

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

Reporting period 8/9/17 – 9/12/17

The church year is underway, and I've been energized by many new faces at the Fellowship, and all of the service, justice, and pastoral activity of the congregation.

Worship: The services I've led in this month have been remarkably varied, even more than our usual UU eclectic approach. I worked with RE Consultant Lynn Hunt and CUF RE Coordinator Connie Payne to plan the 8/13/17 "Reflections" service, and since we were short on time, I only summarized my reflection, but submitted it to the September CUF Links newsletter. By contrast, I wrote and delivered a bit longer-than-usual the following week for the eclipse-themed service "Our Place in the Cosmos." This was a high point for me, and the CUF folks who attended, there was great positive energy from hosting visitors from across the state and country. I adapted two stories into skits, casted and directed their rehearsal for the multigenerational "Welcome Stories" service on 9/3/17. I think stories/plays can be more effective in engaging more people on the service theme than any sermon, no matter how well written and delivered—but they take a lot more preparation and effort from more people, too. I'm fortunate that CUF has so many talented actors (aka "hams") who make the work fun, and will have my eye out for other story-based service opportunities. I enjoyed planning our annual ingathering service with water communion service, especially working with the choir on the processional hymn—the music and "rain storm" they provided made a special service even more memorable for me. The tragic irony of celebrating water communion in the middle of two destructive hurricanes was not lost on me—I wrote an introduction to a pastoral prayer to acknowledge the contradictory feelings of the moment.

Joys and sorrows notes: When a member shared a very emotional concern during Sorrows and Joys on 9/3, I asked the congregation to join hands and send their prayers/intentions for the member's discernment and self care—it was a moment of real connection, that made me think of the line from George Odell's reading: "All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us."

I have retained the "experiment in spaciousness" practice of inviting people to light silent candles throughout the service, and have gotten positive feedback from people who want to express a joy or sorrow without speaking in front of the congregation. I intend to follow the advice to include a reminder about them at every service, and even highlight the practice in a future CUF Links item.

Counseling and Pastoral Care: Made pastoral visits, calls, and emails. Attended SIH-sponsored workshop "Hearts and Hands --How You Can Support Victims of Domestic Violence in Your Congregation" and collected some relevant resources. We'll discuss how to share what was learned more widely at our upcoming Pastoral Friends meeting (Sept.

20). Participated in Healing Circle ritual organized by CUF Pagans, a wonderful demonstration of this caring community.

Practical Arts/Administration:

- Attended August BOT meeting.
- Met with BOT President weekly.
- Attended Officers' Meeting to set September BOT meeting agenda.
- Met or talked with RE Coordinator weekly to discuss current RE program concerns and to review progress toward professional development goals.
- Met with RE Consultant, RE Coordinator for final "closure" meeting of the consultancy.
- Met with Choir Director to set choir schedule, and to plan Ingathering Sunday, set bi-weekly check-in appointments.
- Met with Office Administrator weekly; since the member who compiled the Order of Service and announcement insert is no longer able to do so, the OA has taken on this task, with assistance from office volunteers. This is not an optimal long-term situation; we need to find a new OoS volunteer, I intend to publicize the volunteer opportunity in the coming weeks.
- Met with Committee on Ministry; among other things, we discussed the need to more clearly and widely communicate the existence and function of the committee. Bob Camp has resigned after serving one year—I very much appreciate all that he contributed to the CoSM discussions and activities. I invited Yo Presley to fulfill Bob's term, and she has generously accepted. Her appointment will be considered for approval at the upcoming BOT meeting.
- Attended Sunday Services meeting to plan 9/24 service. The Sunday Service Survey is nearly ready for distribution, I intend to do so before the end of the month.

Organizational Ministry:

- Co-hosted (with Office Administrator) an Office Volunteer (brownbag) appreciation lunch for our dedicated volunteers, Ginivra Herr and Pat Elsaid.
- Led the membership process for our newest members, Kate and Jamie Niman.
- Attended RE workshop on Coming of Age programs.
- Planned New Members class for September 21 & 28, put announcement in the bulletin.
- Held information session for those interested in Covenant Groups, recruited six facilitators, scheduled initial group meetings and put announcement in the bulletin—my hope is that we have at least three Covenant Groups starting over the next four weeks, including one for Young Adults (18-35).
- Interviewed two members in preparation for officiating their wedding in October.

- Met with young adult newcomer about CUF membership, possible YA activities.
- Attended Racial Justice Reading Group, discussed *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin.
- Met with CIC liaison Vivian Feuerborn; regrettably, she is moving out of state at the end of the year, so I will need to find a new CIC liaison in a few months. In her short time as CUF member, Vivian has been so enthusiastic, and a wonderful representative of CUF to the Interfaith Council, I'm very sorry to see her go.
- Attended (part of) Community Service Fair hosted by CUF.

Personal Growth: exercise, meditation, Choral Union.

Professional Growth: met with Spiritual Director, Family Systems coach, Mentor, minister peer group. Read chapter 5 of Krista Tippett's *Becoming Wise*, first half of *The Fire Next Time*. Attended Soul Matters videoconference on September worship planning.

Teaching: Led 20 minute intro to UU & CUF—only one person attended (another 2 had to leave early to attend RE Parent Orientation) but she is likely to attend the New Member class.

Denominational Activities: Attended UUANI clergy videoconference to discuss justice advocacy directions and possible collaboration with other faith leaders/congregations. Conference call with Scott Aaseng, UUANI director about social justice capacity building in CUF and in Carbondale.

Prophetic Outreach:

- Met with a colleague and a representative of Gamaliel faith based organizing, to discuss prospects for community organizing in Carbondale.
- Met with Alex Tindal Wiesendanger, of Responsible Budget Coalition, and CUF Social Action leaders to discuss RBC's Fair Tax campaign (UUANI is a coalition partner).
- Attended monthly CIC meeting, volunteered CUF as October host.
- Accepted invitation to deliver opening prayer and lead closing song at the rally protesting the suspension of DACA program. It was great to see several CUF folks among the crowd of ~100 at the Gaia House labyrinth.
- Attended "The Big Event" Community Gathering hosted by Women of Change at Attucks Park.

