We unite
to strengthen the bonds of kinship among all persons;
to promote human dignity; and to increase reverence for life's creating, sustaining, and transforming power through worship, study, and service.

Presented prior to the Annual Meeting to be held on May 15, 2016
A Song for the Unsung
by Steve Crump

You make the coffee, set up the tables, and organize the cleaning, when the rest of us have gone home.
You know where the brooms and the supplies are kept.
You run to the store in the nick of time.
You find the great stuff to sell at the fundraiser.
You remember to use “I” language.
You speak passionately with a clear voice and listen with open-mindedness.
You consider your tone when you speak.
You say you want to be part of the solution, part of the healing, by hanging in there.
You come up with new ideas.
You gracefully accept the group choosing someone else’s idea.
You step up to make the extra contribution.
You make welcoming room for others.
You acknowledge children and are happy to be around them.
You hold a child, hold a confidence, hold a hand.
You go the extra mile, contribute the extra dollar, and give the benefit of the doubt.
You know that congregational life is all about relationships.
And because you know this, your spiritual discipline of forgiveness is always at hand.
You, with your presence alone, offer a holy companionship.
You accompany others in their dark night of the soul.
You do what you do because you can.
You often wish you could do more.

You labor not for praise or for a song but for the good in the doing of work.

But we sing this song of praise for you – the unsung in our congregation.
And our hearts are glad in the singing because we know the many things you do.
We appreciate you very much.
Our Vision
We come together as a congregation to inspire our quests for the spiritual, ethical, and meaningful in life and to advance respect, compassion, and justice in the wider world.

Our Mission
Countryside is seen as the growing voice and source of liberal religion in the northwest Chicago suburbs by…

…creating a place of inclusiveness, welcome, connectedness, compassion and respect
…providing for the spiritual and intellectual growth of members of all ages
…cultivating a vital future for our congregation and community through thoughtful stewardship of our financial resources and our environment
…acting on a social conscience

To serve our mission and make real our vision, we engage with one another and with this congregation in the light of these

Aspirations of Membership:
To the extent that my life circumstances permit, as a member of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist I will:
• Attend Sunday services and congregational meetings
• Seek out and share opportunities for spiritual, ethical, and meaningful growth
• Engage in congregational projects, programs, or events that reach beyond the church
• Engage in congregational projects, programs, or events that support the life of the church
• Strive to give 3 - 5% of my income to support the mission of the church
• Share with others outside the church the value of my membership at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist

Covenant of Right Relationship
In my relationship with the CCUU community and in keeping with our UU values, I will strive to:
• Take responsibility for my words and actions by being honest and respectful in my speech, while listening to others with an open mind and heart;
• Be sensitive to possible conflicts, and be willing to work toward solutions using available resources, accepting that some differences may not be resolvable;
• Respect and support the diversity within our congregation, and work to create and maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all.
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PRESIDENT’S REPORT

There has been a great deal of time and energy this year in working towards positioning Countryside for a sustainable future. We want to preserve and value all that is strong and good in our congregation while developing new strategies for staying strong going forward. The past few years have been a time of transition and change. We lost valued staff and had interruptions in volunteer leadership, with both a Board President and Treasurer moving on short notice. After a generation of remarkable stability and growth, the economy and our culture in general has been experiencing an extended period of change and adjustment to a world where change is occurring at an increasingly fast and unpredictable pace. That has left some of us hesitant about taking risks to build a future filled with so many unknowns. And yet, to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world, we will need to take some risks, try new things that may or may not all work, and be willing to accept uncertainty as an opportunity. Our UU beliefs, and this congregation specifically, have much to offer to those who come through our doors each week and to the larger community beyond our walls.

We now have a full professional staff team in place who are working together to keep effective programs in place and to implement new ideas that have the promise of bringing even more positive energy and growth to our congregation. There will be a high degree of continuity in volunteer leadership at the Board and committee levels that will make it easier to continue the work already begun. The large amount of staff and volunteer time that has been needed to search for our new staff and gather information to help us shape our future is now free for building that future. Your Board believes strongly that, after several years of transition and ‘treading water’ we are now in a position where we can act together to build a strong future for CCUU.

Much of the work that has been done this year has been behind the scenes. One area of focus for the Board of Trustees (BOT) this year has been to work to build on the information collected by the Strategic Planning Committee. They did not present us with a specific plan, but gathered information from the congregation as a whole about their hopes for our future and areas where there was the greatest amount of interest in developing. The BOT and the committees of the Ministry Council have been working to turn that information into an actionable plan. Priorities have been set and work continues to break down overarching goals into specific, actionable steps. An update on where things stand at this point was made available at our April Town Hall meeting and can also be found later in this report.

Several years ago, the Board of Trustees began a process of moving from being an operational board to being a policy board. This evolving change in our role is considered best practice for a non-profit governance structure of our size. Following those best practices, our role, as a policy board, needs to be one of providing strategic direction, developing policy, and providing oversight and evaluation. The BOT part of the strategic plan that is being built will reflect this.

The last time our Policy and Operational Guidelines were updated, Countryside’s committees had just been re-organized into ministries and the BOT has just started the process of moving towards being a policy board instead of an operating board. Now that we have lived with this set-up for a while, a review and update are needed. All current policies are being reviewed and new policies that will support the goals of the Strategic Plan are being developed. Organizational process are being streamlined so that staff and committees implementing plans have the support and information they need to be successful and so that everyone’s time, both volunteers and staff, can be used in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

One of the biggest challenges for any organization like ours is that we have a small professional staff supported by a large number of volunteers in key organizational areas. Countryside has been blessed to have many volunteers to share their time and talent, but most of those volunteers have other full-time jobs and there is constant turn-over in positions held by volunteers. New people coming on-board don’t know the history behind past decisions, unfinished business from one year ends up buried in someone’s notes that don’t get passed along, and relationships between various committees that need to work together have to constantly be re-built as new people step into leadership positions. Our congregation, to build a strong future, must be able to function as a coordinated, cohesive whole, so steps are being taken to help make this goal easier to accomplish.
Mike Gilley, during his year as President of the BOT, set up a google drive so the Board could easily share documents for each meeting. Before stepping down, he set up a way for our meeting minutes and other reports to be linked to the CCUU web-site. We are still working out some bugs in the system, but ultimately this will allow information from Board meetings to be available to the entire congregation much more quickly, and it will stay easily available.

This year, to improve communication across committees, and also to be sure that work that has been done stays accessible for future volunteers, we have greatly expanded the use of the google drive to encompass the work of all the Board committees. The Ministry Council has also set up their own drive. One of the frustrations that many of us have experienced in past years is the feeling of a disconnect between the work and efforts of different committees. The work of one group has sometimes conflicted with the work of another, or valuable volunteer time is wasted in duplicating work, or not acting on work already done but not shared widely enough. Having our work, past and present, in a format that can be easily accessed makes it much easier to share information across committees and teams. It also means past work will not be lost, and unfinished work will stay in full view until it is acted upon. The BOT will have the widest access, with each committee, group or staff member having access to their particular folders as well.

Along with document folders, a google calendar has been set up that will show the planning and deadline schedules that each major committee works with. This will allow key committees to see each other’s deadlines, as well as maintain a shared record of things that must be done, ranging from a preventive maintenance schedule in operations to the budget-building deadlines all committees must be aware of, to when staff evaluations are going on in the Personnel area and much more. As we all get used to using this system, it should make it much easier for all of us to work more effectively as a coordinated whole.

In Faith,
Karen Noorani
President, Board of Trustees

Building a Strategic Plan for Countryside
The purpose of building a strategic plan is to create a clear guidepost by which diverse members of a group are able to act together to achieve the overarching purpose, mission, and vision of that group. Therefore the content and direction of that plan should be to outline the steps needed to fully realize that shared purpose over a period of time.

A strategic plan needs be a living document. It should be able to be revised in response to changes in mission or vision, or in the conditions that surround the organization. However, it must provide a strong enough guide to the vision of the group that it will inspire and require good faith to achieve it. It must strike a balance between hard realities and the overarching purpose of the group – but purpose should always have the final word.

Steps towards building a Strategic Plan:
I. 2014/15: A Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was formed, it’s purpose to gather information from the congregation about their hopes and desires for the future of our congregation. The SPC grouped those hopes and desires into the following key areas:
  
  - Countryside will demonstrate compassion and respect for all persons as a place of inclusiveness, welcome and connectedness, practicing radical hospitality
  - Countryside will be a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages
  - Countryside will cultivate a vital future for our congregation and community through thoughtful stewardship of our financial and human resources
  - Countryside will engage in a public ministry of social conscience as an advocate, witness and change agent for social justice and human dignity issues of concern
The information collected by the SPC re-affirmed our congregation’s commitment to our UU principles and a desire to act on those principles.

II. The Board of Trustees (BOT) analyzed the study results, considering the main points as well as the ideas that were listed under each of those points. Our first step was to identify every idea listed as either a technical or adaptive strategy or challenge:

**Technical Strategies** are developed as a response to a problem or issue that can be dealt with in a clear-cut, concrete way. Technical strategies may not be easy to implement, but the steps for implementation are clear-cut and can be clearly defined similarly by those impacted by it and engaged in addressing it. Technical challenges can be managed. A team can be formed, they can make a plan, make decisions, hold people accountable and execute their plan. Results are measurable. There is a direct line from action to results.

**Adaptive Strategies** are implemented in response to adaptive challenges. Adaptive challenges are generally complex, with intertwined, and often competing, perspectives of the various stakeholders. There are different views of the problem and different perspectives on what might constitute a viable solution. Defining a pathway for a solution requires learning new skills or new ways of thinking, acknowledging that there can be more than one ‘right’ solution. Applying adaptive strategies will often require an evolution in thinking or relationships. It is unlikely that there will be a direct line from any one action to a desired result.

The BOT believes that, to go strongly into the future, Countryside needs to have a plan that has a focus on adaptive strategies. To remain relevant as a vibrant, growing community and organization we need to be sure that our actions in the future are adaptive to our changing society, demographics and culture, while staying true to our UU principles.

Identifying and consolidating the adaptive ideas collected by the SPC, the BOT constructed the following key points to use to shape a strategic plan.

- Influence the wider community regarding the thoughtful stewardship of a sustainable environment
- Identify and nurture new leaders
- Empower and equip members of our congregation to actively represent our faith and vision
- Become a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages.
- Demonstrate compassion and respect for all persons with our congregation defined as one of inclusiveness and connectedness through “radical hospitality”.
- Make social action and community engagement part of the individual spiritual journey
- Develop a community focus for our programming

III. We do not have unlimited resources of time and monies, so action on all of the above ideas simultaneously is not realistic. Therefore, the next step was to share our work with the Ministry Council. Working together with them, we prioritized the ideas to determine a starting point for the next steps in the development of the strategic planning process. Our top 4 were as follows:

1. Making social action and community engagement part of the individual spiritual journey
2. Become a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages
3. Influencing the wider community regarding the thoughtful stewardship of a sustainable environment.

4. Demonstrate compassion and respect for all persons with the church as a place of inclusiveness and connectedness through “radical hospitality.”

IV. Since the top two priorities fell clearly under the areas of our Ministries, the Ministry Council took on the project of working with their committees to turn those two areas into a set of specific goals and actions that will guide their activities for the next several years. Sheryl Skifstad who, as VP of the Board, leads the Ministry Council, has drafted that work onto a proposed timeline and is currently working with the committees to validate the proposed approaches. Long-range planning is a complex task and the Ministry Council and their committees are doing a great job in their first ever attempt to put something like this together. Below are initial steps that some of our committees and ministries are working towards implementing as they align their goals with a long-range vision.

1. Making social action and community engagement part of the individual spiritual journey
   - Social Action Committee:
     - Work with MC and the BOT to develop a church-wide process of building consensus for action on social justice issues
       [Also a goal of the Living the Welcoming Congregation Ctee]
     - Consider working towards Fair Trade Congregational certification
     - Action in the areas of prison justice and Black Lives Matter
     - Engage with UUANI (UU Advocacy Network)
   - Green Sanctuary
     - Grow awareness and engagement with issues of recycling, climate change, Earth Day
     - Community engagement with St. James Green Team
   - Kinship
     - Encourage & support participation in social action initiatives
     - Design a process for measuring/recognizing individual engagement

2. Become a transformational source of spiritual and intellectual growth for members of all ages:
   - Kinship
     - Diverse offerings in small group ministries
   - Worship
     - Expand opportunities in music programming, including potentially a children’s music program
     - Increase intergenerational worship opportunities
     - Add evening services and special interest services
     - Explore Themed ministry topics

3. Influencing the wider community regarding the thoughtful stewardship of a sustainable environment:
   - See Green Sanctuary plans under #1
   - Consider as a congregation, guided by Green Sanctuary, how to be a model for sustainability in the community

4. Demonstrate compassion and respect for all persons with the church as a place of inclusiveness and connectedness through “radical hospitality.”
   - Living the Welcoming Congregation
     - Congregation-wide social gatherings
   - Kinship
     - Work to enhance a welcoming and comfortable community

V. Now that the Board of Trustees (BOT) has the initial results of the work of the Ministry Council and its committees, as they continue to build on their initial work, we are working to determine what actions we need to take that will align with the efforts of our Ministries and staff, as well as reflect the hopes and dreams of the congregation as a whole. General areas of attention:
- Streamlining Countryside’s organizational structure and processes to empower the Ministry Council and all committees and teams to act on their goals
- Update and add church policies that support the goals of church committees and the congregation
- Develop a calendar that supports long-range planning, integration and coordination amongst groups, and includes regular assessment of progress towards stated goals
- Solidify a budget-building and stewardship process that connects our mission with our pledging.
- Work with the ministries, other committees and the congregation to build a sustainable future.
This year was a turning point year for Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist. A world of great and generous work has been done by the members and friends of CCUU that is gradually transforming this congregation. I’d like to talk all about this work and these transformations – but you will discover them as you read through these pages. What you will also discover is the level of commitment and creativity on the part of the people who make up this congregational community. I’ve always liked the word congregation – I started out in a funky little place called the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta, I attended Bet Haverim Congregation while I was there, as well. I did my internship at Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation. What I like about the word is that, even though it indicates the whole – the building, the people, the clergy, the spirit -- it focuses on the people -- which is, rightly, where the focus belongs. It is the people who make a faith community live, breathe, act, serve, and thrive. This congregation, while facing challenges, is ready to thrive. It has been a rewarding year for me participating in this work.

The year had, for me, a rocky start, as I lost one of my dearest friends to a very short battle with cancer. At first, I felt the emptiness and heaviness that comes with grief, but the grief, itself, became part of the rich learning and growing of this year. Of course, I’d rather still have my friend – but I have reached the stage where I have found the gifts of loss as well as the burden.

It wasn’t only a year of loss for me but for many in the congregation who lost parents and friends as well. Since the publication of our last Annual Report, among our members, we lost Jim Booth in May and Lee Stokes in November, and, in August, a friend of the congregation who was preparing to become a member, Richard Hooven.

It was a year of spiritual and professional growth for me.

In early October, I attended the regional “retreat” for the Unitarian Universalist Minister’s Association. The program, led by the Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed was a powerful exploration of the politics and realities of race in our congregations and the history of our movement as a whole. I am excited that, through the outreach of Alison Vernon, he will be joining us for a worship service and program at CCUU in the autumn.

Later in October, I travelled to Salt Lake City to attend the Parliament of the World’s Religions. It was 6 intense days of interfaith dialogue, community, inspirational speakers, and workshops. I returned to CCUU with stories and learning to share and was grateful to reengage with the Interfaith community when, during the winter, the Islamic Center of the Northwest Suburbs faced real challenges as they tried to expand their space in Rolling Meadows. That struggle continues and a small, but strong contingent, including Tom Curtis, Yvette Johnson, Melanie Schikore, David Silverman, and our Ministerial Intern, Eileen Wiviott, have attended meetings and offered support.

In January, friends of Mark’s took us to Italy. It was a tremendous gift and a great adventure and I absorbed as much as I could that would be of use to CCUU and our faith. I look forward to sharing it.

Throughout the year, I have been inspired by the times I have been able to spend with the Black Lives Matter Initiative – a strong group of lay leaders in our congregation who are working, along with the staff and our Ministerial Intern, to lift up a vital conversation, throughout our congregation, on race. It is a critically important topic in the unfolding of US history, a contemporary challenge to US society, and an excellent opportunity for learning, growing, changing, and serving our principles and ethics as a faith community.

I had looked forward to this year, as Eileen Wiviott, the Ministerial aspirant I had been advising for some years, would start in the fall of 2015. And she has been a pleasure to have here. She is learning and growing – but she also has strong gifts already present for the ministry as well as a wealth of experience in congregational leadership and maturity in life that not only shows promise for the future, but great benefit in the present. She is well supported also by an Internship Team, who are mentioned in her report.

In mid-summer, our new Music Director Alison Vernon started her service with us by attending the UU Musicians
Network conference. It was just one indication of the seriousness, depth, and enthusiasm with which she has entered this position. The autumn was a time for activating her Transition Team, planning the worship calendar together, and beginning to establish the spirit of a staff team. She has brought significant experience, talent, and a thirst for constantly learning and growing to her work. Beginning any new staff position is time consuming and challenging, but the planning of worship has been a joy with her. As we move forward, this collaboration will grow stronger and, therefore, more satisfying for the faith community here.

I knew that the new congregational year would pose some challenges since a very diligent and widespread search had failed to turn up an Interim Director of Religious Education. As it happens, there is a shortage of them, nationally. We were amazingly lucky that the new Religious Education Assistant, Lisa Vanderbleek, who had been hired in the spring, was generously willing to act as a temporary coordinator for our program. She wouldn’t do the interim work of exploring the program, helping our Faith Development program at all ages stop and ask the kinds of questions that are fruitful and useful in an interim period, and she wouldn’t be asked to create curricula – but really just to coordinate teachers and facilitate the program. She served well – and more than well. So much of what she did was unseen – but we managed for 5 months without any real snags – and with much real success – which – if you know the size and complexity of simply the children and youth part of the RE program – is a small miracle.

Meanwhile, a new Search Team of Judy Ball, Linda Berry, Kathi Hillyer, Linda Berry, CarolAnn Shindelar, Chuck Smith, and myself began an earnest search again. We were truly fortunate to have such a strong Search Team and, after long and painstaking preparation, the Search ended mid-year, with the hire of Jules Jaramillo, whom we moved across country to work with us. The reality of the RE Assistant, was a major attraction in the position, as it will mean, that we can take on fresh approaches to our Religious Education program, including a Lifespan Focus. It is an approach that will make our families stronger, our intergenerational connections deeper, our focus as a congregation more cohesive. In addition, the RE assistant will enable our DLRE to do innovative programming for all ages, like the themed ministry that I will mention in a moment.

Still, the most exciting thing, for me, is that we have assembled a new staff team that has tremendous enthusiasm and a strong sense of shared vision and a spirit of service and is more equipped for success than ever before. When Jules Jaramillo began with us, we held another staff retreat to help with cohesion and we are looking forward to a mid-May session with a personnel consultant so that we can be the strongest and most creative team possible.

With some excitement, the staff is also looking at the most successful programming from around the country, blending with our own expertise, and drawing on the gifts and passions of the congregation here, shaping learning and worship so that we can all grow spiritually, intellectually, personally, and as a faith community.

Of course, I have studied this year, taking an online course in racial awareness and another in pre-marriage counseling. The learning is very fulfilling and gives me both material and inspiration. This year, I also began a blog -- which is reachable through the CCUU website (Ministers & Staff tab). If you have any trouble finding it, please look at https://therockshelf.com. I hope to “see” you there.

There are so many upcoming opportunities for which we have laid the groundwork this past year, and particularly, since the full staff has been together.

- Alison Vernon has been highly successful navigating her first year here and has begun actively engaging children and youth in worship, bringing new energy to services with the band and seeking fresh avenues to enrich our worship experience. We expect to increase the involvement of our children and youth in music both in worship and in other settings in the congregation.

- Themed Ministry is an approach to whole congregation learning and worship that has energized many UU congregations around the US and is in use, already in 6 congregations in the Greater Chicago area and will include 4 more this coming year. This is an approach that offers a genuinely intergenerational approach to church, engaging individuals and families, and groups of all sorts in themes throughout the year that creates the groundwork for more connections and stronger relationships throughout the congregation. It engages the congregation during worship, Religious Education for all ages, small group ministry and allows for greater dialogue for families, among generations, sharper congregational focus – more spiritual, intellectual, and social cross-pollination and connection. It will not necessarily displace spontaneous offerings – but, over time, it will allow us, as a congregation, to create and select programs that will really support our thriving and ongoing learning together.

- We are dedicated to bringing our children into our service more often and to building their understanding of
our worship. The DLRE and I have already begun encouraging this.

- Our DLRE’s ability to do this sort of work has been made possible because she has the strong assistance of the RE Assistant, a position we have gradually built for the purposes for handling some of the mountain of administrative work that Religious Educators face, which prevents them from real program innovation, RE family support, and working collaboratively to lift and to meet the changing needs of our members at all ages.
- Our staff team is focused on making sure that the experience here at CCUU gets stronger and deeper all the time; that seekers here find ways to belong and that our good news is shared and not hidden. We are working on, planning, and getting ready to present the first session of our Pathfinder Process that will help seekers in our congregation find a sense of belonging sooner and more effectively.
- Also, the staff team is working on new adult education modules and joining with other congregations on this to help members feel more strongly connected, grow as individuals, and feel empowered in their lives and in the congregation. We are partnering with other regional congregations to further enrich programming and opportunities.
- Our ongoing Green Sanctuary commitment is very encouraging and, perhaps, as it grows, will engage more of the congregation as we stretch to become more and more a model of living our Seventh Principle and having a smaller and smaller footprint.
- This year, a dedicated team of members have turned to face and work with the issue of racism and its impact on our culture. Through reading, dialogues, films, and upcoming programs — such as the upcoming beloved conversations in the autumn. This focus will help us to become more welcoming and more interculturally competent, as well as giving us the opportunity to form new connections.
- This congregation has wanted to look both outward and inward for a long time. We have not wanted to sacrifice spiritual growth for social conscience and have wanted to live our principles in such a way that we can have an impact in the world as well as our own lives. Through the increased number of our community partnerships we have great plans.
  - On July 29, 2016, with Partners for Our Community (POC - formerly known as Palatine Opportunity Center), we will host the last day of their month-long summer camp. It will be a half day of small festival games and treats and an opportunity for people of all ages to volunteer and to make connections with the kids from POC. The kids will come with their camp counselors as well.
  - In addition, this is the first year that POC is holding a week of day camp for high school age young people, and CCUU will host a day of activities at Deer Grove for the high school group.
  - We have formed a partnership with Wellness House, which provides free support (counseling, peer support, pain management, family support) for people fighting cancer, and it brings now 3 groups into our space, learning about us, experiencing our support for their struggles.
  - The work that our members are doing with the Islamic Center in Rolling Meadows will lead to future dialogue, work, learning, and real connection over time.

This is only a smattering of what is going on and what will be coming to CCUU over the next year -- after long transition, we are readier than ever for excellent things at CCUU.

For the sake of our faith, for the sake of all the people who come here and find their lives positively transformed, for the sake of new generations rising here, for the sake of the people who don’t yet know about us as a congregation or a faith -- we are ready to shape, create, sustain, enliven, encourage, reach out, and grow. We can see all around us how much this faith is needed.

*It is an honor for me to serve this faith with you here.*

*Hilary Landau Krivchenia*
DIRECTOR OF LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I began as Countryside Church UU’s Director of Lifespan Religious Education January 19, 2016. In this short time, I do not feel I can give a comprehensive report but I am honored to share with you what I have been witness to and have experienced in these few months serving as your DLRE. These insights will also serve as a reflection of the many good works and the dedication this community has for Lifespan Religious Education. CCUU has welcomed me with open arms and open hearts - showed me love and support for which I offer my sincere gratitude. I stand in awe of this faith community for when I look at you, I understand the meaning of Unitarian Universalism. Your commitment to our faith, to each other, and to the community at large creates a better world for all of us to live in.

Search Committee
Judy Ball, Linda Berry, Kathi Hillyer, CarolAnn Shindelar, Chuck Smith and Kim Tilford
This is where our journey together began and my first impression of Countryside Church UU. The dedicated group of individuals trusted with the task to hire a Director of Lifespan Religious Education, worked tirelessly to represent CCUU’s vision for this position. Through them, I learned of your history and dreams. Through them, I came to love you. Through them, we have today to cherish and our tomorrow’s to look forward to. CCUU could not have chosen a better group of people to represent you. Thank you.

Transition Team
Cara Duffy, John Conneely, Kim Tilford and Gloria Kinney
I am very fortunate to have had a Transition Team in place at the time of my arrival at Countryside Church UU. They have been a source of support and clarity as I have become settled in to my position. The have bridged gaps, helped facilitate compassion when I have unintentionally stepped on toes, and been a sounding board for endless questions. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

Lifespan Start Up
In April, Countryside Church UU held a congregationally wide Lifespan Religious Education Start-Up, facilitated by Nancy Combs-Morgan (Leadership and Organizational Development) from the Mid America Region of the UUA. 27 congregants were in attendance where we united as a congregation and began steps to embrace faith formation through a multi-generational lens.

Interim and Transition Work
I never had the opportunity to meet Rev Colleen Vahey, but from the footprint she left behind, I feel like I do know her and admire her dedication to Countryside Church UU and our faith. She left a legacy that lives on in the program and all of you.

When a beloved and longtime religious educator leaves a congregation, it is inevitable for there to be interim work needed. A space needs to be created for a new professional, healing facilitated over the loss, and assessment of the program strengths and needs. Some of this work naturally took place when Lisa Vanderbleek was hired as CCUU’s RE Coordinator. When I was hired as your DLRE, I understood that there was unfinished interim work to be done, and having the UUA’s Interim Professional Training endorsement, we have been actively engaged in some of the interim tasks.

My leadership in the interim process has been a slower and gentler approach to these tasks as our relationship is settled- permanent. Together, we have been and will continue to explore CCUU’s history, our identity and direction, how to deepen connections to leadership and the systems we have in place, renewing linkages to our faith, leadership commitments and new direction of Lifespan Religious Education.

Staff
Rev Hilary Krivchenia, Laurie Lantz, Alison Vernon, Eileen Wiviott
Countryside Church UU’s staff members, under the exemplary leadership of Rev Hilary, are the most outstanding group of individuals I have ever had the honor to work with. They have offered me their generosity of spirit, support, time and especially patience as I have become oriented. They consistently strive to create an environment of creativity, collaboration and articulate the vision of CCUU in all they do. It is an honor to be a part of the CCUU staff and team.
RE Assistant
Lisa Vanderbleek was hired as the RE Assistant last year, and before she could get settled into that role, she moved into the RE Coordinator position. She dedicated herself and her work to CCUU’s vision and under her guidance and during some challenging times, the RE program flourished. When I was hired as the DLRE, Lisa shifted back to her original Assistant position with grace. She has been by my side and ensured the continuity of our program as I have become orientated here. Thank you, Lisa!

Childcare Providers
We are also very fortunate to have a conscientious and caring childcare team - Aida Acurio and Cindy Ghrist. CCUU appreciates the many ways they serve our Nursery and Chalice Children classes and provide childcare for meetings and events. We are very fortunate to have such skilled and dedicated support for our youngest members.

Religious Education Council
Susan Conneely (Chair), Tim Reuter-Bowers, Cara Duffy, Jen Alton, Jeff Oremland, Liza Bezella, Laura Corrigan
The RE Council are simply a source of inspiration and I am very fortunate to have had this team in place from the day I arrived at Countryside Church UU. They have demonstrated an immense amount of dedication and guidance during this year of transition in the Children and Youth RE program (CYRE). Through their dedication and support, the RE program not only was maintained but also flourished under their leadership and guidance.

Over the past several months the RE Council has been key in my ability to get oriented and settle. Together, we are discovering how to work cohesively and support one another and the CYRE program. We are in the midst of delving into the vision for the Lifespan RE and how this vision will span across all areas of CYRE. Together, we have already brought opportunities for multi-age and multigenerational opportunities. We have been able to creatively address some of the program and volunteer challenges of a comprehensive CYRE program as a team and always with the heart of our program in mind.

I am blessed with the exceptional group of people and look forward to our continued work together. Thank you RE Council! (See RE Council Report later in the Study Ministry)

Senior High Youth Group
Lead Advisor: Kim Tilford; Youth Ministry Team: Steve Black, Jeanie Michalec; Youth Group Support: Venu Vasudevan, Donna LaJeunesse
I have had the opportunity to meet with the Senior High Youth Group (SHYG) on a few occasions since my arrival as well as be witness to their youth service. They are a dynamic group of teens and I look forward to getting to know them better. Kim Tilford has been a pillar in the stability of the SHYG along with the entire Youth Ministry Team. All of us are aware there will be some transitions in the coming year as several beloved students bridge and as we recruit new youth advisors. I am looking forward to working closely with Kim and the Youth Ministry Team. (See SHYG report later in the Study Ministry)

20/30 Somethings Young Adult Ministry
Coordinated by Jessica Gardner, Ryan Schaefges
Over the last few months, it has been an absolute pleasure to get to know some of our young(ish) adults at CCUU. Our community is very fortunate to have such a vibrant and flourishing 20/30 Somethings Group and Ministry. They continue to be engaged in social activities, group discussion, worship and social action – meeting twice each month. This year, 20/30 Somethings transitioned from Kinship to Study Ministry with the intention to strengthen and nurture their ties to our community. Young adults bridge the gap between youth and adult ministry to create a fully multigenerational Lifespan Religious Education program. I am looking forward to their future at CCUU.

Adult Faith Development
Coordinated by Bernice McCarthy
Countryside Church’s Adult Faith Development program continues to provide opportunities for adults to be challenged educationally and spiritually. (See AFD report later in Study Ministry)

Multigenerational/Multiage Focus
In line with our long-range strategic plan there has been concerted effort in creating multigenerational opportunities within our congregation over the past several months.
- Chalice Children (2-3 years) participated in the Earth Day celebration and multiage activities for Earth Day prep.
• As of April, Spirit Play (4 years – 1st Grade) is attending the first 20 minutes of Sunday morning worship service
• Spirit Play will now be included in our Faith in Action Program as is best suited for them.
• 10 children participated in the multigenerational choir for the song “I Am the Earth” at the Earth Day service.

Worship
I have enjoyed planning and coordinating the recent Earth Day-Child Dedication multigenerational service with Rev Hilary and Alison. I have collaboratively worked with Rev Hilary for the message-for-all-ages elements of our Sunday services and was witness to the Senior Youth Service. I also led the Living Exercise of Unitarian Universalism services on April 24 and had the opportunity to coordinate this service with our Music Director and Intern Minister.

Professional Development
I am a longtime member of Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) on a national level and have recently become a member of LREDA MidAmerica Region. In May, I will be attending a 3-day Renaissance Module on Adult Faith Development with 20 other Religious Educators in the region. I will be attending General Assembly (GA) this summer in Ohio where I will also be participating in LREDA Professional Days. In the last year, I have been working with the LREDA Integrity Team developing a multicultural non-biased education module for teacher training that should be finalized by GA 2017.

Looking Forward
I am very excited as Study Ministry and Lifespan Religious Education begins planning for next year. The 2016-2017 year will be filled with opportunities to build a stronger foundation in Unitarian Universalism. The Children and Youth Program will be discovering ways to connect to who we are, what we believe, what we do and how we love in our faith. We will be introducing Themed Ministry and Full Week Faith into our programs and worship in an effort to create opportunities for multigenerational connections and how to live Unitarian Universalism with purpose and intention throughout our daily lives. We will be offering Adult Faith Development workshops and classes that will connect us to the web of life and ground us in what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. I am looking forward to our journey together next year.

~I wish to extend my gratitude to the entire congregation for their helping me to feel welcomed and supported as I have gotten settled at Countryside Church UU. I look forward to our future together…

Love, Love and more Love-
Jules Jaramillo
COMMUNITY MINISTER

Community Ministers in the Unitarian Universalist Association are required to be a member of a UU society and to possess a certification in some form of specialized ministry. I remain grateful to Countryside Church for being the Affiliated Congregation for my work. Even though it is no longer required, I believe it is healthy for Community Ministers to stay in relationship with a specific UU congregation.

I am a Board Certified Diplomate of the National Guild of Hypnotists. This is the highest level of professional rank that can be earned. I am also a Certified HeartMath Coach, which allows me the right to use the research results from the HeartMath Institute in California in my hypnotic work. I specialize in working with persons who have life-changing medical problems and help them using an advanced form of medical hypnosis. In the small world of hypnotic practitioners I am well known, and if anyone is interested you will find the details on my web site at www.CSGiles.org

This past year I took retired status as a Board Certified Chaplain and became a Lifetime Member of the Association of Professional Chaplains. Also, I completed my second and final term as President of the Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries. I have enjoyed my work with these two national organizations, but as I approach my 65th birthday, it is time to release some obligations and adjust to a slower pace.

I filled our pulpit three times this year. I am not paid by our congregation. The majority of the work I do is with cancer patients. The revenue for my practice comes from patients in my ICAN hospital program at LaGrange Memorial and from private clients who consult me at my office in Wheaton. I maintain free clinics for cancer patients at Wellness House in Hinsdale, Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, and Edward Hospital in Naperville. New this year, I now maintain a fourth clinic hosted by Countryside Church in conjunction with Wellness House. Between these four clinics I help up to 100 cancer patients each month without charge.

This year I have taught at the annual convention of the National Guild of Hypnotists and the Mid-America Hypnosis Conference. I write a quarterly column for the Journal of Hypnotism and sit on the Board of the National Guild of Hypnotists. I will be teaching the Medical Hypnotism Certification Course at the annual convention of the National Guild of Hypnotists in August along with other trainings.

I want to thank you all for your kindness and support, and I am happy to be part of Countryside Church. I am also especially grateful to my parish colleague, Rev. Krivchenia, who has been most generous and welcoming to me as the Affiliated Community Minister in her congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. C. Scot Giles, D.Min.
I began as Director of Music here at Countryside beginning in July 2015. The first thing I did was attend the Unitarian Universalist Network (UUMN) Annual Conference. This year it was held in Boston during the last week of July. It was a wonderful event and keenly nourishing to me as I was just starting my position here.

At the UUMN conference I found how tremendously important music is to Unitarian Universalism and I met and networked with Unitarian Universalist church musicians from all over the United States. I had the opportunity to explore new music appropriate for our services and to hear music by Unitarian Universalist composers. This conference is really essential to promote and grow a church music program and Unitarian Universalist music.

The music program at Countryside Church is alive, well and thriving. In August, we kicked off our choir season with a choir potluck/retreat. We got to know each other and began rehearsing music for upcoming services. About 30 members attended.

In September, Ingathering began with guest musician Jim Scott visiting our church and providing appropriate music in folk style. September also brought a beautiful Jewish High Holiday service, as well as a service that introduced our pastor-intern Eileen Wiviott.

I have been grateful that the choir has sung at most services September through June, contributing music intended to enhance the theme of the service by presenting an anthem and leading the congregation in singing hymns. About a third of those services, they sang BOTH services so that the congregation experiences the same service at two different times which helps to keep the services connected to each other. We have noticed an increase in attendance at both services this year but particularly at the early service. A church band has been organized and is led by Greg Schultz. They have provided music that has brought a different tone and dimension to our services. They have played approximately once every 4-6 weeks and also for BOTH services, making the choir furlough, another texturally rich Sunday.

Twice this year, we have had an All Generation choir...Christmas Pageant Sunday and Earth Day. I hope we can expand the role of music with all generations in the coming year.

Planning the service music for each service is a labor of love for me. Working with Hilary or whoever is preaching brings an opportunity to really explore choosing the best music to suit the service theme. This year has included a Dia de los Muertos service, a Jewish service, Thanksgiving service, Christmas pageant service, Christmas Eve service, New Year’s Greens and Beans, Good Friday and Easter Services, Flower Communion service and many other themed services.

There has been an emphasis on providing at least one evening service a month this year. I provided music for a Transgender Day of Remembrance service and the Winter Solstice Service. Tom and Nancy Dempsey provided music for several vespers/campfire style services. Of course the choir sang at our traditional Christmas Eve service. We offered a Good Friday service this year, which was a new worship event for Countryside. The Choir put in additional practice and singing time supporting an Easter Weekend that was spiritually deep and emotionally powerful.

Other musical opportunities this year included a vocal workshop led by Paul Lindblad and held in Forrest Park. About 6 choir members took advantage of the one day event. There was also a one day workshop on Building a Vocal Community led by Ysaye Barnwell and held in Hyde Park. Scheduling made it difficult for choir members to attend but I was able to go and it was wonderful.

Other activities included: a Christmas carol party in December that included all ages. Approximately 40+ people attended with carol singing, hot chocolate, snacks and ages from just born babes to senior citizens and everyone in between. Then on Dec 10, approximately 12 choir members sang in a special community carol sing in Wilmette IL to help raise money for the Chicago Food Depository. Another dozen or so members attended the concert. Countryside’s choir combined with 50+ other singers from various churches all around to make a large 60+ voice choir singing with pipe organ and 20 low brass instruments. $4000 was raised for the Chicago Food Depository. In March, members of the choir joined with musicians from the community and other Countryside church
members to participate in the Music With a Mission outreach/fundraiser/fellowship event here at Countryside. Socially, a holiday party was held in December with a pot luck...just for fun.

Choir membership has held strong with 35+ members. Several members moved or retired but several new members joined.

Countryside choir helps lead the congregation in worship, particularly in the singing of hymns and also by singing an anthem. The purpose of the choir is to reinforce the worship message while lifting spirits and adding another dimension to the way in which congregants experience worship.

The choir at CCUU is, like the rest of the church, a welcoming body that encourages diversity of all kinds and supports UU values through the music it provides in services. The choir seeks to perform a wide range of music from various traditions and cultures with words that further affirm these principles.

Membership to the choir is open to anyone willing to make the weekly rehearsal commitment. Those interested in joining the choir should contact the choir director (music.Director@ccuu.org, or 847 359 8440, ext. 5).

Of course, I cannot end without a HUGE thank you to our interim pianists Janice Razaq and Rick Burdsall providing Gathering music, Prelude, Offertory, Postlude as well as musically collaborating with the choir on special music/anthems and congregation on hymns. Our fine interim pianists were also the “glue” that held the music program together during much of the “interim music director year” as the choir was only singing every other week leaving the other weeks with mostly piano music leading the way. I hope to establish a permanent pianist in the coming year. I am so thankful that the interim pianists agreed to stay on to help me through my first year at CCUU smoothing the transition for all. I also thank my predecessor interim choir director Guillermo Munoz. I know Guillermo professionally and he is a fine musician and a fine person. He did a marvelous job transitioning the choir into new territory and continuing to adhere to and even raise the high standard of music making at CCUU.

Thanks, also, to Greg Schultz who leads the “as yet un-named” church band. Often joining him are Mark Braun, Ray Holpuch, Sheryl Bass, Cortney Ivanov, Jeff Phillips, and myself. Extra special thanks also to Jeff Phillips often singing, playing bass (or any other instrument we need), managing the sound system, along with his wife Lois for taking the lead this year on the Christmas Carol party and Music With a Mission. Thanks also to Karen Noorani for playing violin and to Sheryl Skifstad for playing cello several times during the year.

This year, we had a Transition Team to support me as I began my duties at Countryside. They have been most helpful in so very many ways. Special thanks to Sheryl Skifstad, Kathryn Hillyer, Denise Sepos.

As we look to the future, I would like to see music continue to be a strong presence in worship with the choir membership continuing to grow. I want to hire a permanent pianist. I hope to expand music to include more children and youth during worship more often. I hope to continue to promote the “as yet un-named” church band and finally give it an identity. I intend to continue to look for opportunities to broaden our knowledge through local workshops and the UUMN conference. I will seek to provide events that strengthen our spiritual, musical and fellowship relationships.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Vernon
MINISTERIAL INTERN

The first year of my 2-year internship with Countryside has gone by so quickly; it feels as though I’ve just begun. It has been a tremendous homecoming for me - returning to Palatine - and I have enjoyed beginning to know the congregation. Though I have had nine years of experience as a staff member in a UU church, being in the role of a student minister is a critical component to ministerial formation and your encouragement, feedback and participation has provided me a stimulating classroom. I am grateful to you for providing me the space and time to grow into my ministry. I want to especially thank my Internship Committee, led by Larry Frank and including Siri Laurin, Jeff Oremland, CarolAnn Shindelar, and Christine Organ. They have spent many hours over this year listening, reflecting, and providing constructive feedback. It is a privilege and a pleasure to work with the talented, hardworking and dedicated staff of Countryside. We share a passion for Unitarian Universalism and building a thriving religious community. And we laugh a lot too. I wouldn’t be here without my inspirational ministerial mentor, Rev. Hilary. We have been developing a teaching relationship for many years and it is incredibly enriching to work together and learn from her. I am truly grateful to benefit from her wisdom, insight and guidance.

I have focused my 20 hours a week in part on sermon writing, worship preparation (including trying to match the standard of visuals set by Rev. Hilary), and creating three multigenerational evening worship services with a shared meal. I participated in Ingathering and Water Communion, introduced myself to you in a service about coming home in September, created a seed communion ritual in November, prepared a worship service on UU childhoods in collaboration with Rev. Hilary, and preached and prepared the Martin Luther King Day service. It was a great privilege for me to be able to share my spiritual journey with you in March. I have deeply appreciated hearing from members who related to my story or felt a greater connection with me. I have regularly participated in Staff, Board of Trustees, Executive Team, Worship Committee, and Lay Ministry meetings. A lot of meetings to be sure, but these experiences have provided a necessary opportunity for learning.

I have been working closely with the Black Lives Matter Initiative at CCUU to help the team strategize a plan of action. We want to challenge CCUU to move deeper into the struggle for racial justice and provide opportunities for mutual learning and growth. We’ve offered several programs this year, including a viewing and discussion of the film, The Color of Fear; Just Mercy and Between the World and Me book discussions; and most recently a viewing and discussion of Race: The Power of An Illusion. I attended a weekend workshop with five other CCUU members about Prison Ministry, and we will be exploring ways to become more involved in this effort. We are laying important groundwork upon which to build and hope to expand participation next year. I am eager to introduce a program called Beloved Conversations in the fall, in which we will develop a greater spiritual capacity for this difficult work.

Last month, I visited Partners for Our Community with Rev. Hilary; Jules Jaramillo, our Director of Lifespan Religious Education; and CCUU member Matt Myren to explore ways of building engagement with this vital organization serving the needs of immigrants in Palatine.

This summer, I will be preaching here at Countryside as well in other pulpits, attending the UUA General Assembly in Columbus, OH, and preparing to go before the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in September. I look forward to my second year at Countryside and our continued work together.

Yours in faith, Eileen
CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

This year, it has been a pleasure to help orient our new staff members, in particular helping to train and support Lisa Vanderbleek last summer and fall when she was our only religious education staff. With the addition of Alison and Jules and the added bonus of a ministerial intern, we are settling into a tightly-bonded, hard-working, enthusiastic and capable professional staff of which I am grateful to be a part.

In addition to our regular staff meetings, I have met regularly this year with the Executive Team (Minister, Board President, Board Vice President). This monthly meeting facilitates communication and support among the Board, the Ministry Council, and the Staff and ensures that we are all “on the same page” in terms of what is needed in the way of policy, procedures, congregational leadership or development. The meetings are also attended by the Ministerial Intern, and next year, I would imagine by the President-elect. The DLRE & Board Treasurer have attended the meetings when relevant.

Finance. I appreciate working closely with the Board Treasurer (Mary Johnson) and with the Controller (Gary LaBedz) in matters financial. I continue to use Quickbooks to record income and expenses and to prepare the month-end reports, which Mary and Gary review prior to presentation to the finance committee and the Board. I also use Quickbooks to process payroll, which enables us to offer direct deposit of paychecks, as well as to make payroll tax payments and to file quarterly payroll tax returns electronically. This is not without cost, which is reflected in the Church Office budget. In addition, I record pledges and contributions in the stewardship module of the church database (ChurchDB).

Ministry Council. In addition to attendance at monthly finance committee meetings, I also attend Ministry Council each month to serve as a bridge between programs and operations/administration. I have worked with Ministry Council on documenting processes and on discussing how to facilitate member participation and involvement in church activities. I provide the ministry coordinators with budget reports and assistance with publications/communication. This year, I helped Sheryl & Ministry Council get the Hospitality Teams up & running and created groups & egroups in ChurchDB to facilitate team communication.

Facilities Management – Foundations/Operations Ministry. Facility management continues to be an area of learning for me, as the volunteers who over the years have taken care of these tasks have moved away or stepped back, and I have had to figure out what needs to be done when - and how. It is my hope to create a facilities/operations manual that would include a calendar of the regular maintenance tasks that need to take place. Steve Black and Mark Huston provide much of the expertise and work needed in this area. We are also fortunate to have church members who are handy and willing to do some of the needed tasks – Ron Vargas, Jeff Phillips, John Evans, Judy Miller, Peggy Simonsen are a few of the names who come to mind. We are trying to keep Foundations/Operations as a Ministry under the umbrella of Ministry Council to ensure that the volunteers who coordinate the efforts receive support similar to the other program chairs for volunteer recruitment and communications.

New Database Implementation. Last year, saw the purchase and initial implementation of new church management software, ChurchDB. ChurchDB includes several modules. In 2014-15, I used only the membership and stewardship modules while simultaneously using the homegrown MS Access membership and pledge database created by Rick Klein 12+ years ago. This year, I archived the Access databases, used just ChurchDB, and have been using more of the available modules.

- **Membership module.** In addition to general contact info and membership dates, this module includes the ability to track rites of passage, so we can enter dates of Child Dedication, Coming of Age, weddings, and memorials – all information that still needs to be transferred from our old records.

- **Stewardship module** includes the capability for tracking not just pledges of “treasure” but also those of “time” and “talent.” Currently, it is just being used for “treasure” – recording pledges & contributions and producing quarterly pledge statements and annual tax-year giving statements.

- **Groups module:** I started using this module this year to set up ministry groups/teams/committees and to input the information from the Congregational Engagement sheets, so ministry coordinators and team leaders can more easily know who is interested in helping with church activities and programs. We can also use this module to track participation and facilitate communication among group members (e.g. several groups, including the hospitality teams, have an e-group set up through ChurchDB).
• **Education module**: Lisa Vanderbleek has helped me implement this module. It allows us to manage children, youth, and adult religious education classes and attendance (done prior to this using Excel spreadsheets), allowing us to have everything in one place and to easily “rollover” classes at the beginning of a new church year. We were able to have people register their children for RE classes online and to register themselves for Adult Faith Development classes, like the World Religions course. Implementing ChurchDB has not been without its pitfalls, and Jules & Lisa & I are still working on figuring out which reports give us the information we need. It does insure that information is in one place – if RE is notified of a family’s contact info or a new family member, I have that information too, and vice versa. I am working on creating instructions for church members to more fully use ChurchDB.

**Communications.** In addition to compiling the Annual Report, which you are currently reading, I compile & edit the monthly newsletter, the weekly e-updates, the order of worship & inserts. I do some updating of the website, in particular the worship descriptions, posting the Board agendas & minutes when they are approved, and posting the newsletter. I do not publish a printed membership directory, but I keep one updated on the website and provide a printed or electronic copy to church members upon request. I am working on instructions for members to access the online ChurchDB directory.

**Professional Development.** I maintain membership in the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA). I attended AUUA Professional Days in Portland OR in June 2015, and I plan to attend Professional Days in Columbus OH this June. It is a valuable conference for learning of pertinent administrative updates from the UUA and for sharing resources and information with colleagues, as well as being professionally reinvigorating. My ability to regularly attend this important conference is because of the professional expense funds provided by CCUU.

This year, I joined the local chapter of The Church Network (formerly called National Association of Church Business Administrators) for a modest fee (which saves me a little on meeting & webinar fees) and attended one of their meetings on Church Technology. It is a group with a lot of knowledge and resources to share, but a little off-putting sometimes because their main emphasis is for Christians. (I joined as an affiliate member because their active membership categories are for employees of a Christian institution or organization or those in an administrative capacity who profess and practice the Christian faith.)

Though there isn’t currently an active local or regional UU administrators’ group, I try to meet with local area colleagues when possible. Most administrators have trouble getting away from work, especially those who are part-time; those of us who have been most successful in meeting regularly are from CCUU, Tree of Life in McHenry, Geneva UU, North Shore in Deerfield, and Prairie Circle in Grayslake.

I attended the fall workshop of Chicago Area UU Churches (CAUUC) and may attend the spring workshop on May 21. I did not attend UU General Assembly last year, but I plan to this year – funded through Jules’s generous sharing of her professional expenses and my own personal resources.

**Volunteers.** My great appreciation goes to Debbie Lee, who continues to regularly volunteer in the office while maintaining two households in Palatine & Peoria. She helps with the Sunday Times, letters to visitors, materials needed for Path to Membership classes, archiving & copying the recordings of the worship services, and just about anything I ask of her. She is a very capable, willing, and helpful volunteer.

There are other regular office volunteers for whom I am very grateful. Dan Yokas & Tim Walsh help out every Friday morning. Lois Phillips’s cheerful nature and organizational and aesthetic talents are always of great help to me, especially this year with the acquisition & set up of the new office furniture. The Focus folding team – Art Mayfield, Pat Rochelle, Jim Peterson – is a pleasure to see each month. Thank you to Tom Curtis, who is a regular presence in the office between services on Sundays, a time when staff is not available.

**Sign-up Genius:** We continue to use this online tool for congregants to sign-up for the essential Sunday volunteer positions of greeter, usher, A/V assistant, and coffee host. Using [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com) requires less managerial time on the part of office staff and volunteers. The Hospitality Teams have helped tremendously in making sure these roles are filled each week and in making sure SignUp Genius is up-to-date. Angelina Huntsha uses sign-up genius for the PADS Meal sign-up, and this year, I helped Mike Graves set up Outreach volunteer opps on SignUp Genius (we had mixed success using it for the outreach opps).

**Looking to Next Year.** We are still in need of at least one more computer for use by office volunteers and/or by our new religious education assistant (who currently uses her personal laptop), to make the best use of their time when they are here. I am currently assessing what funds remain in the church office and IT/Tech budgets for this
purpose. I was the winning bidder of the 20-30s group donation of tech expertise to the Time & Talent Auction, which I hope to use as I make and set up this purchase.

In the coming year, I anticipate work on an operations/facilities manual (there is a start on this with Judy Miller’s having provided a grounds task calendar), as well as ongoing work on an Office Procedures Manual (among administrators, jokingly called the “hit by a bus” manual). Cherita has been at work getting the CCUU website to a mobile-friendly format using a WordPress template provided by the UUA, which we hope will be in place this summer. I still want to pursue updating the Focus newsletter to a more mobile-friendly format and perhaps to work on a different format for this Annual Report – one that is more visually appealing and possibly an online, blog-type document (a format I’ve learned of from my AUUA colleagues).

I want to work on communicating to congregation members how to better use the new database for maintaining their own directory information as well as the stewardship of their time & talent and ministry/group engagement.

Areas Where You Might Help
If you see something with which you can help, leave a note in my mailbox or send me an email, office@ccuu.org.

• Facilities on-call list, to be called as needs arise
• Website content updating
• Graphic design interest/experience: helping to refresh the Annual Report format and/or other printed church materials
• Photographers: please take photos at any opportunity - church meetings, events, gatherings, worship - and to share them with me, so we have selections to use for purposes on the Annual Report, website, and other publications.
• Lobby staff – monitoring the doors to give groups access to the building yet keeping the doors locked for safety/security, perhaps while doing some clerical or handyperson work (a few hours one evening/week or month)

In appreciation and faith, Laurie Lantz
THE MINISTRIES

The activities and programs of Countryside Church UU (CCUU) are organized into Ministries. Each Ministry encompasses events, teams, committees, groups, councils, and is led and sustained by staff and lay leadership. The Ministries help people find pathways to become involved in activities of interest and to create connections among our people and programs. Ministries support the work of CCUU and ensure that our work is aligned with the mission, covenant, and seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

Our Ministries are named to represent our congregational covenant, “we unite to strengthen the bonds of Kinship” and to promote our vision through Worship, Study, and Service; and they exist to make that covenant live.

The Ministry Council coordinates the many programs and efforts of these Ministries. It meets monthly and is made up of the Board Vice President and Senior Minister, who act as co-chairs; the Staff Leads and Ministry Coordinators of each of the ministries; and the Congregational Administrator.

This was an exciting year for the Ministry Council. Thanks to our strong council members, we have accomplished a lot this year. Two key highlights this year are the introduction and successful launch of the Hospitality teams and the Long Range roadmap proposal to be shared at the annual meeting.

We kicked off the year with a meeting in the fall where the Ministry leaders and their committee chairs shared vision and insight on teams that they could use throughout the year. As the Ministry Council worked through the fall, we focused on how the Ministries and the Ministry Council build and engage our community by sharing what is going on in the ministries, identifying opportunities to collaborate and looking for areas where the council can support the committees. We also did our planning for the Hospitality teams kickoff. In December, we hosted the Hospitality team’s kickoff and they were ready to start Jan 1. The hospitality teams, which are organized by week of the month, have been a success and consistently support our Sunday morning worship and community activities. A big thanks to the Hospitality teams for their great work. We look forward to growing the Hospitality teams next year and adding more social opportunities for the teams.

This spring, we have been supporting the annual budget prioritization process as well as consolidating our proposed roadmap in support of the long range plan. Look for the month-by-month view of our proposal from the committees at the annual meeting. Let us know what you see in our plan.

It is a great pleasure to serve the board and the Ministry Council and see such success from the hard work of the Ministry Council in support of the vision and the mission of CCUU.

...submitted by Sheryl Skifstad, Ministry Council Chair & Board Vice President

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Reverend Hilary Krivchenia, Minister
Alison Vernon, Music Director
Coordinator: Jeff Phillips

The mission of the Worship Ministry is to increase reverence for life’s creating, sustaining and transforming power through worship and to deepen the sense of worshipfulness throughout all aspects of congregational life.

The Vision of Worship Ministry is to

• Create a center of worship excellence, spiritual growth, and exploration in the northwest suburbs. In keeping with our UU Principles, we foster Unitarian Universalist spiritual groundedness as well as interfaith affirmation.
• Provide a worshipful environment that opens up opportunities to deepen the spiritual lives of all individuals and that strengthens the religious community at CCUU. The worship experience is enhanced by providing sermons, music, performance arts, and visual images throughout our worship services and in other settings within the church, such as meetings and events. The Sunday service is the weekly touchstone of our spiritual life.
This year was crowned with the hire of our new Music Director. The search and hire was an enormous task taken on with great seriousness and skill by duRee Bryant, Mary Ellen Heelan, Cathy Maraist, Ron Polomchak, Sheryl Skifstad, Chris Smith, and Rev. Hilary. The team welcomed Alison Vernon last summer, and her first year with us has been a success. She has shown wisdom, patience, leadership, curiosity, and long experience as well as a breadth of musical gifts – you should hear her play a hymn in the style of 5 different Baroque composers on the harpsichord setting of the electronic keyboard. Her skill with children in music is considerable, and she has a deep love for CCUU and our faith, which she is fast learning about. She will be pursuing credentialing through the UU Minister’s Network – which, on top of her long training and experience, will make her even more of an asset to our congregation. While she does not have the professional expenses to cover the cost of this program, she is moving ahead with it, enthusiastically. She has been written further about in the Minister’s Report.

We were busy and blessed this year by the participation in worship of our Ministerial Intern, Eileen Wiviott. Eileen brought with her a gift for writing and preaching. Her evident professionalism makes her Sundays in the pulpit a joy. She will take one service this summer and in her second year of Internship, will be preaching once a month – an increased frequency that will aid her professional development. She also worked diligently and creatively on three evening services that appealed to people of all ages. The evening worship was deliberately designed by the Minister and the Ministerial Intern to be more accessible by providing the evening meal so that people could attend without the worry about preparing dinner. In addition, it would build social relationships among the people attending. It did both of those things well this year, and we look forward to some more next year. Nancy Dempsey played piano for two of the services, and Tom Dempsey led singing with his guitar for one of those.

We hosted a small but powerful evening service for Transgender Remembrance Day on November 20. Alison Vernon provided the music. We continued with Sound Meditations led primarily by Elizabeth Vesto. They continue to have a faithful attendance.

We offered a Good Friday Service, which was unusual because Good Friday and Passover did not overlap for a change. The service was better attended than expected, the choir offered stirring music, and the service was well received. It was a tenebrae service, which ends in darkness.

Our new Director of Lifespan Religious Education led a service that was also well-received and further introduced her and her ideas about our faith to the congregation.

Our Spiritual Journeys Worship Services are going very well. There has been a benefit in the speakers having more time to share their stories, and it has been powerful to have the service rich with the wisdom of lay leaders. Christine Organ has done considerable work to smoothly run this important branch of worship. They will continue in this longer format.

Worship will play an active role in our first year in themed Ministry, dedicating at least one Sunday a month to the theme.

Thanks go to the Vergers who serve week after week, ensuring that we have support for our worship services: Tracy Boland, Martha Blus, Kristin Huston, Christine Organ, Leslie Peet, Lois Phillips, Elizabeth Vesto. Alison Vernon attends our meetings, as does the Ministerial Intern. They each deserve our thanks for helping to create a Sunday service that can touch the soul and exercise the mind. We look forward to new forms of worship in the future and helping to fan the spark of the congregation so that all our spirits rise and glow.
STUDY MINISTRY
Staff Lead: Jules Jaramillo, Director of Lifespan Religious Education
Coordinator: Bernice McCarthy

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL
The RE Council supported our Religious Education (RE) program for children and youth during a time of transition this year. We worked with the Assistant Minister for Lifespan RE before she left the congregation to plan for the year and to simplify our programming while a search committee looked for a new DLRE. We then worked closely with our RE Assistant turned RE Coordinator until our new DLRE began in January. Throughout this period, we met with Nancy Combs-Morgan, Mid-America Regional Program Consultant, three times, in order to assist us in this transition period.

RE Council Members and Class Coordinators
This year’s RE Council had seven members: Susan Conneely, Chair; Jeff Oremland, Secretary; Jennifer Alton, Cara Duffy, Laura Corrigan, Lisa Bezella, and Tim Reuter-Bowers. Our RE Classroom Coordinators were Cara Duffy, Jennifer Alton and Matt Reuter-Bowers, Susan and John Conneely, Lisa Bezella, Shila Khan, and Kim Tilford. Junior High OWL facilitators were Colin Tysoe and Maria Martinez. We extend our deep appreciation to all these leaders, who give generously of their time, energy and spirit.

RE Volunteers
RE is a cooperative effort and would not exist without many hours of generous support. Many thanks to everyone who served as RE teachers and floaters, and to all volunteers who made this year’s RE experiences possible. The RE Council hosted a teacher orientation in August.

RE Classes
This calendar year, we had 173 young people enrolled in our RE program, with an average weekly attendance of 83. Throughout the school year, we offered 11 classes for infants – Grade 12. This was our fifth year of expanded RE offerings, with opportunities for infants–Grade 4 at both 9:00 and 11:00; and youth classes for Grades 5-12 at 11:00. RE Council members Jennifer Alton and Susan Conneely organized summer programming along with our RE Coordinator for ages 5+, part of the curriculum being a UU-inspired Dr. Seuss theme. RE Council member Cara Duffy organized summer programming for ages 2-5, which involved music, art, and discovery and included these topics: recycling, animals, and science.

Curriculum
The Chalice Children (ages 2-3) and Spirit Play (ages 4-Grade 1) classes continue strong with the great story-based curriculum we’ve created. Grades 2-4 enjoyed Sing to the Power, affirming our UU heritage of confronting “powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.” Grades 5-6 enjoyed Riddle and Mystery, a curriculum which assists youth in their own search for understanding. Grades 7-8 enjoyed partial curriculum from Amazing Grace, which helps youth understand right and wrong and act on their new understanding, recognizing the importance of their UU identity and resources as essential. Part of the year, nine students in grades 7-9 also participated in Jr. High OWL.

RE Library
Thanks to a great team of volunteers, the RE Library has added the adult book collection to the database. The library collection continues to grow and has over 1,500 books! Volunteers offer check-out between services on Sundays and highlight monthly featured books around different themes. Many thanks to Amy Huber, Crystina Smith, Jessica Gardner, and Mike Jeschke for all their work!

Holiday Celebrations
The RE Council supported several holiday activities including the RE Easter celebration; Hanukkah workshop; and the Christmas pageant.

Faith in Action
Our popular Faith-in-Action program promotes service learning and advocacy to help our young people own their power to make a positive difference in the world. This year, young people in Grades 2-8 learned about issues of social justice when Senior High Youth shared experiences with UU College of Social Justice. They also learned about homelessness, collected socks and made cookies for lunches (Journeys program and PADS) facilitated by
John and Susan Conneely. Additionally, youth in Spirit Play-8 learned about literacy and increasing book ownership in at-risk youth (Bernie’s Book Bank) facilitated by Cara Duffy, followed by a book drive.

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

Lead Advisor: Kim Tilford
Youth Ministry Team: Steve Black, Jeanie Michalec
Youth Group Support: Venu Vesudevan, Donna LaJeunesse

Social Justice
We had five youth attend UU College of Social Justice trainings in summer 2015. Jack Spector-Bishop, Malia Bryant, Sarah Pratt, and Adrianna Wydell attended the Border/Immigration training in AZ, and Kadyn Frawley attended a training in New Orleans. Kadyn was also chosen as a UU Luminary Leader and will be attending UU Summer Seminary this summer.

Youth Conferences
The group attended the Spring regional youth conference in Rockford. The Northern Area did not have a Fall conference as no church offered to host. This year, three youth from our group served on the Northern Area Youth Council (NAYC): Travis Black, Jack Spector-Bishop, and Kadyn Frawley. Kim Tilford is an advisor on NAYC and will serve her second of a 2-year term during the 2016-2017 RE year.

Youth Group Service
The annual Youth Group service was on February 28; the group chose the theme of I was… I am… I will be. Four youth gave re-affirmations, examining their Coming of Age affirmations and responding with how they have changed since writing them. They invited the congregation to respond and post their I was… I am… I will be statements in Atherton Hall. The group did a great job and received a lot of positive feedback.

Youth Ministry
Venu has stepped back from the Youth Ministry team, and we have not yet confirmed whether Steve Black will be staying on since his son will be bridging. We are talking with Jules about the need to identify new youth group advisors.

DLRE
The group has enjoyed time with our new DLRE, Jules Jaramillo. She has had a few occasions to sit in with the group, and a number of youth participated in the Earth Day art project led by Jules.

20-30 SOMETHINGS

Coordinators: Jessica Gardner, Ryan Schaefges
We are a group of young adults organized by two co-leaders (currently Jessica Gardner and Ryan Schaefges). Anyone interested is free to contact either of us at ccuu2030s@gmail.com

Our group provides fellowship for people in their 20s and 30s through twice monthly meetings and discussions, monthly social events, and service events.

We help to serve the community and the church through various service projects, such as helping with the Seder.

We offer support and kinship through engaging and thought-provoking discussions on a variety of topics at our monthly meetings and social gatherings / events. We also work with the service ministry to do service events.

We would welcome anyone who would like to volunteer with us during our service events. These are usually planned during our meetings a few months / weeks / or sometimes days in advance. These service events often serve the larger community (Feed My Starving Children, Night Ministry, Clearbrook, etc.)

We aim to continue gathering as we have on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month after the service.
ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT
Bernice McCarthy, Coordinator

Adult Faith Development programs at Countryside Church UU give us the chance to deepen our connection to our Unitarian Universalist Faith—intellectually, socially, ethically, and spiritually. We offer workshops, community service opportunities, classes, discussion groups, meditation—all in the context of a supportive spiritual community.

This year, we continue to support the ongoing learning experiences of Adult Faith Development, while assessing and adding new learning opportunities based on the UU covenant of service and social justice, and the relationships between ourselves and each other.

2015-2016 List of Adult Faith Development Offerings
We continue to support eight ongoing groups and classes: Movies with Meaning, The Book Circle and Last Mondays Book Group, Open Forum Discussion, Atheist-Humanist-Agnostic Discussion, the Buddhist UU Study Group, Journey Inward, and QiGong. Additional offerings this year included: Mary Oliver Poetry Series coordinated by Trudy Kleckner; a World Religions course taught by John Camardella with a UU session taught by CCUU staff; two new classes offered by Rem Stokes: Staying Alive-Inflammation Cascade 2 & Cognitive Behavior; and the annual Journeys Retreat.

This year’s Journeys retreat theme is Mindfulness and Meditation. It is being held May 6-7 in Mundelein on the campus of University of St. Mary of the Lake. A variety of offerings will be held including meditation techniques, QiGong, gentle yoga, Tai Chi, walking meditation, guided meditation, mindful eating (chocolate!), meditations with sound, and more. Members of CCUU will lead the programming for this retreat, which has been coordinated by Elizabeth Vesto.

Adult Faith Development will continue to examine the coordination across all AFD offerings of the seven principles and six sources of UU. We will continue to evaluate the purpose of our offerings and how they align with Unitarian Universalist values, multigenerational opportunities, shared ministry, and how AFD aligns with the vision and long-range strategic plan of Countryside Church UU.
SERVICE MINISTRY

duRee Bryant and Tom Curtis, Service Ministry Co-coordinators
Rev. Hilary Krivchenia is the staff lead to the Service Ministry

The Service Ministry is composed of active members of Countryside Church who have formed groups whose combined effort is to provide our congregation with the opportunity to reach out to help others and ourselves in ways that will generate social benefits to those both in the surrounding community and within our own congregation. It provides our congregation the opportunity to join with other organizations to broaden our ability to service the community and to inform and educate ourselves in the area of social responsibility, and it provides us with the chance to get to know each other.

The Service Ministry has a long history with Countryside Church and the activities of the committees have made a significant contribution to the community especially outside of the Church, but also to the well-being of the Church congregation. It embraces particularly the first two and last two of our Unitarian Universalist principles:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person
Justice, equality and compassion in human relations
The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

The activities of the committees in the Service Ministry are described in the following reports. It’s important to understand that any member of the Congregation can join in and participate in any of these groups and that if we are to continue to be a viable socially active organization, it is important that members participate. There are many kinds of opportunities to be of service for individuals, for families, for those with little time to volunteer, and for those who have a passion they are willing to take leadership for. Look for opportunities on the Service Ministry bulletin boards outside of the office, as well as in our area in Atherton Hall or contact us at Service@ccuu.org.

COUNTRYSIDE ANIMAL FRIENDS (CAF)

Countryside Animal Friends (CAF) is a local chapter of the UU Animal Ministry (www.uuam.org) and was co-chaired this year by Steve Combs and Sheryl Bass. As of March 2016, Steve stepped down as co-chair and Sheryl Bass will continue to chair the group. Pratik Mamtora has agreed to be the new co-chair effective immediately.

CAF supports the UU Animal Ministry’s (UUAM) mission to uphold and honor the seventh principle of UU - the interdependent web of life, of which we are all a part. We at Animal Friends strive to promote the idea that all beings on Earth are connected - social and environmental justice for humans is related to social and environmental justice for all other species. In this sense, CAF can complement and aid the work of other groups at CCUU such as Green Sanctuary and Social Action Committee.

In the summer of 2015, CAF hosted the Blessing of the Animals service. Several church members read poems/readings and many congregants brought their furry or feathered friends to the service.

In accordance with both the first and seventh principles, both UUAM and Countryside Animal Friends promote and provide education about adopting a plant-based diet. We feel that a plant-based diet is an effective tool for combating water and soil pollution, as well as animal (both domestic and wild) welfare.

In the spirit of the above UU principals, we continued our third full year of vegan (plant-based) potlucks this year. The potlucks occurred monthly in Atherton Hall, from October 2015 through April 2016. We also co-hosted summer picnics at Twin Lakes in Palatine IL. An average of 20 people attend the potlucks. We hope to continue the potlucks in Atherton next year and in the years to come. These potlucks and the bake sales are co-hosted by Suburban Vegetarian Meetup, based in Mundelein IL, and we are grateful and blessed to have this relationship with them. Some of their members now regularly attend CCUU services as a result of this relationship.

We continue to maintain a Countryside Animal Friends Facebook page for the community at large - www.facebook.com/CountrysideAnimalFriends. We use this page to share news stories, petitions, and ideas pertaining to animal welfare and rights.
CAF’s plans for the coming year and places where congregation members can become involved include:

• Organizing and officiating the Blessing of the Animals Service (Sheryl Bass and Pratik Mamtora will lead the service to be held on July 31), including creating a theme for the service, crafting & delivering homily/affirmations, finding and reading poems & quotes, working with the Music Director to prepare & present music for the service, setting and re-setting the Sanctuary for the service (we usually take out some of the rows to allow more floor space for the pets)
• Continuing to host a monthly vegan potluck during the school year in Atherton Hall, including setup/cleanup
• Maintaining the Facebook page.
• Baking or purchasing vegan baked goods for an upcoming bake sale.
• Hosting Animal Welfare luminary and author of “World Peace Diet,” Dr. Will Tuttle when he is in town on Friday, September 23, 2016. We hope he will speak in the sanctuary or Atherton Hall and we are asking attendees to donate $10 each to help cover his fee, though no one will be turned away for lack of funds.
• Maintaining the bulletin board and our area of the Service Ministry table.

Furthermore, we are always welcome to any new ideas and projects pertaining to our mission. For more information about Countryside Animal Friends, UU Animal Ministry, and how to become involved, please contact Sheryl Bass at sherylbass999@gmail.com

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

The Green Sanctuary Program is a UUA accreditation process inspired by our UUA Seventh Principle of “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part” and has as its purpose encouraging the spread of “green” values to all aspects of church life. We on the Green Sanctuary Committee, in cooperation with other committees and programs, are working to facilitate that program. The UUA has decided to make Environmental Justice the focus of the Green Sanctuary Program which means that working with other committees and programs is even more, so to speak, natural. The emphasis on Environmental Justice makes clearer the connection to our other UU Principles such as dignity, equity, and compassion, and incorporates environmental values by promoting such basic human rights as access to clean air and water, healthy food, and proper sanitation. UU Principles of peace and justice may be tied to other environmental issues such as the availability of essential resources and the effects of climate change.

Since we are a program that has an impact on all aspects of church life and activity, we touch other ministries by working to make the congregation as a whole aware of environmental issues through projects led by members of the congregation. Our goal is to create a framework, a focus, for thought and action that is fundamentally environmental so that environmental actions become so ingrained as to be fundamental to who we are as a congregation.

We have continued to work on two projects begun last year. The first is to move the church and the members of the congregation toward a carbon-neutral life. We have made solar power the focus of this year’s Climate Change Conference. Our second project, creating an interfaith group for the northwest suburbs, continues; that group meets regularly and has adopted a new name: Interfaith Green Partners. Members of this group are part of the planning committee for the Climate Change Conference.

We will hold the third Climate Change Conference on May 14, 2016. This year’s conference is organized around the theme of community solar. It is smaller in scope, lasting for a half day rather than a full day, and focused on one project, placing solar panels on private homes and public buildings.

Our committee’s ongoing projects for the past church year also include: participation of several committee members in Lobby Day in Springfield, recommending movies for Movies with Meaning, the Countryside organic vegetable garden, donations to the Palatine Food Pantry from both the children’s and adult’s garden, a Winter Farmer’s Market (sponsored by Faith in Place) and a November Farmers’ Market that support local, sustainable farming, support for the Roots Community Garden in Palatine and support for Citizens for Conservation environmental education programs.

Below are general categories of activities of the Green Sanctuary Committee; for a full list, please see the GSC bulletin board or email Judy Ball and Leslie Peet, greensanctuary@ccuu.org.

• Work toward an increasingly sustainable approach to church practices, building, and grounds
• Educational programs
• Fun, intergenerational activities
• Restoration opportunities for volunteers
• Environmental justice projects
• Partnerships with local organizations
• The opportunity to appreciate and care for the environment with a group of like-minded people

The Green Sanctuary Program serves the larger community through educational programs; environmental films; donations of fresh produce to the Palatine Food Pantry; support for local, sustainable food; and restoration of natural areas.

We partner with the following groups:
• Citizens for Conservation
• Deer Grove Forest Preserve Stewards
• Faith in Place
• Palatine Food Pantry
• Roots Community Garden (sponsored by the Palatine Opportunity Center)
• Sierra Club

The co-chairs of the Green Sanctuary Committee are Judy Ball and Leslie Peet. Leslie will be resigning as co-chair at the end of the church year.

The Green Sanctuary Committee would like to express our appreciation of all the members and staff who have supported Green Sanctuary projects.

All our projects are open to volunteers. We encourage anyone with an idea for a project or an interest in working on a project to contact us and to attend our monthly meetings on the second Sunday at 12:15 in Room 6.

LAY & CARE MINISTRY PROGRAMS

We are completing the 29th year of providing lay/care ministries to the Countryside Church congregation. This year, the Lay Ministry was fortunate to have the following people continue to serve in the program: Ken Bobbe, Karen Greenland, Barbara Griggs, Kathi Hillyer, Joy Simon, Chris Smith and Kim Tilford. Jane Matthews was active as co-coordinator until the March meeting prior to her moving away.

This Lay Ministry Team supports and expands the pastoral care of the called minister, but the Team also serves to strengthen the ties among the members of the congregation through the active embodiment of the spirit of mutual care. This is a special Team in the congregation and requires particular attributes in order to insure that we are taking the best care within the congregation that is possible.

Over the winter, all lay ministers were involved in calling every member of Countryside to touch base and to take questions regarding lay ministry. We find this to be very helpful for us and for the congregation in general.

Lay Ministry meets monthly at the church to check-in with each other, review current Lay Minister activity, determine availability and write and send cards to members needing support.

Our Care Ministry coordinator, Sheilah Sokeland, continues to arrange for practical assistance, such as rides for medical treatment, check-in calls and visits, and meals for Countryside members when appropriate. These arrangements are made through Rev. Hilary Krivchenia or myself.

Submitted by Ken Bobbe, Coordinator
LIVING THE WELCOMING CONGREGATION (LWC)

In May of 2007, Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist voted to become a Welcoming Congregation. By adopting this UUA designation, our religious community was proclaiming that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals are not only welcome, but affirmed as fully equal members of this congregation. We are a community that practices inclusivity and honors every part of each member’s identity, background, and experience.

Active members of LWC include: Jeanie Michalec and Tracy Boland, co-chairs; Joy Simon, Dan Yokas, Tim Walsh, Matt Biddell, Deb Quentel, James Vesto, Kristen Wunder, Karl Michalec, and Angelina Huntsha; Rev. Hilary Krivchenia, ex-officio member. All CCUU members and guests are welcome to attend our meetings and events.

The LWC committee informs the congregation about current legislation that impacts the lives of LGBT individuals and families, and advocates for full equality and fairness in all matters related to the LGBT community. We have sponsored letter writing campaigns to local and national lawmakers on legislative issues pertinent to LGBT equality. A number of our committee members are active in the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), Lambda Legal, and Equality Illinois. In addition, committee members collaborate with the Worship Council and Minister to offer Sunday services that include topics that speak to inclusivity and equality. The LWC Committee also communicates with the Board of Trustees and other church committees to make sure that our programs, policies, and procedures are aligned with our commitment to LGBT equality. The committee’s work is supported by many of our straight allies who find ways in their day-to-day living to combat homophobia and transphobia, and to teach tolerance to those with whom they interact.

Countryside Church provides services for LGBT rites of passage, including commitment ceremonies, and child dedications. We have services that celebrate all kinds of families, including LGBT couples raising children. The RE curriculum and church library contain LGBT-related materials. Since 2007, CCUU has provided Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education classes for more than 70 young people in K-1, Grades 4-5, Junior and Senior High. In 2007 and 2009, our church hosted area-wide training for OWL leaders from other churches as well as our own.

Countryside Church provides meeting space for Pride Youth and Transcend-Youth Outlook. Many CCUU adult members and youth, including the LWC committee members, attend the annual Chicago Pride Parade and participate in Pride Week activities.

Activities of Living the Welcoming Congregation (LWC)

LWC plans to continue to focus on educational and information-sharing activities, as well as have LWC-sponsored fundraisers to support local groups.

- **Halloween Ball.** Host intergenerational costume party with food, music and prizes. Suggested entry fee is a contribution of food for local food pantry. The Halloween party was held this past year on Sat., Oct. 31st. Atherton Hall became an undersea wonder. This year the Halloween Ball is scheduled for Saturday, October 29, 2016.
- **Pride Service.** We will plan and lead the CCUU Pride Service on Sunday, June 19, 2016. All are welcome.
- **Support Pride Parade.** Support Youth group in marching in the Pride parade. Offer parade viewing as a group.
- **Education.** Speak at Religious Education classes on LGBT issues, and facilitate Town Hall meetings on LGBT related issues.
- **Movies.** Host movies and support/contribute movies for Movies with Meaning.

Learn More

LWC Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month. Additional meetings are held as necessary to plan Countryside’s Pride Service, Community forums, LWC Movies with Meaning, and of course, our fabulous Halloween Party!

See www.ccuu.org for more information, and see the LGBT Resources listed on the LWC page of the CCUU website.

*Submitted by Tracy Boland, committee chair*
OUTREACH STEERING COMMITTEE (OSC)
The Board of Trustees established the Outreach Steering Committee to assist and guide CCUU and its congregants in reaching out and making a difference in our community.

OSC Vision Statement
The OSC is a catalyst for channeling the talents and passion of the CCUU community to the human needs of the larger community. We will do this through understanding the needs of organizations that address issues important to the CCUU membership and providing resources of both time and money to make a transformational difference to these organizations and CCUU members. We will collectively learn as we develop innovative solutions and processes that enable broad member participation in these activities and manage relationships such that success is sustained. The pride and joy of this effort will be felt by every CCUU member and their children, and become an inspiring example to others.

Based on congregational input and an assessment of community needs, Countryside has three service partners in 2015/2016. Each partner had a liaison, and we extend special thanks to them for the work they did on behalf of Countryside.

Through your donations, we contributed funds to our partners as noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Partner</th>
<th>Liaison</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>Service Opportunity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners for our Community (POC --formerly Palatine Opportunity Center)</td>
<td>Matt Myren, Courtney Renwick</td>
<td>40% $10,500</td>
<td>Holiday decorating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants</td>
<td>Melanie Schikore</td>
<td>25% $7,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith in Place</td>
<td>Dan Huntsha</td>
<td>25% $7,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Fund</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10% $2,600</td>
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</tbody>
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Congregation Engagement and Communication
It is our intent to provide an open, transparent and evolving process for this work. We hope you felt informed about the work of our service partners. We maintain the Outreach web page on CCUU’s website, under the Ministries/Service tab - http://www.ccuu.org/about-us/ministries-at-countryside/149.

Fundraising
Thank you to all who participated in this year’s Time & Talent event. We raised approximately $25,000 including $7,735 through bids for the “Raise the Paddle” items.

The second annual Music with A Mission event was held in March and netted approximately $1,500. More than 100 people attended, including lots of guests. (We had a liquor permit from the Village and the State for this event.)

OSC Planning for the Future
As the 2016/2017 Committee gets established, here are a few of our ideas and aspirations:
- We will continue to grow our relationships with our three Service Partners.
- Based on your input, we know that there is interest in more volunteer opportunities. We will attempt to identify, coordinate and communicate these opportunities to the membership.
- Fundraising events are still being planned.
- In collaboration with the Social Action Committee, we are supporting Countryside’s Share the Plate contributions.

Sincerely,
Laura Mandell, Mike Graves, Melanie Schikore, Matt Myren
SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE (SAC)

This year, the SAC began two new initiatives: one around Economic Inequality and the other around Black Lives Matter.

- **Economic Inequality:** On July 26, Colin Tysoe and Maryanne O'Dowd developed a very well-received summer service around economic inequality. The interest generated from that service encouraged us to develop a follow-up strategy meeting after Sunday service on October 4.

- **Black Lives Matter (BLM):** At the same time we started a Black Lives Matter Team to work on raising our CCUU awareness and to lead us in appropriate action. Our first event was scheduled for Sunday October 11. After service Cliff Nellis, lead attorney and founder of Lawndale Christian Legal Center, talked about his work and legal experiences with 20 congregants. Based on the energy at that meeting the Black Lives Matter team decided to continue sustained action and to deepen this conversation at CCUU. Subsequent events included:
  - BLM yard signs for sale;
  - BLM Buttons for giveaways;
  - 1/17 showed the film “The Color of Fear” to 22 attendees followed by discussion,
  - 1/18 On Dr. King’s birthday, attendance at the Faith in Action Assembly sponsored by the Community Renewal Society and held at the First Baptist Congregational Church in Chicago.
  - 2/7 Colin Tysoe led a book discussion on Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson
  - 3/28 Yvette Johnson and Krista MacTavish co-led a book discussion of Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates.
  - 4/17; 4/24; 5/1. On three Sundays, we showed the three-part documentary “Race: The Power of an Illusion.” As of this writing, we know that eighteen people attended Part 1 viewing and discussion.

The BLM group continues to meet about monthly and to plan strategy into next fall and beyond. Interest has expanded. In order to allow all who wish to join our action group we changed our name from that of a “team” to an “initiative.” The Black Lives Matter Initiative includes Tracy Boland, Tom Curtis, Phil Goldberger, Mike Graves, Angelina Huntsha, Yvette Johnson, Rev. Hilary, Maryanne O'Dowd, Colin Tysoe, Eileen Wiviott, and Kristen Wunder.

PADS Monthly Meals and PADS Site Workers

Angelina Huntsha just completed her second year overseeing this large responsibility—ensuring that we have volunteers to make all aspects of the monthly meal provided to our PADS partner: Presbyterian Church of Palatine. She utilized the online sign up platform all season and it has streamlined the process significantly. Further, through her efforts, we continued to advertise Journey’s ongoing need for PADS volunteers at their partner churches. CCUU signed up two new folks who volunteered at a PADS site over the past year (Oct – Apr.). Below are the names of all the folks who helped support the PADS effort in this fiscal year by helping with meals and/or volunteering at a PADS site:

Angelina Huntsha  Yvette Johnson
Mike Graves      Kristen Wunder
Laura Mandell    Laurie Lantz
Debbie Lee       Carol Bobbe
Susan Conneely   Joan Conneely
Wendy Braun      Peggy Simonsen
Edie Scott       Tom Curtis
Millie Galey     Bobbi Miller
Maria Martinez   Anni Martin
Elizabeth Vesto  Kamala Urs
Angela Walsh-Morris Linda Berry
Bridget Toth     Sarah and Ryan Schaefges
Karen Epps       Janet Simmons
Pat Palmer       Sunny Glorch
Sheilah Sokeland Mike Jeschke
Christine Organ  Alex Mistak
Janet McDonnell  Ann Blymire
Lisa Marie Edidin

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Fair Trade Monthly Sales
Fair Trade is a self-sustaining separate budget within the SAC. The small markups added to our products go to purchase all the fair trade coffee needed by our partner PADS site (Presbyterian Church of Palatine) for the entire PADS year. Thanks to Lisa and Kevin Christensen for ably taking over the bulk of this effort from Yvette.

Last year, it was suggested by a congregant that we should consider using co-op vendors in addition to or instead of Equal Exchange for our products. Yvette checked into this and decided not to pursue the idea. Why? Because Equal Exchange enters into relationships with the religious organizations that purchase from them. A portion of everything we buy goes back to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee for their “Small Farmer Fund.” Yvette spoke to the EE representative who told her that in 2015, $12,597 was given to the UUSC as a result of UU churches buying from Equal Exchange. Furthermore, the EE rep went on to add that “Countryside Church’s purchases last year added up to $4,362, which puts you at #164, in terms of sales, among 7802 congregations we worked with in 2015. So, not only are you in the top 10% -- you’re actually in the top 3%! You are also #20 in terms of sales among UU congregations.”

Fair Trade Fair was a great success on December 6, 2015 with Marsha Balster and Linda Swenson ably overseeing this event. Vendors included Artisans of Ghana, Blossom Inspirations, Fairgrass, Gifts of the World, Give Hope Fight Poverty, Maya Works, Sora Products, and our own CCUU Fair Trade table.

Kiva Account
In January 2016, Linda Swenson began to oversee the Kiva account started by the Social Action Committee some years ago. We thank Nancy Klein for all her years overseeing this account and wish her well in her move overseas.
Linda reported that the money put in by SAC over the years represents about $8,000, while the monies of CCUU personal members who maintain their own separate accounts is about $35,000. All of these together make up the Countryside Church UU Kiva Fund Team--34 members. Anyone can join. As of 4/12/2016 the CCUU team has made 1,146 loans. Making new loans with the monies paid back, this represents almost $60,000 loaned. Linda checks the account monthly. In April she re-lent $225 focusing on water, fair trade and green loans. She welcomes recommendations from the congregation for the focus of future loans.

Palatine Township’s “Holiday Gift-Giving” Program Again this year we were fortunate that Linda and Steve Pratt coordinated this annual program. Congregants signed up to buy presents or gift cards for 28 Palatine folks in need. This included both families with single parents and two parents, all with at least one child, who ranged from infants to 18 years old.

Share the Plate is now overseen by both the SAC and the Outreach Steering Comte. Twice a month during Offertory we donate half of the cash collected to a non-profit organization recommended by a member of the congregation. This year we had more nominations than slots available, thus needing to choose recipients based on the criteria set up by the OSC.

Involvement in Palatine Faith in Action (PFA)
For three years Yvette has been involved with Palatine Faith in Action, a growing group of 8-9 churches who meet bi-monthly and seek to do works of common good.

Our involvement with PFA led to an opportunity for our congregation on Saturday, May 30, 2015. CCUU congregants participated in an inter-church event at Feed My Starving Children in Schaumburg. Marsha Balster oversaw sign-ups.

This was the second year that we took up a holiday-time gift-card donation for homeless or near homeless youth who attend Palatine High School. Again, Palatine Faith in Action worked with PATH, a local non-profit organization that oversaw the distribution of these gift cards. Our CCUU congregation generously donated $846.65 worth of gift cards for this effort.

Finally, before Palatine High School’s spring break in March 2016, the SAC organized a drive for peanut butter, jelly, and nutri-grain bars for their “closet” of donated foodstuffs which they give out to high school students in need. The head social worker at PHS had requested these specific items. Our congregation donated 31 jars of peanut butter, 24 jars of jelly/jam. Nutri-grain/fruit/nut bars included 3 large Costco-sized boxes, 30 regular-sized boxes, and 10 individual Clif bars. All were delivered to the high school.
UU Prison Ministry Initiative: Related to BLM but also separate is our work with the UU Prison Ministry Initiative. Six of us from the BLM group attended a two-day workshop on March 11-12, 2016 at the People’s Church in Chicago. We will likely develop a summer service around this large topic.

UU Advocacy Network of Illinois: Yvette is still the main liaison to UUANI from CCUU, but would like to pass on this responsibility to someone else who enjoys involvement at a statewide level.

Respectfully submitted by Yvette Johnson, Chair

KINSHIP MINISTRY

Coordinators: Tom MacTavish and Carol Sweigert, Kinship@ccuu.org
Staff Lead: Rev. Hilary Krivchenia

The mission of the Kinship Ministry is to ensure Countryside Church grows and has increasing impact on the religious and social life in the Northwest suburbs by developing an atmosphere that is inclusive, welcoming, connecting, compassionate, and respectful.

We include each and every member of Countryside as partners in this mission. We need your welcoming smiles and willing hands and hearts as we welcome newcomers, host church events like the Seder, and help out with church committees. One of the best ways to get to know others and to become an integral part of our beloved community is just to step up and say, ‘How can I help?’

Key Committees and Programs (Chairs)

- Membership Committee (Tom MacTavish)
- Vines & Branches (Dan Huntsha) is not presently active
- Chalice Circles (Lisa Bohné, Joy Simon)
- Circle Suppers (Marty Farrington)
- Compassionate Communication for Resolving Conflict-CCRC (Vid Axel)
- Feminine Divine Women's Group (Kathryn Hillyer)
- 20-30 Somethings (Jessica Gardner, Ryan Schaefges)
- Transitions (Gloria Kinney)
- Friday Game night is not presently active.

Social Events

These were coordinated by Krista and Tom MacTavish and volunteers were recruited on an ad-hoc basis.

- September Ingathering Finger-Food Potluck. (Team: Lisa Bohné, Juli Cicarelli, Barbara Griggs, Krista MacTavish, Judy Miller, Edie Scott, Sheilah Sokeland)
- February Chocolate Fest was masterfully orchestrated by Kay Gredell
- April Passover Seder (Team organized by Carol Bobbe)

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Our committee members have the opportunity to be the welcoming face, hand, and heart of Unitarian Universalism in the Northwest Suburbs. Welcoming can take many forms: greeting, coffee host, audio-visual support, information sessions, and Path to Community classes.

This year, we revised the Path to Community classes so that it is comprised of two sessions: the first session focuses on sharing UU related information and participants’ spiritual journeys; the second session offers participants the opportunity to meet with active church members within each ministry so that they are provided with examples of the church community in action. This year, we held two sessions of the Path to Community course to a total of 14 potential members. We continued to offer the monthly “Introduction to CCUU” classes due the on-going support of Siri Laurin.

Submitted by Tom MacTavish, Membership Committee Chair, Membership@ccuu.org
CIRCLE SUPPERS
Circle Suppers is an activity sponsored by the Membership Committee in which long-standing members, new members, and interested visitors have a chance to become acquainted over dinner in the host’s home. There are two sessions each year, Fall (Oct.-Jan.) and Spring (Feb.-May). Over the four months, each participant dines with a new group each month, hosting one of the four evenings. 30-50 people participate in Circle Suppers each session.

Beginning in the Fall 2005, non-members became full participants, hosting the third or fourth month, rather than participating as guests only. Several visitors and new members have told me that they enjoy the Circle Supper program as a way to meet others in the church and feel welcome. Similarly, many long-standing members participate partly as a way to get to know newer members and visitors.

Submitted by Marty Farrington, martyuu@joltmail.com

CHALICE CIRCLES
Live your life from your heart. Share from your heart. And your story will touch and heal people’s souls.

~ Melody Beattie

The goal of the Chalice Circle program is to provide a vibrant, small-group ministry aimed at developing a sense of community, trust and support among our Countryside Church members and friends. Chalice Circles provide a safe and welcoming place for spiritual exploration and growth. The practice of deep listening encourages and supports us as we share our unique stories, ideas and feelings. This small-group ministry program is dedicated to nurturing community and meaning and cultivating new and deep connections among individuals.

This year’s Chalice Circles included 3 groups with a total of 25 participants, including 6 facilitators. The monthly topics were:

- Listening
- Making Amends
- Hope
- God and UUs
- What Does It All Mean
- Calling

Materials for four of the topics were created by the facilitators this year, and we supplemented with two chapters from our past Chalice Circle books: Heart to Heart and Soul to Soul. The groups met monthly October through May, and this year, a slightly less structured format was used in the groups to allow for more interaction and deep discussion. A potluck dinner will be held in May as a final gathering for participants across all of the Chalice Circle groups.

We will use that final gathering to get feedback from the participants and to generate ideas for future small ministry groups. While the engagement and feedback from the participants in the Chalice Circles seems to be positive, the number of participants has declined over the course of the last 4 years – this may be a signal that it is time to develop a new small group ministry program.

Submitted by Lisa Bohné

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION for the RESOLUTION of CONFLICT (CCRC)
The CCRC (Compassionate Communication for Resolution of Conflict panel) now consists of Vid Axel (chairperson and panelist), duRee Bryant and Lisa Bohné (panelists).

The CCRC stands ready to assist those within the CCUU family who might encounter conflicts with others within our congregational circle, but who encounter difficulty engaging constructively with these conflicts, on their own. All panelists have received training regarding the kinds of support that we can offer, how to offer it, and with respect to the limits of CCRC activity.
When the panel’s support is sought, the more experienced members of the panel make judgments regarding what kinds of support our less experienced panelists might need in order to offer the most effective help in specific, conflict situations.

For those who would like assistance, the CCRC can offer multiple forms of confidential support. Support can range from the rudimentary to the more actively involved.

CCRC panelists may offer advice which a person can then apply when striving on one’s own to deal more constructively with a conflict. When more support is wished, the CCRC can also offer intermediate forms of help.

In its most advanced form, when a given situation warrants, and both parties are willing, one or more CCRC panelist(s) can even assist with facilitated dialogue or mediation.

The CCRC does not take sides or dictate solutions. The CCRC does not seek to act as some kind of “conflict police.”

Rather, the aim of the CCRC is to offer confidential and safe support that will assist CCUU community participants who find themselves in conflict, and who request assistance, to 1) communicate more effectively within the framework of our Covenant of Right Relationship; 2) to more deeply understand one another; and 3) together, to craft their own, constructive solutions.

The CCRC may also, at times, make educational presentations in which we draw attention to the existence and purpose of the CCRC, as well as teach skills in more effective communication and conflict resolution.

In 2016, as part of the Study Ministry, Vid has been offering a new, introductory class about Compassionate Communication. This class helps to share the consciousness and skills involved in Compassionate Communication. It also helps to make participants more aware of the CCRC and what it does.

During the past year, when the CCRC has been sought for support, we have provided it. Because of the confidentiality involved in such support, further details cannot be provided in this annual report of our activity.

We are grateful for the opportunity we have been given to serve our congregation. We feel strongly that our participation has helped and will continue to help. Those who have sought our assistance have reported that we have helped and have lived up to our aspirations. Even so, we continue to learn from experience and to improve our work.

We look forward to future opportunities to offer additional support and education.

Respectfully Submitted by Vid Axel, Chairperson, CCRC

FEUMINE DIVINE WOMEN’S GROUP

Countryside’s Feminine Divine Women’s Group started in 2008 as a study group for the UU curriculum “Rise Up and Call Her Name,” continuing in subsequent years with the program “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.” These two programs were the result of a 1977 UU General Assembly Resolution calling on all UUs and UU organizations to examine and put aside sexist assumptions, attitudes, and language and to explore and eliminate religious roots of sexism in myths, traditions, and religious beliefs.

After completing these programs, the group felt strongly that we wanted to continue meeting, but in a slightly different format. That led to a new structure, which uses a different book each year as a focus for exploring areas of feminine spirituality. Last year, we read and discussed “The Book of Forgiving” by Mpho and Desmond Tutu, and will be leading a summer worship service on it the summer of 2016. This year, we actually formed a second group so we could discuss two books. The new group met the second Monday of each month in the evening, to discuss “Your Spacious Self: Clear the Clutter and Discover Who You Are” by Stephanie Bennett Vogt. Our traditional Saturday group began the year with “The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee. In February, we changed the focus of our meetings away from a book to more topical discussions, beginning with self-care. Each month, we decide the topic for the following month and group members bring in resources.
The purpose of this group is less on outside service and more on supporting our members and exploring our inner beliefs. We are closely aligned with these UU principles: first (the inherent worth and dignity of every person), third (acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations), and fourth (a free and responsible search for truth and meaning). However, our discussions carry us through all aspects of our beliefs as Unitarian Universalists.

The Feminine Divine Women’s Group meets the last Saturday of the month, from 9:30-11:30. The meetings typically begin with a reading of our covenant, where we reaffirm our commitment to the confidentiality and safety of our shared time together. We then spend time on Check-In, where members are free to share their thoughts and experience over the previous month. This is not a time for advice or therapy, but rather an opportunity for us to bring into the open our joys and sorrows, in a safe and supportive environment. Confidentiality is always honored. Some months, we then have a period of meditation and reflection. This is followed by a break and social time, where we enjoy the snacks we’ve brought. The rest of our time is spent in discussing that month’s chapter or topic. Each month, the meeting is led by different members, as we have a shared responsibility to the group. We have a very democratic structure. We laugh, we cry, we enjoy!

In addition, we participate in occasional social outings. Our service project the past three years has been in supporting Music with a Mission by providing food and volunteers.

This year, the group was facilitated by Kathryn Hillyer, although each month different members take turns leading the discussions. Group membership is open and fluid, as people have conflicts and other commitments.

What will our focus be for next year? That will be determined by the group in August. We are open to suggestions as the group reflects the desires of its members. One area worth exploring is how we can be of more service to the larger church community.

For more information, please contact Kathi Hillyer, the 2015-2016 facilitator, at kathioh@aol.com or 847-477-8331. There will be a new facilitator next year (2016-17), to be determined.

Submitted by Kathryn Hillyer

SEDER DINNER

We organize and hold an annual Seder dinner that corresponds to the Jewish Seder observance. This year, it was held on Friday, April 29. We learn about one of the major Jewish Holidays. We bring whole families including some from outside the church together for this observance. This UU Seder is focused on freedom and gratitude with many stories from history including UU history.

This event supports the work of Kinship, Worship, and Study ministries.
- Kinship – we bring church families together for a social evening including a service and dinner.
- Worship – the Seder service is a form of worship, complete with music
- Study – reading the Haggadah is a study of the history of Jews and other persecuted people

This year’s Seder Team was:
- Carol Bobbe, lead
- Set up – 20-30 Somethings group
- Pick up chickens - the Berrys
- Food prep - Carol and Ken Bobbe, Mike and Linda Berry, Karen Epps, Linda and Tom Kuna
- Matzoh balls for soup and vegetable soup - Mark Krivchenia
- Making music - Jeff and Lois Phillips
- Microphone system - Jeff Phillips
- Serving the soup - everyone who helped
- A song for the unsung heroes - the clean-up leaders: Juli Cicarelli, Kathy & George Motto, Mark Krivchenia - also everyone who helped
- Reverend Hilary - leading the entire event, making up gift bags for kids, etc. with help from Jules Jaramillo and Lisa Vanderbleek
- Laurie Lantz - PR, preparing handouts
As you can see, there are a lot of jobs available for volunteers: setting up, taking down, preparing the food before the Seder, picking up the chicken, making the charoset, making matzoh balls and soup, purchasing the food and other items needed for the dinner.

This event is open to the larger community; non-members who don’t belong to a Synagogue or who are just curious about this Jewish Service have attended – and many return. We had about 70 people in attendance this year (2016), we hope to have more next year. We’ve had as many as 135 and as few as 60 over the last few years.

**TRANSITIONS**

The Transitions Group is a monthly gathering of adults who are retired or approaching retirement and would like to join an educational and social meeting on topics relevant to seniors. Our activities support our increased understanding of the world community from different spiritual traditions and emphasize the connection between all people at various stages of life. We share information from our experiences of life and respect the dignity and worth of all persons.

We take periodic field trips to spiritual, educational, and reflective centers such as Bahai Temple, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Illinois Holocaust Museum, and the Meadville Lombard Theological School Library.

We have several smaller groups that meet on special topics; Memoir Makers and Great Books have met regularly throughout the year.

**Memoir Makers**

*Coordinated by Barbara Griggs –* bjgriggs@comcast.net, Krista MacTavish, kjmactavish@aol.com, Tom MacTavish, tmactavish@gmail.com

The Memoir Makers group meets to share fellowship and learning about each other’s personal histories and perspectives as we learn to develop our craft of writing and storytelling. Our goal is to preserve our stories for ourselves and for future generations.

The process of recording and reflecting our stories helps us interpret and reframe events of our lives so that we gain a richer understanding of our truth and life’s meaning. Our group fellowship helps support individual’s progress in their personal growth. This year, we completed learning from the Great Courses “Creative Non-Fiction” by Dr. Tilar Mazzeo. In June, we will begin the series “The Art of Storytelling” by Hannah B. Harvey, Ph.D.

**Great Books**

*Coordinated by Gloria Kinney, gloriakinney@comcast.net*

One of the “off-shoots” of the Transitions program is the reading/discussion group that started in 2015 with the reading of a Great Books short story selection entitled Immigrant Voices. Our discussions of these stories, written by contemporary authors from various national origins, enhance our understanding and compassion for those who have elected to or were forced to leave their native countries for life in an unknown land. Immigration and massive migrations are one of he major social justice issues of our time.

The next book selected by the group (in Spring 2016) for reading/discussion is another Great Books book entitled the Seven Deadly Sins. Beginning April 13, our group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 10 A.M. to discuss the writings of well-known authors on such topics as greed, lust, gluttony, etc., the so-called seven deadly sins. These discussions contribute to our understanding or ourselves and our relationships to others, a truly Kinship issue at a personal level. All are welcome to join us in our exploratory and interesting discussions.

For more information about Transitions or to put your name on our email list, please contact one of the Co-Facilitators:

Gloria Kinney, (847) 397-8114, gloriakinney@comcast.net

Tom MacTavish, tmactavish@gmail.com
FOUNDATIONS/OPERATIONS MINISTRY

The care and running of our congregational home resides increasingly with staff but depends on the involvement, skills, and time of our congregants. During the Ministry Fair in September, it was clear that these efforts, though different than the other program ministries, need to stay within the Ministry structure in order to stay visible and within the communication and coordination umbrella of Ministry Council.

The Foundations Ministry includes all things pertaining to maintaining and operating our building and grounds, the equipment, the use of our building, as well as our means of communication, with each other and the broader community. Much of that is overseen by Laurie Lantz, our Congregational Administrator, with the support of a few of our members and friends. Budgetary items fall primarily in the Buildings/Grounds section of the budget, with “operations committees” being Aesthetics, AV, Historian, IT/Tech, Leadership Development, Marketing & Communications, Safe Congregation (background checks for those working with children & youth).

Most of us take for granted that our building is always here ready to receive us, on Sundays and during the week. We take for granted that the heat will turn on, the AV equipment will be available, equipment and materials will be available for our use, our gathering spaces will be attractive and ready for our use. We don’t think about what is involved in producing and sharing information or how the larger community can find out about what is happening within our walls. In a business with a building our size and with the number of people using it, there would be a team of paid staff to cover all of this. At Countryside, we have one staff person plus a small group of volunteers who are giving of their time and talent quietly and behind the scenes.

Aesthetics
Lois Phillips & her team continue to keep us organized & looking spiffy. Lois brightened Jules’s office with a fresh coat of paint. This year began with the acquisition of free office furniture, worth many thousands of dollars, which we obtained for the price of the move (from aesthetics team & building maintenance budgets) and the time it took to re-assemble it and put it into place. Many thanks to Kristin and Mark Huston and their daughter Melissa for this remarkable find and for arranging the move. Additional thanks to Kristin and Mark, Lois and Jeff Phillips, Karl Michalec, Mike Graves, Chris Smith, and John Evans for all the time & energy that went into getting the old furniture out and the new furniture assembled & moved into place! We now have a very professional, unified look to all the offices.

Audio-Visual
Jeff Phillips continues to maintain all the AV equipment and helps regularly on Sunday mornings. We are thankful to those members of the hospitality team who help with the AV system for worship services – Tony Prett, Mike Jeschke, Mike Gilley, Karen Greenland, Art Paton, Melanie Schikore & David Silverman, Ken Sepos, Colin Tysoe.

Historian: Our church historian is Kay Gredell. Her job is to keep the historical records of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist organized, easily accessible, and up-to-date by adding information as it occurs. She has received some help with these efforts from Gayle Shampine Barr. 2016-17 will be Kay’s last year in this volunteer position. It will also be a year when we will want to call on our historical records, as Countryside Church celebrates its 60th Anniversary. Maybe we could put together more oral/video histories of our members. If you have interest in helping with the Anniversary effort or in taking Kay’s place as Historian, please let us know!

Congregation members can help by watching their local newspapers and magazines for any mention of Countryside Church UU and then clipping out the article, making sure to include date and source, and putting it in the Historian mailbox in the church office. If you would like to volunteer as a "local clipper," please call or e-mail Kay. Also appreciated are photographs of church events that have been annotated with event, date, and names of people in the photo; they can be left in the Historian box.

IT/Tech
With the help of Mike Gilley last summer, we switched to Voice Over Internet Phones (VOIP), saving the congregation some money. Our plan includes 911 service. It is also easy to expand to more lines/voice mail boxes as needed. We started last May with phones/extensions/voice mail for Rev. Hilary, Laurie, and Lisa V and added them for Alison and Jules as they joined the staff. We no longer have to rely on outdated onsite voice mail.
equipment, which was in danger of “dying” with the next great power outage or surge. We continue to have internet service through AT&T. Karen Greenland has helped set up our internet router & modem so the staff has a separate WiFi network from the public.

**Marketing & Communications**
Cherita Axel has been at work getting the CCUU website to a mobile-friendly format using a WordPress template provided by the UUA, which we hope will be in place this summer. Christine Organ continues to administer the church Facebook page. We pay a monthly fee for Constant Contact to be able to easily send and archive e-news, such as the weekly e-updates. *We could use a communications team to help with getting the word out to the larger community about the programs and events that might be of interest to them and in helping to create a cohesive look for our publications.*

**Lawncare/Grounds**
Judy Miller is the main person who oversees what needs to be done on the grounds. She gets help from Beth Gerson and a few other volunteers. Peggy Simonsen, Ron Vargason, and Mark Krivchenia help maintain our “prairie” along the east side of our property. Peggy & Judy have made arrangements for a landscape contractor to help regularly this spring & summer. We are also hoping to put together a list of tasks that volunteers could do should they want to spend a little time outside helping to make our grounds stay looking lovely. Judy has created a month-by-month list of grounds tasks which need to happen, helping Laurie get the facilities manual started.

**Building & Facilities, including North Property and Capital Repairs**
Steve Black and Mark Huston have been the primary volunteers tending to what needs to be done to keep things in working order and contacting contractors when needed. Steve obtained quotes for needed masonry work on the east side of the building; phase I was completed in the fall, and phase II & III will take place later this spring or summer. Mark Huston replaced the sump pump that affects the ventilation system in the sanctuary. He also went up on the roof in March to investigate why the sanctuary roof was leaking. Mark has obtained quotes from electricians for light-sensor parking lot lights (no timer needed; they’d go on when it gets dark) and for additional exterior lighting to make the north & east sides of the building safer; the Board has not yet decided on what of that quoted work will be done. There is always a toilet to be unclogged, a toilet flush handle to be replaced, bookcases to be anchored, a sink to be unclogged, lightbulbs to be changed. Steve Black repaired the drywall behind one of the classroom doors when the door handle crashed into it, and Ron Vargason added a doorstop to prevent the same accident happening again. Jeff Phillips is another volunteer who helps throughout the building - changing lightbulbs, installing outlets in Atherton Hall ceiling, getting on the roof to clear ice dams & unclog downspouts, and I’m sure many other things that I never see.

Ongoing facilities work for which we have contracts with outside contractors includes quarterly preventive maintenance of the HVAC system and annual inspections of the fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, sprinkler system. Next year, we will add annual inspection/maintenance of the emergency lights & exit signs to our contract with Fox Valley Fire & Safety. Nonworking emergency lights or exit signs is the most common citation when the fire marshall does our annual inspection. We also have a contract with Smithereen Pest Management, who currently does a monthly inspection and provides needed treatment (usually for ants & drain flies); we will be cutting back to bi-monthly inspections to save some money in next year’s budget. In the fall, we paid outside contractors to repair a broken toilet and urinal and to fix the leaky fridge (frozen drain lines).

We haven’t had any major expenditures related to the North Property this year, though we just heard from the tenants that several trees appear to be dying or at least to have a lot of dead branches in need of trimming.