

Minister's Report to the Congregation October 2015

"Ministry happens wherever individuals embrace the belief that their good works, their volunteerism, their acts, can help serve the mission and vision of their congregation." This is Shared Ministry -- all of us doing ministry together.

It's easy to write a definition. Ministry is hard, and I still receive questions about Shared Ministry. I can tell you that if ministry weren't hard, then the world would always be just, the environment and humanity would already be in harmony, children and youth would simply download all relevant experience passively from computer terminals, government would be superfluous and church -- well, church would be pointless! Instead, the world we dream of requires our creativity, our passion, our commitment.

So one aspect of Shared Ministry is reflected in recent changes to the church's daily business, in large part because Shared Ministry requires more institutional formality. You, as a people, entrust each other with these ministries you do -- teaching children, mentoring youth, planning Sunday worship and music, caring for each other, welcoming newcomers, building a just world and creating a sustainable way of life... all this ministry! All this takes a lot of communication and building-scheduling... which you have to entrust to staff, for example, and this trust then enables more members to plan more events and focus on ministry itself.

With your church having already grown beyond the ability of one minister to meet all your church needs, additional staff are part of what sustains your ministry as a congregation. Which is why the Church Council, through its Personnel Committee, established Personnel Policies last January. As the next step in this institutional work, the staff is now assisting the Church Council in an update of its building-use policies (the building and its many users is a significant social justice ministry of the church to the North Country).

The Church Council also has studied current best-practices for UU congregations, and out of those studies has written and adopted policies on disruptive behavior and the proposed bylaw changes you will be considering at this Annual Meeting.

Shared Ministry is what we do together -- and that "we" can mean the people of a congregation, but it can also mean the people of a group of congregations. I've been working with other Upstate New York Unitarian Universalist ministers on how our congregations can share ministries and resources -- much as there was a time that St. Lawrence County once had dozens of Universalist congregations that shared many resources, especially through the local Universalist theological school that was once part of St. Lawrence University. I am hopeful about your congregation partnering with other North Country Unitarian Universalist congregations in the coming years.

You are a vibrant and exciting congregation, and I'm delighted to be your Interim Minister. I would love to be around to see what you will be doing in your next 180 years of ministry in the North Country!

Fondly,

Joel

Religious Education Annual Report 2014-2015

Curriculum:

Nursery provided a safe, playful space for our children under 3 years of age to grow and learn.

Spirit Play using Montessori methods allowed our Pre-K to 1st grade children to work freely at their own pace after an initial lesson.

Faithful Journeys equipped our 2nd through 4th graders with language and experiences to develop and articulate a strong Unitarian Universalist faith identity, through historic and contemporary stories of Unitarian Universalist faith in action.

Riddles and Mysteries aimed to teach our 5th through 7th graders to accept, appreciate and celebrate mystery, ambiguity and contradiction as part of human life and the starting points of religion while exploring Unitarian Universalist responses to big questions.

Coming of Age for our 8th and 9th graders celebrated the transition from childhood to youth, using the elements of ritual, learning, testing, and celebration. All youth traveled to Boston as part of this program.

Youth Group focused on environmental justice this year. They viewed videos about Love Canal, discussed climate change with guest Jon Rosales as well as engaged with the SLU Islam Group, held a sleepover and created a service.

Special Programs:

OWL (Our Whole Lives) Program for High School Students was offered for our Youth Group this year. They participated in one session focused on Sexuality and Our Faith.

LOVED (Living Our Values Everyday) Program was offered over 4 sessions throughout the RE year and focused on service to church and community. We covered the different types of service, sending postcards to home-bound members and members/friends who have moved away, reviewed the work of the UUSC and water rights, and heard about the Canton Tree Committee and the importance of giving of our time, talent and money to organizations we value.

Fun Days were offered for all ages. During these 5 days over the course of the year, children choose their own fun activities like board games, arts and crafts or physical activity.

Holiday Pageant was offered on December 21 and celebrated the mid-winter festival of lights by sharing stories of Hannukah, Diwali, Genitju, Solstice in Hopi Land, Norse Solstice and Christmas.

Intergenerational Service was offered on March 22 and celebrated "thresholds". An installation for Carol was held during the service.

Classroom Volunteers and Participants

We had 63 adult volunteers working in the RE program as teachers, assistant teachers, childcare providers, and youth group advisors. A total of 62 children and youth were registered for the program.

RE Staff

Carol Zimmerman completed her first year as Director of Religious Education. Over the course of the year, she attended many professional development webinars hosted by the Central East Regional Office. She has assumed the position of Vice Chair for the Seaway Chapter of LREDA.

RE Committee

The Religious Education Committee was a strong committee of 10 members but saw the loss of (2) members who are now participating on the Search Committee. They met on a monthly basis to determine curriculum and appropriate congregational events (see below).

RE Events

December

- Holiday Decorating Party in collaboration with Welcome Committee

February

- Sledding Party

March

- Everybody's Birthday Party

May

- RE Sundae Sunday

2015 Annual Report Budget and Finance Committee

Mission: to monitor the financial health of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton.

Responsibilities: to identify, define, and support those financial needs that contribute to the greater vision and work of our church; to oversee the disbursement of funds to insure the mission of the church is fulfilled; to communicate to the church community the financial needs and concerns of our church.

Budget and Finance Duties:

- a) Review monthly financial reports for council
- b) Oversee bookkeeping and internal control policies
- c) Oversee appropriations to committees
- d) Recommend annual budget to Church Council
- e) Review financial policies for recommendations to the council
- f) Oversee inventory of facility
- g) Monitor the Investment sub-committee, responsible for Endowment Investments.
- h) Oversee the Olympia Brown Society (OBS) / Planned Giving sub-committee.

Membership Changes:

None this year.

2015 Highlights:

So far this year, in addition to its ongoing duties, B&F has dealt with several singular items.

- *Online Giving System* – We approved use of Vanco as provider of online giving services.
- *Endowment Items* – agreed to invest the expected proceeds of an endowment bequest in the UU Endowment.
- *Energy Provider* – participated in discussions (along with *Environmental Action* and *Building & Grounds* committees preceding decision to change electricity provider.
- *Cooperation with Stewardship Committee* –
 - attended a joint retreat in April
 - cooperated on planning the 2016 Canvass
- *Office Accounting System* – working with outside accountant and office staff to improve the accounting system

Current Financial Status:

Preparation of the budget and monitoring of the financial performance are the major functional roles of the committee. The 2015 budget has proven to be largely on target, with a net margin at the end of September of about \$7,500.

2016 Budget:

The Committee has gathered initial input from the staff and committees for the 2016 budget. In asking for their 2016 budget estimates I asked each chair for their “maintenance” and their “growth” budget. I then used those figures to present a preliminary budget to the Church Council on August 5. The budget contained options regarding the two levels of funding requested by the committee chairs as well as a formula demonstrating the budget effect of different levels of Cost of Living Adjustments to staff pay rates.

After the Church Council determined the revenue goal, the budget was forwarded to the Stewardship Committee for use in their preparations for the annual canvas. The results of the canvas will be used by B&F and the Church Council to set the final 2016 budget.

B&F members include:

Roger Hutchinson, Kevin Ball, David Nelson, Jim Rudd, and Milner Grimsled, Ex-officio members include: Pat Glover, Treasurer; Barb Beekman, President; Margaret Harloe, Stewardship liaison; and Joel Miller, Interim Minister.

Respectfully submitted,
Milner Grimsled, Chair

Nominating Committee Report 2016 Church Council Slate

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the slate of nominees to serve on the 2016 Church Council. As required by the church bylaws, three church members, who broadly represent the congregation, make up the Nominating Committee: chair, elected annually at the Annual Meeting; one member appointed by Church Council; and a member appointed by the Nominating Committee chair. The committee's principal task is to identify and nominate individuals to fill open positions on Church Council.

The 2015 Nominating Committee is Valerie Ingram (chair), Todd Moe (Council appointee) and Carol Pynchon (at-large appointee). We have worked hard to construct a slate of candidates who will complement the continuing Council members and who will provide strong, wise, compassionate, and thoughtful leadership as we continue the work of transition in 2016 and prepare to welcome a settled minister.

Before introducing the 2016 slate, we would like to recognize and thank several people. Jon Montan and Erika Barthelme served partial terms on the Nominating Committee before stepping down to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee; Jon was also a Church Council trustee before assuming his role on the Search Committee. We are thrilled that both of these capable people are part of the group doing the important work of searching for a new settled minister.

Pat Glover has served as treasurer for four years, doing yeoman's service to define and refine the role and responsibilities of treasurer and helping identify lay leadership tasks and duties that can be assumed by staff. Thanks, Pat, for your diligence, care, and commitment.

We are grateful that Ruth Baltus, David Nelson, and John Danis have agreed to stand for nomination for second terms as trustees on Church Council, and that Todd Moe has agreed to serve another term as vice president.

Finally, we are fortunate to have the continued leadership of Barbara Beekman as Council president, Kathrine Brown as secretary, and trustees Gary Hoose and Heather Rousell. Their terms expire at the end of 2016.

Now, we are pleased to introduce the following members of our church as candidates for the 2016 Church Council.

Vice President (January 2016 – December 2017)

Todd Moe and his husband, Paul Siskind, moved to the North Country from Minneapolis in the summer of 1998; they live in Norwood. Todd grew up in rural Minnesota in a Methodist household, went to a Lutheran college, but is most comfortable in the UU world. He joined the church in the fall of '98, and started singing in the choir within the first month of attending church. Todd serves on the Outreach and Nominating Committees, and is a teacher in the RE program. Todd and Paul share their home with two affable dogs, a gray tabby, and a small flock of hens. Todd is the weekday morning host on North Country Public Radio and also enjoys cooking, gardening, theater and dancing. Todd is completing his first term as vice president and has agreed to stand for re-election to a second term. We are grateful to have the benefit of his experience and counsel for another two years.

Trustee (January 2016 – December 2017)

Ruth Baltus was raised Catholic in suburban Buffalo (Tonawanda) by a Catholic father and a mother who was raised Presbyterian. Ruth's UU seeds were probably sown by her mother, who attended weekly mass with the family but never converted to Catholicism because there were too many pieces that didn't feel right. Ruth and her husband, Kevin Ball, moved to Potsdam in 1983 when she joined the chemical engineering faculty at Clarkson.

They joined the UU church in the early 1990s when their daughter Madelyn was born. Ruth feels very much at home in the UU church and is grateful for what the church community brings to her and her children's lives. She has served on the RE Committee and taught in the RE program, is a long-standing member of the Personnel (formerly Staff Relations) Committee, and helps in the UShare garden. Ruth and Kevin live in Potsdam and are the parents of two (almost) adult children, Madelyn and Delaney.

Ruth is just completing her first term as trustee and has agreed to stand for re-election for a second term.

Trustee (January 2016 – December 2017)

John Danis lives in Rensselaer Falls with his wife, Bonnie. Together, they raised four children, now "long out of the nest." John originally moved to the North Country in 1971 and completed undergraduate work at the Crane School of Music in 1975 and graduate work in 1980. Upon graduation in 1975, John began teaching music at the Hermon-DeKalb Central School and taught there until he retired in 2008. As an educator, John held elected offices in various musical organizations and was president of the Hermon-DeKalb Teachers Association for several terms. For many years, he has also maintained an active performing life as a musician.

John's connection to the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Canton began in the late 1970s and has ebbed and flowed throughout the intervening years. For a number of years, the Danis family was affiliated with the Rensselaer Falls United Methodist Church, now closed. During those years, John served on their Church Council and was Council president for two terms. John currently serves on the Music Committee, is a member of the choir, and has performed in various ways in support of our worship services.

John is completing his first term as Trustee and has agreed to stand for re-election to a second term.

Trustee (January 2016 – December 2017)

David Nelson joined the church in 1984. He has served as an assistant in the Religious Education program, on the Investment and Ad Hoc Safety committees, and is currently a member of the Budget and Finance, Library, and Personnel Committees.

After graduating from Columbia Law School, David worked as a lawyer in Washington, DC, for two years, attending All Souls Unitarian from time to time. He then moved back to his hometown of Gouverneur where he practiced law for 21 years. In 1983 he was elected St. Lawrence County Family Court Judge. He retired from that position in 2001, but continued to do part-time judicial work. David has served on the Board of Directors of St. Lawrence NYSARC since 2004. His son Gregory lives in Connecticut (with three grandchildren) and his daughter Karen in Arizona (with one grandson). He is an avid reader of mysteries and histories, music lover, golfer, piano player (beginner!), and Red Sox fan.

David is completing his first term as trustee and has agreed to stand for re-election to a second term.

Trustee (January 2016 – December 2017)

Julie Van Duyne grew up in Norwood and has attended this church since before she could speak in sentences. Her parents, Andrew Van Duyne and Eileen Wheeler, are transplants - Crane graduates who settled in the area and both taught music in the Norwood-Norfolk Central School district.

Julie left home in 2000 to seek adventure and higher learning at the State University of New York at New Paltz, where she encountered many strange and peculiar new cultures and people. After a decade of studying these fascinating groups, she was armed with a baccalaureate degree of liberal arts, declaring her sufficiently proficient in the respected fields of sociological research and music history with a concentration in classical piano. With this

and several years of training in the exquisite art of professional culinary preparation and presentation, Julie returned to the Great Northern Country that was her birthplace.

She now resides on a quaint country estate amid the rolling hills of Russell, spending her summer days harvesting rocks (and occasionally vegetables) from the great gravel fields of Sundance Knoll, and her winters battling the frozen, beastly winds that bring icy driveways and frigid, barefoot-biting morning floors. She lives there with her dog Rasputin, his girlfriend Heidi (an elegantly mature border collie), and Heidi's family, Ken, Lexi, and Henry Hebb. Oh, and there's a cat. But as you know, they have their own way and never really claim to live anywhere or belong to anyone in particular.

On most days, you will see Julie managing The Blackbird Café, where every once in a while when she's been extra good they let her cook a soup or two. This is Julie's second year as an advisor with this congregation's Youth Group and someday, if she's skillfully deft with time management, she'll get to join the choir.

Julie will be serving for one year, completing the term of Jon Montan, who stepped down to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee.

Nominating Committee Chair (January 2016 – December 2017)

Valerie Ingram doesn't actually remember how long she has been associated with this church, but it's going on 30 years, at least. During that time she has held many roles including Church Council secretary and vice president, Ministerial Search Committee member, Youth Group advisor, CoA mentor, OWL facilitator, Canvass chair, and Worship Committee chair. She has two sons who grew up in the UU Church of Canton and are now admirable adults whom she likes very much. She has enjoyed serving on the Nominating Committee because fostering broad-based leadership is important for our church community and because it is a great way to meet and have meaningful conversations with many new and long-time members of the congregation.

2016 will be Valerie's fourth year on the Nominating Committee. In her first year, she was member at large; in 2014 and 2015, she served as Committee chair.

Treasurer

You will note that there is no nominee for treasurer. The Nominating Committee is still interviewing candidates to fill this position, and Church Council is simultaneously reviewing the job description. There may be a short-term appointment and special election for treasurer at some future date. Stay tuned.