

Minister's Report

SUBMITTED: JULY 10, 2017

LIST OF REGULAR MEETINGS ATTENDED (Abbreviated list due to summer scheduling)

- ☪ Monthly Board Meeting
- ☪ Monthly Executive Committee
- ☪ Monthly Westchester UU Ministers
- ☪ Monthly Supervision with DRE
- ☪ Monthly Committee on Ministry
- ☪ Monthly Mentorship Meeting with New Minister

IRREGULAR MEETINGS

- ☪ Commit2Respond (Denominational Climate Justice Committee)

WORSHIP

Sunday, July 9 (Mt Kisco): Allowing Summer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The month from mid-June to mid-July is generally a gearing up for a new board and a winding down for the congregation. Most active committees become inactive for a month or two with only a few exceptions. The Finance Committee will skip their July meeting but will meet in August. The Committee on Ministry will also skip July. The Community Garden Committee, on the other hand, is most active during these warm, summer months. Staff usually spend the end of June trying to wrap the year up and take vacation and study leave in July and the first half of August. By mid-August we get quite busy again. This year is a little different both because I was gone for five months and am still catching up and because we lost our administrator in June.

More of my time has been spent doing administrative work, outside of my time at General Assembly. My hope before my return was that I'd be able to prioritize spiritual and pastoral care, but that hasn't come to pass. I will continue to assess how my time is spent and how it can be most useful to the mission of the congregation.

INSIDE THE CONGREGATION

Pastoral care needs are slowing down. When I returned, there was a very high demand for pastoral care, but most of those stories have been told and I'm shifting back into a more regular pattern. With that said, there are still a good number of people with whom I'm hoping to connect, but no one on a high priority list any more.

There are two messages I am hearing distinctly since my return. One is an anxiety about the state of the congregation and our future. The other is a desire for more active and visible engagement in the world. I would summarize one as inwardly focused and the other as outwardly focused. I am curious about bringing both of these desires together because I don't see them as being oppositional.

I have started to post more to our Facebook group. It is an underutilized space, so I'm posting articles both related to justice work and congregational life as well as poetry or spiritual/meditative thoughts.

As I have in the past, I've scheduled two pulpit exchanges with the other UU ministers in the county. One will be in October and the other in March. We are considering our topics, but are likely to pick one of the denominational Common Reads for one of the them.

As we have in past years, all the UU congregations will consider the same topics for worship this year. They are as follows:

September: Forgiveness
October: Death
November: Mindfulness
December: Embodiment

January: Resilience
February: Love
March: Wandering/Journey
April: Faith

May: Truth
June: Justice

OUTSIDE OUR WALLS

Quite a lot has happened and continues to happen in our local area and in our denomination. Because it's far more than can or should be summarized here, I will stick to a brief overview of General Assembly.

Unitarian Universalists, like many Protestant denominations, gather annually to do the business of our church in a democratic manner. About five thousand people attend each year, most of whom are delegates from their congregations. I suggest checking out the UUA website (www.uua.org/ga) for detailed information and videos of sessions.

Most of the work of GA happens outside formal spaces. I was quite involved, for instance, this year in the work around trying to change our Principles and Sources as written in our bylaws even though you aren't likely to have heard me speak publically. My work was to find back-channels for the folks working on the First Principle Project and the new 8th Principle. To make a long story short, there was potential for very painful conversations on the plenary floor and there was already a good deal of anger in many rooms and we needed to find ways to get as good a result as possible for both groups without damaging relationships or the denomination along the way. It was complicated, as these things are, but ultimately successful. The UUA Board has now been charged with the creation of a commission to review our Principles and Sources.

This was the year for Black Lives of UU (BLUU), a new group, to get on their feet and make a significant impression on our faith. The visible support of their work was a necessary healing to the damage done in the 1960s during the Black Empowerment Controversy. This year was nearly a full reversal of what happened 50 years ago, although it wasn't perfectly smooth or indecent-free. There was also a major push to change the language of the Standing on the Side of Love campaign so as not to reflect abelist language. It was hotly contended and the debate continues, but ultimately it was decided that SSL would now be called Answering the Call of Love instead. The composer of the song has also changed the lyrics to accommodate this request.

We also passed a new Statement of Conscience which can be found at <http://www.uua.org/economic/escalatinginequality/escalating-inequality>. It was hotly debated, as these things often are. This one was unusual in that the UUSC (UU Service Committee, one of our major justice institutions) was opposed to it as were many other groups and individuals because it failed to go far enough in its analysis. It passed, but it was much closer than is common.

And, we elected our first female identified president. Having been on her campaign, I actually cried when her name was announced. I admit to being completely stunned by the news but I'm thrilled and very hopeful about our denominational future.

This is the first GA at which I had no formal responsibility which was a relief. Because I was on sabbatical, I turned down invitations last fall. After so much fall-out in the denomination around institutional racism and enculturated white supremacy, I was invited to lead a few discussions among ministers which I turned down. It was a joy to be able to just participate without having to worry about leadership.

UPCOMING DATES

Saturday, July 15: Board Retreat (to be held from 9-2 at CUC in White Plains)

Monday, July 17 to Monday, August 28: Vacation and Study Leave

Wednesday, August 2: The last scheduled Scoop goes out