

Minister's Annual Report (2018)

Rev. Sam Trumbore

Overview

As I complete my 19th year here in Albany, I'm ever so grateful to be here and able to serve as your minister. We continue to face challenges and opportunities in positive and constructive ways that strengthen us rather than separate and divide us. Whether considering a name change for a hall or a resolution to protect undocumented residents, we use processes that bring us together and keep us moving forward. We are an excellent place for a student to come and learn the arts of ministry.

Eileen Casey-Campbell's Internship

A highlight of our congregational year has been **having Eileen Casey-Campbell as our ministerial intern**. She has been as splendid support to the ministry work of the congregation. We enjoyed and were challenged by her sermons, such as the first one she offered titled, "Losing Our Heroes." She also asked, "How Can We Be Thankful Now," pastored to us with the "Blue Christmas" service; again challenged us with a sermon on race, "No Justice, No Peace," and sexism titled "#Youtoo: Overcoming Toxic Masculinity." She collaborated skillfully with me on several services including the one we did for the beginning of Lent titled, "The Joy of Fasting," and "Why Shelter a Stranger?" Eileen was also very creative when I came back inspired by a training in multi-sensory worship to assist with the Easter service that kicked off a series of services titled, "Emerging Hope."

While we were very impressed with Eileen's skill in the pulpit, she was busy in other areas as well. She worked with Rev. Sam and Leah to structure and to participate in the Rite of Passage program. She taught an introductory class on Islam and assisted with a repeat of the "Developing White Racial Literacy" class. Eileen also participated in the pastoral care of members of the congregation through the Pastoral Care Associates program.

Two social justice initiatives got her support and guidance. The first was our effort to decide to change then rename what is now called "Community Hall." Her primary effort went into helping to create and move the Sanctuary Resolution to the point it is ready for the congregation to vote on it.

We have worked closely together meeting weekly for an hour, collaborating in our Production Meeting that we use to put the Sunday Service together each week, and attending as many other congregational activities as she could fit into her schedule. I've been very happy with her work and expect her to do well in her ministerial calling.

Social Justice Work

Our justice work continues to be dominated by our efforts to work toward **dismantling the cultural dominance of white supremacy in our congregation**. This is challenging work for white folks to do because many whites are not accustomed to and resist being uncomfortable dealing with race issues and behaviors that we are often unaware of and take for granted.

To increase my skill in this area and to learn what other congregations are doing, **I attended the UUA Mosaic Maker's Conference** at the end of October in San Diego at the UU Congregation there. Patti Jo Newell and Jacqui C. Williams attended as well. We brought back some good ideas and I continued to develop my cultural competency.

One positive result of this work was the **recognition of Emerson's white supremacy** and the **decision to change the name of what is now called "Community Hall."** It was a two-step process that started first with the decision to make the change then the selection of a new name. A board sub-committee did a great job collecting names, narrowing the choices to two, and allowing our children and youth to

make the final selection. Congratulations to us all for the success of that process.

I continue to attend the **Inclusivity Team** and the **Social Responsibilities Team** and when I can get there, the Green Sanctuary Team. I've participated in several demonstrations and events this year including the **March for Our Lives**, the **Poor People's Campaign**, the Protect Our Water march and the Prison Reform march conclusions that were held at Albany UU. I've had an op-ed in the paper and participated in advocacy for **Medical Aid in Dying**. I also participate in the **Beyond Racism Interfaith group** that meets at the Friends Meeting regularly sharing our efforts to do anti-racism, anti-oppression, multicultural work.

Hudson Mohawk UU Cluster

The **New York State Convention of Universalists**, a legacy organization from before our 1961 merger that offers grants, contacted me about having their annual meeting at Albany UU in the fall. I said that would be fine if we could **combine it with our Hudson Mohawk UU Fall Cluster meeting**. They agreed. We had a good gathering of about 45 people with a great keynote by the Rev. Richard S. Gilbert and a number of stimulating workshops.

Our custom has been to have a **joint service in the spring** for our five congregations that comprise our cluster (Glens Falls, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, Albany, and Kingston). This year we invited **Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout as our featured presenter**. We wanted to experience a different kind of worship than the usual sermon centered service. This service was designed to step out of the white Protestant norm ... and it did!

That weekend was also the weekend for the March 24 March For Our Lives. We had planned a workshop with Dr. Rideout. Instead we met and worshipped together at 9am and marched down to the Capital together. A soup lunch fortified us for an afternoon workshop with Dr. Rideout.

The capstone for our cluster was the installation of the new Schenectady UU ministers the Rev.'s Lynn Gardener and Wendy Bartel April 21.

Religious Services

The big change for our Sunday services, besides having Eileen Casey-Campbell in the pulpit, was the **hiring of our new music director, Dr. Richard Porterfield**. Though he comes from an Episcopalian background, he has taken up the challenge of working in a liberally religious setting. He chooses a wide spectrum of pieces from ancient to contemporary. We continue to have a choir of significant size that performs on average of twice a month. Dr. Porterfield is from New York City so he has connections with performing artists there he has brought up including most recently, **Ruth Cunningham**.

Remembering a member who encouraged him to invite ministers of color to speak from our pulpit, **Rev Sam and Unity minister Rev. Crystal Muldrow decided to do a pulpit swap** at the end of September. It was interesting for both to experience each other's congregation and speak in a new setting. We also did an exchange of musicians. The Unity band came to Albany UU and Dr. Porterfield accompanied Rev. Sam to their service with him. It was a good experience to try out.

This year was the **celebration of our 175th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of our building expansion**. The first was celebrated in the fall and the second in the spring. In both cases, Rev. Sam traced the history of the development of our congregation and the long process that led to the building expansion.

Rev. Sam attended a UU Ministers Association continuing education event in Tampa, Florida with the **Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee** who specializes in innovative worship. She currently is working on a **contemporary style of worship she describes as "sensory rich."** Rev. Sam was very inspired by her

theory of worship and technical methods, wanting to bring some of them home. The result was the April service series titled, "Emerging Hope." A pleasing discovery was the power of sensory rich worship to engage children, greatly enhancing our Easter service this year ... probably the best one I've done!

Here is a sampling of the Sunday services this year:

Sunday Morning Service Highlights

- **"Expanding Our Welcome,"** September 17
- **"After 500 Years, is the Reformation Over?"** October 22
- **"A Vulnerable Humanism of the Heart,"** November 5
- **"Gratitude to Indian Givers,"** November 19
- **"When the Yule Log Won't Light,"** December 3
- **"The Holy Flame of Life,"** December, 10
- **"Intention Does Not Equal Impact,"** January 7
- **"Collapse of the Enlightenment Era?"** January 21
- **"Order, Disorder, Reorder,"** February 4
- **"The Joy of Fasting"** with Eileen Casey-Campbell, February 11
- **"Why Did You Doubt?"** February 18
- **"What Moves Us?"** with Eileen Casey-Campbell, February 25
- **"A More Perfect Union,"** March 18
- **"Emerging Hope: The Unexpected,"** with Leah Purcell, Eileen Casey-Campbell, April 1
- **"Emerging Hope: A New Story,"** April 8
- **"Emerging Hope: Who Gets To Be Saved?"** (Eileen Casey-Campbell), April 15
- **"Emerging Hope: Our Story and Our Planet's Future,"** April 22
- **"Emerging Hope: Glimpses of the Promised Land,"** April 29
- **"Why Shelter a Stranger,"** with Eileen Casey-Campbell, May 6

If you missed one of these sermons or would like to read it, you'll find most of them archived here:

<http://members.albanyuu.org/wp/services/sermons/>

Lifespan Religious Education

I continue doing **Meditation Workshops**, five this year, to introduce people to mindfulness meditation. Attendance has been strong this year with one workshop with twenty people. It continues to be a way I offer for people to deepen their growth and development process.

Toward that end, I continue to work with other Capital Region meditation teachers as part of a group called Organizing Mindfulness. In collaboration with it, we sponsored a day long workshop the day before Easter with meditation teacher **Mark Hart** with an attendance of about 35 people. Last June and again this coming June we will also have an event to bring together various mindfulness teachers as part of an event called **Change Your Mind Day**. This event drew over 100 people last year and I hope we will have as many if not more this year.

Meaning Matters continues to be a way I connect on a monthly basis with those who want to go deeper into their spiritual lives by contemplating the monthly theme. I distribute a packet I receive and edit from the Soul Matters network just before the beginning of the month. This twelve page packet has a couple of short essays on the theme, deepening exercises, questions for reflection, quotes, electronic media and podcast links, books, movies, music, all to assist the participant to go deeper into the theme. This year I ran three groups (one led by Eileen Casey-Campbell) that had about thirty people signed up and about twenty regular participants.

The classes I ran were:

- **Developing White Racial Literacy (twice, second time with Eileen Casey-Campbell)**
Using the audio recordings from four workshops at UUA General Assembly, three of which came from Robin DiAngelo, a trainer in dismantling white supremacy, we explored white supremacy, white fragility, white silence and 8 tools for doing the work.
- **Cultural Climate Change** – This class came from a talk presented by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks at the Chautauqua Institute. He predicted bad times ahead for our liberal values that we analyzed and invited U Albany professor Dr. Jon Mandle to discuss with us. Made for a stimulating three weeks of political philosophy.

Institutional Development Work

With the approval of the Board to move ahead with governance changes based on the Hotchkiss adaptation of policy governance for religious organizations, I joined the **Governance Working Group**. I've contributed significantly to their efforts (you'll find reports elsewhere on this work). I've also been a participant in the **Covenant Team** working on the development of a Covenant for our congregation. I've offered **technical support for the Growth Through Service** and Membership Teams as well.

We've had a number of young adults visiting our congregation. Eileen Casey-Campbell has done some work with them to stimulate their involvement. I invited a dozen of them over to my house for dinner and conversation to connect and learn how to better involve them (and potentially their friends) in the life of our congregation.

Concluding Thoughts

Having a ministerial intern half my age has been a source of regeneration for my ministry this year. Eileen's recent study in seminary and her experience working as Membership Coordinator for Rochester Unitarian have been very helpful for me to learn and recognize new opportunities for our congregation. She has challenged my old ways of doing things and thinking about things I formed in the 1980's and 1990's. She has helped me keep up with the changes being brought forward by our younger leaders.

Remembering our 175th and our 10th anniversaries has both connected me with our past and how to integrate who we have been with who we and Unitarian Universalism are becoming. In the past I've been the one pushing for new ways. Now I'm the one attached to the old way of doing things. And now I'm more aware of the risks of making changes as well as the opportunities. It makes it harder to take risks ... but just as important and vital as it was when I started in ministry.

May we not be afraid of change ... but consider those changes in creative tension with our heritage.

Rev. Sam