

Minister's Report Rev. Sarah C. Richards **July 2017**

Reporting period 6/6/17 – 7/10/17

**During this period I introduced a new service format to create spaciousness and depth.*

Worship: Led the annual multigenerational ritual-based Flower Communion Service, symbolizing our unity in diversity, and the close of the program year. Worked with a new Facilitator, Scott Gilbert, on the Father's Day Service—he also shared a reflection for the first time. I wrote and delivered my own reflection for that service, as well. I was inspired by a workshop on decentering whiteness in worship services at General Assembly to re-think the July 2 service without Order of Service, and creating spaciousness through more silence, more music, and a different seating orientation, among other elements.* I appreciate Facilitator Kathy O'Laughlin's willingness to "roll with it," and help with the planning of this "service of spaciousness." Most of the feedback from congregants afterward was very positive; there were also expressions of discomfort with some specific aspects of the unfamiliar approach. Taking all of the feedback received, I plan to offer a similar "spaciousness" service August 6, and then a few times throughout the program year. I was so happy to present the "Resist & Rejoice" service with my fellow CUF General Assembly delegates: Esther Hughes, Elena Sasso, and Amy Weber. I hope that the service: readings selected from GA speakers, the photos, and our reflections will not only give the congregation an idea of the many significant events at this year's GA, but also inspire them to participate at next year's GA. Developed thematic Sunday Service components (e.g. Order of Service covers, hymn selection, service scripts, slides).

Planned and held New Members Recognition Ceremony of ten new members with assistance from Membership Committee members. Led the Dedication ceremony for Integrity Ayres—our second baby dedication within three weeks—another shared moment of joy for our whole congregation.

Counseling and Pastoral Care: Made pastoral care phone calls, emails, home and office visits. Attended monthly meeting with Pastoral Friends, reviewed updates, and made plans for coverage of my upcoming study leave/vacation. We didn't have a full continuing education period, but I shared some resources from the pastoral care program from my internship church that we plan to review and discuss in a future meeting. Bob Swenson announced his intention to step down after seven years of service as Pastoral Friend. We thanked Bob for his dedication to the pastoral care of the congregation—we'll miss him and Joyce Shepherd, who stepped down last month. Laura Van Abbema has been unsuccessful in finding someone to take over coordination of Caring & Sharing; I drafted two calls for volunteers for the bulletin in hopes that people might come forward to take on that task, and coordinator of the monthly Cards of Compassion program.

Practical Arts/Administration:

- Met in person or on the phone with BOT chair weekly or more to go over CUF happenings; met with Exec Committee to set BOT meeting agenda.
- Met with Office Administrator* weekly to review tasks and short and long-term goals, and tasks during my study leave/vacation time.
- *In reviewing the increase in hours, responsibilities and salary given to our Office Assistant, I found that the position now is clearly in the Office Administrator category (as defined in UUA guidelines), and after approval from the BOT President and VP/Personnel Chair, changed the title to Office Administrator in the FY18 Letter of Employment for DeSande R.
- Met or talked with RE Coordinator weekly to discuss current RE program concerns and to review progress toward professional development goals. Met with RE Coordinator and new RE Coordinator Assistant.
- Held final phone meeting with RE Consultant, Lynn Hunt, to plan August 13 RE-themed Sunday Service. This Service will take the place of the final RE workshop that Lynn had to cancel due to a family emergency.
- Attended BOT meeting.
- Communicated with monthly music coordinators, set hymns and posted them on google calendar, communicated with accompanists.
- Met with Choir Director, set choir schedule for all of FY18, discussed choir goals.
- Attended Sunday Services meeting, helped plan July 30 lay-led service, presented FY18 Sunday Services calendar, we'll review it at our next meeting. Met with Kim Asner-Self and drafted Sunday Services survey on Survey Monkey; we're on track to distribute it starting in late August.
- Attended final CoSM meeting of the program year; reviewed evaluation, recognized two outgoing members Miriam Link-Mullison and Charles Ruffner, welcomed new members Jan Eisenhard and Roy Sumner.
- Attended RE Committee meeting/lunch for summer/fall preview
- Attended Communications meeting.
- Attended Welcoming Congregation meeting, we finished the assessment form and planned next steps in the process.
- Attended presentation to B&G by Brent Ritzel of Straight Up Solar about promising possibilities for CUF to go solar with very little up front cost. The Board will receive a proposal from B&G in the near future.

Organizational Ministry:

- Wrote July-August newsletter column for May CUF Links.
- Met with new member couple to plan their October wedding service (not at CUF).

- Met with newcomer couple interested in becoming members; during this reporting period, I've seen and tried to speak with at least eight newcomers to Sunday Services. When I return in August, I believe we may have enough folks interested in New Members class to schedule one in September.

Personal Growth: exercise, meditation, voice lessons. Mike drove down to New Orleans so we took a road trip back home from GA, which allowed for some restorative time together between the busy GA and post-GA catch up periods.

Professional Growth: Monthly telephone conversations with Family Systems coach, UUMA mentor, ministry peer group, and Spiritual Director. Wrote and submitted preliminary fellowship self-evaluation. Attended Allies for Racial Equity webinar in preparation for GA. Attended UUMA Ministry Days and UUA General Assembly in New Orleans (see description in Denominational Activities).

Teaching: N/A

Denominational Activities: Attended UUMA Ministry Days, highlights included facilitated small group discussion on response to recent upheavals in UUMA and UUA; Colette Pichon Battle's keynote address, "Religion, Race and Politics: Human Rights as a tool to Create a Climate of Positive Change"; and being in the Singers of the Living Tradition choir. Attended UUA GA, highlights included hanging out with CUF Delegates in New Orleans, Service of the Living Tradition, Ruby Bridges Suite, workshops on dismantling white supremacy in self, congregation, and society. My personal highlight was watching my sister, Ann Richards, be recognized for attaining credentialed DRE status.

Prophetic Outreach:

- Had a phone call with Gamaliel organizer about prognosis for their developing a faith-based organizing group—it seems that the leaders who have met over the last month have decided to concentrate on forming connections across the communities involved (Carbondale, Cartersville, Marion, Murphysboro, and others) through service projects first; community organizing to make policy impacts may follow, but is not the present focus.
- Attended emergency I Can Read! Board meeting relating to proposed rent increase at Eurma Hayes Center.