**Annual Report from the Minister** Rev. Kathryn Hawbaker May 31, 2020

*“Perfection is not the goal.”* Connection, community, spiritual growth, love, and justice – these are the values that guide us and bring us together.

-Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Working with the Board of Trustees, we focused on leadership development, initiating and refining different programs (i.e. Safety), even as others were let go (Storage). While most of our systems and programs are healthy, there is always room for improvement. We are blessed with unbounded generosity among the members and friends of our congregation and wider community. Many are seeking ways to have a healthy response and find ways to help build a better community through kindness and safe practices. This time of respite gives us a chance to reset, and do better on the most important things- Why are we a congegation? Who do we serve?

**Fall 2019** Final Gathering UUMA Deepening Program. (Baltimore, MD) & Zoom Meetings.

Valuable work in small groups, reflection overv time for perspective and to mark progress on professional goals. This was the first program in my documented professional development and education, as there is now a reuirement with the U.U. Ministers Assoc. This was an excellent opportunity and will have lasting impact on my ministry and life in balance.

This year I made U.U. colleagues a priority- Deepening Group & OM-UUMA Chapter; I led worship in Charleston for a colleague on maternity leave, attended 2 Installation services, and one virtual one. I ask myself what are my obligations and commitments to my colleagues? (Covenant). As I encounter the value of this reflection, I have sought ways to facilitate sharing for small groups for FUUSM in the future.

B.R.I.D.G.E.S. has also been an area of focus for me, including organizing, planning, and being present with children and families as I can. Several lay-led Sundays this year allowed me to work with the young people. Initiated preliminary plans for offering Our Whole Lives human sexuality education course for 7-9 graders. There seems not better time to offer a respectful and science-based model for healthy relationships and self.

Religious Educator, Lucy Fillipow has been a regular asset to our program and relates well to the young people. Nursery care was provided by our three caring attendants: Lela Erb, Deborah Lauer, and Laura Cejka, and supplemented by parent participation.

Our young families are a vital aspect of our mission and ministry.

I mourn with the congregation, some significant losses and deaths in our community this year, and hold my breath for the first one related to the pandemic. Our Caring Committee leads by example, nurturing the caring nature of the whole congregation.

We rejoice in the celebration of wedding services and anniversaries in our midst, and I’m glad we had to forsight to enlist Lay Ministers for Weddings. It was also a very good year for extended FUUSM family births and graduation milestones.

Our fundamental commitment to all human rights, especially GLBTQ+ advocacy is well-known in the wider community and part of who we are. I have encouraged additional study in anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multi-culturalism. I have found the Poor Peoples Campaign to be a strong movement for social & environmental justice, and work on voting rights, which are a priority for the rest of this year.

**Jan. 2020** We are exploring new territories in human evolution and community. I continue to look for new growth opportunities in these challenging times, taking a positive approach, yet I am concerned that we not go back to a normal that never was. We must be resolute and responsible in learning from our past, and planning for our future and being a vital part of our local and global solutions. This is a crucial time for greater care and strength.

The weekend of the U.U. Ministers Meeting- March 6 & 7 was a turning point in Ohio for gatherings amid the growing number of cancellations and closings as the numbers of deaths due to COVID-19 rose dramatically. I was grateful to process and reflect on the uncertainty of everything with my wise, and woke colleagues, strengthened by their insights and passion. Shortly after that, our vacation trip was cancelled and I began intensive efforts to help our people connect, meet and find spiritual solace and support.

Here we are.

In addition to regular Sunday Morning offerings, the Wed. Meditation group has made the transition to Zoom, and I started a series using an older U.U. feminist theology curriculum -*Cakes for the Queen of Heaven,* which has been well-received (I knew I would be motivated to grow in skill of using technology with these materials).

The next stage is to share the power, and avoid a narrow bottle neck of approval. I have heard it described as giving the ministry away, as it is not just what I do that is our shared ministry. There is a wealth of creativity and skill in our congregation to create program material and help others use their gifts.

As part of the administration of the congregation I provide guidance, direction and assessment to the staff, attempting to nurture productive relationships and clear channels of communication. This has become even more important during this pandemic. The Personnel Committee helps to oversee our policies and practices and the Bookkeeper takes care of the payroll in a most professional matter.

The Payroll Protection Program rewarded our efforts to do the right thing by our employees and be generous as they learn how to operate in these ongoing conditions.

As we all stumble forward, finding our feet for our next steps, let us be guided by our principles and strengthened by our care and connections. We are all in this together.

All Blessings,

*Rev. Kathryn E. Hawbaker*

Preferred Pronoun: She/Her