

**UUCF Annual Report 2024-25**  
**Presented by UUCF Board President Stacy Casey**

It's my honor today to report to all of you on the State of our Congregation this past congregational year - a year when UUCF reached its 70th anniversary. We'll continue to celebrate this anniversary in the fall.

I would like to make the case that 2024-25 was the year that this congregation got its groove back with its beautiful mission: to transform ourselves, our community, and our world through acts of love and justice.

The Board's main focus this past year was called Living the Mission - an effort to re-engage the congregation with its mission. We asked ourselves, with the new world we live in today, how can we as a congregation live this mission more fully?

To re-engage the congregation, we held multiple sessions throughout January to gather input - but be clear, mostly to get all of us talking (and listening!) to each other..

Afterwards, the Board and Coordinating Team workshopped what we heard, and grouped feedback into four main points. We heard a desire for:

1. Greater Visibility in the Community
2. Continued Source of Spiritual Strength through Ministry
3. Securing the Future of UUCF, to include building deeper connections among Congregants
4. Expanding our Social Justice Reach

These items are what will shape UUCF's Strategic Plan - to be created by staff and the Coordinating Team. The Strategic Plan will give a mission-based direction to all of our efforts - programs, staff and campus improvements.

So now let's look at just a few of the ways UUCF worked toward those four goals this year.

**Greater Visibility in the Community**  
**"Let's be Seen More in our Neighborhood"**

So first - hey, we're at Reston Pride RIGHT NOW. And we'll also be representing at the WorldPride parade in DC next weekend.

In just a few weeks, UUCF will be sending 11 delegates to the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly in Baltimore - including (for the first time in many years) two high school youth and two young adults. This achievement is largely thanks to the Leadership & Nominating Committee's skilled work to promote and improve the ease of participating as a delegate.

UUCF also gained significant visibility through hosting the SPARK Convocation in April, which brought together 80 spiritual leaders from around the country to discuss the future of Unitarian Universalism.

Greater visibility in the community comes by building partnerships. Social Justice Coordinator Andrew Batchner led many partnership efforts on social justice issues:

- With Cedar Lane UU, we participated in the National Mosaic Racial Justice Conference, Immigrant Justice training for Allies, and more
- With River Road UU, we participated in the UU Climate Justice Revival

More ways we made our loving presence known in the community include:

- Giving blood! The Bloodmobile is back again!
- Making and delivering 100+ hot meals, every other month, with FACETS
- Many other efforts

Meanwhile, greater visibility has also meant utilizing social media to get our message out to the community. It's been working - we've had 185 visitors this year, the most in many years. And once visitors arrive, the Welcoming Committee (new name of Membership Committee) is living up to its name by adding programs such as the "Inquirers Series for Newcomers." With that, we have seen - so far - 62 new members this year!

### **Continued source of Spiritual Strength through Ministry**

#### **"UUCF should be like sunshine and water for our spirits"**

This year, our music program continued to shine.

- We've seen a large, growing Adult Choir - which will be singing with Mosaic Harmony for the Hope Rising concert on June 14th
- Joyful Noise! the children's music group (for little ones) has grown this year, helping to engage new families with young children.
- Meanwhile, the Voices of Hope youth (grades 3-12) is just everywhere! They have been invited to sing in Baltimore prior to UUA General Assembly. They also sang with GenOUT at the "Showing Up" and Youth Invasion concerts
- Another growing musical group is the Revolution Ringers Handbells, which performed with the choir & Voices of Hope at the Fairfax Festival of Lights in December

Another source of spiritual growth - our strong Religious Exploration program:

- We enrolled 40 new students in RE this congregational year, for a total of 157 students
- Thirteen students went to Boston last month for the Coming of Age trip.

In addition to classes, RE has offered multiple outings and social events for our youth, including Escape Room adventures, Chill Space, Dungeons & Dragons, and more.

And of course, spiritual strength comes through worship. We have had amazing worship services this year - our thanks to Rev. David Miller, Intern Cara Fortner, and the Worship & Arts Lay Ministry led by Lay Minister Susan Bennett.

For this, I just want to make two special shout-outs:

- The two beautiful Friday evening services that were held this year - a Buddhist exploration and "Under the Full Moon" rest & relaxation
- And the Post-Election gathering on Nov. 6th, which was billed as a potluck, but for me was the first safe place I went to find a spark of comfort after Election Day. This beautiful evening, with music, message, and candle lighting, is a moment I hold onto.

## **Securing the Future of UUCF, to include building deeper connections among congregants**

### **"Let's make our congregation closer and stronger"**

As a congregation, we seem to be realizing the importance of strengthening ourselves, our relationships with each other, and our campus to ensure this congregation's future.

I'll start with the budget, although of course that's only a portion of what this category entails.

The Generosity Team led an Annual Giving Campaign this year, "Keep it Going, Keep it Growing," which included amazing testimonials from Nina Doorley, Marcia Tugendhat, and Mi Puchon.

- The campaign was very successful, as Dillon will outline later.
- We have more people pledging for the coming year than the current year - and a pledge total of about \$15k more next year

As far as strengthening our relationships, we continued our beloved traditional events this year, including a successful Auction party. RE families gathered regularly for RE potlucks and family hikes, and many folks participated in our third Thursday Soup's On dinners - which featured mostly vegetarian or vegan soups.

As far as keeping our physical campus strong, much of that this year is thanks to the incredible level of campus repair and rehabilitation undertaken by Peter Clark and his collection of volunteers. This work started in the fall with a huge campus cleanup, filling a dumpster of debris found throughout our acreage. Peter continued throughout the year, chipping away at all of the "extra" upkeep that this aging campus needs. Peter's work was complemented nicely by the constant garden beautification work done by the Garden Gnomes group.

Back to Peter - he led the effort to update the Memorial Grove, down the hill here, a place for peaceful reflection and to remember our loved ones who have passed away. In this past year, our UUCF loved ones we have lost include Bill Kirby, Mary Tripp, Herb Ware, Don Andress, Roland Cyr, Bruce Vernor, Sue Robinson, Joanne Schneider, Hays Gorey, Rod Paolini, Bill McReynolds, Ray McKinley, and Bruce Wheeler.

We remember, and we feel their love.

## **Expanding our Social Justice Reach**

**“Let’s help even more people and make the world more fair”**

Finally, the fourth goal. Many items I’ve shared already fit into this category as well, but I’ll share a few more.

We sponsored a Hypothermia Prevention Shelter here in the sanctuary building in February. This is annually our biggest volunteer-led effort at UUCF. There were nearly 100 UUCF volunteers, and 50 from partner groups, who worked more than 1,000 hours to welcome our unhoused neighbors for one week.

The committed Act for Climate Today group promoted environmental issues throughout the year, including “Climate Friendly Friday” presentations, Savory Sundays, movie nights, and other events.

And, of course, we promoted democracy. We held:

- Democracy Project Potluck in August
- Two election literacy courses for adults, last fall
- Sent over 2,000 letters and postcards to promote voting
- Started a Federal Employees Support Group

As a foundation to much of this work, the Social Justice Group has re-established itself as the UUnite for Justice group, and has offered multiple skillshare trainings this spring.

So - what a year! So many good things. Does that mean we don’t have any challenges? Of course not.

Challenges we’ll tackle next year include:

- We’ll explore the possibility of a Capital Campaign, starting with congregational meetings in the fall. The work Peter is doing can only go so far! We need more significant repairs throughout our campus.
- We’ll also look into how to adjust as a congregation, with our increasing visitors and members. Will it mean a new way of worshipping together? Another service? That needs to be discussed.
- And finally, we’ll continue to explore the effects of last year’s staff restructuring. This is an ongoing evaluation.

With that, I’ve finally reached the end of this year’s Annual Report. I am grateful to be able to share these accomplishments with you, and grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Board President.

Thank you.