

Minister's Report Rev. Sarah C. Richards **January-February 2017**

This report covers two months 12/7/16 – 2/7/17 because I was ill and unable to submit a timely report in January. This reporting period includes vacation 12/25/16 – 1/2/17.

Worship:

Facilitated Scott Aaseng's 12/11 service, led emotionally difficult Sorrows & Joys in which I perceived that together, minister and congregation were a pastoral vessel of support for a person recalling a very traumatic moment. Created slides for Kid's Holiday Service; I very much enjoyed seeing another demonstration of multigen worship from children, youth, and RE teachers. Led informal worship at Carol Sing and Potluck, our traditional celebration of community and the season. My husband Mike and I set up the Commons for the event, everyone pitched in to clean up afterward. Led Christmas Eve Service similar to past two years, with the addition of slides (no hymnals or song books) and subtraction of keyboard accompanist, which worked unexpectedly to make the intimacy of the darkness, lit by candlelight express the hope and spiritual uplift of Christmas. I was on vacation for the January 1 service, but met with one of the co-leaders to draft the Order of Service and help with other preparations. Though I didn't lead the January 8 service, I drafted the OoS, and the service script, helped to select readings, met with the speaker and facilitator, created the slides and set up the projector (I spent the morning with the High School Youth). For the remainder of January, I developed three services with original sermons bringing together post-presidential inauguration uncertainty and UU impulses to activism with our monthly theme. I was happy to welcome Sam Teitel as guest speaker the first Sunday of February, and to again serve as Facilitator.

I have found that having a monthly theme has provided structure and depth to Sunday Services, and these last two months have especially demonstrated the strength of theme-based worship. Exploring local and national events through the lens of being a community of presence (December) and prophecy (January) has allowed me, Covenant Group members, and I hope the wider congregation, connect more directly to UU values, principles, and actions.

Counseling and Pastoral Care: Made pastoral care phone calls, emails, office visits. Two monthly meetings with Pastoral Friends, reviewed updates, had midway and post Blue Holidays Sharing gathering discussions. We decided to have monthly drop-in gatherings, with alternating specific group/general themes (Bob Swenson and I announced it at the Congregational Meeting 1/29). In the December meeting, we identified folks who needed check-in calls and divided the list of names. In the January meeting, Astrid Mosely gave a continuing ed presentation elaborating on the psychological model at the basis of her 1/8 Sunday Service.

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 monthly to preview the BOT meeting agenda.
- Met with Office Assistant weekly to review tasks and short and long-term goals.
- Met or talked with RE Coordinator weekly to discuss current RE program concerns and to review progress toward professional development goals. These past two months have included planning for the RE Workshops.
- Phone meeting with DRE Consultant Lynn Hunt regarding the RE Workshops she led January 28-29.
- Met once with Choir Director, had biweekly phone calls.
- Because I was sick, Committee on Shared Ministry met without me in January. I had a “catch up” meeting with CoSM chairwoman to go over my midterm performance evaluation, and to confirm the decision to cut the planned congregational retreat back to an evening instead of weekend. Because of all of the work CoSM is doing on the stewardship campaign, and because of the timing of the retreat, this seems like an eminently sensible plan.
- Communicated with monthly music coordinators, set hymns and posted them on google calendar, communicated with accompanists.
- Attended January Membership meeting (Dec. meeting cancelled), and two planning meetings for the Pathways to Renewal retreat 2/4.
- Attended Congregational Meeting 1/29.
- Attended January Communications meeting – along with the usual discussion of our internal media, we talked about possibilities for doing some Outreach tasks included in the strategic plan. Following our discussion, I talked with Candy Davis, who accepted the invitation to be our “outreach brainstormer” identifying opportunities to get CUF into the community eye.
- Following my goal from Family Systems to work on one-to-one relationships, I had another enjoyable meeting with a Board member. I look forward to similar meetings with each Trustee before the end of the church year.
- Attended first of three “Protecting the Greater Good” webinars sponsored by Church Mutual. Three other CUF folks have agreed to watch them, we plan to meet and discuss options and eventually make a recommendation to the BOT about violence prevention and preparedness.

Organizational Ministry:

- The first session of the evening New Members class had only three participants, and the following week it had to be cancelled due to illness of two of them. Since then, I’ve worked with one of the class facilitators (the other is on paternity watch leave :) to reschedule a “one-off” membership class for Saturday, 2/25. We have over ten

potential new members, and we have seen an up-tick in newcomers at Sunday Services over this period, but the two previous attempts at evening classes led by two newish members haven't drawn much interest. This is something else Membership Committee will need to explore.

- Held monthly meetings with Covenant Group facilitator. Apparently the group has already established strong rapport and is delving deeply into the monthly topics.
- Wrote newsletter column for January and February CUF Links.
- Drafted stewardship letter with BOT president for the stewardship brochure.
- Held first "Theme Salon" at the end of January – attendance was low, only one and a half people attended, but it was a good discussion. I hope to better advertise the February Salon, and talk with Sunday Services about evaluating them.
- Participated in Racial Justice Reading Group's book discussion of *The Warmth of Other Suns*.
- Co-led the first Pathway to Renewal Retreat with Kathy O'Laughlin and Mary Campbell. Eighteen CUF members participated, and the response has been very positive—clearly it filled a need of "seasoned" members. The Membership Committee will look at other ways of meeting those needs, as well as offering the retreat again.
- Attended Trivia Night!

Personal Growth: exercise, meditation, singing with Choral Union.

- **Professional Growth:** Monthly telephone conversations with Family Systems coach, UUMA mentor, ministry peer groups, and Spiritual Director. Attended the first part of the Volunteer-focused RE Workshop, and all of the RE Models & Resources Workshop led by Lynn Hunt. I learned some valuable insights for the Membership Committee from the first one, and lots of different possibilities for the RE Committee (and hopefully, Program Committee) to explore from the second one.

Teaching: N/A.

Denominational Activities: Attended December BUUMS meeting.

Prophetic Outreach:

From the Carbondale Women's March preparations in December to the ongoing interchange with local Muslim communities, I have been increasingly active in public ministry. This has been both exciting and exhausting, for me personally, and I've noticed the ripple effects – positive so far – to the Fellowship more generally.

- Attended MLK Community Celebration and MLK Breakfast.
- Attended Interfaith Council meetings, and two Ralph Anderson Interfaith Dialogue planning meetings. The event will be at the Lasar Law Center on April 4.
- Gave tv interview at the Women's March sign-making event at CUF.

- Led pre-march “chant training” for chanters and then all people ready to march, and then led chants and songs (with CUF folks carrying our banner!) along the march route.
- Attended International Coffee at SIU Student Center.
- Conferred with BOT president and Social Action leader about how best to show support for Carbondale Muslims after the executive order restricting travel, delivered heart messages CUF folks made 1/29 to leaders of Sufi and Muslim Community Center. Their response to our gesture of support was effusive and has created the opportunity for closer connections between our congregations.
- Gave TV interview about the heart messages.
- Met with Sheik Din and agreed on a congregational “exchange” to get to know each other better. He accepted my invitation to bring his people to Open Minds, Sunday Service and potluck 2/12, and I accepted his invitation to bring CUF folks to their worship service, discussion, and dinner 2/16.
- Attended interfaith refugee support meeting.
- Participated in faith-based community organizing call with interfaith colleagues from Carbondale, Carterville, and Marion. A “Come and See” event for congregational leaders (lay and professional) is being planned.
- Attended January and February Racial Justice Coalition meetings.