

Ministry .....

PARISH MINISTRY

Rev. David McFarland – Called Minister

– *What is your ministry’s mission in serving the congregation?* My mission is to offer the spiritual and social and intellectual and physical space (for those of you familiar with the term, “the holding environment”) to grow a soul: the soul of individuals and the soul of this congregation of ministers. I serve this mission through word and silence and lunches and texting and neighborhood walks and prayer and acts of justice and social media and leadership development and reading and events and presence. Through these, I practice radical welcome, put Unitarian Universalist commitments into action, celebrate life, nourish the spirit, and commit acts of justice, peace, and equity, all toward the mission of creating a Beloved Community that lives love boldly.

– *Who are the people involved in your ministry’s work?* Although mine is referred to as a “sole pastorate,” I do not do this work alone. The entire congregation (Members, Friends, and Guests) are involved in this ministry’s work, especially church Leaders who are too numerous to name here though you probably know their names (and even if you don’t know them by name, after you’re around awhile, you know them by sight).

– *What are you most proud about your ministry’s accomplishments this year?* We hosted an intern from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Scott Eckes, who worked on the Heart-to-Heart effort to connect Members and Friends to one another and to the neighborhood, and on Religious Education for volunteer recruitment and other support. Through our relationship with Youth Opportunities Development, we brought a Mindfulness Meditation group to the church designed for Returning Citizens (formerly incarcerated) and open to all. Through our neighborhood connections, we now host Yoga as one of our regular spiritual offerings.

– *What challenges did your ministry face this year?* Having been seminary-trained the same way Ralph Waldo Emerson was in the 19th century, I’m still feeling like a foreigner in the “new world” of Twitter, FaceBook, online communities, meditation apps, and the like. On

a personal note, bringing up two special-needs children has been enormously challenging this year such that I need to ask to move to a three-quarter-time ministry for a season.

– *What are your ministry’s hopes and plans for the next year? What future do you see for your ministry in the next three years?* I hope we inspire more Members and Friends to show up more often and more fully. “Showing up fully” is the essence of spiritual growth. Perhaps not coincidentally, it’s also the essence of church growth. This year, I foresee new worship experiences bringing new people, and engaging more Members and Friends through large- and small-group gatherings. In the longer term, I see expanding “Alternative Spring Break” type ministries that make us a local and regional center for effective, relational social justice action; collaborating more closely with the 1000 other UUs in the cluster that allow more effective resource sharing; and through intentional reflection on our mission and other assets, becoming the sustainable 21st century church that the North Side needs us to become.

MUSIC MINISTRY

– *What is your ministry’s mission in serving the congregation?* Music is the language of the soul. The ministry of music celebrates life, nourishes the spirit, and inspires. It gives us a reason to rise together, breathe together, and embody the work of the Spirit together.

– *Who are the people involved in your ministry’s work?* Rev. Dave takes responsibility for choosing songs for worship and for scheduling musicians, but everybody who sings and plays music at Allegheny is involved in the ministry’s work.

– *What are you most proud about your ministry’s accomplishments this year?* Despite losing our Director of Worship Music this year, we’ve developed a dedicated crew of excellent musicians, including those from within the congregation, who provide soulful, heart-felt, Spirit-drenched musical experience every Sunday.

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— *What challenges did your ministry face this year?*  
The loss of regular contributions from Allegheny Voices (choir) has been difficult. Our committed singers have been disheartened by their small number.

— *What are your ministry's hopes and plans for the next year? What future do you see for your ministry in the next three years?* We hope to expand our musical resources. We hope to provide opportunities for singers and instrumentalists to contribute to the worship music experience. We look forward to a new volunteer crew of musicians who have offered to play and lead music at worship starting Flower Communion Sunday and showing up throughout the summer. We hope that new music written for Allegheny's worship and the infusion of a band/combo will bring even more Spirit and vitality to our worship experience and be spiritually nourishing for current Members and spiritually inviting to those who have not yet even crossed our threshold. We hope that in three years the Music Ministry will be bursting with musicians and choir(s!) and be just too big and vibrant for Rev. Dave to handle himself.

#### **WORSHIP MINISTRY**

— *What is your ministry's mission in serving the congregation?* Sunday morning worship supplies the beating heart to the church body. Worshipping together, we practice radical welcome, we give life to Unitarian Universalism, we celebrate life, nurture the spirit, and inspire acts of justice and mercy. We live love boldly.

— *Who are the people involved in your ministry's work?* Easiest would be to say it's staffed by Donald Zeilman, Mark Tomlinson, and Rev. Dave. But a lot more people go into creating worship: Worship Hosts with special shout-out to our newest Hosts, Shane Freeman, Beth Glick, and Sonia Reed; Greeters and Welcome Table led by "Super Greeter" Andy Schwarz and Membership Chair Betty Schwarz, respectively; Religious Education (RE) Ministry including those much-appreciated Members and Friends who offer Time for All Ages; Worship Musicians like Tom Roberts, Brad Yoder, and Jesse Landis-Eigsti; Hospitality, currently led by the Board of Trustees; Guest Speakers, whether other Members and Friends or from the broader community; all are integral to the worship experience. And the most important people are those who create worship by showing up in the pews. That's where the spirit really ignites.

— *What are you most proud about your ministry's accomplishments this year?* The ministry encouraged and nurtured two "worship experiments" this year: Sunday Boost and Friday Happier Hour. We also experienced a variety of different worship styles: UU Taize, UU-Quaker Mash-Up, Music & Meditation. And although it's not without its own challenges, we've heard anecdotally from guests and new Members that having Fellowship Hour in the Emerson (Fireside) Room has made that experience much more accessible.

— *What challenges did your ministry face this year?*  
We struggled with losing our Director of Worship Music and regular contributions from Allegheny Voices (choir) and Allegheny Sounds (instrumentals). First Wednesday "Music Circle," designed to nurture musical participation in worship, hasn't been well attended. We're still unsatisfied with our collaboration with RE on Worship for All ages. We are most challenged by the reality that people come and respond super positively to Allegheny's worship experience, yet more often people don't come back than do, including the very ones (Members or Guests) who say they really love Allegheny's worship!

— *What are your ministry's hopes and plans for the next year? What future do you see for your ministry in the next three years?* Rev. Dave is planning a "Sermon Seminar" for those interested in speaking at Allegheny. We're going to try different styles of Worship for All Ages this year. Perhaps most significantly, this summer we're introducing worship with less ritual and more new music, instrumentals, and poetry beginning with Flower Communion Sunday on June 5. Don't miss it! Worship in three years might look very different from worship over the past three, and that's as it should be. As with all church endeavors, Worship Ministry tries to balance what current Members need with what future Members need.

#### **IN-REACH MINISTRY**

*Ellen Kerr*

Rev. McFarland started the In-Reach Ministry during his Sabbatical to help us stay connected and to provide some peer to peer pastoral care. We continued after his return to help to cultivate a culture of caring.

Jane Schwarz, Suzanne Gais and Ellen Kerr work with Rev. Dave to help maintain and strengthen the

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ties between members and friends of this community. We respond sometimes with a note, sometimes with a phone call or sometimes with an e-mail to a personal problem or event to be celebrated that is shared in joys and sorrows or that Rev. Dave brings to our attention. We contact you to let you know that we heard you or about you, that we care and that you are never alone. We are here for each other. In-reach is here for you.

You are also a necessary part of this ministry. We can only respond to what we hear. Please participate. Our community grows stronger and more caring the more we know about each other, the more we can trust each other with our feelings, life changes, struggles, adventures, triumphs, and celebrations.

In-reach is available to and for you. If you want to talk, contact any of us by phone or e-mail. The group e-mail is: [inreachministry@alleghenyuu.org](mailto:inreachministry@alleghenyuu.org)

We hope to add a member or two to our ministry. There is always a lot going on in every life and we would like to be able to be more responsive.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY**

*Peggy Thompson*

The mission of the RE Ministry is to create and nurture an exploration of our Unitarian Universalist values. We're striving to provide an environment that encourages spiritual development. Our focus right now is with the children of the church. There are about twenty five children enrolled in RE. On most Sundays there are between ten and twelve children in church.

There are two classes. The younger class has a lesson and story time. The children write or draw or do other

art activities. They have time for snacks and playtime. The older class has a mixture of stories and lessons along with discussion and art activities. Under our current curriculum, both classes study the contributions of one notable UU each week. Recent lessons have focused on Ben Franklin, Beatrix Potter and Alexander Graham Bell. When possible we try to have two teachers in each classroom. Marissa Morrison, our Childcare Specialist, has been teaching the older class. She has brought both leadership and creativity to the program.

The kids enjoyed several parties and special activities. They celebrated with Santa and also learned about Hanukkah. On Easter they had an egg hunt. Recently, Sarah Mocker has been gardening with the kids.

"Time for All Ages" has become an integral part of Sunday morning worship. Thanks to the people who have read a story or shared a lesson with the kids. The goal for "Worship for All Ages" is to help the kids feel included in Sunday worship. The activity bags have helped keep their hands busy. We're pleased that RE takes place every Sunday whether in Unitarian House or in church during Worship for All Ages.

One of the challenges this year was recruiting volunteers to teach RE. The classes run more smoothly with two teachers in the room. We're in the process of hiring a teacher that could help in either class when needed. The RE Committee is small and would welcome new members. The Ministry includes Marissa Morrison, Lisa Schroth, Peggy Thompson and Rev. Dave. It's our hope that with the involvement of more people over the next few years the RE Ministry could be enlarged and more programs could be offered to both adults and children.

## **Nominating Report 2016** .....

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following candidates for Trustee in two-year positions:

- John Luff (second term)
- Greg Blackman (second term)
- Jay Poliziani (second term)
- Kate Tomlinson (first term)

The Nominating Committee will be presenting candidates to serve on the Endowment Committee. The list currently includes Mark Tomlinson and Sarah Mocker.

### **KATE TOMLINSON**

Kate Tomlinson is an 18-year member of Allegheny. She has served on a variety of committees and initiatives, including fund raising, stewardship, committee on ministry, communications, endowment, and Growth and Vitality, and was involved in the development of our Covenant. Professionally, Kate works for the National MS Society, leading their digital strategy. Kate lives with husband Mark, daughter Emeline, and dog Moxie in North Side's Manchester neighborhood.

# Board Administration .....

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Greg Blackman – Vice President, acting President January 2016*

First, I would like to thank Liz Dell for her year and half of service as President of the Allegheny Board of Trustees and wish her well as she embarks on her new role as mother of Pauline. Liz did an excellent job, helping us navigate through some difficult changes.

Some of the high points for the past year were:

Our October 2015 celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Reverend David McFarland's installation.

One of Liz's goals – improved acoustics for Founders Hall also came to fruition in the Fall when the sound dampening ceiling panels were installed.

In February, the value of the effort to improve the acoustics of Founder's Hall was demonstrated when we hosted a community meeting there called Hope Against Hate. The event was quickly organized after a banner at the North Side office of a physician serving the LGBTQ community was vandalized.

This spring Allegheny and the Unitarian House became the home base for another group of college

students spending their alternative spring break doing social justice work in Pittsburgh. A group from Vanderbilt University has been coming for several years; this year a group from the University of Delaware also made Allegheny their home base and attended our Easter Sunday service.

In support of the Fight for Fifteen movement to raise the minimum wage nationally, in April the board voted to pay all hourly employees of Allegheny a minimum of \$15 an hour.

Sometime in late 2016 our Share the Plate program will reach \$25,000 in donations; a celebration of that achievement is in the works.

Issues the Board needs to address this coming year include how to handle hospitality after worship, and planning to make sure we remain financially secure.

I would like to thank our continuing members this year: Sonia Reed, Mary Jo Sonntag, John Luff, and Jay Poliziani – thanks for your efforts. I would also like to thank Eric Meisberger who is leaving the Board. We will miss his wise contributions and lightheartedness.

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## JUSTICE LEAGUE REPORT

*Shane Freeman*

The Justice League has five members: Shane Freeman, Betty & John Luff, Betty Schwarz and Ellen Kerr.

The mission of the Justice League is to work towards a more just and equitable society. We strive to work within the congregation and with outside organizations in the hopes of tackling social justice issues. Our discussions about how we might help have touched on racial, environmental, and economic justice topics. We have come to the conclusion that the most efficient way for us to effect change is to offer our time and energy to local organizations in need of help, by way of tapping into our volunteer base. In that way, we feel we can maximize our impact by plugging into issues that are already being addressed, rather than "reinventing the wheel."

One of the ways we accomplished that this year is the Refugee Assistance Program. In April we were able to assist 13 refugees (clients of the Northern Area Multi-Service Center in Sharpsburg) come one step closer to permanent citizenship by assisting them with one of

the more daunting aspects of that process, the paperwork. We intend for this program to be an ongoing one, with sessions recurring about once a month.

We look forward to what the coming year holds for us. We are currently discussing activities that revolve around the upcoming Pride Week Celebrations. We are also discussing Allegheny's Welcoming Congregation status as it relates to the constantly changing landscape of LGBTQIA+ issues. In particular, we are bouncing around thoughts about how to make Allegheny more welcoming to people in that community, including the possibility of gender neutral bathrooms and gender pronouns on our name tags.

One of the most daunting challenges that the Justice League has faced over the past several months is engaging members in important (and potentially uncomfortable) conversations. For a wide variety of reasons, it has been difficult to get folks to open up and talk about some of the delicate subject matter, especially pertaining to racial justice. We continue to seek an appropriate avenue to getting those dialogs rolling.

## FINANCE REPORT — (as of March 31, 2016)

John Luff – Treasurer

**Summary** The state of the Church's finances is the best it has been in a long time. With a bit of luck and effort by everyone to pay the balance owed on pledges for FY2016 we have a shot at breaking even at the end of the fiscal year in June, which would be a dramatic turn around indeed. Prospects looking forward are also quite good as the efforts of the Board to make important long term strategic choices that will materially stabilize the Church's finances are in process.

**Income** Through March income was down 7.5% compared to the same period last year. However, rental income is up resulting in total income essentially identical to last year.

**Expenses** This year the Board, Ministries and committees have done an outstanding job managing the expenses of the Church. Total expenses are down about 9.4% from last year. We have lowered insurance (down \$2,400), utility costs (down \$2,400), reduced general expenses, and facility maintenance cost. Our operating costs were about \$13,000 below last year.

**Operating Income <Loss>** The operating deficit has been reduced from about <\$14,000> last year to about <\$2,500> in FY2016 (July–June).

**Giant Eagle Card Program** For the fiscal year, GE shows a profit of \$1,222, or 3.1% for the year. The inventory of cards as of March 29th increased to \$1,450.

**Notes** Some of our long-term investments suffered a bit this year in the volatile stock market, losing about \$3,000 through the end of March, while others increased in value, for a net increase of about \$1,300. Cash accounts (checking and money market) decreased by about \$14,000, in part due to the expenditures on the acoustics work in Founders Hall, which cost us about \$7,000. Our total Net Assets decreased by \$7,100.

**Endowment** The Allegheny Endowment was established in 2012 at the Annual Meeting. It was funded by a donation of \$10,700 in early 2013. In 2014 the Board of Trustees voted to move \$15,000 from the PNC Money Market Account to the Endowment. Those funds (total of \$25,000) are invested in the UUA Common Endowment Fund. To date, during the drop in the market last year and volatility this year, that account has dropped in value to \$23,532 (as of 3/31, the last reporting period). The Allegheny Endowment also has a checking account with just over \$700 in it. Both of those accounts are not accessible to the Church Operating Budget until the total invested amount exceeds \$75,000.

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## STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Tiffany Merriman-Preston

From the Stewardship Team, thank you to everyone who supported this church in a myriad of ways over the last year!

In the 2015–16 fiscal year, as part of our “Built by Many Hands” campaign, we introduced our first Commitment Sunday. This was an opportunity to dedicate the Sunday service before our Annual Meeting to celebrating our commitment to the Church's mission and pledging our support together. The 2015–16 campaign raised more than \$78,000 in pledges from members and friends!

In November, we celebrated together with an appreciation event, which was generously hosted at the home of Karl Kunkle. We enjoyed gathering over good food and drinks, socializing, and spending some time reflecting on what our Church means to us and where we would like to take it.

In December, we invited members and friends to make a special gift to the Church, to mark the end of the calendar year and the season of giving. You all responded with enthusiasm, and we raised nearly \$10,000 to support our programs and outreach!

Now, as we gather again to review the past year and prepare for the future, we have launched our #LiveLoveBoldly campaign. This year, we're looking past the numbers and into the future, dreaming big and calling upon everyone to pledge their support. We kicked off with a great picnic in the park on Earth Day Sunday, and we're bringing back Commitment Sunday on May 22. We need everyone's help to make this year's campaign to fund our mission a big success!

Thanks for continuing to make this Church happen every week of the year! If anyone is interested in joining the Stewardship Team in the coming year, please contact Tiffany Merriman-Preston for more info!

**[MEETING]HOUSE COMMITTEE**

*Charlie Snowden – Chairperson*

This past year the committee coordinated the use of the Unitarian House for the filming of the movie “American Pastoral.” The income from that was a nice help to our budget and they made some nice improvements to the rooms they used.

This past year also saw the completion of the ceiling project in Founders Hall, and set up and wiring of the WiFi extenders in Unitarian House and the lower level of the church.

General maintenance was maintained with the furnaces, boiler, fire safety inspection, repair and installation of the inside storm windows in Unitarian House, snow removal, and cleaning and waxing of the floor in Founders Hall.

Capital improvements to Unitarian House were put on hold pending the possible sale of the building.

It has been difficult trying to find a plasterer to repair the ceiling in the Emerson room at a reasonable price. We hope to have it resolved in the next few weeks.

Future project include temporary replacement of the exterior handrail on Unitarian House, painting the foundation of Unitarian House and painting the box gutter on Unitarian House.

A general spring cleaning needs to be scheduled and a lot of junk needs to be removed from the Unitarian House basement.

The House Committee consists of Charlie Snowden, Andy Schwarz, and Donald Zeilman (DZ).

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

*Betty Schwarz – Chairperson*

The Membership Committee welcomes newcomers, encouraging and facilitating an introduction to our faith, our congregation and to the process of becoming a member. We host the Welcome Table on Sunday mornings to greet and encourage visitors to sign the guest register and make them aware of our weekly online newsletter. We hold visitor orientation sessions, provide Sunday name tags, and visitor follow-up. We support fellowship within our membership, friends and visitors by organizing the In-Gathering potluck dinner, the Thanksgiving potluck dinner, and the June picnic.

The reputation of the church for warmth and enthusiastic welcoming of newcomers makes us proud. The Committee will continue our activities of welcoming guests and providing encouragement along the path to membership. We would also like to encourage more

social interactions among members and guests that provide opportunities to meet people in the congregation. In consideration is a return to forming small social gatherings or activities. How about “Dinners for Six”? A game night? A movie night? We could redesign and reactivate the circle concept. We are open to suggestions.

Our Committee is challenged by demographic changes in society which affect church growth and attendance. Our membership declined this year when four members moved out of state and two members became “friends.” We welcomed one new member and look forward to welcoming several more in the coming church year. We plan to grow the church. To do that we so we will need the active participation of the Board and all members and we will need to grow the Membership Committee.

**Committee on Ministry** .....

The Committee on Ministry is charged with tracking ministry within the congregation: how the members take care of themselves and each other, how the lay ministerial leadership serves the congregation, and how the called minister serves the congregation. It seeks to understand, assess, support, and advocate for high-quality ministry throughout the context of congregational life.

This past year, the Committee members have been Greg Blackman (Chair), Bethany Meisberger and Sarah Mocker. With Bethany’s resignation and Greg’s term at an end, the Church will be trying to identify two new members, one for a two-year term and one for a full three-year term.