

Significant Moments

- UUMA Application Process – I am delighted to report that I have turned in my application to become an Associate Member of the UU Ministers Association.
- Discernment Workshop – I found the LDC workshop lead by Tom Darnton very useful. It provided not only helpful content but the process of interaction was meaningful. Thanks to Tom and the LDC.
- Social justice protest – While a rather intense effort, organizing the protest in Cadillac against the Trump campaign was extremely edifying. While not a UUCGT activity, it was highly public and created an opportunity for a high energy action for our members.
- Restart of LGBT support group – I am delighted to inform the board that our LGBT ministry will be re-starting in early April. The sessions will be co-facilitated and will take place on Sunday evenings.
- New member welcome – It was delightful to welcome 14 new members in March!
- NMC Class – I completed teaching at NMC for the semester. The class had at least 8 of our members in attendance. It was well received.

How has my view of the future changed?

I am inspired by the growth in membership our congregation is experiencing. At the same time, it is vital that we now include in our thinking some underlying system concerns. The two areas I'd like to address here are **building transgenerational relationships** and more broadly **member engagement**/relationship building.

I am concerned that we speak so happily about welcoming families with children, but we are struggling to volunteer-staff our children's LE program and Friday Night Out. I believe the underlying systems issue is that we are not cultivating relationships between our families with children and our older members. **More broadly, how do we create an environment that encourages formation of relationships, especially among our newer members and between newer members and longer-standing members?**

I am encouraged to have my UUMA application under review. Assuming I am accepted as Associate Member, I will attend the minister meetings prior to the GA and am scheduled to attend the regional ministers' meeting at the end of April.

In order to balance my current workload, I plan to end 9 AM Sunday programming for the Summer. The contemplative meditation has been sparsely attended, but the 9 AM education have been robust. I seek input from the board for Fall resumption.

I would like to request that the Board and Committee on Ministry consider a joint training in discernment, if Tom Darnton is willing!

As you may know, there is no local clergy association. I have been in touch with several local colleagues, and we will be re-launching the Grand Traverse Ministerial Association in the next 60 days. I'll be at the helm and we will meet at Central United Methodist for the time being.

It is my aspiration to attend the UUMA Western [Michigan] Cluster monthly meetings in Grand Rapids now that the drive will not be snafued by weather concerns.

Update on Major Activities/Goals

Counseling and Pastoral Care – I continue to provide pastoral care to individuals who are ill, hospitalized or otherwise in need. We have been fortunate to have few hospitalizations this month. The Pastoral Care Committee is currently exploring what we want the team's function and scope to be going forward.

Staff/Staff Resources – Working with our staff continues to be a joy. We are working very hard and feeling quite busy, but our intra-staff relationships are functional and supportive. We are looking forward to welcoming a new music director. The process of interviewing is now taking place.

Program Council – The program council now has a schedule through May. The information and community building that are coming about because of the Program Council have great value. We connect on practical matters (like creating a congregation-wide schedule) and also on philosophical issues (like how do we grow member engagement and how we can better support our families with children).

Lifespan Experience – Like Sarah I am concerned that we are not able to provide the level of volunteer leadership for our LE and Friday Night Out Programs. How do we value our families with children? How can we engage a broader group of members to support these programs, even if they themselves do have direct benefit?

Denominational Affairs – As mentioned above, I have submitted my application to become an Associate Member of the UUMA. My reservations are made for the Regional Assembly (end of April) and General Assembly (June). I will begin attending Western [Michigan] Minister Cluster meetings in March.

Social Witness – I attended a phone conference of the Michigan UU Social Justice Network this month. I will keep the congregation and board informed as that group moves toward the possibility of programming in the area of anti-racism.

Stewardship – Judy Myers is leading us beautifully. We have launched and so far it has been celebratory! I will be actively supporting stewardship from the pulpit, I have fulfilled my pledge from last year and made my pledge for the upcoming year.

Question for the Board

How do we create an environment that encourages formation of relationships, especially among our newer members and between newer members and longer-standing members?

I seek input from the board about 9 AM contemplative programming for Fall resumption.

A Final Thought

From "Getting to Know You... The key to building community is social interaction, not 'social networks'" by Susan Freudenheim

"The congregation's leaders called author and educator Ron Wolfson for help. His solution? Downsize the programming and start talking to one another instead. "You have to understand your population," he told them. Programs are great, but if they don't offer a return by building the congregation, what have you accomplished? "It's all about people first and programming second," Wolfson said."