

Annual Report Submitted by the Rev. James Galasinski October 2020

This has been the craziest of years; where does one begin? I can tell you that some of my colleagues and mentors who are now retired are gratefully retired.

Black Lives Matter

I am grateful to the leadership who took a stand on Black Lives Matter in 2016. We could have taken the sign down but Council voted to put up a new and better one. Teresa Veramendi and I helped organize BLM protests and gatherings here in Canton. We rang the church bell for 9 minutes for 9 days. I and 3 other members of this congregation are serving on a village committee to help reform the Canton Police Department as mandated by Governor Cuomo.

Pandemic and Worship

Thankful for leadership, especially Jenn Whittaker who has kept on the latest science and has been putting everyone's health first. At first I was in denial of the magnitude of COVID-19. This can't be happening. Not here in Canton. I did not want to close the church building. But I have adapted. I got familiar with the technology of Zoom, lighting, cameras, and editing videos. While worship is not as good as being in person, the Worship Committee have slowly worked out the kinks to create good virtual worship.

Our Web of Connection - our New Circles

I wholeheartedly believe that now and into the future small group ministry, these circles, along with powerful worship, and a good RE program will allow our congregation to grow and flourish. Many thanks should be given to Sara Trimm, our Congregational Administrator for organizing these circles.

Listening: We have 3 circles up and running. The facilitators had a training/practice session. It has been pretty powerful. This requires a little homework and a commitment to attend monthly meetings.

Connection: Friday Happy Hour with rotating hosts has been working. The Saturday coffee hour did not seem to work out well. Both hikes were well attended. The hike on Sept 26 had 12 show up.

Exploration: Kathy Montan's Eckhart Tolle group has a sold out crowd and actually had to turn people away. No turn out for the first parent group. We got a few more people interested in already established groups like Charlie Bradt's meditation group and my Sacred Texts.

Interest: Gardening group has 5-6 people attending. The Geocaching group has a few in attendance.

Social Action: Focusing on UU vote, calling and sending postcards to people who have been taking off of voter rolls in swing states. They have sent out 1,200 postcards so far.

Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care Team helps me with pastoral care, keeps in contact with shut-ins, and covers pastoral care concerns me when I am on vacation. Now after about 2 years the Pastoral Care Team is starting to get calls from congregants, which is what we hoped for. I think this is great.

We meet about once a month to discuss who may need care. We have been very careful, about how and where we meet, sometimes through open windows and on porches. Valerie Ingram, Helen Hutchinson, Leo Burger, Pete Wyckoff, and Claire Gardam make up our team.

Poor People's Campaign

Our Church has been connected with the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) for 2-3 years. The PPC is a national organization which demands human rights, income equality, environmental sustainability, and is against systemic racism and military expansion. Ultimately the PPC sees themselves as being in the legacy of Martin Luther King's last big initiative before he was murdered. For more information please visit <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/> I have attended meetings and our Social Justice Coordinator, Teresa Veramendi, is part of their North Country leadership team. Many members of our congregation are also involved. Before COVID, the PPC held their meetings in our building.

I think the PPC is right on with our mission and core UU values. The PPC is seeking out formal institutional partnerships. I think our church should agree to that. I want to be clear that this does **not** involve a membership fee. In many ways this will not change our relationship with the PPC and what we are already doing with them. It will just formalize our relationship and we will be listed as a partner on their website.