thrive during this time. This is a team that has each other's backs and is dedicated to working together with everyone involved in the Sunday service to ensure the best experience for our congregation. None of this could have been achieved without a unified group effort.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

I don't think there was anything unexpected, other than how well our new team and legacy team members were able to come together and do a spectacular a job with the virtual services. One thing we have learned is how much our efforts are appreciated by the congregation and the staff. That appreciation has likely been there all along, but the challenges of doing church virtually seem to have led to a deeper and more vocal appreciation for our group.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

As we transition into the new year with new Worship Associates co-chairs Jen Couchoud and Lauren Shallish, the hope is that the entire group will follow their lead (along with that of Rev. Kim and the Worship Tech Team) while transitioning back to in-person services. There will be new Worship Associates joining the team before the end of the calendar year, and it will be a joy to watch those new team members add their personal touches to the services. The congregation has a lot to look forward to with our new co-chairs, as well as our current and future team members. And hopefully, there will be some surprises to enhance the virtual and in-person worship experience.

Create Community, Celebrate Life, Change the World

Worship Tech

Group Leaders: John Harvi, MJ Hansen, Nancy Neff

Group Members: Michelle Zechner, Mike Gianella, Mary Lou Dahms, Heather Edwards (new), Jean Semler (learner)

How did your group adjust this pandemic year, and what helped your ministry survive?

This group helped with everyone's adjustment to the Zoom environment for connection. The team was formed because of COVID-19 - to serve and support the Minister and congregation to stay connected via Zoom for Sunday services and meetings.

Were there unexpected learnings about the purpose of your group or how you work?

The team evolved almost week by week, troubleshooting Zoom issues and training congregants (and staff). The team became an arm of the Worship Associates to collaborate in presenting Sunday services.

What are your hopes for the year to come?

We hope to continue to serve. However, the team's function will change once we return to the sanctuary for multiplatform services. We will be needed, but not at the same level and the function(s) may change. Hybrid services are being developed. This will drive the need for this team.