



# 2025 Annual Report

Cedar Valley Unitarian Universalists

# 2025 Annual Report

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# 2025 Annual Meeting Agenda

May 18, 2025, 11:15 a.m.

Meeting to be held following the regular Sunday service, in the sanctuary at the CVUU building. An on-line attendance option through the [Zoom](#) platform will be available.

Call to Order

\*Approval of Agenda

\*Approval of Minutes from May 19, 2024 Annual Meeting

Election

\*2025-2026 Board

\*2025-2026 Nominating Committee

\*2025-26 Budget (FY2025: July 1-2025 – June 30, 2026)

Accessibility Task Force Report

Selection of Beneficiaries to Receive Monthly Social Action Collections

President's Report

Acknowledgments/Thank Yous

Meeting Adjourned

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\*Action items

# 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

Held May 19, 2024, 11:15 a.m., in-person and over Zoom

Rob Boody, Secretary

\*2024 Annual Meeting Minutes will be printed separately from the 2025 Annual report, and distributed at the 2025 Annual Meeting.

## Minister's Report

Pastor Emma Peterson

Beloveds,

In years past, gratitude was the focus of my Annual Report. I'd list our Paid Staff and each Council and Committee, highlight a few accomplishments of the year, and express effusive praise for their hard work. I remain profusely grateful for the tremendous work of our congregation's Staff and lay leadership. I try to express that gratitude consistently, publicly and privately, and I intend to continue to do so indefinitely. With that in mind, I'd like to provide a brief overview of the Church Year in lieu of my typical litany of thanks.

### **Autumn**

In August of 2024, I returned to the CVUU after a three-month Sabbatical. My return felt bittersweet, as it coincided with the departure of our three paid Staff. Our Music Director Jess Lieb concluded over a decade of service to the CVUU. Their departure marked the end of an era of beautiful music! We continue to treasure the gifts of that time in the present. Our DRE Kate Flynn resigned after two years of service, departing after effectively rebuilding children's RE in the wake of COVID's impact on our programming. Our Office Administrator Kat Beane Hanson began her tenure mere months before COVID transformed how we Do Church. Her skill set proved invaluable as we pivoted to virtual church. Her abilities continued to elevate the professionalism of our organization during her four years of service. For all three employees, the choice to depart from our Staff team was made when it was clear each of them had grown to their capacity within the role. We want our Staff to thrive, and in this case, that meant moving on. It is a testament to the employment environment we foster that both Jess and Kat

became members of the CVUU after leaving their Staff roles. We are deeply fortunate that they, along with their families, remain a part of our Beloved Community.

At present, we have filled the role of Office Administrator and hired a new CCRE. Leann and Ronan are thriving in their positions. Office Admin Leann will begin working twenty hours a week in July, and 25 hours a week in September. This should provide much needed additional administrative support while supporting the continued growth of the CVUU. CCRE Ronan is actively planning for the summer and the year ahead, with sights set on revitalizing our YoUUt programming. At present, our Board President Carolyn Hildebrant continues to pull double duty as Board President AND Interim Music Director. (If ever there were a time for effusive expressions of gratitude, this would be the time!) Her revitalization of our Guest Musician Program is one of the highlights of the year for me. We are admittedly disappointed by the dearth of applicants for the open Music Director position. And yet, with Carolyn's leadership, I am delighted and encouraged by how we've sustained beautiful music at the CVUU. Still- one of my biggest dreams for CVUU Church Year 2026 is the hiring of a new Music Director to complete our CVUU Staff Team. Here's Hoping!

In November, I successfully completed my second of three rounds of Fellowship Renewal with the UUA. After one more successful renewal cycle, I will be in Full Fellowship with the UUA. I am tremendously grateful to the lay leaders on the Shared Ministry Council and CVUU Board who work with me to write and submit the required paperwork. That time of reflection, while annoyingly bureaucratic, offers me space to review my ministry and acknowledge the strength and depth of the relationships and community we've built over the last seven years. There is rich ministry yet unfolding at the CVUU, and I am excited to see what we can build as we begin our eighth year of Shared Ministry!

In November, the results of the presidential election rattled us all. As you are aware, my partner Skylar and I had been experiencing increasing hostility from neighbors in the small town where we owned a home. An incident on the morning after the election confirmed for us that we needed, urgently, to move. Weathering this Administration would undoubtedly be easier and safer in closer proximity to our CVUU community. We announced to the congregation our intentions to sell our home and we were immediately encouraged and overwhelmed by the tremendous help and support we received. I'm convinced our home in Dysart sold as quickly as it did for two reasons- the first is the providence of the Divine, who knew my path before I trod it, and the second is the incredible labor of members of the CVUU who showed up, week after week, to prepare our house for market. We could not have accomplished the move without your help. We'll never forget it and can only hope we have an opportunity to pay it forward sometime soon.

## **Winter**

Our Christmas Eve service is always a highlight of my year. This year felt particularly special because of the music provided by Nate Callahan. I love a banjo, and Nate's contribution made

for a wonderfully cozy service. We didn't even try to hang Christmas lights in the Sanctuary this year, leaning heavily on the adage "less can be more!" An important lesson from the year- with enough collaboration and grace, "good enough" can be wonderful. The destabilization in my personal life, in addition to everyone's attempts to cope with a world on fire, drove home that point for me. More often than not, simply being together is all we need.

In January, we invited Reverend Lydia Ferrante-Roseberry from Stewardship for Us Strategic Alliance for a "Next Steps Weekend." As we endeavor to determine the best path towards an Accessible building, Reverend Lydia spent several days evaluating our readiness for big moves, like a Capitol Campaign or the acquisition of a new building. Rev Lydia's assessment was that we are *almost* ready to launch. (I say this with the caveat that determining our path is the business of the entire congregation, and we have many more conversations ahead of us before any final decision is made, collectively.) Rev Lydia suggested a history review, with particular attention to the ministry of my predecessor and the dynamics experienced in that period. This will help us resolve lingering tendencies within the System while strengthening our shared ministry. She also suggested a Power Analysis of the System, to illuminate unhelpful patterns and pitfalls in our leadership, policies, and procedures. At present, the Board is taking steps to engage in Rev Lydia's suggestions while continuing to consider and explore the possibilities for the CVUU.

In that line, a small group of folks from the CVUU began meeting with a small group of folks from the UCC in Cedar Falls this winter. As the UCC faces the end of their congregational lifespan, we at the CVUU are planning for growth and expansion. The acquisition of their building- located on University Ave in Cedar Falls- is one of the possibilities we are exploring. Steve Chamberlin and the Accessibility Task Force have done a wonderful job in sharing details of the truly massive amount of work they've done over the last several years and they've explored and made plans for all possibilities. That work, and the conversation continues. We're envisioning a CVUU that will outlive us all, and we are deeply aware that such plans are not made in haste.

## **Spring**

We sprung into spring with a wildly successful Yearly Pledge Campaign. We exceeded our goal of \$217,000 by raising \$220,252! This gives us the space to continue to pay our Staff equitably and in line with UUA guidelines, add additional hours to the Administrator role, and plan for future growth. I'll leave it to the Finance Council to explain the details, but we're in great shape as we focus on nurturing our growing Beloved Community.

The current political climate has provided ample opportunity for Public Witness. I've been in increased collaboration with community organizers and activists. I am encouraged and excited by the connections I'm forming and the opportunities to proclaim our Unitarian Universalist Values in the public square. It has felt empowering and exciting to gather with congregants at protests, to attend town hall meetings with our Iowa Representatives, and preach Truth to

Power from the pulpit. An appearance in multiple national news publications following my exchange with Senator Chuck Grassley at a town hall in Dysart gave me the motivation to continue to elevate my public platform. The events of the last year have reinvigorated and reshaped my understanding of my Call to Ministry. I am committing to fight the good fight in Iowa, a place desperately in need of liberal clergy and open and affirming spiritual community. I believe these challenging times will result in growth for the CVUU. Let us be a beacon to those seeking a place to come and be welcome, radically. I am honored and excited to lead this community as we discern how best to serve this broken world.

We welcomed 13 new members this year! When I arrived seven years ago, the CVUU had less than 110 members. Now we have over 150! The growth is remarkable, and I am hopeful we can sustain and even increase it. At this year's Annual Meeting, we will Commission two new lay ministers- Mandy Boody and Callie Amiday. As the congregation grows, my bandwidth stretches. I am thrilled to welcome Mand and Callie into their roles. Already, both have provided big help at critical moments of the year. I am excited to see what they both create from their new lay positions.

### **Gratitudes**

I am endlessly grateful for the countless hours our CVUU lay leaders donate to our congregation and community. It is a Shared Ministry, indeed. For those who are cycling out of leadership after years of service, thank you for contributing to the legacy of the CVUU. Your influence and contributions will not be forgotten, and your effort will ripple out for years to come. Thank you for shaping this place into what it is and what it will be.

For those taking on new leadership roles, thank you! It is a joy to see new folks find their niche here. I am always looking forward to what we can create together. Listen to those mentors who came before you, but don't be afraid to do things your own way. Our unique approaches are part of what make this place so special.

One of the reasons I'm skipping the litany of thanks this year is because I always worry, I've left someone out! In reviewing the last year, I'm amazed by the multitude of hands that made it all happen. Huge thanks to our Board President Carolyn Hildebrandt, our Executive Board including President, VP Karen Impola, and Finance Chair Mike Knapp. Thank you to our Board Liaisons. What an interesting, challenging, exciting, and fun year we've had! I'm looking forward to Carolyn's continued leadership and our shared visioning. Thank you to our Council Chairs, and all those who serve on a Council or Committee. I know much wonderful work has been accomplished this year, and I'm so excited to see what we do next!

Thank you to our awesome paid staff, Admin Leann and CCRE Ronan! While you're both still relatively new, your efforts and contributions have had a huge impact on the thriving of the CVUU. I am thrilled to get to witness you both grow in your roles. It is an honor to get to work alongside you. I'm looking forward to a summer of collaboration and future planning!



Thank you to everyone who does something to keep our community going. From Greeters on Sunday morning, to guest musicians, to Sunday morning fellowship and the myriads of fellowship opportunities arranged and carried out by congregants. Some of your work is done quietly and with little fanfare, but that doesn't mean it isn't vital. I hope I've found a moment to look you in the eye and express my thanks recently. If not, please tell me I owe you a heap of gratitude! We tend to notice far more of what doesn't happen or what isn't done- a peculiar human tendency! Please know your work does not go unnoticed. Thank you.

### **What I Need to Help Our Ministry Thrive**

With growth comes need! At present, I recognize three areas where support would be much appreciated. They are

#### **-Pastoral Care**

With growth comes more people who need or want or would like a pastoral visit. Huge thanks to Nancie Groszkruger who has provided much pastoral care filling in the gaps I can't close on my own. At present, we are hopeful we can build out a small Pastoral Care Team (3-5 members) who can make visits "on behalf of" or as an "extension of" the minister. Training and continued support will be provided. Please let I or Nancie know if you're interested.

#### **-Children and YoUUth RE**

At present, our program is growing and we don't have the RE teacher volunteers to meet the needs which arise from that growth. We would benefit from two classrooms. Additionally, we need help revitalizing our YoUUth programming, including hopes to bring OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexual Health curriculum) to those families who would appreciate the availability of that open and affirming curriculum. You don't need to be a teacher or even have a tremendous amount of experience with kids to be an excellent RE volunteer. Please reach out to Ronan if you have any interest in volunteering in RE.

#### **-Fellowship and Programming**

As our congregation grows, the need for more opportunities to build relationships grows. Our First Friday Dinners, Happy Hangs, etc. are a great way to meet new people and draw deeper connections with folks you already know. We hope in the coming year to form additional small groups to provide opportunities to make connections and have some fun. If you have an interest in organizing a month or a few months of First Friday Dinners, would like to start a small group, or other fellowship event, please let me or Heather Flory (Shared Ministry Chair) know.

## Personal Gratitude

Thank you to every single person, dozens of you, who supported our urgent move out of Dysart, buoyed us (and literally sheltered us!) during our time of transition, you cleaned and repaired our home, carried heavy boxes, arrived on short notice and then continued to show up. Thank you to those who contributed to the fundraising that supported the move. Your donations paid for a radon mitigation system that was a condition of closing in Dysart, contributed to a much-needed hallway paint job, and covered a myriad of small repairs. Your donations made a stressful time much less so.

We made the choice to move to the Cedar Valley and really root in because of the wonderful Beloved Community we have here. I cannot tell you how many times, after a crew of CVUU beloveds would depart, that Skylar and I would look at each other in astonishment. We knew we couldn't accomplish such a move without your help, and you helped so much. We are still stunned by the blessing of the house we've purchased and the blessings that come from being a part of the CVUU. I truly see that property as an asset to the congregation as much as it is for my family. I foresee church picnics and Board retreats and parties, parties, parties in our future! We look forward to continuing to be a part of this remarkable community, in a place where it is so desperately needed. I'm glad you're here, and that we're in this together. May it be So Because We Make it So; Amen and Blessed Be.

# President's Report

Carolyn Hildebrandt

This year, our church theme is "Love at the Center." This not only reflects our new UUA Values, but also symbolizes our commitment to caring for ourselves, each other, and our larger community as we continue to learn and grow.

My first term as Board President has presented a real learning curve for me. Although I had led and served on many CVUU committees and councils since I joined in 1998, this is the first time I have been able to get a comprehensive overview of the church and how it functions. I am in awe of how much time, talent and commitment it takes for our paid staff and dedicated volunteers to keep our church running day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, and year-by-year.

As Pastor Emma noted in her yearly report, during the last 7 years our membership has grown from less than 110 members to over 150, with 13 new members this year! This is remarkable given that several of these years were during the pandemic. Growth like this does not happen

by accident. It is the result of ALL of our efforts to make this a vibrant and welcoming community.

As I enter the church each Sunday morning, I am aware of the many people who work “up front and center” as well as those who work “behind the scenes”. I typically park in the back, so I can leave spaces for visitors and those who need to enter the sanctuary at the ground level. As I drive to the rear parking lot, I see the Little Food Pantry and the Little Free Library. Depending on the season, I note that the paths have been cleared of snow or that the grounds have been neatly mowed and tended.

As I get out of the car, I see the pollinator garden, the new steps to the second level, the new concrete entry way, and the peep hole that was just installed in the door for security reasons. Entering the Fellowship Hall, I see Pastor Emma’s office, where countless hours are spent in individual consultations, committee meetings, as well as study, writing, and reflection.

The main dining area includes new stand-up tables, regular tables and chairs, technology for broadcasting the service and other meetings, as well as bulletin boards and brochures that show who we are and what we do. Prominent among them is the Accessibility Task Force’s display of two options for sustaining our growth: the remodeling of our current building or a move to a larger building in Cedar Falls. Also included are bulletin boards and materials about Social Action initiatives aimed at important issues such as protecting migrant rights, women’s reproductive rights, LGBTQIA rights, food accessibility, our environment, and our democracy.

At this time of the morning, the kitchen is already buzzing as Nick and his crew are preparing coffee and food for our after-church fellowship time. As with many places, the kitchen is the heart of the home. As I prepare to climb the stairs to the atrium and the sanctuary, I look back and remember all of the amazing events we have held there this year: the wildly successful Treats and Talents Auction, First Friday Dinners, Friday Night Hangouts, Seasonal Potlucks, meetings of the Board and other councils and committees, and the ever-popular after church Fellowship or “Coffee Hour.”

In the atrium, the greeters are organizing the name tags and sign-up sheets and getting ready to greet regulars, newcomers, and those who haven’t been with us for a while. As I enter the sanctuary, I see the seasonal decorations on the altar, the Zoom host on the big screen, and the Sanctuary Tech donning earphones and checking the camera angles for the service. The musicians are warming up and doing sound checks with the Sanctuary Tech. The Worship Associate is putting out the hymnals, making sure that they have all of the information needed for the announcements and prayers of the people, and that all of the people involved in the service—the chalice lighter, the readers, the story teller, the musicians, and the main speaker—are there. As people begin entering the sanctuary, they sit alone or with friends, all while making sure that newcomers are greeted and don’t have to sit alone.

As the service gets underway, there are people on the ground floor as well as in the balcony. Some of those in the balcony came early for the morning meditation. During other parts of the week, the balcony is a place for small group meetings, including the Buddhist Path. Beyond the balcony are the RE classrooms and nursery, full of history and incipient activity. As the children leave the service, they go up to the nursery or RE classrooms where Ronan has prepared lessons and activities for them, assisted by volunteer teachers from the church. The classrooms are also used for adult meetings such as those for potential and new members.

During Fellowship time, we enjoy coffee, tea, and an amazing buffet of sweet and savory treats. Upon the ringing of the bell, many of us return to the sanctuary for the Adult Forum. This is a time when we can engage in further discussion with the main speaker of the service, or when we can learn from community leaders, church members, and CVUU small groups about what they have been doing during the year.

With this short tour, I've highlighted many of the people and activities that are "up front and center" without naming everyone individually (you can find their names in other parts of this report). In this way, I have tried to show the church from a systems perspective; in other words, how we all work together to create the wonderful community that we are.

But what about all of the work that goes on "behind the scenes"?

Behind the scenes are those who do the planning, organizing, networking, and communicating that you might not see when you enter the building on a Sunday morning. These include our Office Administrator, our Calendar and Newsletter Editor, the President and Vice-President, the Board of Trustees, and members of the following committees and councils: Finance, Building and Grounds, Accessibility Task Force, Religious Services, Music, REAP (Religious Education and Adult Programs), Personnel, Nominating Committee, Shared Ministry, Congregational Life, Caring Connections, and Social Action. If you'd like to know who is in these groups and what they have done this year, you can start by reading this report and then asking questions about what more you would like to know.

As I conclude this report, I'm thinking of a little chant that I learned as a child in Sunday School. You might have learned it as well. We would start by interlacing our fingers facing toward our chest, enclose them in a two-handed fist, and then say, "Here is the church, and here is the steeple, open the doors, and see all the people!"

I hope you have enjoyed this brief tour of our church and its people. We are all looking forward to what the future holds for the CVUU. The future depends on everyone...including you! So, if you have the time and desire, please step up and give us a hand!

With gratitude for all that you have done--and are planning to do--to help grow and sustain our beloved community.

With Love at the Center, Carolyn

# Communications Report

Leann Lockard, Office Administrator

Since joining the CVUU Staff in September 2024, it has been a joy to meet many of the faces that selflessly volunteer their time to the CVUU. I have had the honor of supporting many various councils and committees in a variety of ways, each opportunity giving me a wider glimpse into the admirable work done behind the scenes for the CVUU congregation and greater Cedar Valley community.

I must note my many gratitudes, as my success up to this point rests heavily on the grace offered me, and support that has rallied behind me. Firstly, Pastor Emma has been a consistent and much appreciated source of wisdom and grounding support as I have waded through the wide waters of expectations and emotions during this huge life transition for myself and my family. I am excited to collaborate with her more consistently this coming year as our work hours in office will more closely align starting this July!

I also offer my extreme thanks to our newsletter editor, Gerry Chamberlin, who has been such a personal encouragement and support to me during this arduous learning process. She keeps me “on point” and “in the know,” as she truly is a deep well of knowledge on all things CVUU, (and close behind her knowledgeable support--working as quite the pair--Steve steps in and helps me with those rare things beyond Gerry’s scope!)

I also want to extend many thanks to Karen Impola, who took on many of the administrative tasks in the interim between the position’s vacancy and my hiring. She has continued to be a reliable source of support for which I am forever grateful.

May it also be noted; I am beholden to the many people who stepped in selflessly to fill various needs until I was hired, and furthermore graciously waited to hand off these tasks until I was oriented enough to reabsorb them. Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not note that I am indebted to my predecessor Kat Beane Hanson and her no doubt tireless work in creating extensive Administrator Procedure documents, as well as her willingness to be a continued source of support and knowledge. She clearly held her position here with the utmost reverence, and I am constantly reminded of that as I witness the work she put into many of the cornerstone structures in how things are currently done and run here at the CVUU.

This year has felt a lot like trial by fire, many of us muddling our way through an awkward transition phase together—which I think speaks to the true sense of community that defines the CVUU. Now that we have worked so hard together to make it through some wide learning curves—and we have made it through!—it is one of my goals for the 2026 fiscal year to streamline and revamp some office administrator processes in the hopes of creating a more proactive and less reactive atmosphere. As I continue to gain understanding of what is

consistently needed/expected of my role, I have been strategizing a more transparent system of communication between myself and the councils that I support so that we can all do our best work in fostering and growing the CVUU as an accepting and supportive community.

I also have a goal of growing and enhancing our online presence to increase congregation support as well as community outreach. I hope to accomplish this goal by doing the following:

- Working personally, and with other (much more so) tech-minded CVUU members, to make upgrades to the CVUU website.
- Regrouping the podcast and YouTube presence in a way that serves the changing digital needs of our community in this very unstable political atmosphere.
- Brainstorming with Pastor Emma and others to revamp our social media presence in these very uncertain times in an effort to simultaneously continue protecting and supporting the CVUU congregation AND also broadening our reach to the wider Cedar Valley with the message of love and inclusion that the CVUU offers.

I am excited to see the potential for our online presence to increase our greater community reach, and ultimately add to the growth and future stability of our already rich CVUU community.

## Newsletter Report

Gerry Chamberlin

The CVUU newsletter is published eleven times per year, with the summer months of June and July combined into one issue. The size ranges from eight to fourteen sides per issue; this variation reflects the time of year and the number of activities happening at the church in a given month.

We have several ways members/friends can choose to receive the newsletter/newsletter calendar. They can:

- 1) receive a paper copy via first class mail,
- 2) pick up a paper copy at the church,
- 3) be notified by the Office Administrator via email when the files are available at the website; it's also available via a link at the end of the Weekly Updates.

For members opting to pick up their paper copy at the church, the copies are there a day or two prior to the last Sunday of the month.

Currently, thirty to thirty-five copies are printed at Copyworks each issue. The distribution is as follows: one is saved for the Archives; three are for the staff; nine or ten are sent first class postage; the remainder are divided up at the CVUU between the acrylic holder on the north/entry wall, and a box on the table at the foot of the stairs in the Fellowship Hall. I monitor these two places weekly to be sure there are copies in each location.

Members responsible for seeing to newsletter details and more –

Editor: Gerry Chamberlin

Maintaining an on-time schedule remains a high priority for me so that each issue is ready promptly. I spend many hours with editing, formatting, layout, and seeing that the final copy is to the printer in a timely manner. After picking copies up from Copyworks, there is stapling and folding for the copies to be left at the church. The post office doesn't allow staples, so those being mailed are folded and taped (four pieces on the three open sides); mailing labels are attached (provided by the CVUU office each issue), and stamps are added. Most months one first-class stamp is adequate, but weight is checked at the PO for issues that have six or more pages.

After the printing and prepping of the paper copies is complete, I make a PDF of that month's files (newsletter and calendar) to send to Leann for the website and to distribute via email to the membership.

Monthly deadlines are always established ahead of time and published in each issue – on the calendar page and in the Newsletter Deadline article. There are e-mail addresses on the calendar page for contacting the Editor (newsletter items) and Office Administrator (Calendar/Order of Service items). At deadline time each month, Leann and I are in communication often to be sure that, to the best of our knowledge, information being sent out is correct and current.

Assistant Editor: Steve Chamberlin

Steve is my invaluable computer guru. Since December 2004, we have done the entire newsletter on the computer. He assists with computer dilemmas/problems, and lends advice as the need arises with any computer issues. He is my second set of eyes for proofing, and often helps with the folding of the paper copies.

Calendar: Leann Lockard

Each month, Leann sends me the calendar the day prior to the newsletter deadline. She collects Sunday service, committee meeting, and event information from committees/chairs and enters all of it into a computer calendar version that she emails to me (which becomes page two of the paper newsletter). This is no small task! She also updates the labels monthly and prints a copy for me at deadline time for mailing purposes.

First Class Postage (no Bulk Mail): Since August 2011 we have only used first class mail. Although it can vary a bit, most often we send ten copies each issue at the first-class rate.

Copyworks: Mostly Brock, but occasionally another employee, sees that the newsletter is printed and ready for me to pick up in a short turn-around time. They are very good to us in this respect, for which I am most grateful as I'm always working on a deadline!

Contributors: Without contributors (and some of them write every month!) we would have no newsletter! Articles mostly arrive via email which is preferred so that I have all information in one place. For the most part, members are conscientious about making the deadlines enabling me to keep on schedule, which is very much appreciated!

## Building & Grounds Council Report

Roger Hahn

During the past year, the Building & Grounds Council:

1. Rebuilt the exterior stairs on the east side of the building.
2. Hired a contractor to repair the east door of the sanctuary which had rotten casing.
3. Repaired damaged shingles from wind damage.
4. Repaired shingles and a hole in the wall from a raccoon "break-in".
5. Installed web connected thermostats in the sanctuary, allowing better temperature to be controlled from either room and online.
6. Installed online and connected thermostats for the administrator's office and the balcony, allowing temperature to be controlled from either room and online.
7. Installed a fire sensor and a water leak sensor provided by our insurance company to allow automatic online notice of any problem.
8. Hired an electrician to fix some wiring problems, including why the sign was not working. Problems were fixed, including the sign which had an internal problem resolved by the sign company.
9. Maintained lawn mowers, recruited volunteers to mow, and coordinated the mowing schedule.
10. Coordinated snow removal and provided ice melt when needed.
11. Continued gradual switchover of lights to LED.
12. Cleaned out eaves and replace some screens to keep leaves etc. from clogging them.
13. Replaced furnace filters, changed smoke alarm batteries.



14. Worked with the pollinator garden volunteers to trim and clean up the area around the shed, and plan how to improve the area in this next year.

## Accessibility Task Force (ATF)

Steve Chamberlin

Since the 2023 Annual Meeting Report, many of the “next steps” outlined in that report for the Accessibility Task Force have been successfully completed. We have:

- Recruited new task force members to fill out the team. The current group consists of Steve Chamberlin, Chair, Roger Hahn, Co-chair, Floralyn Groff, Margie Miller, Steve Thom, and Jill Miller. This group, or parts of it, have met eleven times on various topics and with other parties since the last report.
- Conducted training sessions to bring the new members up to speed with the activities and decisions of the pre-pandemic task force.
- Affirmed unanimously that the new ATF members agreed with the direction of the previous work and desired to move it further forward in a similar direction.
- Identified improvements in the plan which would allow it to serve the congregation better over a longer future.
- Re-engaged with Mardy Holst, Architect and Principle of Align Architecture and Planning of Waterloo. Mardy and his staff have put our ideas into layouts and helped us refine them, and made significant contributions of advice relative to various potential changes.
- Received updated costs estimates from Mardy on a base “minimum” plan, and on the plan the ATF proposes.
- Presented the task force’s proposal to the Board to determine if the congregational leadership endorses the plan we are proposing, or has concerns that we should adjust our direction in any way.

The meeting with the Board was held April 2nd, 2024. The current ATF members as well as past members attended, and all Board members attended or their areas were represented. Steve Chamberlin made a presentation summarizing past activities of the team, and laying out the two basic plans and their estimated costs, concluding that the expanded “Accessibility PLUS” plan is the ATF’s recommendation for many reasons. ATF members offered statements of support for the plan. The ATF proposal accomplishes the minimum objectives for disabled access support by the installation of an elevator as well as providing a number of other benefits including: an expanded foyer area; a room next to the foyer which could be used for storage, meetings, or a library; a new larger kitchen with new appliances for improved food safety and a serving arrangement that will be easier for the disabled to navigate; a 65%

increase in Fellowship Hall usable space; an office suite that brings our staff close together for improved collaboration and a more professional staff environment; a room dedicated to our music program; making the two upper level bathrooms disabled accessible; and improved overflow viewing of our sanctuary services and activities when attendance is high.

The Board unanimously endorsed moving forward with this plan, making a number of positive comments about the long-term value of the plan. At an estimated cost of over \$1.1 M, it will be a challenge to do this, but it was felt it is worth trying. One important factor is that the minimum plan, which does only the elevator, the expanded lobby, and the kitchen, would be about \$900 K, so it is not that much of a savings anyway.

Going forward, the following steps are envisioned:

- Continue working with Mardy Holst to generate more plan details and visualizations including elevation views and “walk-by” videos. Map out an estimated timeline for the project.
- Present the plan to the congregation through multiple channels and get feedback for further improvements.
- Plan and execute a staged capital fund drive and create a financial plan.
- Get approval of the full plan and financing by the Board and congregation.
- Construction!

The ATF “Accessibility PLUS: A Future for ALL” proposal is exciting and will carry the congregation into the future. The plan is being viewed as the kind of renewal that is undertaken maybe every 40 years, and since the last major project like this, when we added the Fellowship Hall/RE wing, was almost 40 years ago, it seems doubly appropriate to undertake this now.

## Congregational Life Council Report

Juanita Williams

The Congregational Life Council promotes activities that contribute to the general health and spiritual growth of the congregation, including greeting, hospitality, membership, marketing, caring, and small groups. Juanita Williams and Jill Miller served as co-chairs of the Congregational Life Council for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

### **Greeting**

The Greeting system has adapted again this year as in-person attendance at Sunday services has grown and we also maintained a strong virtual option. Joanna Waggoner-Norquest took on

management of the Greeting schedule this past year. She has overseen the online sign-up process and sent emails to request greeters and ensured that there were 2 Greeters each Sunday. Jill Miller ensured that orientation of Greeters took place and communicated when additions or reminders of Greeter responsibilities were needed. We need to address the way Zoom Greeting is taking place, now that the majority of people attend in-person. Jill has helped recruit new Greeters and updated the Greeter Responsibilities Document and oriented new Greeters.

All Greeters arrive 20-30 minutes early to greet and welcome everyone, with a special focus on newcomers and returning visitors. Greeters count and document numbers of attendees in-person and on Zoom. We continued to experiment with a new role called 'Connectors' this past year to help new people find their way and meet other CVUU attendees with similar interests. Rosa Torres and Mollie Wallsteadt fulfilled this role and guided many new comers through the Sunday morning experience. Additionally, Greeters send a postcard to new visitors and communicate contact information for visitors to Juanita. The postcard, in addition to a "glad you visited" message, also has the date of the next New to CVUU session and encourages the recipient to attend. The following week, Juanita sends visitors a personalized Welcome email including an electronic Welcome Document which provides introduction to the CVUU and a Visitor Information form. (As a reminder, the Visitor Information form helps us learn a little about the attendee and also add them to our mailing lists so they get the Weekly Update and Newsletter emailed to them.)

Leann, our office administrator, maintains a Google spreadsheet which lists the names of visitors and returning new people so we are aware of specifically who visited and who returned. We continue to try to stay aware of members (and friends) who have attended infrequently and let them know we've missed seeing them.

### **Hospitality**

This year, we successfully revived our Hospitality process, post-pandemic. Our team worked hard on this as we recognize it to be an important opportunity for visitors and members to interact and build community. Nick Reans has led this effort for most of this past year. Nick has lovingly made food and cleaned up and used multiple avenues (including Facebook) to recruit helpful volunteers. He has set-up multiple systems for people to sign-up to help. He has also taken over the stocking of kitchen supplies and made sure coffee is made. Multiple volunteers take home and wash the kitchen towels and wash cloths each week.

Our Council has also helped be a part of improving accessibility in the Fellowship Hall, particularly at Coffee Hour. We purchased Hightop tables to facilitate conversation with others who can stand easily in order to allow room for people with hearing challenges to sit at tables. This allowed us to remove some tables and spread out the remaining ones to reduce the level of noise during coffee hour.

## **Membership**

The Congregational Life Council ensures that guests, visitors, and newcomers are welcomed at the CVUU. We also provide opportunities to learn more about the Unitarian Universalist faith, and specifically, the CVUU. Membership sessions were offered multiple times this year and personal sessions have been arranged when attendees request to join between scheduled sessions. We work closely with Shared Ministry Council to help new members get engaged and be offered meaningful volunteer opportunities. The Congregational Life team members this year included: Mica Lorenz, Jill Miller, Chelsea Toppin, Juanita Williams, and Leigh Zeitz. Jill Miller was our liaison to the Board after Stacey resigned in July. Pastor Emma has offered input and helped promote continuity with the work of other related committees (i.e. Shared Ministry, Religious Services, and Social Action) to help us promote social interaction and connection at the CVUU.

### **Projects and Activities of the Membership Team included:**

New to CVUU sessions were offered 3 times this past year. A total of 14 new people attended these offerings. These sessions included new attendees, as well as a few seasoned members to share a fuller picture of the makeup of the CVUU. The focus of each session is to help people get to know us and also for us to learn what newcomers are looking for in a “spiritual home.”

I Want to be a Member sessions were offered 3 times this past year. 14 people attended these sessions and 13 joined the CVUU. (Jeff Chapin plans to officially join as soon as we hire an additional RE Coordinator). Welcome packets, a UU World magazine, a wooden name tag (made by Mica Lorenz) and a chalice (made by Pastor Emma) were given to new members when they signed the Membership Book.

Chelsea Toppin coordinated the “Meet the New Members” project. This project involves soliciting a brief bio and picture from new members to introduce them to the congregation. This was published in the monthly newsletter and also posted in the online CVUU Weekly Update. Chelsea helped enlarge and copy the New Member Bios and Pictures and create a bulletin board display so that the Congregation would have an additional exposure to our newer members. Chelsea is improving the follow-up process and also pursuing other ways to use these bios to highlight new members.

Collaborated with Shared Ministry Council and Social Action Committee to maintain social activities, like First Friday Potlucks, The Happy Hangs, and some social action activities, like Tied-Blanket making for the Warming House, etc. We’re grateful to several leaders who helped make these fun and meaningful community-building activities happen!

A Children’s Name Tag Project has been in development this past year. There is a need for a leader to take charge of making easily readable name tags so adults can help build

relationships with our young people and families. Betsy Brant helped facilitate this project this past year.

Marketing: The marketing efforts of the Council have been minimal due to the Council's prioritization of retention rather than outreach this past year. Due to the small size of our committees and the difficulty of finding volunteers to help projects to take off, we decided to focus on building out internal strength and resilience. We continue help the congregation grow by promoting the CVUU to the larger community through the use of our website, social media, etc. We also had ads in the Waterloo/ CF Courier on Christmas and Easter.

The T-Shirt Project has laid low this past year but about 40 members wear them regularly at outreach events, like Food Bank volunteering, Community Meal serving, social action events, etc. The design was improved, based on feedback, to highlight our name better.

A button project was implemented by Moria Brown to make buttons that have our logo and brand and identify us when the T-shirts need a supplement. She made about 100 so that every adult has one to wear when they attend community events.

We began discussions in February about our Marketing plan for Pridefest. Jill has made sure that we cooperate with the Social Action Committee so we work efficiently to engage with PrideFest attendees.

Small groups continue to thrive and expand and offer people opportunities to engage with others in like-minded activities.

We have included the current small group document to newcomers at the New to CVUU and I Want to be a Member sessions to help make them aware of the opportunities for connecting with CVUU folks with similar interests.

Many small groups transitioned back to in-person or hybrid. All of the groups have offered valuable opportunities to build relationships and socialize with others around shared interests.

Anyone interested in participating in a small group should look for the "CVUU Open Groups" handout in the CVUU foyer or Fellowship Hall, or view it online at <https://cedarvalleyuu.org/adult-programs/small-group-ministry/>.

## Caring Connections

Carolyn Hartsfield

This (committee) now renamed Team serves as a conduit from individuals that may be in need of support and service due to a sudden health crisis and CVUU. Our volunteers take turns being the Contact person one month at a time. We keep track and reach out to members and ask if they would like to be in the update to let our Beloved community know what kind of help

they would need. We ask permission before putting in update. We have 9 members on our team who have been on our team for years. We ourselves do some of the service for those individuals that need it. However, we are mainly a connection to inform congregation and needs of recently in and of a little help. We appreciate members that help these members if it is possible. We have a few people come to our meeting to learn more about our team. We welcome congregants to visit our meeting on the first Sunday of the month before second hour. We have recently distributed at CVUU that would be helpful to our members facing health problems. We invite you to fill out the paper list or go on line and fill out the form on our CVUU website.

Our group has been successful in serving some needs of individuals in hospital and home bound. We do not keep statistics of any kind for our work and we have had positive feedback from individuals that have been helped by this Caring Connection Team. The congregation has many who serve others without being on our committee and we want to acknowledge their service to others. There are things we cannot do such as serving as nurses or other medical needs. Our work is crisis work not on-going service. We try to provide information to connect people with community services.

## Finance Council Report

Mike Knapp

The 2024-2025 Finance Council is composed of Michael Knapp, Finance Director; Mary Kay Madsen, Endowments; Bill Brown, Collector; Jeanette Talbert, Treasurer; David Steege and Rob Boody, At-Large Member/Fiscal Review. New to the Finance team is Lawren Medhaug. Lawren Medhaug and Rob Boody are being trained to assume the Treasurer and bookkeeping duties in FY26 in preparation for Jeanette Talbert's retiring as our current Treasurer.

### **CVUU Fund Definitions**

- **General Operating Funds:** General Operating funds are used to perform the usual and customary activities of the CVUU. Funding for the general operating budget comes primarily from the financial pledges obtained from the members and friends of the congregation during the annual Pledge Campaign drive. Unspent general operational funds revert back to the general fund at the end of the fiscal year and are not carried over into the next unless encumbered for a specific purpose. The Board is required by CVUU bylaws to present a balanced budget to the congregation at each year's Annual Meeting for its approval and adoption.

- **Restricted Funds:** Restricted funds are those funds received and spent for a restricted purpose only (i.e., funds raised through donation for Pride Fest can only be spent for Pride Fest related expenses). Restricted funds are ongoing and do not revert back to the general fund if unspent at the end of the fiscal year. Restricted funds can only be released for general operational purposes upon release by the donor(s) or by its respective committee.
- **Capital Funds:** Capital funds are those funds designated for special projects, off budget purchases, or for costs associated with the maintenance or improvement of the property that do not fall within general operational funds or are not scheduled expenses within the Building Maintenance Reserve Fund. Funds available for such projects are based upon donations received or through proceeds raised by special fundraising events for capital improvement projects. Bequests are not used to fund capital projects, but are rather directed to the CVUU endowment fund.
- **Building Maintenance Reserve Fund (BMR):** The BMR contains those funds required for the scheduled purchase, repair or maintenance of the CVUU building, its equipment or grounds. Funding for the BMR is received from an annual allocation from the general operating budget to ensure its viability in meeting future facility related costs (furnace replacements, roof repair, parking lot repair, etc.) without holding special or emergency fundraising activities. This annual allocation is determined by direct allocation from the general fund. New facility expenses not presently a part of the Building Maintenance Reserve will be added to the schedule as those costs are incurred.

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### **FY2024 Financial Report**

CVUU finances are tracked through ICON a purchased church financial program. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 (FY2024), the CVUU had total revenues of \$227,816 and expenditures and fund transfers of \$224,857, giving us a year end surplus of \$2,959 in the general operating fund. This surplus was created by:

- Increased revenues from the Treats and Talents Auction
- Interest gained from our assets, including a money market account and assorted CD's
- Vacant staff positions
- Unused Board, Council or committee budget allocations.

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### **New Funds Created from FY4 Year-End Fund Transfers**

Recommendations from the Finance Council to create or add to the following year-end funds

through fund transfers from the general fund were approved at the Board's August 2024 meeting:

- **\$3,000 - Unbudgeted Project Fund:** This fund is available for the Board's use in addressing significant unforeseen increases to the operating budget in future years.
- **\$5,000 - CVUU Pastor Search Fund:** This fund can be used to offset church costs associated with minister's future search committee costs.
- **\$2,000 - Tech Fund:** This fund can be used for future technology upgrades and purchases.
- **\$15,000 - Additional Funding to the Building Maintenance Reserve Fund:** The BMR has not been fully funded at replacement costs incurred since Rod Debs served as our minister. The additional funding was added in anticipation of large expenditures to be incurred in the first quarter of FY24 for furnace replacements and other costs, and to better prepare the BMR for parking lot repairs in the coming years.
- **\$2,000 - GA Participation Fund:** This fund was established to provide cost assistance to board members or members of the congregation attending the Annual General Assembly as voting members of our congregation.
- **\$5,000 – Capital Improvement Fund:** This fund was established for use in new capital purchases for equipment or facility improvement not included in the general operating budget.
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### **FY24 Annual Fiscal Review**

Review of financial income, expenditures, and investments for FY24 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) is currently underway by Finance Council at-large members David Steege and Rob Boody and will be completed and reported to the Board by June 30, 2025. Recommendations for changes in our fiscal monitoring and review process identified by the annual fiscal review will be reviewed for addition into our policy and procedures.

### **FY2026 (July 2025 – June 2026) Annual Pledge Campaign**

The FY26 Annual Pledge Campaign team was composed of co-chairs Michaela Rich and Joanna Waggoner-Norquest with assistance from Sally Browne, Moria and Bill Brown and Stephen and Gerry Chamberlin. This year's theme was "Living Our Values" with a goal of raising \$217,000 in pledges to support the coming fiscal/program year. This pledge goal was set to support both our normal annual operating expenses, plus maintain our support of our Minister, one staff position (Office Administrator), receiving benefits and two part-time, non-benefit eligible positions (Children's Coordinator of Religious Education and the Music



Director) in line with the newly revised UUA Salary/Compensation guidelines for GEO Index 2 congregations and shifting from a Size A to a Size B congregation. This goal was exceeded by the time the Pledge Campaign was ended, resulting in \$222,551 pledge revenue now being available to the FY26 budget. Should any additional pledge contributions for FY26 be received, the Pledge Campaign Set-Aside Fund will be reimbursed for the \$381 needed to present a balanced budget for your approval, with the remainder amounts credited to FY26 pledge revenue received.

### **FY2026 Pledge Campaign Analysis**

An analysis of this year's pledge campaign has revealed the following findings:

- Of the 112 potential members and friends solicited for pledge support, 79 pledge units responded by the close of the campaign. Two additional pledges have been received since March 30<sup>th</sup>.
- The average pledge received was \$2,788. The median pledge was \$1,500
- Of the \$220,252 in pledges received by the March 30<sup>th</sup> campaign closing date, 5 pledge units accounted for 27% of the funds raised; 10 pledge units accounted for the next 24%; 16 pledge units accounted for 24% of funds raised, and 48 pledge units accounted for the remaining 24%.
- 33 potential pledge units did not submit a financial pledge for FY26 by the close of the campaign. Of these, only 2 additional pledges have been received.

### **CVUU Endowment Fund**

The Endowment Fund Committee is composed of Council members Mary Kay Madsen, Jeanette Talbert and from the congregation at large, Dick Warhol and Gerry Chamberlin in monitoring and investing funds received from memorials and bequests. Endowment Funds are invested through the UUA Common Endowment Fund. The UUACEF invests in socially responsible investments. The Endowment Fund has appreciated in value this fiscal year to date by \$2,130.28. The net cost (principal) of the CVUU Fund is \$48,591.24. Net cost generally refers to the total cost of investment after subtracting any deduction for costs associated with maintaining the account in the UUACEF, such as investment manager fee, administrative fees and other expenses. The market value of the CVUU Endowment Fund as of March 31, 2025, is \$76,725.55.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The following actions were taken by the Treasurer since July 1, 2024:

- **Building Maintenance Reserve:** \$10,253 was moved into the BMR in July for FY25 annual funding.
- **Investments:** New CDs were purchased as old CDs matured or additional cash built up in the Money Market account. Currently there are six CDs laddered with various maturation dates. CD dividends are considered income to either the General Fund or the Accessibility Task Force (ATF) as appropriate. Higher market interest rates have really helped increase our investment income. Future rate increases are unknown.
- **ATF Fund:** The ATF Fund has incurred expenses of \$7,235.65 since the beginning of the fiscal year and has earned \$2,502 in interest income. The ATF fund balance as of March 31, 2025, is \$84,079.23.
- **Tax Information:** Year-end IRS form 1099 went to contractors, and form 1096 (with 1099 copies) to the IRS went out on time. Next January we plan on a local CPA to make our IRS filing. We will still need to pull 1099 data together for this to happen.

### **Collector**

The Collector (Bill Brown) collects weekly plate offerings, contributions and pledge payments and deposits them to our bank accounts. He also records revenues received to the proper accounts through our iCon software to ensure that contributions and pledge payments received are credited to the appropriate individual pledge accounts, the general fund or other funds maintained by the CVUU. Currently over \$11,000 remains in outstanding pledge payments for FY25. Members are encouraged to complete their pledge payment commitment by June 30, 2025, the end of the FY25 fiscal year.

### **UUA Administrative Support Co-Hort**

Mike Knapp, Finance Director was invited by Jan Gartner, Associate Director, UUA Church Staff Finances to participate in an Administrative Support Co-hort being convened by her to review and make recommendations regarding pledge campaign support materials on giving and more recently for recommendations of administrative support (accounting services, HR tech support, etc.) that the UUA could provide to its member congregations. The cohort has been meeting over the past five months. Recommendations and discussion will be included in upcoming GA sessions.

### **First Step Consultation**

Lydia Ferrante-Roseberry, a consultant with Stewardship for Us, enlisted to assist the congregation during the

weekend of January 23 to 26 for a Next Step Weekend consultation focusing on annual pledge campaign and the ability of the CVUU to mount a general capital campaign to fund either the renovation of the existing church facility or purchase of an alternate property. Among her many recommendations to the board included the expanded use of one-to-one direct contact solicitations for both annual pledge drives and any future capital campaign drives. These

recommendations are being incorporated into future pledge and/or capital campaign drives. Among the comments included in her final report to the board/congregation was her finding of “solid fiscal practices, analysis and budgeting” being practiced at the CVUU.

### **UUA Geo Index and Congregational Size Determination**

Questions were raised at the May 4<sup>th</sup> Budget Interview regarding what the UUA Geo Index and Congregational Size guidelines were. The Geo Index is used by the UUA in developing its guidelines for staff and minister’s wage and compensation. The Geo Index is the UUA’s response to incorporate the relative cost of wages in a given community. Currently we are assigned to Geo Index 2, which reflects the average wages between 91 and 96.9 percent of the US average. The Congregational Size denotes wage and compensation guidelines based upon membership size of the congregation, its operating expenses, and staff and ministerial positions (part-time and full-time). In FY25 the CVUU was categorized as a Size A Congregation (membership up to 140 members), but following discussion by the Board, Shared Ministry Council and Personnel Committee, this classification was upgraded to Size B status (120 – 230 members) for FY26 fiscal year despite its significant increase to wage and compensation levels, as the increased costs were expected to be offset by the new rental revenue received from Weight Watchers.

### **Rental Income**

A rental agreement was entered into with the local Weight Watchers organization. Under the terms of this agreement, the CVUU will receive approximately \$9,600 annually in return for Weight Watcher meetings being held twice a week at the CVUU. This new source of revenue is reflected in the FY26 budget being presented to the congregation at the May 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. It should be noted that Weight Watchers has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy at the national level, but it is uncertain as to how this filing will impact our agreement with the local Weight Watchers organization. Finance will continue to monitor this latest development and any impact on our rental revenue stream going forward.

### **UCC Purchase Exploratory**

Finance Director Mike Knapp, Budget/Endowment Chair Mary Kay Madsen and Treasurer Jeanette Talbert have participated in a series of meetings with the UCC Church. Their involvement was to gather financial operational cost of the UCC Church and comparison with current CVUU operational costs. A summary of these findings have been sent to Steve Chamberlin, chair of the ATF project and leading the discussions with the UCC Church representative.

### **FY26 Proposed Budget**

The following is a summary of the budget being proposed for the coming fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026). This budget was presented in line-by-line detail to the Board at its April meeting and to the congregation during the Second Hour Adult Forum on Sunday, May 4,

2025, and feedback and suggestions included in the budget being presented for adoption and approval at this year's Annual Meeting.

<b>Budget Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Percent of Budget</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
Carryover Income	\$381	0%
Pledge Income	222,551	92%
Pledge Shortfall	-4,451	-2%
Other Contributions	1,700	1%
Rental Income	9,600	4%
Fundraising	8,000	3%
Interest/Dividends	5,000	2%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$242,781</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Minister	103,680	43%
Staff	68,309	28%
Child Care	500	0%
Affiliation Dues	9,147	4%
Building	24,674	10%
Building Maintenance Reserve (BMR)	12,139	5%
Operations	4,787	2%
Board/Councils	19,045	8%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$242,781</b>	<b>100%</b>

- Footnote for Minister Salary/Housing Expenditure: The total wage and compensation package for the minister reflects an increase of 10.7% based upon UUA's Geo index level 2, Congregation profile size 2 guidelines.
- Footnote for Office Administrator Expenditure: The hourly increase for the administrator is 4.8% based upon the UUA's Geo index level 2, Congregation profile size 2 guidelines.
- Footnote for CCRE: The hourly increase for the CCRE is 4.2% based upon UUA 's Geo index level 2, Congregation profile size 2 guidelines.

# Religious Education & Programs (REAP) Council Report

Ronan Parker, Director of Children's Religious Education

Greetings from the REAP Council! We've had an exciting year as we continue to grow our youth programs with new activities, new staff, fresh volunteers, and open hearts. It's been a blast hosting and celebrating holiday activities and providing space for our youth to grow in knowledge, spirit, and kindness. It remains the goal of the REAP council to provide a safe space for youth education and community. In a time when our local villages may be growing weaker, we aim to be at least a small part of the village that raises our children to be kind and thoughtful members of tomorrow's society.

## **Highlights from the Year**

Throughout the last year, we've hosted several events for our youth members of CVUU. We threw a Halloween Party in October filled with spooky-themed activities. CVUU youth were invited to watch a Black Hawks Hockey Game together. We threw another holiday-themed party near Valentine's Day, including card making and 3d model painting. Our Easter Egg Hunt was quite popular, involving 16 children, nearly all our regular Sunday attendees, and even a few more! We've also begun to partner with First Friday Dinners to provide activities for children during those events, so parents can attend and stick around for post-dinner activities as well.

We've been using the Soul Matters curriculum for our lessons. There have been themes of listening to ourselves and others (Deep Listening), of inclusion and what it means (Inclusion), of joy and how/where it can be found and shared (Joy). Many lessons include thinking about how we can look within as well as consider the world around us. A highlight was our Memory Tree activity, where the children wrote the names of a person or pet who had passed and held importance to them, then hung them up on branches fashioned into a tree. A large part of our lessons focus on the beliefs of other cultures, so we have been dedicating time in class each month to learning about holidays and days of religious significance, what they mean, and why they are important to those who celebrate or observe them.

All of these events and lessons have been spearheaded by our excellent new Coordinator of Children's Religious Education, Ronan Parker. He's proven to be a tremendous asset to our program and has grown into the position even as the position itself has grown, as we have been unable to hire a second co-coordinator.

Attendance is steadily growing. Our average kid count in the fall was 5 kids, which has grown to 7 this spring. Our Easter Service saw our greatest attendance with a total of 14 kids

between the RE and Nursery rooms! Currently, we're averaging about 7 kids a week and rarely seeing attendance dip lower than 6.

With this growth and hopefully more to come, we want to take a moment to thank all our wonderful volunteers who help make it happen! Jeff Chapin has been a massive help, contributing his time each week to the RE room. Debbie Kyler has filled in for the nursery when there aren't other volunteers during the week. Karen Impola, who goes to the library and picks up books that we use in RE each week, also volunteering in the nursery and during Second Hour. Curt & Chelsea Toppin have been volunteering in the nursery as well as helping us put together things for Special Activities. If you're interested in helping our growing youth program, please reach out to us at [cce@cedarvalleyuu.org](mailto:cce@cedarvalleyuu.org).

### **Our Current Challenges**

Our intention was to hire a second coordinator for RE programming, but unfortunately, finding the right candidate has proven difficult. (Curt: Of course, this makes us extra grateful for the amazing solo job being done by Ronan.) Ronan reports that the role is within his capabilities at the moment, but we'll continue to monitor the situation as our program grows and the role expands.

Staffing the nursery is an ongoing struggle. Currently, we try to recruit at least 3-4 volunteers each week, and often are unable to find someone for the Second Hour childcare we try to provide. We need more "regular" volunteers, so that our current rotation can be extended and let the volunteers attend sermons more regularly. It is a large sacrifice to ask people to skip one of the main reasons for coming to the CVUU on Sundays.

We're still feeling the impact of the COVID era on our youth program. Our consistent attendees are 12 and under. We plan to experiment with providing some teen-oriented activities to help grow our youth program in the coming year, such as starting a youth group for teens and exploring reintroducing the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program.

We want to personally thank all of our current volunteers. Without them, there would be no Children's Religious Education program. They make it possible for us to open our space to parents and provide a safe space for their children to learn and grow.

Thanks for sticking with us and reading this far! We look forward to the ongoing growth of our program and seeing the personal growth of our wonderful children in the coming year.

# Religious Services Council Report

Karen Impola

Much of the work of the Religious Services Council consists of showing up, week after week, and making a thing happen every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. We did that this year. We also met monthly to plan future services, and to discuss and refine our procedures. This is an ongoing task.

The current church year began part way through Pastor Emma's sabbatical, which ran from May through July, 2024. For May and June 2024, we had 7 lay-led services and two guest ministers.

During FY25, we have had/will have a total of 53 services. That's 51 Sundays (one Sunday was cancelled due to weather) plus services on Christmas Eve and Good Friday.

By the end of the fiscal year, Pastor Emma will have preached 24 sermons, and been otherwise present or working on four other Sundays. This includes Sundays that she was acting as Worship Associate or RE teacher, and the Sunday that she will be attending General Assembly. This gives her 28 working Sundays, which is within the adjusted range for her FY25 contract. (The contract was adjusted to account for her being on sabbatical during July.)

During the remaining Sundays, we had 24 lay-led services and five guests preaching. Many thanks to all who pitched in! Thanks also to those who served as Worship Associates, Sanctuary Technicians, Zoom Hosts, Chalice Lighters, musicians (especially Carolyn Hildebrant, who went above and beyond as volunteer Music Director, story readers, greeters, and any other tasks that I may be forgetting. Thanks to Kathi Bower, who served as co-chair of the RSC and helped keep me on track.

I do not currently have access to our attendance figures for the year, but can provide them on request.

See you in church! Karen Impola, RSC Co-Chair

## Adult Forum Report

Pam Hays

### **Forum Presentations – September 2024 – May 2025**

Poetry with Vince Gotera – Poet Laureate for Iowa

New Years Celebrations – Different Religious Expressions – Dr. Joyce Boss

Job Foundation – Seth Stearns  
Next Step Program Lydia Ferrante Roseberry  
House of Hope – Dusky Steele  
Try Pie – Sarah Helleso  
Momentum Program – From Jails to Jobs – Michele and Dean Feltes  
Forgiveness Talk Back – Suzanne Friedman  
Future of the Little Food Pantry – Priscilla Nieman  
Digital Literacy – Matthew Bancroft-Smithe  
Health Disparities Among Women of Color – Alisha Hunt  
Accessibility task Force Report – Steve Chamberlin  
Solar Power – Austin Evens  
Cedar Falls Resiliency Plan – Aaron Hawbaker  
The Upcoming Election – Grant Veeder  
Who Are You – Talk Back – Ken Taylor  
Why Be Good – Talk Back – Robert Earle  
Celebrating UU Heroes You Probably Don't Know – Pam Hays  
Pills and Potions - Pathways  
Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels – Dr. Barbara Cutter  
Stories of the Struggle – Kathi Bower  
Iowa Environment – Art and Politics – Margaret Whiting  
Free Speech in the Trump Era – Al Hays  
In Their Own Words – Sue Hutchins  
Haitian Art in Waterloo  
Generosity – Rob Boody  
CVUU 101 – Juanita Williams  
CVUU Worship Associates – Kathi Bower  
Climate Justice Revival – Shirley Whiteside  
Repair – Soul Matters – Rob Boody  
Serving Health Needs in Black Hawk County – Allen Hospital



# Music Committee Report

Carolyn Hildebrandt, Interim Music Director

When Jess Lieb stepped down as our Music Director in August 2024, we thanked her profusely for an incredible 10+ years of service. This included planning music for Sunday services and other events; singing and playing piano and guitar; composing, arranging, and improvising; directing the Band and the Choir; and leading the Music Committee.

We knew that Jess would be hard to replace, but we didn't know how hard. Thinking that it would only be a matter of weeks before we could start interviewing qualified candidates, I stepped in to help. Now, 9 months later, we still do not have a Music Director.

As volunteer Interim Music Director, my solution has been to do as much as I could while juggling several other jobs. To keep things simple, I focused mainly on providing music for Sunday services, which typically includes a prelude, 3 hymns, a children's recessional, music for meditation/special music, and a postlude. As part of my duties, I selected music for most of the services; checked on copyrights; played the piano; composed, arranged and improvised; and invited church members and guest musicians to perform. My main goal has been to provide a variety of musical experiences to support the theme and mood of each service.

To coordinate my efforts with other committees and councils, I attended monthly Religious Services Council meetings, Thursday rehearsals, and consulted with whomever was providing the message for the service. If there were collaborating musicians, I rehearsed with them separately. On Sunday mornings, I was there early for warm ups and sound checks. In addition, I made sure that information about the music was available in time for inclusion in the Sunday bulletin, and arranged for the piano to be tuned.

To expand our musical offerings, I created a Guest Musician Program similar to one that I had created many years ago. However, unlike the previous program, this one is funded. Using money that would have gone towards paying our yet-to-be hired Music Director, we are now able to pay non-church members to perform. In addition, the Finance Council has budgeted money to continue this program through FY26, even if we hire a new Music Director.

I would like to thank the following CVUU members (and kids) for performing during Sunday Services this year: Callie Amiday (voice), Mandy Boody (voice), Rob Boody (voice), Bill Brown (guitar, percussion and voice), Nate Callahan (guitar, banjo and voice), Austin Evens (guitar and voice), Heather Flory (voice and percussion), Karen Impola (recorder and percussion), Jess Lieb (piano, guitar and voice), Erik Norquist (guitar and voice), and "Taylor and the Taylors": Taylor Hansen (violin), Walker Taylor (violin, piano and voice), William Taylor (cello), and Wren Taylor (string bass).

I would also like to thank the following Guest Musicians: Bethany Brooks (piano), Suzanne Bullard (cello), Elliot Purdum (cello), Tim Purdum (piano), Julie LaMendola (ukulele and voice), and Pip LaMendola (voice). Coming up in June will be a talented professional violin duo, Hannah Howland Jacobs and Austin Jacobs. I hope you can be there!

# Shared Ministry Council Report

Heather Flory

Shared ministry is the mutual responsibility that the congregation, the minister, and the professional staff share, committing them to work together to support and promote the growth and well-being of the CVUU congregation in all aspects of its community life.

The mission of the Shared Ministry Council (SMC) is to enhance the overall quality of the shared ministry of the CVUU by working with the minister and the Congregation to collaborate and support each other in shared leadership. This includes having regular meetings with the minister, assessing the health of the Congregation through surveys or other means, resolving conflicts for members who cannot do so on their own, and facilitating opportunities for members to develop the necessary skills to participate in shared leadership.

## **Council Members**

Members of the Shared Ministry Council this year included Heather Flory (chair), Nancie Groszkruger (Board liaison), Debra Kyler, Floralyn Groff, Byron Plumley (Dec 2024 – April 2025), and Pastor Emma Peterson.

Thank you to all the members of the Shared Ministry Council! A special thank you to Nancie for being our SMC Board liaison, to Debra, who took notes at our meetings, to Byron for his insight during the months he was on the council, and to Floralyn for continuing to serve on the council throughout her medical issues.

## **Accomplishments**

Here are some highlights of what we accomplished this year:

- We supported our minister in a variety of ways.
  - We continued to support Pastor Emma in other areas of her ministry as needed, serving as a sounding board for her to express her personal ministerial challenges, concerns, and successes.
  - We followed the CVUU's updated annual Ministerial Review process in April – May 2025, following the process outlined in the CVUU bylaws. According to the bylaws, each year, the SMC collaborates with the minister, with input from the current

- Board president and Religious Services Council chair, to review the minister's and the congregation's performance and discuss successes, challenges, goals, and areas for future improvement.
- We helped keep track of Pastor Emma's vacation time, study leave, and sabbatical leave.
  - We supported our congregation in a variety of ways.
    - We worked with Pastor Emma, CVUU members, and the UUA as needed to address conflict and attempt to resolve it.
    - We participated in the Next Steps weekend in January.
    - To enhance our own knowledge of how to handle conflict situations at the CVUU, we continued a common read discussion of the book: Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times, which was recommended to us by the UUA.
    - We had interesting conversations on a variety of topics related to the general well-being of our congregation and our role as a council.
    - We wrote newsletter articles to help inform members about opportunities to get involved at the CVUU.
    - We collaborated with the Board President and the Finance Council to prepare an addendum to Pastor Emma's ministerial agreement for FY26 to reflect minor changes to the ministerial agreement. An addendum is typically used during years when the entire ministerial agreement is not reviewed and updated.
  - We collaborated with the Congregational Life Council on areas where our councils connect or overlap, e.g., small groups, social activities, and the new member welcome process.
    - We held several engagement/activity planning meetings with members of the CLC, SMC, and interested others. These meetings resulted in the continuation of the First Friday Dinners throughout the fiscal year, the Find Your People socials in March, and continued collaboration between the two councils.
      - A special thanks to Michaela Rich, for taking the lead on First Friday Dinners from January through May, and a special thanks to Jill Miller for initiating and organizing the Happy Hangouts several Fridays a month. We plan to take a break from First Friday Dinners this summer and focus on more Happy Hangouts and other fun social activities. See the Weekly Update and Newsletter for activities happening throughout the summer.
    - See the Congregational Life Council report for additional information about engagement activities and all the great work they're doing to welcome visitors and new members to the CVUU.
      - Thank you to Juanita Williams and Jill Miller for co-leading the Congregational Life Council this year!

### **What's next?**

It takes the shared ministry of everyone in the congregation to make the CVUU work. For continued information from the Shared Ministry Council, see our regular contributions to the CVUU newsletter!

# Social Action Council Report

Austin Evens

The CVUU Social Action Committee has had an exciting year! Our group has continued to bring strong energy to the Cedar Valley to encourage equality and justice for many causes including, but not limited to, Climate, LGBTQIA+, and reproductive justice. Many members fully engaged during a critical time to support immigrants and refugees after recent initiatives to deport people without full USA citizenship.

First, I would like to say 'Thank You!' to all our members that continue to show up and support worthy causes. This is the third year you have allowed Lizzy and me to lead the CVUU social action committee. I appreciate all the support from committee members, staff and congregants. Our current committee members include: Al Hays, Pam Hays, Lizzy O'Loughlin, Sally Brown, Carollyn Hartsfield, Kathi Bower, Priscilla Nieman, Byron Plumley, Shirley Whiteside, Mollie Wallsteadt and Rosa Torres. It is truly a wonderful group. We are always looking to add to our roster so please reach out if you would like to join us!

Next, I would like to highlight a few projects this group was able to accomplish, with support from the congregation:

1. Social Action Plate Collection - For another year, Sally and Carollyn coordinated this effort to provide financial support for local causes. The congregation was able to vote on 8 organizations that the CVUU was able to raise funds for: Iowa Abortion Access Fund, Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Fund, Cedar Valley Victims Resource Coalition, 1619 Freedom School, Planned Parenthood of the North Central States, NE Iowa Food Bank, Iowa Safe Schools, and House of Hope. As always, we continued funding for Community Meals, The Little Food Pantry, and Guest at your table.
2. Cedar Valley PrideFest in downtown Waterloo - As expected, this event was a hit! Pridefest is special to our congregation and allows us to 'Walk our Talk' as a Welcoming Congregation - open and supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community. The committee did a great job organizing this event but the members of the UU are who make it possible. This year, members designed new flyers and cloth bags that were handed out. Our membership and marketing team made a new sign that was displayed with information about CVUU. Moria Brown and Roger Hahn designed a peek through photo board that was a big attraction. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way!
3. The 'Toilet-Tree' - This year, around the holiday season, our committee (lead by Kathi and Pam) collected toiletry items for those in need. The decision was made to switch gears with our holiday time fundraising and move away from the mitten tree, in hopes

to reach other people in our community and support the newly opened Warming Center.

4. Iowa UU Witness and Advocacy Network (a group that is dedicated to creating strong cooperative relationships among Iowa's 14 UU congregations as a basis for education and action) - Byron and Shirley presented a climate justice revival at the CVUU, organized by IUUWAN. This was a weekend long forum discussing pressing climate issues and deriving some local solutions to fight against climate change. These new ideas will be carried out at the CVUU through the remaining parts of the year. Look for climate focused adult forums, a carpool map and, for those able, some 'bike to church' Sundays.
5. The Little Food Pantry - Times are changing and so is the leadership of the little food pantry. Priscilla has spent many years supporting the CVUU Little Food Pantry but she has decided to step away to focus on her other passion projects within social justice. Thank you, Priscilla, for all the dedicated years! The LFP currently does not have consistent leadership but has some volunteers stocking the pantry on a 'part time' basis. With that being said, we are not quite ready to end the CVUU pantry but new leadership will need to step forward to keep it open long term. If you are interested in this project, reach out to the CVUU social action committee!
6. Pam has continued to support the CVUU on the Cedar Valley Interfaith Alliance. This is a great organization that brings together many leaders within faith organizations in our area for political discussions, climate debates and many other topics.
7. The Pollinator garden has continued to be a success and will continue to be an important project for the CVUU. We even had an exciting visitor this spring. As our team started preparing the garden for the summer, a mother duck was observed to have built a nest and laid some eggs behind our building. The decision was made to leave the duck where it was and prevent any work near the nest until the eggs were hatched. This is exciting to see nature play its course in our own backyard.
8. Cedar Valley Advocates for Immigrants and Refugees Rights - Molly, Rosa, Byron and Shirley have been active with this group. CV AIR has been a long running group in the Cedar Valley that has been dormant for some time. The recent attacks on immigrants and refugees in our area has re-ignited the group and the CVUU has stepped up to help in any way possible. This organization is working to build a network of resources for immigrants that may be targeted. This includes education on local laws, access to translators to help communicate with lawyers or councilors and organized protests showing support for those captured by ICE. If you have any interest in being connected with CV AIR, please reach out to social action!

9. The CVUU members continue to show presence at local community events and organizations. This year, members were present at the NAACP dinner, MLK Banquet, Voters' Rights March in Lincoln Park, Waterloo City Council Meetings, Cedar Falls City Council Meetings, Planned Parenthood Day on the Hill, local school board meetings, North End Culture Fest, Cedar Falls Human Rights Campaign meetings, and NE Iowa Food Bank. There have been many 'pop up' protests against the current climate that is propagating hateful rhetoric in politics. The CVUU continues to have many members showing support at these events.

This list certainly isn't all encompassing of the work the Social Action committee has completed, but it is a small glimpse into the great things that are happening at the CVUU. It has been a hard year with that change in political power within our country. Policies being pushed by the current administration continue to go against the beliefs of the CVUU. We have members of our congregation that are being marginalized and bullied because of the way they dress, talk or identify. Now, maybe more than ever, we need to stand up for our beliefs and push back against the bullies. We won't let up anytime soon. The state of Iowa has a lot to fight for, and together with our beloved community, we can do this! Let's continue to make good trouble.

## Nominating Committee Report

Michaela Rich

The following Board positions are up for election for the 2025-2026 year. Each individual is eligible and willing to serve.

### Officers – one-year terms (3 terms max)

President – Carolyn Hildebrandt ( 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

Vice President – Vacant as of 5/9/25

Finance – Vacant as of 5/9/25

Secretary – Vacant as of 5/9/25

### Trustees – two-year terms (2 terms max)

Congregational Life -- Margie Miller (1<sup>st</sup> term, 1<sup>st</sup> year)

Religious Services – Mandy Boody (1<sup>st</sup> term, 1<sup>st</sup> year)

Shared Ministry – Nancie Grozkruger (2<sup>nd</sup> term, 1<sup>st</sup> year)

The following Board positions are not up for election for the 2025-2026 year. Each individual is eligible and willing to serve.

### Trustees – two-year terms (2 terms max)

Social Action – Lizzy O'Loughlin (2<sup>nd</sup> term, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

Building and Grounds– Steve Chamberlin (1<sup>st</sup> term, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

The trustee for Religious Education and Programs is completing a term started by another individual, a change which has been approved by the board. The position will be up for election in 2026-2027. Curt Toppin is completing a term begun by Seth Chadwick, and is eligible and willing to serve

Religious Education and Programs – Curt Toppin (1<sup>st</sup> term, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

The following Nominating Committee position is up for election this year.

Advisory: Nominating Committee – three-year terms (2 terms max)

Linda Lechty (1<sup>st</sup> term, 1<sup>st</sup> year)

The following Nominating Committee positions are not on the election cycle for the 2025-2026 year.

Advisory: Nominating Committee – three-year terms (2 terms max)

Al Hays (1<sup>st</sup> term, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

Margie Miller (1<sup>st</sup> term, 3<sup>rd</sup> year)

Thank you to all who serve as CVUU Board Members and Nominating Committee Members.

Respectfully submitted by Michaela Rich

## Personnel Committee Report

Karen Impola, Vice President

This has been an eventful year for the Personnel Committee!

Between late August and mid-September, all three of the CVUU's part-time employees (Office Administrator, Music Director, and Director of Children's RE) left their jobs. It was coincidental that all of these happened in the same time frame; one was related to the employee finding full-time work elsewhere, one was because the person already had a full-time job and needed more work-life balance, and one was due to a lack of fit between the church's needs and the employee's vision of the job. Two of the three employees have continued to participate in our congregation.

It was a challenging time, to say the least. For parts of August and September, I (Karen) was performing aspects of the Office Administrator and RE jobs, as well as dealing with job searches for the three (or possibly four) positions.

Leann Lockard was hired for the Office Administrator position, beginning in mid-September. She has done an admirable job learning many different procedures, dealing with many people's requests, figuring out where to go for information in a sometimes chaotic system, and maintaining grace and flexibility throughout.

Ronan Parker came on as Coordinator of Children's Religious Education in late September. He has proved to be a highly empathetic, nurturing, and self-motivated employee.

Our original plan was to hire a second co-coordinator for RE, but this has proved challenging. Two different people were offered the job but declined it. We stopped posting the job on Indeed because it was getting very expensive, meaning we now have fewer applicants. We decided in the meantime to increase Ronan's hours. We would like in the future to expand them further, which would make this a benefit-eligible position, but that didn't seem financially feasible at the moment.

The Music Director position has been the hardest to fill. Our original job description was based on everything that Jess had been doing. Finding a person with \*all\* of those skills for a very part-time position was well-nigh impossible; we had basically no qualified applicants. We made the job description less demanding and raised the pay, but have still not had any luck. Carolyn Hildebrandt has generously stepped in to fill the gap - many thanks to Carolyn! We are using money that had been budgeted for the Music Director's salary to pay substitute pianists and guest musicians. Kudos also to Jess Lieb, who has volunteered their talents once a month or so. (Jess was grandfathered in as being both a CVUU member and a paid employee when we adopted a policy of not paying church members for church work; once they resigned the Music Director position, they could not be paid to return as a substitute.)

This is my third year as VP, so I will be stepping down at the end of the church year. I know there are things that I could have done better, but on the whole, I believe I made a positive contribution as VP, and it was an honor to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Impola