

2014-15

Annual Report



BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

May 16, 2015

Dear Peoples People,

It has been a busy year for Peoples Church!

In August we began an interim ministry with Rev. Jeff Briere who has brought a new level of professionalism and excellence to worship services and has given us straight talk and encouragement in our quest to prepare ourselves for a new ministry, not to mention being an invaluable resource to the Board.

We proved resilient at the loss of two directors of religious education within eight months, and we faced conflict with determination and unity. In the process, we discovered the importance of our Covenant of Right Relations and the value of Circles to express feelings and heal wounds. The Interim Transition Team is continuing the Circle approach, helping us better understand ourselves and formulate goals. Always experimenting, we revised our Sunday RE/Worship schedule and are evaluating the effectiveness of that change.

We ended our 2014 fiscal year in the black, and our 2015 programs were funded by the fall stewardship drive without additional campaigning. We took a significant step to protect our facilities with a \$40,000 roof repair. And we had fun raising additional money with parties, garage sales, meal events, and plant sales. For the future, a process is under way to secure long-term financial health with a renewed endowment plan.

Our social justice effort was greatly strengthened by the formation of the Social Justice Council and we are again making significant commitments in this area. Plus we served as a site for free tax preparation services that helped over 300 people. And we had an unexpected opportunity to stand for both equality and diversity when Deb Maynard gave the first Pagan invocation ever at the Iowa Legislature.

Adult programming has reawakened with a popular discussion series based on the book "A Chosen Faith". Special taskforces have tackled improvements to two foundational documents, the Bylaws and Covenant of Right Relations.

A comprehensive list of bylaw recommendations is ready for congregational consideration, with the Covenant of Right Relations soon to follow.

Finally, where many see decline for religion in the 21st century, we see opportunities for innovation and growth. By unanimous vote we have committed ourselves to an extended period of congregational development through the new UUA Developmental Ministry program.

These are only the main points that come to mind as I write this. But I am forgetting things, I know it. For that I apologize. And there has been much that I am not aware of. Few notice the ordinary acts of kindness and commitment that happen all the time from members and staff. But we are grateful, for these are the actions of a caring community. Many people have told me that they sense a fresh wind blowing at Peoples Church. Confidence is rising, involvement is increasing, and new faces are appearing. Steps have been taken and plans for a thriving future are being made and implemented. For all who did the work to bring this about, hearty thanks are deserved and given. There are so many hands that make this church thrive!

From the Board's perspective, this has been a year of many accomplishments. As hard working members of the present board are ending their terms, we thank them sincerely for their contributions at this time of transition and transformation. And we welcome our new board members enthusiastically. As leaders, we are privileged to serve this church, but we are all part of the community. We all do this together. We all move forward together.

So take pride in your church. Brag about your church. Be excited about your church! Membership here means something in the values we live by and bring to the world. There is much to do in the coming year. So let's get started!

Respectfully submitted,
Bryan Davis, President

Peoples Church UU Interim Transition Task Force Annual Report
2014-2015

Members: Rev. Jeff Briere, Barb Gay, Geoffrey Johnson, Maria Kell, Scott Mansfield, Tristan Maynard, Judy Price, chair
Talking Circle Facilitator: Marion Patterson

“Transitions are a part of life. Transitions in ministry are no less inevitable, and no congregation or minister can avoid them, nor should they try. Some of us do transition well; others need more practice. It is not a one-size-fits-all process.” *Keith Kron, Director of Ministerial Transitions at the UUA*

“...a religious community touches every aspect of our lives... Religious leadership promotes this wholeness of being. Knowing that whole, holy, heal and healthy are part of the same word family sheds warm light on our shared endeavors.” *Margaret Keip, retired UU minister*

The Interim Transitions Task Force is charged with assisting the congregation through the interim time. In order to provide a framework for action, Rev. Briere gave a September sermon listing the five (5) tough tasks congregations need to accomplish during the interim before calling a settled minister. In March, the wording was updated:

1. Heritage: reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.
2. Leadership: reviewing the congregation’s ways of organizing and developing new and effective clergy and lay leadership.
3. Connections: discovering all the relationships and networks a faith community builds beyond itself.
4. Mission: defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction.
5. Future: synthesizing the interim work, activating and training the pastoral search committee, and coaching the committee (as requested) to accomplish its work.

The Interim Transitions Task Force plan is to address these tasks with the congregation in “tough task” circle meetings (Sunday morning and Wednesday evening) starting in March and continuing each quarter for the next fifteen (15) months. As defined in Wikipedia, a talking circle is used as a way to organize group discussions in an egalitarian manner. Group members typically sit in a circle and discuss issues with simple rules: the talking stick, or other object, is passed around the circle, and the person holding the talking

stick may speak though the "holder" may allow interjection. The Task Force's plan was duly approved by the Board. In addition, the Task Force and Marion Patterson reached out to the congregation for people interested in becoming talking circle facilitators. Four (4) members indicated interest and are involving themselves in the process as their schedules allow.

The first two talking circles were held in March 2015 re: Heritage/Coming to Terms With Our History. Nineteen (19) people attended. Participants discussed the importance of developing bonds of friendship in the congregation. These relationships were prized because they:

- Allowed groups to accomplish important work in the church and the wider world
 - Were deep, lasted over time, and provided support raising children
- Also discussed were:
- Accepting need for ebb and flow—being more involved with church life at times and at times needing to back off
 - The impact in participants' lives of social events, change in location, women in ministry, and connection with the generations
- For the church to thrive, people thought congregation needs to:
- Approach each other with love, respect,
 - Work on communication and
 - Apply our covenant of right relations
 - Let go of past mistakes
 - Focus on today
 - Honoring ourselves as we are
 - Reach out actively to newcomers
 - Making others feel welcome,
 - Take action as congregation in the wider community and
 - Realize the church is more than a minister or group of friends
 - Share the load of church business
 - Tap those with experiences as former Board or committee members for advice when issues arise

We completed the Talking Circles on the first tough task in March and a report on the "takeaway" from that process was shared with Board and congregation. We are now looking at our next step continuing at this process.

At the time this report is being written, the task force is working on Leadership as the second tough task.

DECAL Talking Circle – Developing Effective Clergy and Leadership
Sunday, May 17, 9:15 am to 10:45 am in Andre Room (limit 15 people)
Wednesday, May 20, 6:15 pm to 8:00 pm in Andre Room (limit 25 people)
Talking circle questions will be:

- What does leadership mean in our church?
- How can every member be a leader?
- What is the nature of authority we give our leaders and how do we recognize it?
- How do we provide support to Board members for the decisions they make for the church?

The talking circle is open to all congregants to talk about leadership in our church. The talking circle process uses respectful listening, silent reflection, and sharing in the moment and from the heart. A scribe will capture participants' takeaway points to share with the congregation and Board.

In addition Marion Patterson has led a healing circle for past board members at Judy Price's home on Wednesday, May 6, 6:15 pm to 8 pm. Nine (9) people attended stretching the time from Rev. Kellison to Rev. Capo. The healing circle addressed both personal and church healing issues. A second healing circle will be held on Sunday, May 17, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm at Marion Patterson's home and results from both circles will be reported to the congregation in future Voice columns.

The task force's goals for the following 2015-2016 year are to:

1. Continue to involve the congregation in the remaining tasks: Connections, Mission, and Future using the Talking Circle and/or other processes as appropriate
2. Report results from the Talking Circles to provide useful information for the congregation to select developmental goals for the future

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Price

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT

This has been one of the most difficult years for Religious Education for Peoples UU in its history. In August we lost Our DRE under traumatic circumstances. Following that we lost all but one member of the Religious Education committee for varying reasons not necessarily having to do with the Suttlers. This included the Chair of the committee. After hiring a new DRE we were saddened to lose her after a few short months. With the upheaval in the program attendance suffered- averaging approximately 8 children per week.

Not everything is negative however. Thanks to a very dedicated group of teacher and the RE Committee the RE program has continued to run and we are continuing to do the business of Religious Education. We had a very successful Winter Lu'au that raised over half the total "fundraiser Line" of the PCUU budget in one night. Together with the Iowa City Church we are hosting our first Area Youth Con in September to be hosted here at PCUU.

The RE Committee is currently collecting and evaluating RE director applications so as to be able to advise our minister. We have a RE Committee retreat in July where we will be restructuring the duties and goals of the volunteers of the RE program. We are planning a summer outreach plan to try to identify and reach out to families who may have left us in recent years and to invite them to return and to learn from them and their experiences. Finally we are recommending at the congregational meeting that the RE program return to its historical slot during services. It is our belief that this will help RE attendance, particularly with new families coming to the church.

We are looking forward to a strong start in the fall and to fulfilling our leg of the trio - "Church Membership comes from good services, good music, and good RE."

Rob Loughrey

SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 16, 2015

I. Social Justice Interest Surveys

In September of 2014 and again in January of 2015, the congregation was surveyed as to which top social justice issues they wished to address as a church. The top three issues were poverty/income inequality, racial disparities, and the environment.

II. Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness & Advocacy Network

In January the congregation voted to join the IUUWAN. The IUUWAN is a non-profit 501.c3 network of UU Churches across the state. The purpose of the group is to take action by increasing the power of UU voices and making those voices an effective tool for social change. People's Church is represented on the IUUWAN Board of Directors by Marcia Swift.

III. Formation of Social Justice Council

People's Church formed a Social Justice Council with the support of the Board of Trustees. The purpose of the Council is to help the church identify which social justice issues they wish to address and to organize the members to take action. The Council has also taken on the task of increasing the visibility of the Church in the community and the state as a leader in social justice causes and concerns. The current members of the Social Justice are Carol Berg, Laura Diers, Rose Gabe, Mary Huneke, Bev Philpot, and Marcia Swift. Special thanks to these active people and to Marcy Mattison as well, for her invaluable assistance to the Council.

IV. Social Justice Page on Facebook

The Social Justice Council created a PCUU Social Justice page on Facebook. Thank you to Bev Philpot for all her work in this area.

V. Head Start Classroom

Keeping with the church's choices of poverty and racial disparity as the top priorities, the Social Justice Council adopted a Head Start Classroom in the Olivet Neighborhood of Cedar Rapids, which was greatly impacted by the flood. The Council has requested that church members donate much needed supplies, money and volunteer time. Thank you to Laura Diers for all her efforts in this area.

VI. Visibility of PCUU as a Leader in Social Justice

The SJ Council has been working hard on developing a tee-shirt design for a shirt that members could wear as they participate in social justice endeavors as an individual or as a whole church. Many people purchased tee-shirts which allowed us to design and order them. Again, a special thank you to Marcy Mattison for all her help and to Bev Philpot for her coordination of this project. The tee-shirts will include “Love is the Spirit of this Church and Service is its Law. People’s Church since 1869.”

The SJC will be asking the Board of Trustees to support the purchase of two banners, one for each side of the Gordon Ave entrance. One banner will have the same wording as what is on the tee-shirts. The wording on the other banner is to be determined by church members.

VII. Forums

Forums on Sundays at 10 am have been held this spring to educate us on issues related to poverty and income disparity. Speakers have included representatives from HACAP, Feed Iowa First, and the IUUWAN. Future speakers include a representative from the Community Free Health Clinic, the Eastern Iowa Center for Worker Justice, Sisters and Brothers Against Human Trafficking in Cedar Rapids, and Ed Fallon on climate change and the Baken pipeline. Thank you to Carol Berg, Rose Gabe and Mary Huneke for their efforts to recruit speakers. Thank you to those members of Peoples who have been attending.

VIII. Future Plans

- A.** Recruit more members to serve on the Social Justice Council
- B.** Market the tee-shirts
- C.** Ask the Board to approve the banners and if they do so, complete this project.
- D.** Continue to support the Olivet Head Start Classroom
- E.** Link the Social Justice Facebook page with those of elected officials and other like minded organizations
- F.** Choose a social justice organization from amongst those who spoke at our Forums for further coalition building and to engage in social action and advocacy.

PEOPLES CHURCH CHOIR

The choir - and most especially the choir leader - are getting their feet under them. We're doing more ethnic music, which both singers and congregation seem to appreciate, and we're becoming more of an ensemble and less a gathering of individuals. This is a good thing.

We would love to have more voices so we could do bigger multi-voice songs. Tenors are an especially needy area. We only have two guys who can sing this part; one plays piano and the other has three little girls to manage (I'll leave you to figure out who they are).

Now, you may be saying, "Oh, Kath, I don't:

- read music
- sing anywhere but the shower
- have time
- have brain capacity"

To which I say,

- A number of us do best learning songs by ear rather than by reading music
- If you haven't cracked the shower tiles, your voice is perfectly fine to take out in public
- The choir only sings once a month, fer cryin' out loud, and practices just three times each month before services; if Catholics can learn new music every single week and sit through two-hour practices one evening each week, we talented UUs can certainly handle monthly performances
- Learning new music will actually increase your brain performance by leading to the creation of new neurons; it's actually a healthful behavior."

In other words, please join us so we have exciting news to share next year about the fabulous growth of the choir!

Kathleen Watson

WORSHIP ASSOCIATES

The worship associates are Scott Mansfield, Kathleen and Joseph Watson, Bryan Davis, Deb and Lance Maynard, Maria Kell, and Marian Patterson. We assisted the minister with each service. We also were in charge of a service once a month. Special thanks to Kathleen Watson for leading the choir, and Scott Mansfield for accompanying the hymns and finding musicians to play for church.

Scott Mansfield

TREASURER'S REPORT:

We finished 2014 in the black, with total income of \$190,174; total expenses of \$183,948; yielding a net income of \$6766. Unfortunately for 2015, our current projected pledge income is \$16,500 less than last year, so the budget adopted at the January meeting severely restricts spending, including halving our contributions to the UUA and MidAmerica Region and reducing discretionary spending.

As of the end of the first quarter of 2015 (through March), we have income of \$32,907; total expenses of \$42,670; leaving us with a net loss of \$9764. This will be partially offset when we begin receiving proceeds from our endowment, which have been delayed by a change in how the UUA Common Endowment Fund distributes funds. However keeping up with your pledge payment is the key factor in our financial health. If you haven't recorded a pledge, please contact Robyn Meissler-Kubanek, Pledge Treasurer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gary McGraw, Treasurer