

Minister's Notes  
January 15, 2020

Dear Board Members,

OMG, things are heating up at UUCGT! What's happening this month? A few things; Starting Points UU Orientation classes, an after-church Transition Team event with lunch to educate and inform the congregation about the search process and what to expect. Soul Matters Themes will be playing a role in worship, small groups, and potentially, RE. The Stewardship campaign will be introduced via postcard mailing on Jan 24. The kickoff Sunday will be Feb 9 and will culminate with Celebration Sunday on March 15.

The Transition Team event will introduce the process of selecting a Search Team. Folks will begin to think about who they might want to represent them on the Search Committee, and they will leave with a clearer understanding of what the next 18 months will look like at UUCGT.

We have so many folks signed up for the Starting Points Class beginning on Jan 26<sup>th</sup> that I may need to schedule a second class! This is good news. Sunday Services have started using the themes from Soul Matters Sharing Circle this month, and fourteen people took part in the Small Group Facilitator training last week! Many of us met at church on Saturday to take the training via Zoom together. Three participants were from the Benzie Group, but two of them joined the training from home computers. Since the Benzie Group is considered a satellite of UUCGT, Soul Matters has given us permission to share the resources with them. Several of our newly trained facilitators are eager to begin small groups, and we are in the preparation process. Small groups are essential to Program size congregations because they provide a vehicle for deeper connections and spiritual growth. The process used in small groups models right relations and covenant. The high level of enthusiasm the training generated for the Soul Matters model is exciting. We learned at the training that we can create a monthly journal for all members and friends to enjoy whether or not they join a small group.

Investing in the Soul Matters Sharing Circle subscription was an experiment this year and since it was met with some skepticism, I used my professional expenses for the first year's subscription. If UUCGT wishes to continue using Soul Matters next year, the \$385 fee will need to be added to the 2020-21 budget. They have an additional subscription for Social Media that might be worth getting. It's inexpensive at \$10 per month.

Last month, the Winter Solstice Service on Dec 22 was well-attended. There was great music, a meaningful ritual, and a vegetarian potluck supper that followed. The Christmas Eve service was packed with visitors and members. The collaboration that happened in preparing that service

turned out to be a relationship/trust building experience. The result was a meaningful service, beautiful music, aesthetically beautiful setting and was followed by a lovely reception. The Sunday Services Committee was responsible for planning, executing, greeting, ushering, and clean up. We heard that the kitchen was left in an unacceptable way, and I accept full responsibility because I pushed the reception in order to demonstrate its merit. Sunday Services members and I arrived at 4 pm and were not finished until 9:45. The service began at 7 pm. The reception was a lovely addition with Christmas punch and beautiful cookies and makes for a nice tradition, but if it is to be continued next year there will need to be more support for setting up and clean up. I believe it's worth the effort.

I drove to Ludington on Christmas Day and returned on New Year's Day. While I was in Ludington, I had lunch with John Thorp, a co-founder of the Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State in Big Rapids. John is a retired Anthropology Professor from Ferris. I wanted to lure him to UUCGT to do a service with me about the history of racism. He agreed to come on March 29<sup>th</sup>. They will drive up on Saturday and it would be wonderful to offer them home hospitality. I will offer a service on March 22<sup>nd</sup> to introduce the history from the 1600's to Reconstruction and John will cover Jim Crow Era the following Sunday. Emmy Lou and I are planning a group tour of the museum in early April. Date to be determined. It might require renting a large van. I hope to get an article in the Record Eagle to promote the event, and Jolynn will promote via website, and social media.

Other ministerial duties have included committee meetings, one-on-one meetings, pastoral visits, worship services, and a memorial service preparation for a non-member but frequent visitor, John Haskin. His widow, Roxanne, has been in church almost every Sunday since his death. The service is on Feb 8<sup>th</sup> and Renee has been contracted to do the music.

All in all, I would say UUCGT is in a good place to begin the work of searching for a new minister, and I am grateful for all the help and support I have received from the Board, the Transition Team, the staff members, and congregants. It has made all the difference.

In faith and love, Cathy