

Report to the UUTC Board
Rev. Bob Renjilian
October 2022

PERSONAL:

- Thanks for the flexibility to work from PA for a few days mid-October. I was able to handle ministry tasks via zoom, phone, and emails. I expect to return to PA for a few days in November when I'm out of the pulpit.
- Christy and I attended the Carolinas District Barbershop Harmony conference in Raleigh mid-October. The Asheville chorus that I'm part of did very well: second place overall, and first place in the small chorus category.

UUTC COUNCIL RETREAT:

For the first time since before I arrived, we have a reconstituted Council! This was a stated goal (for Fall target date) back at the time of the Board Retreat, and had been a previous year goal as well. The retreat is the same day as the Board meeting so I will report more at that time.

CEREMONIES:

I officiated at the wedding of (member) Carrie Branum and Seth Batchelder on Saturday, October 22, 2022 at Linger Long in Brevard. It was a lovely afternoon for a small outdoor family gathering.

IN THE WIDER MOVEMENT:

I continue my work on the UUA Board's Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC). This past month we were revising outdated requirements and we also consulted with UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee co-chair, Rev. Dr. Rebekah Savage, as there are similarities and differences between Religious Educator and Ministry vetting processes. Our meetings have been entirely online during the pandemic, but an early-April 2023 committee retreat is planned which will be in-person and require my travel.

REFLECTION ON "NEXT NORMAL"

With a rise of COVID-19 cases in the congregation it was suggested that I do something to reinforce the message that while still optional, we encourage the wearing of masks in the building. Choir rehearsals and performances were paused this month due to both John and Carlene being quarantined.

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION: opening of classes was at the end of September. We have noted some new children are attending. Classes were not held on October 23 since a majority of the active families were attending the CRE campout weekend organized by Kevin (but we kept Nursery open).

ADULT RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION:

The Spiritual Explorer's sessions continue. I attended two sessions in October led by Carter Heyward on her new book, *The Seven Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism: A Call to Action*.

I've decided to discontinue the "Soul Matters" theme discussions. This had been fairly popular during the pandemic, but with declining interest more recently. At the same time it will help to free up a Sunday after-church slot so that we can try Souper Sundays again (second Sunday of the month). I will continue to distribute the study packet to the almost 50 UUTC folks who asked to be on the list, and will preach on the monthly themes.

I led the College Walk UU's in a discussion of the (UU Beacon Press) book, *Breathe: A Letter To My Sons* by Imani Perry. This book is about lessons for black sons growing up in the realities of current day America. I'd quoted one moving passage in my sermon on Oct. 23, and went deeper into the themes in our small group discussion.

New plans are developing for Wonderful Wednesday, which was launched this Summer under the auspices of the Adult RE team. The program itself, at least as remembered by long-timers of UUTC, is broader than the ARE Team mission, so we're planning to make a transition to a (as yet un-named) new team. In the meantime, we are skipping programs for November and December, and I'm working to bring in a speaker for January.

There are efforts to have an in-person UUTC Men's group (the current group is online only and I've been told they don't want to change) that will have a daytime meeting, and I'm also working on the possibility of a working-age men's group (which would likely be an evening or weekend group to avoid work hours).

We are in early stages of setting up a group to study the UUA "Common Read" book (the study guide is not yet released). As the UUA website explains about *Mistakes and Miracles*:

Co-authors Nancy Palmer Jones and Karin Lin—a white minister and a lay person of color—explored five UU congregations' journeys toward Beloved Community. *In Mistakes and Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism* (Skinner House Books, 2019), they shared the joy, disappointment, and growth these congregations found. Today, UU congregations are grappling with a charge to dismantle white supremacy in ourselves, our communities, and our world. What lessons and inspiration can we find in *Mistakes and Miracles* to guide us?

PASTORAL CARE:

I've been in touch with folks by phone, offered a letter of support for someone to access food assistance. My offer of home visits did not work on people's schedules this month. I've also had brief chats with folks who have dropped in at my office. I also noted a car that had been parking in our lot, and I talked with the driver.

I attended the LHHH meeting via zoom this past month, from Pennsylvania. We're working with the Worship Team to figure out better ways to consistently record and communicate the joys and sorrows of Sunday morning candles to be included in the Member-to-Member Connection e-mails, mid-week.

EXTRA CONNECTION

I continue to pick random Sundays to be available for going out to brunch/lunch with congregants after Coffee Time. In October a few folks and I went to eat at Mayberry's on Sunday after church.

Christy and I attended the Emma's Revolution concert at UUTC on the evening of Sunday, Sept. 25.

Christy worked at the UUTC Yard Sale, Saturday, October 1. I stopped in during the first moments the doors were opening.

I attended (and introduced the speaker) at the Wonderful Wednesday presented by Luanne Algood on Wednesday, Oct. 5.

WORSHIP:

I met with the Worship Team via Zoom this month. We continue plans for Holiday services, and making slight modifications to the Sunday morning format. I thank Janice Canon and Vanessa Cowie in particular for their extra efforts to adapt to the quarantine of our UUTC music leaders on Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward's guest preaching Sunday - they pulled everything together in a record 3.5-day window!

Changes: We've alerted the Ushers that people may want to take hymnbooks to use on Sundays. This is optional, as we continue to post the words on the screen. Also, I'm still adjusting the way we do candles of joy and sorrow (we recognize that the method we're using is not the best, but we will continue to be inventive).

IN THE COMMUNITY:

I participated in the NAACP Religious Leaders Zoom meeting.

I was an extra "staffer" at the WNC UU tent for part of my time at the Blue Ridge Pride Festival in Asheville. (I also sang on stage with the Asheville Gay Men's Chorus).

COMING UP:

I will be working the booth for a two hour shift at Saturday's Halloween Festival in downtown Brevard.

I will meet with the Evaluation Team in early November to get the results of the August congregational survey, and discuss that with them. I understand the next step will be to bring it to the Board.

I will host a post-election-day prayer time, mid-day on Wednesday, November 9, at UUTC.