First Unitarian Church

Annual Report

2020
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State of the Church
The Rev. Angela Herrera

Prepared for First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque’s Annual Congregational Meeting, January 31, 2021

We are almost to the end of this meeting now, and you have heard a lot about the state of the church. You have heard about incoming leaders, finances, and the endowment. And you’ve heard from our wonderful, outgoing president. I want to thank Heather Clark again for her leadership, which I would describe as steady, discerning, and present in a spiritual sense. She has accompanied our congregation in this hard year. I’m grateful for her and to her. And I thank all of our board members, who served through a time none of us could have imagined.

At our last annual meeting, we were just completing the social hall and looking forward to enjoying it and sharing it with the wider community. We had just hired a new Associate Minister, and we were sharing him with the wider community, too! Bob hit the streets for justice work with our community partners right from the get go. But we were about to experience—well, I’m tired of the word “unprecedented,” so I’ll say we were about to face a uniquely disruptive situation. We have just lived through, and are still living through, a time that will be written about not only in history books, but in the history of this church. I am really proud of us. I’m proud of how we leaned into new ways of being together, and how we kept our values right in front.

We went virtual on March 15th. By late April, it was clear that the pandemic was going to disrupt for months, not weeks. It was time to let go of some of our old priorities and embrace new ones. Three pressing questions were before us.

• How would we keep the church together when we couldn’t get together?

• How would we keep the church active in its mission? We may have had to close our doors, but 2020 was no time to stop working for equity, compassion, and justice.

• And how would we fulfill our unique role as a church to offer encouragement and help equip people spiritually to get through these times?

Our top priorities now were connection, engagement, and resilience.

We rallied to meet the challenges in wonderful ways; so many, that I can’t name them all. From the dedication of our staff who re-imagined things like choral singing, children’s programming, and new member signing ceremonies, to our volunteers who mastered new technology so they could keep on serving.

All year, our food pantry adapted and kept serving, too, never missing a beat. Over a dozen church members made masks to hand out with the food when the pandemic began, and by the end of the year, more than 5,000 bags had been distributed.

We continued our work around racial justice: marching, speaking, studying, and diversifying worship in music, sources, and participants. At one march in downtown Albuquerque, I believe UU’s made up about a quarter of the crowd. I was honored when the NM Black Leadership Council invited me to join a team of facilitators for the Racial Contract Lecture Series hosted by UNM last month.

Our Pastoral Care program shifted gears, responding to Joys and Concerns and reaching out to members who may be especially in need of support. Their 2020 spreadsheet has nearly 180 entries, and those don’t even count the quick check-ins the team did that didn’t warrant an entry in the record.

Those are just a few examples of our connection, engagement, and resilience this year. I am especially proud of the quality
of our weekly worship services, which now include a Wednesday vespers service as well. The staff and volunteers who partner to create these services give it their best effort. Our strong attendance is a testament to their success. Recently, we’ve had as many as 280 log-ins and well over 300 people visibly present at services.

Not everyone in the congregation has gone virtual with us—now and then I hear of someone who has decided to wait it out. We miss them, and look forward to being together again. Meanwhile, new members continue to join the church each month, and I also hear from some folks who are able to attend because we are virtual; folks who had moved, or had become ill, or who attend from afar with New Mexico friends and family.

Signs indicate that overall, we are doing well under the circumstances. First Unitarian is a healthy, resilient church. It is that way because we love it and each other and we strive to make it so.

This new year, I hope, I pray, will bring some gifts. One is that when we return to our campus, we will have the opportunity to “build back better,” to borrow a phrase. Changes that seemed very difficult one year ago, like putting more time between our two worship services so we don’t run out of parking spots, now seem pretty doable. I’ve always wanted to have a mid-week vespers service, and now we do! Imagine the programming we could add around that, if it were taking place on campus. Likewise, the way we form and recruit volunteer teams, the way we do family ministry, and lots of other things have already had to be reimagined, and can be again as we plan our return.

Moving back onto our campus will be an enormous undertaking—harder in many ways than going virtual was. So many volunteers, staff, spaces, materials, etc. have to be coordinated. But it’s also exciting to approach church with fresh minds and a deepened appreciation for what matters.

One of the ways we will shape this next chapter of our church’s history is by listening and dreaming together. I hope that when you see opportunities to engage with the Strategic Planning Task Force, which should really be called the Dream Team, you’ll do so. The disruption in the world around us, which involved so much more than a virus, has placed our church in a liminal time. What I mean is that we are between the old time and a new one. The before and the after. The world has been changed. Our church has been changed. Knowing that things cannot return to “normal,” we must ask ourselves this:

What is our church called to be and do next? What is our congregation’s unique and irresistible calling in these new times?

Last year, I ended my state of the church report by saying that the word that best described the church was “evolving.” Little did I know how true that would be! To evolve requires courage to risk the unknown.

At the beginning of the year, I could never have imagined how my and our plans were about to change. We discovered that church really does exist in the bond between us. We can’t know everything 2021 will bring. But First Unitarian will be here, and it will be good to be together.
I have been deeply honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve as the president of the congregation at First Unitarian in 2020. While this year brought many challenges and required decision-making about an unprecedented situation for our community, I’m grateful to have helped lead our incredibly thoughtful, dedicated board members.

Our board members stuck to their values as each wave of the pandemic hit, and the world seemed to rip apart at the seams, with racial injustice and a volatile presidential election. At the same time, this year was exhausting for our board members on many levels. There was tragedy, anxiety about their health or that of family members, school and full-time jobs happening in overcrowded homes, economic uncertainty, and the strain of social isolation. But despite all these hardships, 2020’s board members showed up, engaged in meaningful discussion and questioning and pitched in to help when needed. They took a careful, thoughtful approach in unchartered territory and led our church with wise counsel throughout this “dumpster fire” of a year. Thank you, board members for all you have done.

I’d also like to express my gratitude to the outgoing board members:

- **Gina Kennedy** is an amazing person, who always provided a young person’s perspective. She is an accomplished musician and dedicated student who always made time for her board duties.

- **Marilyn O’Boyle** not only provides wonderful violin music for our church, she is also a discerning board member. She has spoken up for better environmental practices at our church and, during the pandemic, she often had wise advice for how to handle what came next through our church’s policies.

- I appreciated **Dumas Slade**’s willingness to share the Building & Grounds Committee’s viewpoint on many budget issues that came up during his four-year term. He also was a voice for a can-do attitude on the board that helped keep us moving forward.

**2020 Priorities: Moving Targets**

Remember that saying about best laid plans? That was particularly relevant this year. The board met for a February retreat, just before the pandemic started. But what ended up taking much of the board’s time this year were projects that were not anticipated:

- **COVID-19 response:** Angela Herrera quickly set up a COVID Advisory Council that Mikaela Renz-Whitmore and I served on, along with scientists and medical professionals from our church community. There was an open flow of communication between the council and the board that I think helped both groups.

The board grappled with questions of whether we should open at 25% capacity, and what that would do for our value of inclusiveness. Board members expressed varying desires from continuing indefinitely with virtual church, to gathering in small
groups, to thinking about what it would take for us to return. The values that informed this discussion were safety, health, inclusion, freedom of choice, caring, and love, among others.

Together, the council and the board developed thoughtful policies and staff guidance to respond to the pandemic. The board reviewed a draft policy from the council and took an active role in improving it, even holding an extra meeting in July to consider the policy. The board approved the policy and gave the Advisory Council the authority to put it into practice when the time was right. As it turned out, the time was never right as cases again climbed this fall.

Some good has come of the pandemic. We can carry on virtually. We are adaptive and flexible in the face of disaster. We lean on each other, and work well together in stressful times. I believe we will emerge more connected and stronger after the pandemic.

These benefits came to a head for me at our special congregational meeting on May 17, when the congregation voted on whether to pursue CARES Act funds to help our church through this difficult time, obtained by our former Director of Finance and Operations, Cherri Japhe.

• Dan’s Lillie’s Ordination: The pandemic caused the delay of the congregational meeting from March 15 (remember that weekend?) to May 17 when we were able to meet virtually. After the congregation voted to accept CARES Act funds, we voted to ordain our former Ministerial Intern & Resident, Dan Lillie. We made church history that day, both in the way we met and in the numbers who showed up to support Dan! Thanks to Bob LaVallee and all the tech folks in guiding us through this new process. In October, I represented First Unitarian in ordaining the Rev. Dan Lillie, alongside the board president at his new congregation, Woodinville Unitarian Universalist Church.

• ARC Building Sale: It couldn’t have come at a worse time. The ARC Building south of the church came up for sale at the end of 2020. As of this writing, it’s unclear whether the church will purchase this building or not. Around the time ARC approached us, our DFO, Cheri Japhe, resigned and the ministers were busy readying for the holidays. So, the board stepped in and created an ARC Task Force to work with the ARC staff and the congregation to determine whether a purchase was feasible and desirable. George Bakula and Gwen Sawyer co-led the ARC task force. And there will be more to come on that in 2021.

So, our main projects this year were dominated by things that came up suddenly and left little time or energy for planning or work on the board’s priorities. Some updates on that front:

• Five-year Strategic Plan: The board set up a strategic planning committee led by Mikaela Renz-Whitmore. The board considered our church’s strengths and weaknesses and our place in our community and the world. This work started early, but as the pandemic progressed, it became increasingly difficult to discuss our place in the world, when changes to our world were swirling around us. It became difficult to imagine how to engage the church in this process when we couldn’t meet face-to-face. This important work will continue next year, and I’ve asked to continue to serve on this committee for continuity in this important work.

• Naming New Social Hall Rooms: The board decided to name the newly renovated Social Hall Rooms. The board voted that the “Green Room” on the south side of the building will be called the Harmony Room, the library will remain The Library, and the glassed-in conference room was named the Vision Room. Now we just need to be able to book them!

• Board committee structure: The board discussed the structure of the Buildings and Grounds and Landscape committees. Several proposals were raised to bring these two board committees into closer collaboration with each other, and a new policy governing these committees is being drafted. More to come in 2021.
Diversity and Inclusion: The board was concerned throughout the year about diversity and inclusion in our church community and in our church leadership. I think progress has been made thanks to intentional efforts by our ministers, the people of color who are members or friends of our church, the Leadership Succession Committee, and others. For the board, “leading” was learning to “follow,” and so we stepped back and, per Bob LaVallee’s request, allowed him to lead us to our work in Beloved Conversations. This class is being taken by many church members and is leading to important conversations and thinking about what we can do to solve this problem at our church. We look forward to taking what we have learned and applying it to our church in 2021.

Budget: One of the board’s main duties is helping form the budget proposal provided to the congregation. In February, we voted to accept the Endowment Committee’s recommendation to add $10,000 to care for our campus. Thank you to those who support the endowment for this much-needed gift. To craft the 2021 budget, the board wanted to maintain the 2020 budget due to economic uncertainty. In the end, pledges came in at adequate amounts and some expenses were down, so we felt good looking at the draft budget in December. As of this writing, the board is discussing a number of budget priorities, including raises for church staff, upgrading staff computers and a server that are more than 10 years old, more money for maintenance of the facilities, paying more of our fair share to the UUA, and other items.

Our Future
Thanks to Mikaela Renz-Whitmore for agreeing to serve as president of the board next year, and to Faye Raffety for continuing as our treasurer for a third year. Mikaela is such a visionary, and I’m sure will be the right kind of leader for First Unitarian as we emerge into a new age following the pandemic. Her leadership also will serve us well as we continue the five-year strategic planning sessions in 2021. Faye’s institutional knowledge and insightful questions will serve the congregation well as she enters her third year as our treasurer.

I’m grateful to the Leadership Succession Committee for its work to move people of color into leadership positions in our church. On the board, we have seen an increase in leaders who are also people of color, and I anticipate they will move into leadership roles in our church in coming years. I’m eager to see our church’s diversity grow, and for that to be paired with true inclusion where people of color don’t have to worry about tokenism or unaddressed microaggressions. I know the LSC has talked about doing more for leadership development. It seems this needs some changes to church policies to task them with that job, and give them the resources to accomplish that vision. These efforts also will be helped by more work on diversity and inclusion by our members, similar to the White Fragility book groups, or building off the Beloved Conversations training.

Some important work is happening to reimagine the Director of Finance and Operations and other positions at the church, and how best to manage our operations and finances. We have a consultant helping us with that, and we should have a path forward in 2021. One thing I learned in talking with the consultant is that we need more church members to step into our financial oversight roles, both in terms of the board’s Finance Committee and the congregation’s Financial Review Committee. One priority identified by the board in 2020 that was not pursued, was to conduct a holistic checkup of our branches and untapped resources, such as restricted gifts and land we own in Rio Rancho. Another great idea is to look at the demographic changes of the nation’s workforce and the wealth gap and how that might affect future pledges. I think these are excellent ideas that should be pursued.

I’m also eager to see how the congregation determines its strategic plans for the next five years and whether we purchase the ARC Building. As I wrote in back in April: “I recognize there is a time for everything and maybe this is a time to slow down and let this new world wash over us, so that we can regroup
and carry on to a new, and hopefully better, future.” These words still ring true to me. While we accomplished a lot this year, out of necessity, some good ideas were put on hold or delayed. Of course, I’ll continue to volunteer and help as needed. I look forward to seeing what the board and our volunteers and staff can accomplish in the years to come.
Summary of Financial Status

The Church has managed well in this turbulent year. Our financial status is strong. Pledges have continued apace and the support from the Government PPP program has helped ensure that our staff remained intact and able to continue to perform their roles. The campus has suffered additional break-in abuses, but an improved alarm system and routine safety patrols have helped, and additional safety steps are planned. We hired a new Director of Finance & Operations, Cherri Japhe, who resigned the full-time position in November but worked part-time until a new interim DFO was hired. Cherri was of immense value to the church as she implemented and managed financial assessments, and the efforts which were needed to clean-up and revise many long-neglected aspects of the church’s finances. Phillip Robinson joined as a 30-hours-a-week accountant, and has been a real asset to the financial operations of the church.

The actual income from all sources (pledges, contributions, rental, miscellaneous and endowment income) was $935,037. The PPP loan was $154,000. Total expenses were $918,809 which was 96.5% of budget and will result in a surplus of $137,083 after the loan is forgiven. The opposite page has a summary of operations for the year.

Finance Committee: Changes for 2020

We were able to continue some of the tasks which were planned in 2019 but, of course, the change in personnel and their efforts to focus on the important financial aspects which needed attention had priority. We have defined a process for review of the three bank reconciliations to ensure visibility into our cash flow, both income and expenses. These will be regularly implemented when we are fully staffed. We have reviewed the monthly finance statements during our Committee meetings and plan to understand the Church’s balance sheet more fully during 2021.

Focus for 2020

We have focus items for the near term which may be amended and added to as we progress:

1. Needless to say, the church has not fully implemented some of the financial policies and procedures which are needed to ensure we have a system which meets generally accepted accounting procedures. A financial audit by a CPA firm is important to ensure our financial health and is overdue for our church.

2. A review of our mortgages, including the impact of the purchase of the ARC building, if recommended by the Board and approved by the church, is of importance. The increase in mortgage debt must be carefully considered. Of particular concern at this time is the rate of interest structured into our current mortgages.

3. We will also be assessing how we are managing our assets (probably excluding the endowment allocations) to be sure we are maximizing income.

4. The mural at the front of our church is a beautiful and valuable asset. We need to understand what protections, such as appropriate insurance coverage and perhaps physical ones, will ensure it is there for ourselves and future generations.
## 2020 Operating Fund Performance

### 1/1/20 - 12/31/20

Please note: The 2020 financial numbers below are preliminary and may be changing over the next few months as activity is finalized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Pct</td>
<td>Amount</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income Contributions</td>
<td>$933,660</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
<td>$909,317</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledges</td>
<td>$927,713</td>
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<td>$886,427</td>
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<td>Pledge Contributions Transferred to Capital</td>
<td>($64,497)</td>
<td>-6.5%</td>
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<td>Gifts</td>
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<td>Music Angel Gifts</td>
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<td>Gifts in Kind</td>
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<td>Rentals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Previous Year Surplus</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<td>Endowment</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
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</table>

### Total Income

| Total Income | $985,360 | $935,037 | $-50,323 | -5.1% |

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### Expenses

#### Operating Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating Expenses</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payroll</td>
<td>$740,508</td>
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<td>$710,106</td>
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<td>Program Staff</td>
<td>$490,832</td>
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<td>Administrative Staff</td>
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<td>Facilities Staff</td>
<td>$53,460</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
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<td>RE &amp; Childcare Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Employer Costs</td>
<td>$34,552</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$50,400</td>
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<td>Physical Plant</td>
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<td>Rental Expense</td>
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<td>Religious Education</td>
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<td>Music Program</td>
<td>$11,300</td>
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<td>Sunday Services</td>
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<td>0.5%</td>
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<td>Councils &amp; Committees</td>
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<td>Branch Congregations</td>
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<td>$1,995</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Accounting Firm Services</td>
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<td>Insurance</td>
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<td>Bank Service Charges</td>
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<td>$7,109</td>
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<td>Other Miscellaneous</td>
<td>$4,922</td>
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<td>$2,624</td>
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</table>

### Total Operating Expenses

| $952,215 | 96.6% | $981,809 | 96.5% | $-33,406 | -3.5% |

#### Operating Surplus(Deficit)

| $33,145 | 3.4% | $33,145 | 3.5% | 0 | 0% |

#### Other Expenses

| Property Financing Costs Moved to the Capital Fund |
| Denominational Commitments | $33,145 | 3.4% | $33,145 | 3.5% | 0 | 0% |

### Total Expenses

| $985,360 | $985,360 | $951,954 | 96.5% | $-33,406 | -3.5% |

#### Surplus (Deficit) as of 1/27/21

| $0 | 0.0% | ($16,917) | -1.8% | $-16,917 | -51.0% |

#### PPP Cash Received- Loan/Potential Revenue*

| $154,000 | $154,000 | $137,083 | 14.7% | $137,083 | - |

#### Surplus (Deficit) after Loan Forgiveness

| $0 | 0.0% | $137,083 | 14.7% | $137,083 | - |

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* We are in the process of requesting forgiveness for this PPP loan. If it is forgiven, we will recognize an additional $154,000 for 2020 and end the year with a $137,083 surplus.
When 2020 began, I had been serving First U for four months. I was well into the happy process of learning about the church and its congregation, and was excited to go deeper. Then the pandemic happened. In this shattering year, I’m proud of the work we accomplished together.

The big story of the year is making the pivot to worship over Zoom. Building on my experience leading online church during my internship at the Church of the Larger Fellowship, the worship team moved rapidly and skillfully into this new mode of worship. I recruited and trained volunteers to do the critical behind-the-scenes tasks, and eventually we hired Chris Paul as our Tech Arts Director, taking a lot of the editing and technical work off my plate. Chris is indispensable now, and our Sunday “attendance” is not that much less than when we were meeting in person. Equally indispensable is our team of volunteers who skillfully and generously keep our Sunday services and Wednesday Vespers going as a source of community and inspiration to the congregation. And, Music Director Susan Peck gets the MVP award for embracing technology and creating a lot of beauty out of a hard situation.

First U continues to live into its values as active seekers of justice. I’m proud of the approximately forty congregants who are participating in the Beloved Conversations program. Personally, I supported the Food Pantry as they adjusted their operations to pandemic-conditions without stopping their mission of providing food to any who need it. In February, I participated in a UU College of Social Justice trip to El Salvador, where I saw first-hand the consequences of U.S. intervention in that country. We also hosted a Trans Identity Workshop that was well attended and very powerful.

I’ve been active and visible in the larger community. I gave the benediction at a vigil for George Floyd, and hosted a panel on police accountability run by Albuquerque Interfaith. I marched with the Red Nation advocacy group. I also worked with the Albuquerque chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) to set up an Honor Native Land Tax fundraiser to support Red Nation and Pueblo Alliance.

Our congregational life is evolving to adjust to the new circumstances, but the sense of community continues. I worked with the amazing Radical Generosity team to run a successful annual pledge drive. The Brothers Men’s Group continues to meet twice a month; and I taught a UU 101 class. We did a drive-through Blessing of the Backpacks, complete with facemasks and squirt guns! And I’ve supported our Covenant of UU Pagans in several of their powerful ritual gatherings.

I’m looking forward to 2021: supporting Rev. Angela’s sabbatical, and more deeply leaning into a ministry of servant-leadership and collaboration. The pandemic makes it harder to make connections and get to know folks, and that’s incredibly frustrating. Despite that obstacle, I’ve met and worked with so many amazing folks in this congregation, and I’m grateful for that. And as always, I so appreciate my boss and partner in ministry, Rev. Angela.
Youth Programs Coordinator
Alana Rodriguez

At the start of the year, our All-Youth group, 6th-12th grades, met every Sunday at 11:00. Every Sunday had a specific goal: RE Sunday, when we’d talk about the theological theme, Game Sunday when we’d play games like Apple to Apples, and Social Justice Sunday, when we’d do a social justice project together, like making Blessing Bags or having a bake sale for a cause. Every month we’d also have a social activity, off-campus, with the sole purpose of building connection, friendships, and community. Bowling, movie night, and a BBQ are some examples of things we did.

Our High School group, La Amikoj, would meet twice a month separately from the All-Youth meetings at 12:15pm. Once a month ,we’d meet in the classroom to have a discussion or spend time on a project. The other Sunday we’d have lunch together and connect.

In March, when everything went virtual, I started daily check-in with the youth. The only agenda item was to connect with each other, process all the changes that were thrown at them, and find ways to cope together. After a couple of weeks, I implemented a schedule and a plan to keep things consistent and purposefull. Some things we did were meditation, virtual games, casual conversation, and theological discussions and learning. Once virtual learning started, it became difficult to meet every day, so we switched to three times a week, combining all the elements into shorter chunks. During the summer, Youth were invited to join the All-RE summer programming for Chalice Home and Books & Cooks, but took a break from All Youth Check-Ins. I continued monthly social events, like a virtual movie night and a virtual talent show.

While working to continue a supportive, engaging, and spiritually-fulfilling youth group, I also participated in some events with other religious educators including General Assembly, LREDA Professional Days at GA, and district (MDD) LREDA support group meetings. I was also able to be an advisor at the virtual MDD Youth Fall Con, where I was able to meet youth from other churches. Since then, I have become involved in UU Religious Professinals of Color Groups which provides increased support.

With all of the changes in the Spring, the message I keep hearing from the youth is that they desperately miss meeting in person. Although having virtual options, especially ones that are more fun and less curriculum-driven, is appreciated and attended by some; the most important part of youth group for many of them is getting to spend time with friends. For a lot of us, it is not quite the same through a screen. Youth, especially those in our congregation, are resilient and wonderful young humans. And working with them, even in these circumstances, is a joy.
Attendance at community events or Family Sing, which also ceased in March.

Attendance numbers for Our Whole Lives (OWL) and Coming of Age (COA) are incomplete, as both programs were interrupted by COVID-19. The OWL classes had to cease, as UUA guidelines specifically recommend against holding OWL classes online. There were seven registered in the K-1 class, nine registered in the 4-5 class, and eight registered in the Mid-High class, with a total of 11 adult facilitators. The COA class continued online and completed their COA service virtually. COA had eight youth participating with two advisors.

Elementary Religious Education

Elementary classes ceased in March, as did volunteer participation. In April, Mia began holding frequent check-in sessions for children with parents in attendance. Participation in the beginning was good, and then started to fall off as families found their footing in the new reality of coping with COVID-19. Once school started again, both parents and children had much less bandwidth for meeting virtually. When Mia returned from Sabbatical, Sunday morning RE resumed, and attendance has averaged 8-10 children, ranging from Pre-K through 5th grade. Two volunteers are helping with every Sunday class: Carol Cowan, who manages attendance and chatting with new families to get contact info, and Nissane Capps, who manages the Waiting Room and the Chat. Mia is using a program called CARTUUNS, in conjunction with Soul Matters themes and materials, to create a hybrid that children are enthusiastic to attend. Mia purchased a movie license that covers movie and film content. Mia also learned how to create a Bitmoji Classroom, and creates monthly content for asynchronous participants, available on the RE Facebook page and the Church’s website. We have retained the

Staffing

Mia Noren completed her 6th year as DRE, Alana Rodriguez completed her 6th year as RE Assistant, and reached the first anniversary of her additional role as our Youth Programs Coordinator. Arianna Coriz was our RE Aide until June, when the position was put on hold due to COVID-19. The childcare pool is at 11.

Mia completed a Sabbatical June 3 – August 16. A report on her sabbatical has already been shared with the Board. She assumed the position of Chair of MDD LREDA in July, a position that will continue until July 2021, when she will be in the position of Past Chair.

She attended virtual workshops and trainings, the virtual General Assembly in June, LREDA Professional Days at GA, and the virtual Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Conference in November.

Registration numbers

During the academic year, from September 2019 through August 2020, there were 134 individual children and youth registered in the program. An additional 11 children participated in an unregistered status, attending three or more classes during the academic year. Those who participated in less than three classes were not included in the count. The children and youth were managed on Sundays by 56 adult volunteers (teachers, advisors, COA advisors and OWL facilitators), 11 paid childcare workers and three, then two, staff.

Attendance numbers

Attendance in our programs is recorded until we stopped meeting in person in March. In that time, individual instances of attendance in classes for first service totaled 241 for the academic year, and for the second service totaled 770. Adult volunteer attendance for the period was 584 occurrences. These numbers refer to programming only, and don’t include
same Teacher Holidays we had in the past to give a break to those leading virtual classes.

**Worship**
With the advent of virtual services, **every Sunday service is multigenerational**, and an effort has been made to include recordings of children and youth sharing a Children’s Affirmation with the congregation. A Time for All Ages is featured every week and creating them is a shared effort. Since Fall, Mia has created one TFAA a month. Children’s Chapel ceased in March.

**RE Council**
The RE Council continues to operate with portfolios, extending the effectiveness of the DRE and benefitting and enhancing RE programming. Up until March, Mia met individual members as needed to discuss their portfolio work and to plan, and progress was reported on and discussed at the meetings. As such, meetings ceased during Mia’s sabbatical, and resumed upon her return. Meetings with individuals did not resume, as most programming is paused, and Mia communicates often with the Curriculum portfolio holder, Carol Cowan, to plan lessons. Wendy Small and Desiree Spielman left the RE Council; Delino Donado-Kapelianis joined as a Youth Representative and is managing a limited, virtual Community Connections portfolio as well. Mia asked all current RE Council members to stay in their positions until we can transition to meeting in-person again.

**Summer RE Programming**
During the Summer, **while Mia was on Sabbatical, Alana hosted virtual programming** beginning with a month of Chalice Home, a Soul Matters offering focused on Family Ministry and worship at home, and then continuing with the Books & Cooks program we used last summer, focusing on different cultures and a dish from each that could be prepared at home. The average attendance at each session was four children. Some of our unemployed childcare workers were hired to help with the virtual Books & Cooks programming.

**Community**
Only **one in-person community event took place: the Backpack Blessing**. Both ministers and RE staff, along with 5 additional volunteers, staged a drive-through event that was a lot of fun. Once the RE staff got the hang of meeting virtually, they initiated game and movie nights. We held a virtual Halloween Party with costumes, a showing of the Costume Parade video, songs, and Drag Queen Story Time. A virtual Christmas Party was planned with our Youth Community Connections leader, and featured games, songs, and a reading of The Night Before Christmas courtesy our UU Santa.

Mia determined that the **RE adults needed supportive programming**, and so created Friday Night features. A virtual version of Potluck Theology moved to first Friday. A new online program, POP! (Parents of Preschoolers) moved into the second Friday. A drop-in Parent Check-In is on the third Friday, and the end of the month is reserved for an RE Movie offering, open to all ages.

**UU Kids Camp**
Our Camp Fundraising Team kept functioning until it became apparent that there would be **no camp at Sacramento this year**. The money raised went to the camp scholarship fund and will remain there until needed again.

In its 30th year, our Summer Camp was unable to meet as usual, and **Alana worked with our Camp Queens to design a shortened virtual Summer Camp experience**. Participating were 39 registered campers, of whom 11 were CITS (9-12 grade). They also had one YAM (Young Adult Mente), nine adult councilors, and three special guests: Christine Robinson, Angela Herrera, and Caelie, a Drag Queen Story Time performer. These numbers were comparable to normal camp attendance.

**RE Buildings and Grounds**
We have not been using our Buildings or Grounds. Alana has been going into the office once per week to use her work computer and water our many plants. There has been one ongoing rodent infestation. Maintenance of the playgrounds has also ceased, as that was being performed by volunteers.
Director of Music
Susan Peck

The mission of the music program is to inspire and support worship through high quality music in a variety of styles, encourage members to participate in congregational music, and build connections with the wider community through music.

The music program includes one paid staff member: Susan Peck, Director of Music. Pianist Gabriel Longuinhos has been volunteering for the church, due to visa restrictions (see below for more information).

Regular volunteer participants include:

- **Chalice Singers**: 20-30 singers, including a number of new choir members, participate in Zoom rehearsals and virtual choir videos. We recorded several hymns, choral anthems, and Christmas medleys.
- **Sol Singers**: 12-20 singers met weekly on Zoom, made virtual choir videos, hosted Zoom drop-in group for shut-ins.
- **Spare Parts**: 7-12 musicians presented music for Eulogies service in January, shifted to multi-track recording as “Disparate Parts” during COVID.
- **Chamber Playing Group**: 12 musicians, were on hiatus during COVID
- **RE Family Sing Song-Leaders**: 8-10 singers were on hiatus during COVID
- **Ad-hoc UUkulele Ensemble**: 8-20 musicians were on hiatus during COVID
- **Sampling of guest and member musicians in worship (live and virtual)**: Linda Myers, L@otr@s, Woody Woodstra, Marilyn O’Boyle, students of Stevie DeJuan Springer, Sharon Stepler, Dave Edwards, Sue Spaven, Vance Bass, Laura Bartolucci, Randy Granger, Peter Mayer, Lea Morris, Petroglyph String Quartet, Issa Noor, Glen Thomas Rideout.

**Key Events & Accomplishments in 2020**

**Social Hall Celebrations in January**: We produced a full-house coffee-house concert with UU singer-songwriter Peter Mayer, inaugurating the new sound and light system in the hall. The social hall celebration event included a chamber music set (Susan and Marilyn O’Boyle), a pop-up wedding, and high energy dance set by Spare Parts.

**One New Mexico Gospel Choir**: Susan Peck again served as a co-chair for the 3rd year. First Unitarian supported this project with a grant from UU Funding Project for Social Responsibility, to support One NM Gospel Choir concert, and raised funds for the matching grant with a successful national Faithify campaign. The February concert featured rising gospel star Kelontae Gavin, and several First U singers rehearsed for several weeks with the city-wide interfaith One NM Gospel Choir.

**Gabriel Longuinhos, H1B application**: Due to restrictions in his renewed student visa, Gabriel continued as a volunteer, rehearsing with the choir and playing in worship in January and February. During the COVID shut-down, Gabriel has used our sanctuary for practice, recording videos for use in worship, and monitoring our Steinway’s humidity control system.

First Unitarian has been working with Rebecca Kitson Law Firm (immigration specialists) to apply for an H1B visa which would allow Gabriel to remain in the US for a 3-year (renewable) period. Final documentation was submitted to USCIS before the Jan. 5, 2021 deadline. The H1B visa is rarely granted to musicians, but we have made our case that our position requires the skills Gabriel has earned in his Bachelors and Masters degree programs.

**Shifting to Virtual Worship**: With the shift to Zoom in March, Susan worked with our tech team...
to upgrade her home’s technology for live music presentation; selected recorded and live music for Sunday worship and the new vespers services; polished her audio-mixing skills in Garage Band; and learned basic video editing in iMovie and Final Cut Pro X.

**Music Leadership Certification**: Susan completed the UUA’s 3-year program in May. Coursework included UU history, ethics and self-care, anti-racism work, practical training in leading congregational music, choir programming, managing a music program, and leadership practices focusing on systems theory. She was recognized in the virtual Service of the Living Tradition at General Assembly, and will “walk” in that service at the next in-person GA.

**Association of UU Music Ministries’** conference planning committee selected Albuquerque to host the 2021 AUUMM annual conference. With the 2020 conference going virtual, 2021 is now scheduled to be held in Ann Arbor MI, with Albuquerque hosting in 2022, pending COVID restrictions being lifted.

**Dan Lillie’s Ordination**: Spare Parts recorded a song and Chalice Choir collaborated with Woodinville choir members on a virtual choir project for the ordination service.

**Virtual Open Mics**: in August, we launched 4th Sundays @ 4:00, establishing a regular group of musicians and writers who share their work on Zoom once a month. We are looking forward to the day we can hold Coffee House Open Mics in the Social Hall.

**Interfaith Thanksgiving Service**: Chalice Choir participated in virtual choir recordings with several other local congregations.

**Holiday music**: Susan presented a “music and poetry” vespers service on December 16, with musicians from the Open Mic group. Chalice Choir recorded 3 “virtual caroling kits” as well as a candle-lit Silent Night for Christmas Eve. RE families participated in two virtual videos for the Christmas Eve pageant.
There were 50 people who joined or re-joined First Unitarian in 2020. 31 of these new members joined our church virtually! When our operations turned 100% virtual in March, it took some time and imagination to create our temporary process for welcoming newcomers to our congregation. Before that time, if guests expressed an interest in joining the church, they visited the Welcome Table in our sanctuary foyer where a volunteer from the Membership Committee was available to answer questions, provide information, and assist in filling out our Ready to Join form.

I created multiple electronic forms on our website that allowed those new to the church an opportunity to express interest in membership. A “Get in Touch” form allows them to request more information or reach someone on the staff. Once they’ve decided to join, they can fill out the electronic “Ready to Join” form. It’s sent to me immediately so that I can quickly follow up and invite them to one of our monthly Joining Ceremonies.

Traditionally, our Joining Ceremonies are held on the first Sunday of each month after the worship services. We did not have ceremonies in April or May as I worked on how to create something virtually that would replicate the intimate experience of the in-person ceremonies. In June, we held our first virtual ceremony and had each new member sign our Membership Book by proxy. When we are in person again, everyone who has joined this way will sign a space saved for them in the book.

I reach out to new members the week after they join with an official welcome and more information about the church and its activities. They are also invited to participate in the Welcoming Conversations program, where they can meet one-on-one with someone who has been a member for a long time.

The spring’s New Member Recognition Ceremony and Dinner which was set to take place March 22 had to be cancelled. At the end of August, the Membership Committee and I created a Virtual New Member Recognition ceremony during Sunday’s service. 39 new members were formally welcomed with a video ritual. The hope is to have a large New Member Dinner hosted by the Membership Committee as soon as we are able to gather in person.

I reach out to new members at their six-month and one-year anniversaries to make sure they are feeling at home and getting the most out of their membership. I’ve also added a “Membership Milestones” section to our monthly newsletter The Messenger, recognizing significant anniversaries for all of our members.

This year I began to offer “New to First U” sessions on the 3rd Sunday of each month following services. These allow people new to the church in some way a place to ask questions and meet others. They have continued virtually and have become another important place for our members to connect.

Speaking of connections...we found a way to keep the tradition of Connections Sundays online with Connections Week the first week of September! Thirty-two groups held Zoom sessions with interested members of the congregation over 8 busy days. Through an online format, folks were able to immediately fill out an interest form and get added to the mailing list for each group.

Even in pandemic times, there have been numerous new groups formed to build social bonds including Living Alone Together, Meet & Greet, and a revitalized LGBTIQ+ group. With the help of Nancy Bowen and Chuck Blocher, we created “New to First U Connections” which began in the spring. This is a drop-in discussion group that allows anyone to join in a deep conversation and connect with others in a meaningful way.

2020 held many unprecedented and unique challenges for our membership, but throughout this time our members have remained connected and committed to support of each other and our beloved community.
Technical Arts Director
Chris Paul

Producing Sunday Services, Vespers and a myriad of events under COVID restrictions has been a real challenge. We are extremely fortunate and grateful that the Rev. Bob LaVallee had the vision and experience to enable the congregation to meet and worship via Zoom conferences. The Rev. Angela Herrera quickly developed the skills to share the load, and Director of Music Susan Peck has added video editing to her exceptional talents.

The technical demands of producing online services continued to grow and it became clear that we needed a Technical Arts team, not just for current demands but also for our growing digital future. Fortunately, we already had teams of volunteers who had been handing in-service audio, and filming sermons and other parts of our services for our branch congregations. Several members of these teams stepped up to take on the roles of DJ, Usher, and Technical Support for our online services. I am particularly grateful to Christine Robinson, Bill Miller, Melanie Rubin, Dan Small, Cy Shuster, Vance Bass, Arne Gullerud, Mikaela Renz-Whitmore, and Diane Ross for doing outstanding work and making our services the envy of many other churches. I was hired part-time to make videos, support our volunteers, and continue to improve our Digital Arts.

I have heard many positive comments about our online services from the congregation. People appreciate being able to participate in our services no matter where they are. There are additional benefits to online services, such as closed-captioning and being able to bring in guest ministers and other contributors to worship that might not have been able to be in our services in person.

These services have been so successful that we are almost certain to continue at least some parts of them even after COVID restrictions have been lifted. This might take the form of hybrid worship, with some congregation members joining from home and perhaps guest ministers, worship leaders, musicians and others contributing to the services remotely. We might also host elements of a service from different parts of the campus, such as piping in musicians from the Social Hall or having children do their affirmation from a classroom.

Our greatest challenge right now is getting more tech volunteers to help with the services. No current technical knowledge is needed—we provide training and support to both new volunteers and current members of the team. I can testify that the Technical Arts crew is the most positive and supportive group I have ever worked with. We welcome and cherish all who would join us in this exciting new way to support our church!
Endowment Committee
Pat Diem, Chair

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Andy Apple
Cheri Plavnick
Howell Lind
Linda Suydam

ENDOWMENT FUND FINANCIAL RESULTS - 2020

- Jan. 1, 2020 beginning balance $ 890.6K
- Market Growth in 2020 + $ 162,500
- Operating Fund Withdrawal - $ 30,000

- Dec. 31, 2020 balance $ 1023.1K
Use of Endowment Income

Server and Computer Equipment  $13,000
Campus Care  $13,000
i Ministry  $ 4,000

Total Withdrawal of Income  $30,000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND COMMITMENT TO FIRST UNITARIAN’S FINANCIAL SUPPORT INTO PERPETUITY
The buildings of the church campus stood empty for much of the year, given the restrictions necessitated by the virus. Fortunately, the Landscape Committee, under the leadership of Steve Phillips, continued to care for the various external areas of the campus. Some members of the Buildings and Grounds Committee helped with this effort.

In addition, members of our committee contributed to the informed planning and future operation of the church by developing and utilizing two sources of information:

1. **Parking:** A congregation-wide survey of Sunday parking issues was conducted to provide a more detailed and balanced picture of the “parking situation” on the campus. Members of the committee had received a number of comments, and the results of the survey helped establish the relative importance of various reported issues, and will subsequently help with future decision-making. Findings from the survey included:

   a. About 40% of survey respondents drove by themselves to church on Sunday, while 60% had at least one additional occupant in the car.

   b. A substantial number of drivers and occupants participated in more than one activity on Sunday (e.g. attend church service and attend a group activity such as Sunday Explorations). Multiple activities necessitated the need for longer-term parking. Previous analysis has shown that Sunday morning is the busiest time at the church.

   c. About three-quarters of the drivers (and occupants) preferred the North Lot and the Business Lot to the South Lot.

   d. One-out-of-four drivers reported that it was “somewhat or very difficult” to find a parking spot and almost all of these drivers were attending the second service. A few drivers reported considering not attending church due to the parking situation.

2. **ARC building:** When it became known that the ARC building was up for sale, an ARC Building Task Force was established to determine the feasibility of the church buying the property. Members of our committee were called upon to identify and review past studies and plans to provide information relevant to the decision. Since the ownership of the AEC building would provide alternative office space and additional meeting rooms, previous analysis of meeting room-usage was of particular interest. One previous 13-month analysis of meeting room-usage established that an average of 236 events (or 8 per day) were held in church rooms. Both church-use and rental-use were identified. It had also been determined that room usage was increasing from year to year.

   It is expected that analysis done to date, as well as additional analysis, will support an informed decision about the ARC building.
Healthy Community Team
Alisa Cooper de Uribe, Chair

Members
Shelley Alonso-Marsden
Brenda Cole
Angela Herrera
Dimitri Kapelianis
Cheri Plavnick
Raven Reed Starr

The Healthy Community Committee (HCC) is a Standing Committee of the Board. At First Unitarian, the Healthy Community Committee has been charged with assisting, in a confidential manner, our church community with appropriately managing conflict when it arises between or among church members, or between the senior minister and church members.

2020 Activities
The HCC met on a variable monthly or bimonthly basis to ensure that any potential issues under our purview could be adequately monitored or addressed.

To increase awareness of the committee and its mission, The HCC reached out to Committee and Task Force chairs to share updated contact information and conflict management approaches. We aim to maintain this contact with group leads on an annual basis to foster ongoing cognizance of the service we can provide.

The necessity of social distancing this year limited our outreach initiatives, and we are waiting for a safe time to schedule and offer another conflict management workshop.

Given the major changes experienced in the congregation related to the pandemic, we continued offering our quarterly Seasons of Change listening sessions to receive observations and thoughts with the intention of fomenting relational health where needed.

The HCC looks forward to the opportunity to continue working for and with the beloved community in the coming year.
Landscape Committee
Steve Phillips, Chair

Committee Members
Andy Apple
Nancy Cushman
Marcia Finical
Nancy Gilson – New member
Martha Ketelle
Scott Lake
Sarah Manning
Melisa Nicoud
Ed Wallhagen – Inactive
Virginia Burris – Retired

There are many non-committee members who helped with the work of the committee on an ad-hoc basis. These include Donna Collins, Nancy Bowen, Amanda Harper, Christine Robinson, and Ron Friederich; as well as the many church members who have helped with spring and fall clean up events over the years. Attempts to recruit new members yielded only one new member during Connections Week.

Activities
Individual committee members or small groups maintain the landscape in the following areas of the church campus: Courtyard, Wildlife Habitat, around the Sanctuary and Social Hall, north parking lot, and Memorial Garden. The campus irrigation system is also managed by the committee chair with help from Mark Fickler for major repairs. In contrast to previous years, there has been no Saturday spring nor fall clean up this year because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Individual committee members, with occasional help from other church members, are doing this work on an ad hoc basis.

The following areas of the campus have not been maintained because of the lack of committee members able to do the work: RE playground and grassy area, south parking lot off Carlisle, and the area adjacent to the intersection of Cherokee Road and Tyson Place. For the last several years, the committee has asked the church staff to hire outside workers to maintain these areas and trim trees. This additional help is particularly important along the southern boundary of the campus where trash accumulation impacts adjacent private properties. Professional tree trimming has been the only help that has been forthcoming.

The Committee is involved in planning landscape restoration around the newly remodeled Social Hall. These plans included the design and installation of a wrought iron fence around the Wildlife Habitat before the end of 2020. Thanks to a church member who provided a gift for the cost of this fence. Plans are being developed for a new deck in the Wildlife Habitat, and restoration of landscaping on the east and south sides of the Social Hall. Committee members have also worked on removing overgrowth in the Wildlife Habitat and are beginning to update names of the major trees and bushes in the Habitat as well. During the next year, the committee will work on updating the Board policy establishing the Landscape Committee.

The Committee would like to end this annual report with a special thanks to Ed Wallhagen and Virginia Burris who are no longer active. Virginia devoted decades to the care and development of the Wildlife Habitat and Ed served as the campus arborist for many years, and kept the north parking lot free of trash. Our thanks go to both for their years of dedicated devotion to their tasks.
Hello beloved community!

My name is Andrew Fearnside, and I'm here to provide a report on the activities of the Leadership Succession Committee across 2020. As we have done for years, we worked towards achieving our Mission: working with you, the congregation, to maintain the continuity of volunteer leadership within our Standing Committees. We did this in some time-honored ways: we sought referrals to Members who might be interested in volunteer leadership from our own connections within the congregation; from Members who have been leaders in the past; from the staff, especially the mighty Laira Magnusson, and from the ministers. We then reached out to our referrals, and through conversation, found enough folks who had the inclination, the time and the courage to step up.

In addition to our time-honored practices, we continued with some relatively new activities that help us get the word out about volunteer leadership at First U. While our Connections Sundays were in a new venue, they still worked to bring LSC members together with future leaders.

We also tried some new things. We continued to explore the synergy between leadership development programming, faith development programming, and volunteer leadership by reaching out to First U volunteer veterans with experience in those areas. Sadly, one of our ideas—a spring-time Leadership Roundtable—was an early casualty of the pandemic. Not to worry; we'll be doing that this spring.

Our biggest victory this year was in successfully holding diversity as a principle and a goal. The LSC does its best to create a group of new leaders each year that are diverse in many ways, and this year we were especially successful. We found folks willing to step up to the Board with many years of volunteering here, and folks who are new to the church. We found older folks, and younger folks. We found folks with experience behind the scenes in a number of crucial church areas, like RE and Family Promise; and we found folks with a wide range of life experiences. And significantly, we found more leaders of color who were willing to step up than we have in the past.

Unitarian Universalism has been a movement centered among liberal white Americans since its creation. But now, UUs around the country are reckoning with our denomination’s tacit support of white supremacy—and we are too. We want our church to become a center of anti-racist growth and activity, and in our small way, we’re working on that directly—by actively inviting Members of color to step up to leadership.

We realized at our last meeting that while our work seems slow, it has palpable positive effects on our congregation. We can look back and see the changes we’ve initiated taking root. As a committee, the values we hold together guide our actions. And so the dream of a more inclusive and diverse congregation, which begins as an idea, grows into The Way Things Are.
Membership Committee
Cheri Plavnick, Chair

Committee Members
Joanne Bodin
Debbie Golden
Erin Hendrick
Aroop Mangalik
Melanie Rubin
Becky Steele
Debbie Sue
Amanda Wachtel

Until the pandemic resulted in the suspension of in-person Sunday services, committee members routinely staffed the Membership table to answer guest questions and assist in membership sign-up. We were also within two weeks of holding our first New Member Recognition Dinner for 2020, when those plans had to be cancelled. Not to be deterred by the need to avoid in-person gatherings, the committee worked with Membership Director Laira Magnusson to plan a virtual celebration. Given that there was minimal interest among new members to participate in a virtual event, we decided to cancel it. Once we are able to gather again in our beautiful new Social Hall, we will hold a New Member Recognition Dinner honoring both the new members whose Recognition Dinner in early 2020 had to be cancelled and all those who have joined since then.

Early in 2020 the committee undertook a survey of Membership Committee best practices in seven large UU churches. Our six survey questions asked what each congregation was doing in the following areas:

• Welcoming guests and moving toward membership
• Celebrating congregants at different stages of membership
• Fostering social connections
• Follow up with people who have drifted away
• Fostering membership while virtual
• Fostering racial and cultural diversity

While our findings showed that First U is doing comparatively well in these areas, we also learned from the best practices of other congregations and have begun to adopt some of their excellent ideas. There are many best practices that we will consider making part of our membership outreach as we move into 2021.
Radical Generosity Team
Kathryn Probasco, Chair

Members
Heather Clark-Slakey
Kris Kennedy
Raven Reed Starr
Eric Renz-Whitmore
David Wilson
The Rev. Bob LaVallee

In 2020, the Radical Generosity Team continued to fulfill the charge that it received from the board:

“The Radical Generosity Team is an ongoing committee of the board, tasked with overseeing the pledge drive and fundraising for the annual operating budget, and helping First Unitarian refine its stewardship practices and develop a culture of generosity.”

Over the spring and summer, we planned how to hold the congregation’s annual pledge drive and Giving Circle donor recognition events in a COVID-safe manner. We developed all-virtual events, an all-virtual pledge process, and an all-virtual communications campaign. This fall, we conducted the pledge drive, and are pleased to inform the congregation that as of this writing, we have received $917,286 in pledges – 96% of our goal - towards our annual operating budget. Moreover, the congregation embraced the virtual format, with 96% of our pledges made via the virtual pledge card or email.

The Radical Generosity team also offered both adult and youth financial literacy webinars, and worked with staff to acknowledge and thank donors, and to welcome new members to the congregation.
The Council is an umbrella organization formed to nurture the activities of groups taking action in the community, and to promote systemic change. It is devoted to enabling and funding social justice efforts within the church and the larger community. First Unitarian has 13 justice groups that provide food, tutor neighborhood children, improve the environment, pursue racial justice, conduct citizenship & ESL classes, seek economic justice, and more. Core justice programs include: After School Program, Adult Language, Literacy and Citizenship Program, Earth Web, Family Promise, and Food Pantry. Many of our programs, except Wednesday’s Food Pantry, were suspended in 2020 due to COVID restrictions.

In anticipation of member needs due to COVID restrictions, the Council provided 2020 funding to the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. In addition, $5,000 was provided to ABQ FaithWorks via an anonymous donation. FaithWorks is an alliance of congregations which provides social work and other services to homeless and immigrant communities.

Due to COVID restrictions, the Council was creative in conducting its 2020 annual auction fundraiser. We certainly missed this social gathering and interactions among justice groups, but the virtual Facebook auction was very successful. Over 110 people participated in the Facebook auction raising nearly $10,000. Included was a Zoom auction to bid to name sermon topics. The winning topics were Rev. Angela: “Doula: The Spiritual Experience of Helping with Birth – Mother Daughter Birthing” and Rev. Bob: “When the World Is in the Same Storm, but Not in the Same Boat.” We can look forward to those sermons in 2021. Thanks, Ministers for your support!

The SJC manages funds for the Change for The Future (CfT) program from coins from our Sunday Offerings and distributes them to four different nonprofit groups elected by the congregation each year. At the January 2020 Annual Meeting, the congregation selected these four groups:

- **Feb.-April 2020: Women to Be** provides survivors of domestic violence, women experiencing homelessness, and asylum seekers in detention in New Mexico and Juarez, Mexico with washable, reusable menstrual supply kits that provide dignity and bolster self-confidence.

- **May-July 2020: Oxford Houses of Albuquerque** provide a safe and communal living environment for those who have never had the opportunity to lead a productive and sober lifestyle where they can learn the tools to be a successful contributing member of society.

- **Aug.-Oct. 2020: Roadrunner Foodbank** provides meals to hungry children and seniors throughout New Mexico. Currently, Roadrunner Food Bank is able to provide up to five meals for every dollar in contributions received.

- **Nov. 2020-January 2021: Sage Albuquerque** educates the general public, service providers, and the LGBTQ community about the unique challenges older LGBTQ adults face and connects LGBTQ elders to opportunities for support.

We want to express our deep thanks to Peggy Whitmore who has been an active member of the Council for the last six years. Her involvement in the First U and greater Albuquerque communities in pursuit of social justice for all is inspirational.
Report not yet received.
Key accomplishments for 2020

- Staged two art exhibits
- Supported an auction fundraiser in behalf of the PTA of First U’s partner school, Montezuma Elementary. Support was given in a call for artists, who contributed artworks to the auction.
- Worked with church administration to develop policies and procedures pertaining to the timely payment of artists and the secure transfer and storage of artists’ PII.
- Obtained upgraded hanging wires and access to church ladders.
- Welcomed two new members and one returning member to the committee.
- Found an alternative to onsite exhibits while the church campus remains closed.

Since March, the A&A Committee has continued to meet monthly on the fourth Sunday of every month to conduct committee business, such as the timely payment of artists and setting up a streamlined process for collecting and storing documents related to the A&A Committee’s business. Since the campus closure, we meet by conference call and later by Zoom.

When the church campus was open, artwork was sold off the walls on Sundays and through private arrangements. Mercados were held one day only at exhibit openings and at the request of artists & groups. Mercados provide for the sale of smaller, less expensive items and give artists and congregants an opportunity to meet in person. Most artwork in A&AC onsite exhibits are for sale. Thirty percent of the sales go to the church’s general fund.

For the year 2020, sales totals amounted to $2,271, with $651.30 going to the church.

We will resume onsite sales when the church campus reopens.

Visitors and potential new committee members are always welcome at the monthly meeting.
Caring Network
Kristin Satterlee, Chair

Caring Network Steering Committee
Nancy Bowen
Angela Herrera
Marian Kraai
Kristin Satterlee (chair)

Care Team Members
Maureen Bannon
Nancy Bowen (chaplain)
Ron Friederich
Arne Gullerud
Sheryl Guterl
Marian Kraai
Andrea Lanier
Ernest Lanier
Lynne Patton
Mary Ready
Anna Watkins

The mission of the Caring Network is to provide support for First Unitarian community members in times of need, grief, joy, and transition, with the understanding that the whole church is responsible for caring for one another.

The Caring Network includes:

• The Care Team: provides supportive visits and companionsing in person (pre-pandemic), by phone, and through text and email as appropriate.
• The Caring Cooks: cooks together to fill the Caring Freezer with meals for the Care Team to provide as needed. Due to social-distancing requirements of the Covid-19 pandemic, they could not meet this year.
• The Sol Singers (led by Susan Peck): brings the gift of song to hospitals, hospice, and home bedsides as requested. This year, led by Jetta Reynolds and Cy Shuster, they shifted their work to an online mode through Zoom.
• The Friendship Ministry: provides regular outreach to isolated church members.

Key Care Team accomplishments for 2020:

• Over 100 First Unitarian community members supported through phone calls and visits;
• 178 entries into the Google Sheet for tracking First Unitarian care needs;
• Highly successful (approximately 100 attendees) hosting of Transgender 101 workshop presented by Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico;
• Two rounds of calls (75+) in March and April, with Friendship Ministry assistance, to check in with vulnerable, grieving, and nursing-home resident community members at the start of the pandemic;
• Outreach each week for the most urgent concerns captured in Zoom chat at Sunday and Wednesday services (generally 6 to 8 weekly, mostly not reflected in numbers above);
• Monthly meetings (on Zoom since March), providing mutual support and continuing education for our volunteers;
• Presentation, with Revs Angela and Bob, of the second annual “Blue December” service, a reflective alternative holiday service for those with sorrow around the season;
• 100+ holiday cards sent to those supported by the team throughout the year;
• Referrals made to FaithWorks social worker for needs beyond the Care Team’s scope.
Coyote Willow CUUPS (CWCUUPS) is an Albuquerque chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans. We support the practice and understanding of modern Pagan and Earth-centered spirituality, with a focus on Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources. We also provide outreach to the Pagan community, which is very active locally.

Coyote Willow CUUPS has an open, drop-in style membership. Officers this last year were Raven Reed Starr as Contact Person, and Jessi and Joela Bezzeg as Keepers of the Keys.

CWCUUPS had another busy year in 2020, despite the pandemic and the challenges of switching to virtual meetings and services. Elya Arrasmith was critical to this process in their role as Zoom Host and DJ. We regularly met on the second Friday of every month at 7:00 pm for planning sessions and discussions on various topics related to Pagan/Earth-centered interests.

Additionally, we hosted open rituals for the most commonly recognized Pagan holidays: Imbolc, Beltaine, Litha, Lughnasadh, Mabon, Samhain, and Yule. We cancelled Ostara due to it being early in the pandemic, but we rallied and carried out the rest of the year with online rituals. We had also attendees from the church, local pagan community, as well as guests from other pagan communities, UU churches, and CUUPS groups. We also held our first Virtual Divination Night event.

Despite the challenges of meeting virtually until the pandemic is over, Coyote Willow CUUPS had a successful 2020 and we are grateful for the continual support of First Unitarian in making that possible. CWCUUPS looks forward to a successful 2021, and the time when we can all safely gather in person again.
The Denominational Affairs Team met several times January – March to plan for hosting the Mountain Desert District Annual Meeting, surrounded by a fabulous conference. The music and guest speakers from all over the country were scheduled and then... Covid.

The meeting will now take place at the Pacific Western Region virtual conference on February 13 at 10:30 MST. Please consider joining! They need a quorum to have a vote on new members and the budget to keep up their work supporting UU Churches in our Region. The meeting is free; only the conference—which should be fabulous— has a registration fee.

UU the Vote was led at First U by Peggy Roberts, which was a BIG effort on behalf of the UU denomination. In addition, our Earth Web group is connecting more closely with other UU congregations across the nation via Climate Justice and Strengthening Climate UU.
First U’s People of Color began the year with Jane Davis, ministerial intern, serving as its leader. She let the group know that when her tenure as a ministerial intern was up, she would be required to leave the congregation for a year. Under her leadership, the group developed a structure for its meetings, including a group covenant, meeting days and format, and we agreed to make group decisions by consensus. At this time, the group included a loose assembly of people numbering six to eight congregation members.

Before Jane left the group, Lucy Silva and Carmen Samora agreed to co-chair the group meetings, including encouraging other group members to suggest discussion topics and lead discussions. In March, the meeting was moved to a virtual format on Zoom; and since then the group has requested and been given a dedicated link for a POC breakout room after the Sunday service. Sometimes we have up to nine people in the breakout room for group discussion.

Our meetings begin with the lighting of the candle and a brief reading, followed by a brief meditation time. We then proceed to check-in with a brief response to the question, “How is it with our spirit?” After introducing a discussion topic, attendees are given an opportunity to share in a safe space, based on their own experiences. The meeting closes with a one-word response to the question, “How are we feeling now?”

Our group has grown to include self-identified POC with approximately a dozen in regular attendance. We have members from other churches in New Mexico whose own congregations do not have a POC group, and the virtual platform allows this. Recent topics for discussion have included white fragility, micro-aggressions, cultural appropriation, and topics from the Beloved Conversation UUA curriculum. Our last meeting of the year will be a planned reflection of 2020 with individual members’ perspectives as people of color in our First U congregation, our NM communities, and our worlds.
In late 2020, the UUABQ LGBTQ+ Community Facebook group was launched for members of the church who identify within the LGBTQ+ community. As of December 30, 2020 the group has 25 members.

Our group hosts monthly Zoom meetings and hopefully—in the future—in-person meetings. The meetings have consisted of catching up and chatting within our group.

In 2021, there will be discussion topics added to our social time. The meetings have ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. The group will be voting on a specific Tuesday of the month to meet on to make meetings more regular in the upcoming year.

For additional information or questions, feel free to email Adrian@AlphaCorgi.com.
Religious Education Council
Benita Terrell, Chair

Members
Callie Cone - OWL Portfolio
Carol Cowan - Curriculum Team Lead
Eric Keiter - Secretary
Chris Mayo - Youth Programs Liaison
Nicia Rae - UU Kids Camp Liaison
Delino Kapelianis, Youth Representative/Community Portfolio

Ex-Officio Members
Mia Noren, Director of Religious Education (DRE)
Alana Rodriguez, Youth Programs Coordinator

The RE Council is responsible for organizing, promoting, supervising, and evaluating the religious education programs for First U children and youth. The RE staff collaborates with the RE Council concerning issues of policy and direction providing lay leadership to the church’s RE programs.

In 2020, the Council added a Youth Representative from La Amikoj to better connect with the needs and interests of high-school and mid-high youth. The representative also assumed the Community Portfolio to identify opportunities for social interaction and arrange activities. This has become critically important in a year when all socialization has been limited to online.

COVID abruptly ended all RE activities at church in the spring and required cancelling camp for the summer. The uncertainty of the pandemic consequences, as well as the DRE’s summer sabbatical, brought the Council’s oversight to a standstill for 3 months. When meetings resumed in September, the main responsibilities of the Council shifted to supporting the DRE in whatever capacity needed.

The goal for the first part of 2021 is to provide a space for RE parents and children to feel a sense of community and security. The Council will assist the DRE in maintaining an engaging online RE program that will adapt easily as the COVID situation remains fluid. Ideally, the second part of the year will allow the Council to return to its more normal responsibilities of tracking how many children are attending Sunday morning RE, signing up for Our Whole Lives (OWL), or going to camp.
Albuquerque Interfaith continued activities using Zoom meetings throughout 2020. House meetings in member institutions outlined the issues we researched in Public Education, Behavioral Health, Public Safety, and Economic Recovery.

In October, an Accountability Session was held with candidates for NM State House and Senate. Preparations are underway to participate in the upcoming Legislative session, January 19 – March 20, 2021.

In the fall, individuals from several of the member institutions volunteered to make calls to assist with the 2020 Census Count and then to Get the Vote Out for the November 3 election.

Albuquerque Interfaith is entering a phase called Sponsorship Committee, during which emphasis is on expanding the number of member institutions and stabilizing the financial base.
The After School Tutoring Program was providing tutoring, art and PE activities to 20 children from Montezuma Elementary School until the Covid-19 epidemic forced us to discontinue the entire program in mid-March at the same time that the schools were closed.

We had numerous discussions on how we might continue to provide some support to our students, but these proved to be impossible as more restrictions became necessary.

All the families in the program were contacted by phone to find out how they were doing and whether or not the children had the necessary tools to continue remote learning. From March through to the end of the school year was a difficult time for families with several children because they were often forced to share a computer or device. Parents reported that little learning was actually happening.

In August and September, we contacted families again and were pleased to find out that Chrome books had been issued to all children. This was an improvement although it was a very difficult transition for many children and their parents. We continue to try to assure families that we will return and they should contact us if they have a serious problem.

Our art leader, Linda Bairstow, has sent children art projects on several occasions and some of the students have been provided with additional books when they requested more reading materials.

During the holidays, we prepared gift bags with books, art projects, calendars, fruit, and snacks for the children and families in the program.

Tutors really miss having these children in our lives, but we are ready to resume as soon as it is safe.
Animal Advocates
A Chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry
Sharon Hall, chair

Active Members
Martha Anderson (Treasurer)            Al Kulp
Mikki Aronoff                             Judi Lafleur
Linda Bairstow (Critter Club and Newsletter)   Gail Livingston
Graham Bowkett                             Richard Marens
Sacha Bush                                 Sally Storrs
Marcia Caregeorges                        Janet Strong
David Gick                                 Jo Wilsdorf
Lisa Goldman,                              
Sharon Hall (Chair)                        
Margaret Keller (Facebook/Announcements)   
Cindy Kloss

First Unitarian Animal Advocates celebrated its 10th Anniversary in 2020. We held our regular meetings in January and February (4th Sunday of the month, 12:15pm, Wesson Room), but have only met twice on Zoom since. However, we have been able to maintain contact with our members through an extensive e-news list and our Facebook page.

Thanks to social media, Animal Advocates members have remained connected with local and state animal welfare/rescue groups and have continued to make financial contributions to several, including: the national Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry, Animal Australia (fire relief), Kennel Kompadres, Ramah Navajo Chapter (pet food/supplies), Broken Promises SW, NMDog, The Longears Safehouse, Fur and Feather Animal Assistance, New Mexico Animal Friends, NM Farm Sanctuary, Pawsitive Life Rescue of NM, Sunflower Sanctuary, Cottonwood Rehab, and Volunteers of Valencia County Shelter.

Our planned field trip to the new Longears Safehouse in Estancia had to be postponed due to Covid, as did our Pets of the Homeless Wellness Clinic. However, a dedicated Pets of the Homeless volunteer continues to pick up pet food and supplies at our partner veterinary clinics and to deliver them to HopeWorks (formerly St. Martin’s). Thanks to a generous grant from the Social Justice Council we have been able to provide pet supplies for the city’s Westside Homeless Shelter as well.

Other notes:
• Animal Advocates was grateful to become the first Social Justice committee to participate in the snack table program for the new Social Hall;
• Margaret Keller created a wonderful slideshow of Animal Advocates’ mission, events, and activities for our Connections Week presentation;
• Although we were not able to co-host this year, we celebrated the virtual Animal Blessing in the Fall with Rev. Angela and Raven Reed Starr.
Adult Literacy & Citizenship Program (Formerly Adult English as a Second Language)

Connie Molecke

Mission: The Adult Literacy & Citizenship Program continues its mission to promotes the worth and dignity of all beings through education, advocacy and assistance by teaching adults who wish to improve their general English speaking, listening and reading and writing skills. In some classes our goal is also to enable them to pass the US Citizenship Exam to become citizens. We additionally provide some informational workshops about community resources and advocacy. This builds relationships with people in our community and with other community organizations.

Staff and Students
Pre-Covid 19, we had 22 ESL and Citizenship tutor volunteers from both the church and community. We employed two child care workers for each weekly session. We had approximately 20 adult students learning English and 18 adults studying for their citizenship exam. We teach in English in all classes except one class which is mostly in Spanish. This class is for some people in our community who can take their citizenship exam in Spanish. About 95% of our students speak Spanish but we occasionally have students who speak other languages.

After the Covid Shutdown on March 14, we paused all of the ESL classes. We continued to work with some Citizenship students online or by telephone to prepare for their exams or to complete their application before an October 1st deadline. In September, we began to resume about four adult literacy (ESL) classes. We plan to resume online study for English and the Citizenship exam online in January 2021 for 13 weeks each spring and each fall. Classes were formed around skill levels and student needs. We have some “one tutor/one student” classes and small groups of 3 to 5 students. Currently, tutors and students arrange online or telephone classes for 60-90 minutes per week. But, many of our students do not have easy access to computers, tablets or phones with a camera and are not able to resume classes through distance learning.

Community Partnerships
• We have a partnership with ReadWest Inc. which is a non-profit in Rio Rancho that teaches Basic Literacy, ESL and computer skills. They provide training to our tutors and assist with our registration and skill assessments.
• We have a continuing partnership with the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. We link with them online to complete the N-400 Citizenship applications. They visited our classes each semester and are still available to our students as a legal resource. Currently we meet online or by phone as needed.
• We collaborate with Encuentro & El Centro which are non-profits in downtown ABQ. which provided classes in ESL, Citizenship, Financial Management, Home Health Aide training. They held Hispanic rights workshops for the community and occasionally at First U. During the pandemic, we have distributed their informational materials about resources, rights and community online events.
• Montezuma Elementary School – Partner School The PTA (Parent Teacher Organization) started meeting online in September once a month and is doing fundraisers. We have not been able to be active in this partnership recently.

Evaluation of our program
• Adult Literacy (ESL) We evaluate each student using NM approved assessments to determine student skill levels and skills progress. We work with each student on language needs and their personal goals.

Schedule
Pre-Covid, our classes met in the RE Building on Monday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 pm.
• **Citizenship** In 2019, 11 of our students became Naturalized Citizens. In January of 2020, we enrolled 9 English speakers and 10 Spanish speakers into our citizenship classes. During the 2020 year, 3 students have become citizens, 10 students have turned in their applications and are waiting for their tests, 3 students are still completing applications.

• **Attendance** In 2019, we averaged attendance of 28 adults per week and 4.4 children per week in childcare. From January 2020 to March 2020 we seemed to be on the same course. We currently have only 6 students in online or phone classes with 4 volunteer tutors. We plan to recruit more students and tutors to study online in January 2021. We hope to resume on-site classes at First Unitarian when it is safe to return. We also may continue offering some classes online or by phone. We project that it will take a year or two to return to pre-covid levels of operation.

• **Funding** This program is funded as a continuing program of First Unitarian, the Social Justice Council, and occasional donations from individuals. Expenses usually average $1,200 to $1,600 per calendar year. Our largest expense is childcare. **We spent a total of $369.26 in 2020.** This was for ink, materials, food/beverages and paper goods. This amount did not account for childcare costs.I did not receive any records for childcare or other expenses.

• **Grant Received** During the pandemic, our Adult Literacy Program of applied for and received a 6 month grant for $5,000 from the New Mexico State Department of Education Central Region Operating Assistance funds, administered through ReadWest, Inc. These funds are specifically approved for purchase of 10 tablets for student use at their homes, a contract staff person to provide technology support of online/distance education, for training and materials for student assessments, for materials such as workbooks, postage, and for reading materials at basic literary levels.

• **Note: The Citizenship Test Fund**
This separate fund was created in September of 2017 through a special fundraiser and is also managed by Connie Molecke. It had an initial credit of $5,762.00. It had been used to pay the Citizenship Application Fees of 11 people. A full Application Fee is $750 and a Reduced Fee for people below a certain income is $405. We will need to raise funds to replenish this fund.

For a complete financial statement, please contact Connie Molecke at conniemolecke@gmail.com.
The Earth Web Team meets on the second Sunday of each month from 12:15 - 1:45. There are usually 10 - 15 people in attendance and working on our projects. Our group works in several areas of environmental sustainability and care for the earth.

Here are our main activities and accomplishments for this year:

From January to April, we met as usual at the church, continuing our study of the book *Drawdown*, and planning some projects that could support drawing down pollutants from the atmosphere.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown, these projects were canceled as well as our annual Spring Sustainability Fair. We stopped meeting until August. We participated in Connections Week and have added more members to our group. We have been meeting online since September and have continued the Drawdown study, using “The Drawdown Review”.

Our main action focus is legislative advocacy, with special emphasis on The New Mexico Green Amendment and Community Solar. Our guest speaker in December was State Senator Mimi Stewart, who gave us considerable information about what we can do to influence environmental advocacy at the state legislature.

We will continue doing this work online and doing what we can to combat the threat of climate change until the church opens up again some time in 2021, at which point we will be so happy to see each other in person again!
First Unitarian is one of 22 congregations that host families experiencing homelessness during the year. In 2020, we hosted in our new social hall. Hosting up to four families for one week, providing meals, companionship, activities, a safe place to sleep, and transportation when needed, is just a brief list of what our UU volunteers accomplish.

Our March 2020 host week was the last host week before Family Promise moved to semi-permanent and safe facilities at Church of the Good Shepard. The staff at Family Promise ABQ took over for overnight duties and spending any direct time with the families. Our Food Team stepped up to provide meals during our scheduled host weeks remaining in 2020.

It takes up to 70 volunteers to support these families for one week. We are so fortunate to have a congregation that supports these families in so many ways. Our volunteers cook dinners, stay overnight, set up the sleeping spaces, clean up, and provide evening activities and companionship.

One host week costs approximately $400. We have been blessed to have the financial support of the First U Social Justice Council and numerous monetary donations from congregants.

Family Promise Albuquerque supports these families in numerous ways. The primary goal is to get the families into their own homes. A success is credited when a family has been in their own home for 6 months. Currently, Family Promise Albuquerque has a 90% success rate! We support these families and their success.

Family Promise ABQ is currently purchasing a permanent building which will house up to 8 families. Our commitment to this program will continue but in different ways. We await the opportunity to support this fantastic program!

Thank you First U!!!
The Food Pantry went to a drive-by system of food distribution beginning on Wednesday, March 18. This is when it was no longer safe to have our clients come inside the building to get their sacks of food because of the pandemic.

Prior to that date, we had a group of four volunteers for each week in the month who handed out the food, but all of them opted to end their participation because all were at risk for contracting the virus.

From March until November 11, there was a team consisting of Erin Hendrick, Dante Cabeza de Baca, and Ruth Mueller who came every week, and they would put the sacks of food in each client’s car as they drove through the parking lot.

Most of our team of nine packers continued with their job. It is a single-person task when one has the pantry to oneself. One person packs 50 sacks on Tuesday and another packs 50 sacks on Wednesday. Each person does this job once per month. This team is coordinated by Kathy Kwait.

Our two Tuesday teams of three people each, alternated weeks to be at the pantry to receive the food delivery from Roadrunner and put the food away. Gary Donnermeyer worked in the pantry on Wednesdays to put the perishable food in all 100 sacks, and Rebecca Gracey and Connie Harrington registered all of our clients as they drove through.

This routine changed on November 18 when the Covid cases in Albuquerque surged, and it was decided to reduce our number of volunteers so that they could stay home. At this point the sacks of food were still placed on the outside tables but now our clients drove through and got out of their cars and picked up their food. This was still the routine as of the end of 2020.

During the pandemic, masks were made by 16 church members to hand out each week. Linda Skye coordinated that program.

A total of 5,127 sacks of food were given out during the year with a weekly average of 98.6 sacks. The average in 2019 was 108.6. It is surprising that our numbers are lower than previous years. One explanation is that our clients are finding other food pantries closer to home.

The total income for the pantry in 2020 was $35,158.72.

The total expenses were $27,234.94.

A new frost-free freezer is included in those expenses.

The year-end balance was $41,845.85.
The pandemic brought face-to-face opportunities to provide direct service to a halt in 2020.

Support for immigrants continues to be a value of members of the congregation, but there was no organized program or group meetings during the pandemic.

Some of the opportunities that still exist include support for asylum seekers in detention, support for ABQ Faithworks and Immigrant Justice focused groups, connecting with immigrants in our neighborhood and through Montezuma Elementary school, and advocating with local government to assist immigrants in our community. The group will reconvene when there is an identified need and safe ways to assist.
At the beginning of the year, our increased attendance continued in 2020 with sometimes over twenty persons, which meant we needed more hymnals; a nice problem to have. When UUABQ required us to cease our services in Socorro, some aspects of SUU changed and some didn’t.

SUU’s official Steering Committee positions have mostly become irrelevant since we no longer have our own services. First U services are now provided to us via Zoom, and the majority of SUU folks do not attend. A post-service SUU Zoom chat follows the Sunday service.

On the other hand, the SUU congregation remains very active and well connected! Within an hour of being told we were to cease our own services, we began a daily Joys and Concerns email thread. Also new are a spiritual journaling group and a meditation group. Adult RE proceeded with a longer course than usual for the summer (Building Your Own Theology). Upon completion, another Adult RE began for the fall (Inherited Wealth and Economic Justice). Previously, we had Adult RE only in the summer.

Also continuing are the biannual Highway Clean-ups, the monthly Theology on Taps, and SUU’s weekly Announcements. Change for Change, collection of items for the local homeless shelter, and updating SUU’s website remain ongoing.

While we will have no Holiday Concert this December, SUU folks—via CLF—are maintaining the tradition of providing Christmas Cards to incarcerated UUs.

SUU is known as a caring congregation and that likewise continues. Phone calls, in-person visits (outside!), and physical items brought to people’s houses have become the norm. Especially nice was home-cooked Thanksgiving dinners delivered to people—some very tangentially connected to SUU—who were spending the holiday alone.

This year, two members of the SUU family died (not of Covid-19): Lora Cooper and Elaine Marr. We have not officially honored their lives, and such events are not scheduled. Three people became members: Jeff Dixon, Francie Durand and Steve Durand. The Durands have regularly attended for years and, in fact, had volunteer jobs within SUU. Francie is the host of the SUU post-service Zoom chat.