

REPORT ON PROGRAMS

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica



Fiscal year
July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012

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REPORT ON MINISTRY
Reverend Rebecca Benefiel Bijur

Dear friends,

Thank you for your love and service to this community and the wider world.

As you know, Nurit Gordon joined our staff this year as Church Administrator. In this role, Nurit quickly made herself indispensable by working behind the scenes to support all aspects of church life, particularly key improvements in maintaining and upgrading our facilities. We welcomed Seth Houston, Director of Music, to lead our choir, lead a seasonal children's chorus, and support a vital music program, even as we said goodbye to organist Louis Durra with gratitude for his many years of service. In the spring, you sent your minister off on family leave, and part-time Acting Minister Rev. Erika Hewitt lent us her leadership, energy, and care. It has been a year of change and growth for all of us.

Love is the doctrine of this church...

Together, we dedicated ourselves to our children, including new arrivals Kathryn Ealasaid Duckman and Gabriela Belen Henderson-MacLennan. I had the joy of blessing Robin Lowney-Lankton's journey into motherhood. I also led memorial services for the following beloved members and former members of our community: Libbie Barach, Michael D'Asaro, Milton Holmen, Julie Kinsinger, John Raiford, Andrew Still, and Jim Weinberg. My colleague in ministry, the Rev. Ernie Pipes, Minister Emeritus, led memorial services honoring George Bell, Margaret Thurmond DePrima, and Donald Nierlich, and Rev. Judith Meyer, Minister Emerita, contributed to many of these services by sharing her remembrances.

...and service is its prayer

From September to February, your Generous Congregation and Christmas Eve offerings of over \$6,000 served the youth, families, and communities of the following organizations: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE-LA), Common Ground Westside HIV Center, Homeboy Industries, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Westside (NAMI), Ocean Park Community Center (OPCC), Southern California Unitarian Universalist Justice Team, Turning Point, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and the Westside Food Bank. Though this is only one of many ways this community strives to put its faith into action, it is one I admire every Sunday.

It is an honor to serve the ministry of this congregation, as it is carried out by each of you in so many ways.

Gratefully,
Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur



NEW PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Cynthia Cottam

First of all, I want to express another thank you to Bronwen Jones and the outgoing board. Even though they will continue to be active among us, especially since I will be constantly asking them questions, they deserve our special gratitude at this time. They have served us well for many years through times of challenge and transition, and we have accomplished several important goals during their tenure. I also want to thank our Acting Minister, Reverend Erika Hewitt, for stepping so gracefully into our pulpit. Her intelligence, compassion and good counsel will see us successfully through our minister's family leave.

I am proud to be elected your president and I am excited to greet the upcoming year. I am at a point in my life where time seems shorter. I recognize the need to say what I want to say and do the things that seem important. The opportunity to serve as your president feels like the culmination of a journey that began when I was a child, attending Unitarian church in Madison, Wisconsin. Recently, I have been remembering an experience I had in high school. I was 14 or 15, and I chose to attend a UU leadership training camp for a week on a lake about 3 hours from my home. I went alone—I didn't know anyone there—and slept in cabins and went to workshops. I don't remember the process of deciding to go, but I'm sure I was scared. I also must have been quite motivated. Interestingly, one of the main things I remember about the experience is my new bathing suit, a one-piece made of orange and white stripes. I was self-conscious, but apparently also excited about it. I remember the trees, and groups of kids and a volleyball game. I also remember very clearly a moment after I had returned home, when I had just finished leading some kind of a group discussion, and I realized that I actually was a better leader and that the techniques I had learned at camp were helping me be more effective. I am personally moved by the symmetry of the idea that my high school camp trained me to become, 50 years later, the president of my church.

We never know, really, all of the effects of our actions. Our community is special because it has the ability to weave itself into the fabric of our lives and wrap itself around us from the beginning to the end. I am especially looking forward to working with Reverend Rebecca during this remarkable year in her life, when her family welcomes and gets to know Nathan, their second child. This is a unique opportunity for all of us in the congregation. As we continue to practice what it means to be human, we must surely know that a young family will need our support, and our generous giving of ourselves. We will be excited to have Rebecca back among us, and she will be excited to be back. Together we will embark upon the journey of nourishing new life, including the many possibilities for new congregational life, as Rebecca begins her third year with us.

This is more than a symbolic thought. We will have a new roof to keep the rain out, and give us shelter from the storm. We will have a new website. We have new staff people. I have most recently served on the Personnel Committee, and I am impressed by the many gifts these new people bring to us. We have each other, and all the good work we do in our community and in the wider world.

I haven't presented you with much of a platform. I do have opinions, which are sometimes open to discussion; I still have much to learn, and I have personal UU-shaped values, which will help me navigate the road I travel with you. In the end, just as President Obama explained when he expressed his support for same-sex marriage, the value I care about most deeply is how I treat other people. As your president, I care most about how we as a community treat one another.

PAST PRESIDENT REPORT

Bronwen Jones

Thank you for coming today. Your presence is why we can continue to work together as a community.

Last night I was hanging out right here playing a clarinet duet with my son, Baxter, at the Saturday Spotlight. It was so wonderful for us to play a tune together for our friends. This sanctuary transforms into so many wonderful purposes and holds so many hearts within its walls. And here we are, having a political meeting in the middle of our place of worship, just like our UU ancestors.

We are celebrating the second year of our settled minister. Rebecca tells me that she is no longer considered a “new minister” as she starts to own and hone her own style of ministry. We look forward to her return on July 1, with baby Nathan in her arms, to be with her on the continuation of her journey with us.

Many people have asked me why I am not chairing the board for another year, which is the expectation here at UUSM. It has been a challenging year for me. My music work has not slowed down. And last May I started my internship at the Santa Monica UCLA chaplaincy program. I didn't know how I would like the chaplaincy work. It turns out that I love it. It has engaged my heart and my brain and my, dare I say it, soul. So I will be continuing.

There was a time in this last year that I thought about jumping ship. It has been a tough year for personnel changes. Losing Louis Durra, our organist/pianist was awful for me personally, even though I know how hard everyone tried to work things out. And I know it was really hard for some other people in the congregation. Before going into this presidency job, I had read all this stuff about church minister transitions, and how tough it can be. I really wanted Rebecca but also wanted the music program to stay unaltered, which is not reasonable but that is the way I felt.

I also knew going in that a new minister in our church has freedom of the pulpit. And she has exercised that with a strong heart. My desire is to have a healthy church. On heavy days I would look at all the faces in the congregation during a service, chat at coffee hour, and know we had to figure out how to keep it all together the best we can.

And, you know, we do have a healthy church. There has been so much wonderful community work this past year. Especially the last six months have really shown a true blossoming of many of committees. There is fresh energy in the membership committee, the music committee, the rental committee, interweave, the green committee, Dining For Dollars and the Lifespan RE committees. The Atheists, Agnostics, Humanists and Secularists (AAHS) are zooming along with wonderful events and lively discussions. It is really exciting. The Forbes Hall walls have been full of terrific artwork. The hardworking Stewardship, Personnel, Nominating and Finance Committees have done a great job. Faith In Action have been actively taking UU values out into the community and doing things!

CareNet is up and running, and really doing things. We have a network in place to take care of folks in all kinds of need. It wasn't long ago that we had absolutely nothing in place to help each other through hard times. Charles and Christina Haskell, and Beverly Alison got the ball rolling and Karl Lisovsky is now coordinating the incoming needs of our congregation.

Forbes Hall and the patio are being used more and more for hosting lovely events. Many people have said to me how much they love the fact that they can drink coffee in Forbes and still see all the way to their children playing in the cottage playground.

Our current project is to fix our roof. We have started fundraising and we have started the process. I am going to step aside and ask Tom Hamilton to update you all on the roof project

(From Tom Hamilton)

In February the congregation voted to start fundraising to replace our dilapidated, leaky roof. You also indicated a strong preference for using the type of Spanish tile originally chosen by the architect if funds were available. Because of the generosity of many church members, as well as a large bequest dedicated to the church building program, fundraising has gone extremely well. We have enough money to proceed immediately.

Putting tile roof on the church requires that we investigate the structural implications of replacing the current lower roof levels with something heavier. So we paid for a structural engineering firm to evaluate the safety of our structure with the new roof. This is required by the city, but a good idea anyway.

We have the report. If you are interested I am happy to provide anyone with a copy. The bottom line is that most of the sanctuary structure is perfectly capable of supporting a tile roof and would be fine in a major earthquake. If you look at the structure above the center of the church you can easily see that it is very strongly built.

By comparison, if you look at the structure of the roof over the north wing you can see that it is much less robust. This is our problem area. Indeed, if you look carefully at the center rafters you can see that they are starting to bow under the existing load. Seismic analysis indicates that there is a significant chance of a structural failure in a Northridge-sized event. This is a problem even if we don't install tile.

Legally, the city cannot force us to make our sanctuary safe as long as we don't change anything. If we want to make any significant changes at all, we will not get a permit unless we improve our seismic stability. To do that, we need to do two things. We need to reinforce the roof rafters on the north wing, and some of our interior walls need to be stiffened. This is done by removing the plaster from the frame, nailing a sheet of plywood to the frame, and installing new plaster. The changes to the appearance of the interior should be unnoticeable. We do not anticipate any disruption of church operations.

The board's view is that seismic safety is a serious issue. These problems will not go away. We have available dedicated money to fix them now. So they decided we should proceed.

We have commissioned our engineers to produce detailed drawings for mitigation. They will be submitted to three contractors for competing bids. One of the contractors will be John Ingram who did the Forbes renovation and is interested in working with us again. The plans will have to be approved by the city. The city is unpredictable, but in my experience they take earthquake issues quite seriously. I can't promise anything, but I think it is very possible all work on the retrofit and roof will be finished by fall.

I can assure you that we will work very hard to make that happen. This community has been awesome. You are such a pleasure to work with. Thank you.

(From Bronwen)

Heartfelt thanks to all of our board members for serving this past year. To Sue Bickford, Alan Brunell, Kathy Cook, Beth Rendeiro, and Norb Gallery – fare thee well. You have all been through many years of transitions in staff. Your constant presence on the board provided a much needed continuity. Thank you all for giving up your Tuesday nights, for your contribution to the board work, and for sharing your talents with us most generously.

Vilma Ortiz, Bruno Lacombe and Pat Gomez – thank you committing to staying on for the next ride. We will have a chance to provide some historical context for the newly-elected board members. I

look forward to being with you another year and greatly appreciate your time and expertise that you bring to the table.

I also want to thank Erika Hewett for coming here to serve us at this time, bringing her gifts and talents during Rebecca's family leave time. We are fortunate to have her with us today.

I am signing off with love. It has been an honor to serve you and I will continue to do so with the best of my ability by supporting the next board as Past President.

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Alan Brunell

Financial results for the current fiscal year (2011-2012) are similar to those of the prior three years, with a few small, yet important changes. Staffing and program cuts that were put into place three years ago are still in effect, with few exceptions. Net results have proven better than expected. Nevertheless, the board recommended budget for the coming year continues a frugal, cautious approach.

Three and a half years ago, the Finance Committee suggested dramatic mid-year cuts to the budget, in response to the significant fall in income. Despite the cuts, the church year closed with a large deficit. For the following year the board approved a budget that maintained these significant cuts and estimated a small overall deficit. The Finance Committee estimated that the church's resources were sufficient to cover about three years of moderate deficits, at which time the economic climate and church revenues would improve. We had not expected, however, what was to be the longest, though not the worst recession, since the Great Depression. Given normal operations, the church should have run out of unrestricted savings about a year ago. At the end of each fiscal year, however, the church received a sizable donation, often a bequest that for two of the three years created a small surplus. In addition, continued efforts by a vivacious Stewardship Committee kept donations growing, despite a static number of members. As a result, the church's overall resources have not declined over the last three years, but neither have they grown. The combination of excellent stewardship and unexpected bequests are again likely to create a less than expected deficit or small surplus by the end of this fiscal year.

While income and spending have been similar this year to prior years, there were a number of important changes. This past fiscal year, the board approved an increase to the Generous Congregation program. In conjunction with Rev. Bijur's realignment of the GC program to focus on 12 key programs, the increase enabled the church to have a greater impact on the organizations it supported. Second, the board recognized that many of the prior cuts to the budget included cuts to building maintenance and repair. Those were not so much budget cuts as they were expense deferrals. This past year, important facility work included repairs to the ministers' office, installation of new office heating, and painting of the cottage.

The proposed budget for the fiscal year July 1 2012 through June 30, 2013 is similar to that of the last three years, with a small number of important changes. Revenue is expected to increase slightly, thanks to the continued hard work of the Stewardship Committee. In addition, a new chartered Facility Rental Committee is actively promoting rental of the newly refurbished Forbes Hall and courtyard and is updating rental arrangements with existing tenants (some who are willing to pay more but whose rent has not changed for over 20 years).

The largest expense increases come from compensation and related expenses. 80% of the church's budget (increasing to 82% in the coming year) is for staff. At the request of the Personnel Committee, small compensation increases, as appropriate, are included in the budget. In addition, increases are recommended to staffing for Nursery/Preschool/Childcare. Finally,

additional reserves will be set aside for the minister's Sabbatical fund. (Additions to the fund had been cut in prior years).

An important structural change is the realignment by the Religious Exploration Committee of its expense categories. They've requested expenses be budgeted and tracked by the groups served (e.g., Children, Youth, Multigenerational, Adult, etc.) so it will be easier to understand and plan future RE activities, classes, etc.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Denise Helton

The Personnel Committee met regularly throughout fiscal year 2011/12 to address the many personnel-related challenges that arose. The year began with the successful conclusion of two major recruitments: Seth Houston, Music Director and Nurit Gordon, Church Administrator, both began their positions in late August 2011. Also, we had a successful outcome to our search for two RE positions: ZaNyaa Lee began as our nursery caregiver and Carmen Santos began as our preschool teacher in September 2011. Louis Durra left his position as organist in January 2012 and various musicians have been filling in on an interim basis since that time. We will begin a wide search for a permanent organist in the near future. Also, as we end the year, we will begin once again the search for a Music Director, as Seth will be leaving us at the end of June. In addition, Holly Nguyen, who has been such a competent and positive presence in the church office for over six years, will be leaving us at the end of April. We have already begun a full search for an Administrative and Financial Assistant to replace her, which we hope to conclude soon.

In preparation for Reverend Bijur's family leave, which began at the end of March, Victor Paddock, past Chair of the Personnel Committee, worked closely with her to finalize the many details regarding her time away and to ensure a smooth transition for Acting Minister Erika Hewitt, including the finalization of her employment agreement.

Also, the committee began two rather large scale projects which are still in progress: rewriting the Employee Personnel Manual and creating a Personnel Committee Procedures Manual. As committee members change, such a document will be helpful in clarifying our responsibilities, as well as maintaining consistent, legal, and transparent procedures. In addition, the opening up of so many positions has given us the opportunity to update and standardize the job descriptions and employment agreements, which is ongoing.

Throughout, we have worked closely with Reverend Bijur on all employment-related issues as they arose, with a commitment to fairness, clarity, and standardization in regards to policies and procedures. As the year comes to a close, our committee is comprised of the following members: Rob Briner, Cynthia Cottam, Barbara Kernochan, David Olson, and Denise Helton, who serves as Chair.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jerry Gates

As specified in the by-laws, this committee is responsible to find candidates to fill open Board and Nominating Committee positions as well as positions on both the Finance and Personnel Committees. Jerry Gates was elected as committee chair after being appointed to the committee in the fall of 2011. The Committee is comprised of six individuals. Currently serving are: Jerry Gates, chair, Jessica Clay, Nels Hanson, Phyllis Kory, Katie Malich, and Rima Snyder.

This year the committee task was to nominate individuals for the following positions:

Board

- ❖ Church President

- ❖ First Vice President
- ❖ Second Vice President
- ❖ Treasurer
- ❖ Member-at-Large

Nominating Committee

- ❖ Two positions

The committee completed its work regarding the Board and Nominating Committee and the nominees are listed on the ballot for election by the congregation at the May meeting. The Committee has not taken action to fill any vacant positions on the Personnel and Finance Committees.

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION: THE COMMITTEE FORMERLY KNOWN AS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Emmy Cresciman

This has been a transformative year for RE at UUSM. We have grown from a committee totally focused on programs for our children to a conglomerate of subcommittees coordinating programs and events for children and adults of all ages and stages in our church. Our visibility in the church has been enhanced by the presence of a weekly table in Forbes Hall staffed by committee members who are able to answer questions about our programs and help with registration for classes. It's also a place where members of the congregation can voice opinions and make suggestions for new activities. The entire program is overseen by Director of Religious Education, Catherine Farmer Loya.

Each of the subcommittees has consisted of four or five members. On the first Tuesday of each month we meet briefly as a large group to discuss items affecting all subcommittees. Then we break into our smaller groups to brainstorm and plan the programs in our areas of interest, gathering again for a few minutes at the end of the evening with the whole group to summarize the results of our small group meetings. Thus, though each of us is involved in a subcommittee, the committee as a whole always has a connection to the big picture and we can cross-pollinate ideas and offer help to each other as needed. Following are reports from each of these four subcommittees—Children, Youth, Adults, and Multigenerational.

Children's Subcommittee

**Susan Hendricks Richman (Chair), Nicole Henderson-MacLennan, Sabina Mayo-Smith, and
Kim Santiago-Kalmanson**

We have had a wonderful year in the children's RE program, with new staff members, new curricula, and lots of new energy. The program is made possible by more than 40 UUCSM members who volunteer their time as teachers, assistants, event planners and more.

We welcomed two new staff members in September, ZaNyāa Lee (nursery supervisor) and Carmen Santos (preschool RE teacher). Enrollment in both programs is growing, and parents report that their kids love coming to church on Sundays. We are lucky to have two such skilled and dedicated staff members to provide care for our youngest children. In the Spirit Play class (K-1st at 9/K-2nd at 11); children began the year with stories that exemplify each of our seven UU Principles, focused on Peace and Justice for the winter quarter, and then explored our Jewish and Christian Heritage in the spring. 2nd-3rd graders (at 9) took part in "theme workshops" that offered

active, tactile projects of all sorts to help participants explore our monthly congregational ministry themes.

The UUniverse Story class (4th-5th at 9/3rd-5th at 11), developed by UCCSM members Ian Dodd and Margot Page, nurtured in participants a sense of awe and wonder for the world around us through a hands-on, science-based curriculum that included an exploration of the Big Bang and the origins of the universe, the chemistry of life, the ideas of evolution and change over time, and the interconnectedness of all people from our shared ancestry with each other and every other life form on the planet.

The Neighboring Faiths class for 6th-7th graders spent the year learning about Eastern and earth-based religious traditions, with class discussions, visitors and field trips designed to help participants reflect on the unique and universal nature of religious experience, explore their own values as they relate to many other faith traditions, and increase their appreciation of religious diversity.

We also offered six "Faith in Action" Sundays this year, engaging children and youth in acts of service to the larger community. In October we visited the Westside Food Bank for a food sort. In November RE children and youth prepared hygiene kits and a roomful of clothing and other items donated by UCCSM members for youth served by the homeless teen drop-in center at Common Ground. In January we visited the Turning Point transitional housing shelter and prepared sack lunches for the residents. In February we celebrated "Peace Sunday" by making peace flags in many languages. In March RE participants spent a morning making doggy treats for donation to local animal shelters, and in April RE families headed to the beach for a cleanup with Heal the Bay.

Under the guidance of Beth Rendeiro, the Our Whole Lives sexuality education program continues to be a vital element of our congregation's educational ministry. This year we offered 5th-6th grade O.W.L. with 14 participants and Kindergarten-1st grade O.W.L. with 10 participants.

Youth Subcommittee

Teri Bond (Chair), Liza Cranis, Elaine Gordon and Nalani Santiago-Kalmanson.

On Sunday mornings this year, the Coming of Age program for 8th graders provided opportunities for youth to learn who they are and where they are on their spiritual journey, celebrate their gifts, learn about the church and how it works, and articulate their own personal beliefs within the context of our UU faith. The program culminates on Coming of Age Sunday, May 20, with the presentation of their credo statements to the congregation and a special Coming of Age ceremony in a worship service of their own design.

The YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) group for 9th-12th graders engaged teens in exploring what it means to be young and UU, how our UU principles inform how we live our lives, and what power young UU's have to change the world. YRUU also took part in social justice projects, social gatherings, and led a Sunday worship service for the congregation in March.

A top goal for the youth sub-committee this past year was to strengthen fellowship among the kids. This was accomplished by offering monthly social events for the youth with help from parent volunteers. After an enthusiastic planning meeting, organizers got busy. The year officially kicked off with a fun bonfire at Dockweiler Beach in Playa del Rey. The following month, the group met for a wild night of bowling. Two youth enjoyed playing in the snow and many other activities during the Jr. High Camp de Benneville Pines weekend last fall. The goal is to send a larger group next year with more advance planning. COA/YRUU gathered for a pizza party at Common Ground's homeless teen drop-in center in December while delivering donations collected by the congregation. The New Year was launched with a graceful group of youth, and a few parents, ice-skating under the stars in Santa Monica. The legendary overnight lock-in at the church took place in February with pizza, games, movies and some midnight madness baking cookies and making sundaes all while deepening friendships. In spring, we developed laser tag skills at Ultrazone in

Sherman Oaks and explored nature on a hike to Eagle Rock at Trippett Ranch in Topanga Canyon. A Dodger game has been scheduled for the summer.

Adult Subcommittee

Emmy Cresciman (Chair), Joe Engleman, Judith Martin-Straw, Karen Hsu Patterson, Rhonda Peacock

It's been a whirlwind year for the Adult Programs Subcommittee! In our first year under the umbrella of Lifespan RE we have tripled our program offerings and have strengthened ties with other committees in the church by collaborating on workshops and events. The following are some highlights of the 2011-12 church year:

- ❖ Monthly "Patio Chats" about the ministerial theme of the month facilitated by Leon Henderson-MacLennan
- ❖ Wednesday evening meditation led by Bill Blake
- ❖ Adult/Young Adult O.W.L. coordinated by Beth Rendeiro
- ❖ Exploring Provocative Quotations Past and Present with Ernie Pipes
- ❖ "Lessons of Loss" guided by Leon Henderson-MacLennan
- ❖ Building Your Own Theology facilitated by Max Johnson and Judy Federick
- ❖ "The Rise of Irreligion" featuring Dr. Phil Zuckerman in conjunction with AAHS
- ❖ all day retreat with Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur
- ❖ Introduction to Yoga presented by Judith Martin-Straw
- ❖ "Faith Like a River, Part I" – a study of UU history led by Catherine Farmer Loya
- ❖ World Religions facilitated by Max Johnson and Judy Federick
- ❖ "Acts of Faith" book discussion groups in various locations as part of the UUA Common Read
- ❖ "Sex & God" featuring Dr. Darrel Ray in conjunction with AAHS
- ❖ "Examining the New Jim Crow" facilitated by Peggy and Rick Rhoads

Multigenerational Subcommittee

Judy Federick (Chair), Leon Henderson-MacLennan, Carol-Jean Teuffel, Larry Weiner

Our committee is just completing its first year, having been formed as an adjunct to the other Lifespan RE subcommittees. Our goal is to create opportunities for people of all ages, from the youngest to the oldest in our congregation, to deepen their sense of community at UUSM. A service project in December presented a chance for the whole congregation to donate toys and gifts to brighten Christmas at Sojourn, a Santa Monica women's shelter for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Carol Jean-Teuffel led an "appetizer" of table games on second Sunday afternoons prior to the monthly potluck. The committee also coordinated craft making before Second Sunday Suppers on two occasions – valentines in February and spring peace crafts in May. During the summer we plan to offer one or two crafty afternoons where both children and adults will gather to teach and/or learn how to make something wonderful. Another big event during the summer will be Camp UUSM – an evening of camp games, camp food (including bug juice), songs around the campfire and, of course, s'mores. We're hoping it will tide us all over until our later-than-usual weekend at de Benneville Pines in September.

Several films were screened during the year including *Billy Elliot*, *After Life*, and *That's a Family*. Our most ambitious project of the year, and one that we hope will continue indefinitely, is "Share UUr Story", the creation of a documentary archive of the history of our church community through the reminiscences of its members. We kicked off the program with a screening of *Sunset Story*, an award-winning documentary on the residents of Sunset Hall. Since Maggie and Ernie Pipes have long been associated with Sunset Hall, they introduced the film and talked about some of its inspiring inhabitants. After months of planning, sourcing equipment and technical expertise, and planning, and planning . . . we are finally ready to begin taping our first interviews. Keep your eye

on the newsletter and drop by the Lifespan table to check on what's happening with the Lifespan Religious Exploration program at UUSM. We're always interested in hearing what's on your mind.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (DRE)
Catherine Farmer Loya

This year has been one of growth and transition, as the new Lifespan RE Committee and I worked together to launch a lifespan focus for UCCSM's educational ministry to people of all ages. In this experimental year, we have successfully instituted monthly congregational themes, working closely with Rev. Bijur to weave the themes into many elements of congregational life, including worship services, adult RE offerings, multigenerational events and our Sunday morning RE classes for children and youth. My job has been shifting as well, now that I have taken on overseeing the full lifespan range of programs rather than just RE for children and youth as in the past. We are still working out the balance of responsibilities and time for my work as DRE, but I am very pleased at how the transition is going and am proud that we are seeing such a significant expansion, in just one year, of the programs being offered for adults at UCCSM. Last spring when we first agreed to move in this lifespan direction, we recognized that everything would not come to fruition in the first year; we talked about our vision for the program 3-5 years from now. We are well on the way to realizing that vision, with even more to come in the next year.

Multigenerational Programs and Worship: Multigenerational programs offered this year included movie nights, dinners, social justice projects and worship services. My role in Sunday morning worship included collaboration with Rev. Bijur on intergenerational services for Ingathering, Day of the Dead, Thanksgiving and the Winter Pageant, as well as leading the Easter service on my own and offering an adult worship service in March while Rebecca visited RE classes. I have enjoyed the opportunity to spend some time in worship with the full congregation, and look forward to more opportunities to do so in future years. In June we'll celebrate RE Sunday with participation from all children and youth classes, as well as recognition of all of the volunteers who make our lifespan RE programs possible.

RE for Children and Youth: This year, 131 children and youth enrolled in our Sunday morning RE programs, led by 34 teachers/advisors, 2 staff members (nursery and preschool) and many additional volunteer assistants and helpers. For more details about Sunday morning RE classes for children and youth, see the Lifespan RE Committee report. However, I do want to highlight the extraordinary dedication of Ian Dodd and Margot Page this year, who have created a new curriculum for our upper elementary classes called The UUniverse Story, which has received rave reviews (who wouldn't love extracting strands of DNA from strawberries, or swabbing their own cells to look at under the microscope?). The program will continue next year with a focus on cosmology as the class continues to engage with the overarching theme, "How Do We Know What We Know?"

Adult Programs: Adult RE courses this year were organized around Lifespan RE's seven "core content areas" (Unitarian Universalism, World Religions, Jewish & Christian Heritage, Personal & Spiritual Growth, Spiritual Practice, Peace & Justice, and Interdependent Web) and also engaged our monthly congregational themes. I greatly enjoyed offering a four-week program on UU History, which will continue with additional sessions in the fall.

Our Whole Lives (O.W.L.): O.W.L. is a very important element of our educational ministry, and I am very proud that we are a congregation that offers five levels of the Our Whole Lives lifespan sexuality education program! This is thanks to the long-term dedication and organization of O.W.L. coordinator, Beth Rendeiro. This year, we offered 5th-6th Grade O.W.L., Kindergarten-1st Grade O.W.L., and Adult O.W.L. These classes call for a special commitment of time from teachers, participants and their families. Next year, we will offer the 8th-9th (Jr. High) and 10th-12th (Sr. High) O.W.L.

5/6- Dan Nannini, Tom Early, Kathy Cook, Beth Rendeiro

K/1- Dan Nannini, Tom Early, Linda Van Ligten, Beth Rendeiro

Adult/Young Adult- Cynthia Cottam, Buudha Quant, Steve Young, Sylvia Young, Beth Rendeiro.

Professional Development: As DRE, I make a commitment to continuing my own professional growth and development and to represent our church and our faith at various conferences and denominational affairs. I have been chosen to serve on the Board of the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) as its Secretary through June of 2013. LREDA is the professional association of UU religious educators. I have also been asked to serve as a mentor for DREs in the UU Association's RE Credentialing program. I am honored to serve our larger UU movement in these ways. I am so grateful to many UUCCSM members who provide support for our lifespan RE programs. It is a gift to serve as the Director of Religious Education in a congregation that is so vibrant, and so willing to try new things. I look forward to many more years of celebrating "being you and being UU" together.

FDC – FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE **Bryan Oakes and Beth Brownlie-Oakes**

The FDC strives to continue the efforts of the New Building Committee which was responsible for the renovation of Forbes Hall in 2009/2010. Active members include: Bronwen Jones, Tom Hamilton, Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur, Nurit Gordon, Karl Lisovsky, Keith Ludowitz, and Alison Kendall. We continue to add details and features and to make the new Forbes Hall completely functional and safe for all community members and staff. We will provide expert opinions on measures to be taken to complete small building projects. We will advise the church community and staff on sustainable building/repairs to the facilities. We will research and then propose sustainability goals for the church community and help staff, members and the community as a whole attain those goals.

We meet twice monthly. This year, we completed preparing a bid package for repair of the roof. We also prepared a presentation for the congregation about the options on the roof. The congregation voted to restore the roof to its historically correct appearance with two-piece mission tiles on the upper and lower roofs. We also installed a security key pad on the kitchen entry door. With the help of the Green Living Committee, we planted 14 trees in the courtyard. We installed heaters in the office areas. We removed the carpet from the office areas.

FAITH IN ACTION COMMITTEE (FIA) **Rick Rhoads, Chair**

Most of our activities are conducted by the committees under the FIA umbrella (Peace & Social Justice, Multi-Racial Development, Green, Interweave, Hunger Task Force.)

However, FIA itself has been involved in three activities in the past 12 months, in addition to staffing the FIA table in Forbes Hall during Sunday social hours (where, among other things, we collect batteries for proper disposal, thanks to Joan Verdon):

- ❖ The FIA Exhibit on the Forbes Hall Art Wall during the month of November, 2011, illustrated some of our activities. We will be doing the Art Wall once again this July.
- ❖ The campaign to support the Southern California Supermarket Workers' struggle against draconian cuts in health benefits and other working conditions. At the UUA General Assembly in June 2011 we spearheaded the passage of an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) calling upon congregations in Southern California and throughout the US to support the 62,000 workers, who were planning to go on strike if necessary. When we returned from Charlotte and spoke at rallies and marches of the grocery workers, they were tremendously heartened to hear that representatives of our entire denomination had voted to support

them. Our church “adopted” the Vons on Wilshire and 14th, and 30 of us, from toddlers to grandparents, marched to and through the store to deliver a letter to the manager.

- ❖ The current campaign to unionize southern California carwash workers. Working together with CLUE-LA, members and friends of our congregation have helped a campaign that has resulted in Bonus Car Wash becoming the first carwash in SoCal—and perhaps the first in the US—to sign a union contract. Since then, two carwashes in South Central have followed suit.

We sponsored a carwash in the alley behind the church to raise rent money for carwash workers fired in the course of the campaign. Thanks to the tremendous response of UUCCSM’s members and friends, the five fired “carwasheros” [AKA carwash heroes] made a total of over \$620 in four hours. We marched with the carwasheros, including one of those who washed cars at our church, in the May Day march in downtown L.A. We have also hosted several organizing meetings of carwash workers.

Upcoming events in the Clean Carwash Campaign include a rally/press conference in Virginia Park at 10am on May 21 to announce a new initiative in the campaign, and speaking at the Santa Monica City Council the evening of May 22 in support of awarding contracts for washing city vehicles to union carwashes rather than those that continue to commit wage and hour violations, mistreat their workers, violate safety laws, and pollute the bay via improper discharge of toxic chemicals.

PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Co-chairs: Roberta Frye, Cathie Gentile

Activities:

Ongoing, semimonthly

Rush-hour peace vigil in Mar Vista with Mar Vista Neighbors for Peace and Justice

2011

January

We screened *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U.S. Media and the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict*. An activist with the Israel Divestment Campaign led a discussion/Q&A afterward.

March

Anti-war march in Hollywood with our banner.

June

We hosted a presentation by Pastor Wayne Christiansen on the plight of some five million women and children made homeless by the armed conflict in Colombia and the efforts of the League of Displaced Women in Colombia to provide a safe place for them to begin rebuilding their lives.

September

Peace Sunday

October

We participated in the peace protests (Westwood and downtown federal buildings) marking the 10th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan, the longest war in US history.

2012

January

Showed DVD by National Religious Campaign Against Torture and a speaker: a mother of a prisoner in solitary confinement who is active in the fight to change California’s harsh policy of isolation and indeterminate sentences.

March

Went as a group to see the play, *The Pentagon Papers*.

May

Host Second Sunday Supper with Mother’s Day theme.

MULTI-RACIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (MRDC)

Peggy Rhoads

The MRDC sponsored the 2011 Thanksgiving program, in which we read a Thanksgiving prayer of the Wampanoag, a tribe of Native Americans who lived near what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. The audience helped to read the story of Maushop, the Good Giant, who helped his people learn self-reliance. Church members and guests participated in this inter-generational tribute to sharing the bounty of our lives.

In January the committee helped with the services celebrating the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. We welcomed Victoria Gray, who told us of the incident at Santa Monica High School in which her son was the victim of a mock lynching. She inspired us to work with the Community Anti-Racist Forum, a group formed after the incident to energize actions against racism in education, the community, and the workplace. Will Coley's video of Victoria's speech can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/UUSantaMonica>. The next day, MRDC hosted a table at the Santa Monica Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration, where we met community members and publicized our work at UUSM.

On April 14, 2012 the MRDC conducted its fourth Seder, for the second time in Forbes Hall. About 60 UUSM members and friends read the traditional Jewish history and honored past struggles against slavery in the United States. We pledged ourselves to continue the fight against modern slavery and racism.

On Tuesday, May 1, we marched in downtown L.A. on International Workers' Day with other organizations and churches supporting immigration reform and protesting racist immigration laws now in effect in several states, as well as the 1.2 million deportations conducted by the Obama Administration. Our work continues and we welcome all church members and friends to participate in it.

HUNGER TASK FORCE

Rhonda Peacock

The Hunger Task Force continues to provide the monthly meal at Step Up on Second. An average of 65 people are served each month. This year there has been a steady group of volunteers helping out and we've had solid sign-ups through June. The Men's Group has committed to serving once a quarter. Rhonda Peacock coordinates the volunteer needs for Step Up. Janet Goodwin also serves in a leadership role.

Monthly, Denise Helton collects and delivers frozen food donations for Daybreak, the OPCC women's drop-in center. There is a core group of folks that contribute frozen casseroles and bags of fruit each month.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are collected weekly and donated to 4 different food distribution agencies: Los Angeles Catholic Worker, Grace Lutheran in Culver City, Common Ground in Santa Monica and Step up On Second. Sue Stoyanoff, Debbie Menzies and Rima Snyder coordinate the collection and delivery of the produce.

FUUsion provided the evening meal at Turning Point on Martin Luther King Day. In previous years the Hunger Task Force has also provided the evening meal on Mother's Day and Labor Day. Due to organizational difficulties, this has presently been suspended. We are researching other volunteer opportunities, including those at Turning Point. By the fall of 2012 the task force hopes to have a new volunteer opportunity established within the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition.

HISTORIAN/ARCHIVIST

Rob Briner

Along with the supplies for many other activities, the church's archives have settled in at Forbes Hall (built in 1960; rededicated on October 17, 2010) after a major remodel. The Art Wall hosted a church history display in October 2010, and approximately 25 boxes of documents were moved in April 2011, from an off site facility where they had been for six years to a storage area on the second floor of Forbes Hall. There are tentative plans to install a secure display cabinet on the wall in the Arizona entrance foyer, next to the relief of Angie Forbes, that would display one or two framed items from the church's history on a rotating basis. The most significant ongoing collection of UUSM history is the archiving of the monthly newsletter, that contains a vital history of our ongoing community. As has always been the case, this church function is conducted at no cost to the congregation.

ANNUAL PIPES LECTURE SERIES

Rob Briner

This committee was created and the fund established in 1991, by its first chair, Dr. Ray Goodman, and second chair, Leonard Adler, to honor UUSM's then retiring minister of 35 years, Ernest D. ("Ernie") Pipes, Jr. and his wife, Margaret ("Maggie"). The inaugural lecture was held in October 1991, by the then outgoing president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, William Schulz. Speakers in the past few years have been Tim Rutten, Los Angeles Times journalist and columnist (2009), George Takei, actor/activist (2010), and Father Gregory Boyle of Homeboy Industries (2011). The 21st annual Pipes lecture is scheduled to take place on April 28, 2012, with the speaker being Reza Aslan, an academic and writer on the subject of religion in general and Islam in particular.

KNITTERS AND FRIENDS

Karen Patch

Knitters and Friends has been meeting weekly in Forbes Hall between services for the last 3 years. We are open to anyone who wants to join us; you can just be a friend who doesn't knit or crochet. Fellowship is perhaps our main activity but there is more than meets the eye! This last December we had our third annual Holiday Bazaar which has become a UUSM tradition. 100% of the profit is donated to the church and we are very proud of the contribution we can make. We also continue our Prayer Shawl Ministry project where items of comfort are given to the minister to use a part of her ministerial visits. The blessing of these pieces at a February service was really wonderful: the entire congregation (including children) holding hands and sending love and healing to the shawls, stuffed animals and lapghans. In that same service we surprised Rebecca and Jonathan with a baby blanket which over a dozen members helped to make. Great fun doing that top secret project. We also stepped up to the plate (literally) and hosted a Second Sunday Supper. Of course, it was a spaghetti dinner....because that looks like yarn! So a lot is going on and we hope everyone will feel welcome to spend time with us. We'll even teach you to knit!

COFFEE HOUR COMMITTEE

Nancy Howell

The Coffee Committee volunteers have enjoyed serving coffee, tea and cookies to the congregation after each church service. We are proud to continue being more aware of our environment. We serve coffee and tea in ceramic cups. Coffee grounds are put into the compost bin. We serve sugar from a container rather than individually wrapped packages. We serve only fair trade coffee. We use cloth tablecloths rather than paper. Our napkins are made of recycled

paper. We are happy to be in our new kitchen and we are happy that the electric circuit problem has been solved.

As coordinator, I would like express my appreciation for a great group of dedicated people on this committee. They are as follows:

Robert and Phyllis Kory, Sheila Bjornlie, Leah Moore, Kit Shaw, Alicia Van Ooyen, Karen Canady, Dennis Gorman, Linda van Ligten, Homa Feizi, Karen Patterson, Jennifer Westbay, Patrick Meighan, Amy Lacombe, Pam Teplitz, Peggy Rhoads, Sanna Egan, Resa Foreman, and Sylvia Young. Our committee appreciates the numerous people who have donated cookies this past year. Our goal for the next year is to remain flexible and continue the great coffee service. We would invite anyone interested to join our volunteer group. It is an enjoyable way to meet and greet the people in our church.

BOOKSTORE COMMITTEE

Nancy Babbitt

Thanks to the generous book donations of many church members, we have lots of fantastic books displayed on the Forbes Hall bookshelves. These books are on many subjects and are for purchase for a donation, or as little as a dollar unless otherwise marked. We decided to retire the book cart and downsize to a book table, allowing more space for other activities in Forbes Hall. Our book table, now adjacent to the book shelves, features mostly books from the UU Association of Congregations emphasizing Unitarian Universalist principles, history, culture, music, and poems. As many people in the congregation contribute to the success of the book store, either through their direct book donations or book purchases, we are able to make a yearly contribution to the UU Building Fund.

INTERWEAVE

Judy Federick

Interweave is the UU affiliate group for bisexuals, gays, lesbians and transgenders (BGLTs), and their friends and allies. Our issues for study and action this year continued to be marriage equality and outreach to at-risk GBLT youth. Our activities in the past year included the following: Over 45 marchers from our congregation participated in the June 12, 2011 L.A. Pride Parade, many of them for the first time. Young and not so young, gay and straight, we all reveled in the exhilarating reception from the parade-goers. It was particularly gratifying to hear our congregation described over the loudspeaker as the place where gay weddings have been taking place since 1959.

As part of our outreach to at-risk GBLT youth, we continued this year to focus our fundraising efforts on homeless youth services: Our annual All-Church Interweave Picnic, co-hosted with the Women's Alliance, was held August 7, with proceeds (\$545.77) going to the Common Ground Westside HIV Community Center. In addition, Common Ground was the beneficiary of a Generous Congregation collection on October 30 of \$588.72.

On October 9, we once again hosted the Coming Out Day service. The Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur preached a homily, "It Gets Better", on the It Gets Better Project and the suicides of teenagers who were bullied because they were gay or because their peers suspected that they were gay. Several members of the congregation each then shared what it was like growing up gay and how it got better for them as adults.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Cindee Hallinan, Natalie Kahn, Robert Kory, Amy Lacombe, Patrick Meighan and Beth Rendeiro

The UCCSM Stewardship Committee is proud to present this 2012 UCCSM pledge breakdown, featuring plenty of comparative data stretching back over the past four Commitment Campaigns.

As you'll see, the congregation at UCCSM can and should feel justifiably proud of its amazing generosity during this year's Commitment Campaign. We finished with a total pledged sum of \$407,606 (!). This compares to just over \$377,000 last year, and about \$364,000 two years ago. Also, this year's Commitment Campaign tallied up a 91% participation rate (as compared to last year's then-high participation rate of 87%, and the 75% participation rate two years ago). Only 26 of our member units failed to submit a pledge for this year, as compared to 35 last year, and 70 two years ago.

In short, more and more of our members and friends are investing ever more of their love and their resources into UCCSM and its mission, and that's a really, really wonderful thing. We're so grateful to the hundreds of families who have made meaningful, transformative commitments to the church in 2012. Together, we've made this an incredible Commitment Campaign, giving UCCSM the resources it needs to live out our shared values this year, and beyond.

GREEN LIVING COMMITTEE

Jessica Clay and Beth Brownlie Oakes

The Green Living Committee strives to continue the focus of UCCSM on being green and sustainable. We will research and then propose sustainability goals for the church community, and help staff, members and the community as a whole attain those goals. We meet as needed.

We prepared, planted and maintained a vegetable and herb garden with the help of RE and YRUU in 2011 and will continue this annual tradition this year. We continue to have a sustainable food event, Second Sunday Supper, focusing on vegetarian cooking and local cooking and ethical eating. We featured a local CSA group who provided cooking instruction with local ingredients at the 2011 event.

In May 2011, we held a bike safety course for members. We continue to support the Energy Upgrade program (Alison Kendall) encouraging members to improve their homes to be more energy efficient. Donations from the state are given to the church when a member does the upgrade. We continue our efforts to support Heal the Bay with our generous non-pledge offering during the month of April (Earth Month). In addition, we continue having three Heal the Bay Beach clean-up days during the year at lifeguard station 1550.

We were able to meet our goal of having reusable coffee cups for coffee hours with the generous donation of an anonymous member. With the help of the FDC Committee and Tree People, we planted 14 trees in the courtyard in October.

fUUsion
Karen Hsu Patterson

fUUsion continues to be a vibrant group for younger adults aged 18-35+ in our congregation. fUUsion's email listserv has 140 members, and the Facebook page has amassed over 100 fans. Both the listserv and the Facebook page continue to attract new people, several of whom are now pledging members of UUSM.

fUUsion hosts and sponsors social events, spiritual events, and service projects. While many events are targeted specifically for younger adults at UUSM, several have been open to the wider UUSM community as well. fUUsion hosted more than 30 events this year. Social activities have included movie nights, museum trips, potlucks, hikes, and more. Spiritual activities have included a "Worship in Dinner", and visiting services throughout the greater Los Angeles region, such as an interfaith "Finding Hope in the Holy" 9/11 remembrance and an interfaith "Prayer for World Peace Ceremony" at Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights. Community service projects have included food bank sorting during the winter holiday season, preparing and serving a meal at Common Ground in conjunction with YRUU, and preparing and serving a meal at Turning Point. fUUsion also formed a team to fundraise and walk at the AIDS Walk Los Angeles in support of healthcare and social services and programs for people affected by HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles.

In the past year, fUUsion has become more active within the UUSM community. We continue to staff the Welcome Table and greet visitors for the 11am service in months with a fifth Sunday. We planned and hosted a Vespers service, open to the wider UUSM congregation. In November 2011, fUUsion worked with Adult Programs and AAHS (Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists, and Secularists) to prepare and serve lunch for a guest speaker event, "The Rise of Irreligion". Examples of other meaningful fUUsion contributions to church life include: YRUU advising, ushering, serving coffee, facilitating Young Adult & Adult OWL (Our Whole Lives), and coordinating events with other committees and groups. In addition, fUUsion is active in the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD). fUUsion members attended and helped to staff the annual PSWD Young Adult weekend at Camp de Benneville Pines. Via a monthly "12 Churches in 12 Months" series, we visit UU churches throughout the Los Angeles and Orange County area with other UU young adults. In April 2011, fUUsion members helped to organize a PSWD Young Adult Planning Summit, during which young adults from throughout PSWD came together to brainstorm ideas for networking, community building, and sharing resources through the district. fUUsion members will be attending District Assembly (serving breakfast, and as delegates) and General Assembly (as YRUU advisors) this year.

Future plans and ideas include campus ministry at UCLA (University of California Los Angeles), a Soulful Sundown evening worship series, and continued outreach efforts through coffee hour, flyers, staffing at the Welcome Table, Facebook, and our listserv.

NEWSLETTER

Charles Haskell, editor-in-chief

Editors: Laura Eklund, Liz Fuller, Nels Hanson, Joyce Holmen, Geralyn Lambson, Rima Snyder, Carol-Jean Teuffel, Jennifer Westbay

Calendar: Laura Eklund

Art Directors: Dayla McDonald, Carol Ring, Pam Teplitz

Photographer: Charles Haskell

Distribution: Elizabeth Fuller (electronic edition), Anne MacQueen (paper edition, July 2011-February 2012) and Peggy Kharraz (paper edition, March 2012 to present)

The primary function of the newsletter is to inform the congregation and visitors of church issues, programs, and activities. The Newsletter Team is responsible for production of the newsletter, including making reasonable discretionary decisions relating to content and design. The team

chooses its own editor-in-chief to serve for each church year (July to June), subject to approval by the Board of Directors. Space and emphasis in the newsletter is allocated according to priorities that are available on request. All newsletter items should be emailed to newsletter@uusm.org by noon on the 15th of the month. Articles received by this deadline are published, provided they are considered appropriate material for the newsletter. Articles received after the deadline may or may not be published, depending on available space and whether the material can be added to the issue without disrupting our publication schedule. The editor-in-chief may edit material for length, style, grammar, etc., and refuse material that is not appropriate. Literary contributions are not accepted. Any questions or problems concerning the newsletter should be addressed to the editor-in-chief. All material published is copyrighted and is the property of the church.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Rima Snyder

The past year has been a time of many changes for the church and the music program. The position of music director was filled by Seth Houston who has worked closely with Reverend Bijur to get the congregation more involved in the musical life of the church. Seth will be moving to Chicago this summer and with the departure of Louis Durra in January this means the church will be looking for both a permanent organist and a new music director to begin work in the fall. Nova Safo also resigned as tenor section leader.

Music events in 2011 included the 30th anniversary rededication concert, showcasing our historic pipe organ, which was largely orchestrated by church historian Rob Briner, the final performance of Louis Durra's jazz trio, and the annual Christmas Eve concert which featured the choir at both services. The choir performed at a Vespers service in November, and in 2012 the choir sang at the February Vespers service and at both the intergenerational Easter services.

Seth worked with some of the children for other intergenerational services, preparing a children's choir that sang on the Day of the Dead and for the Thanksgiving service. He also led a congregational sing on April 15. The choir will be doing an exchange with the Studio City UU choir in May, their group will join us on May 6 and the following week our choir will sing at the Studio City church. The church received two generous anonymous donations providing funds for the purchase of copies of the supplemental hymnal for use by the congregation and the choir.

The music committee has been generally less active this year and several promotional activities have been suspended temporarily. These include the informational music table that we have staffed in Forbes Hall during coffee hours, and the music events email distribution list that has been managed by Peter VanDenBeemt for several years. With Peter's resignation from the church we are also not doing any organized mailings about our music events to local news organizations or other area UU churches, and the website has become extremely outdated, still showing Steve Wight as music director and no longer listing any of our events.

We have had several opportunities to enjoy performances by excellent guest musicians, either by paid soloists or those who have provided their services in exchange for use of the sanctuary. In addition we have been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have played without compensation. This has helped to offset some of the difficulty of providing musical elements for worship services in a time of financial deficit.

In response to outreach by the committee and Seth there are several new members of the music committee. I am happy to say that although I will be resigning from the chairmanship and the committee at the end of this season, it seems there will be fresh energy and new ideas to keep the program thriving as we enter another time of growth and change.

CARE-NET
Karl Lisovsky

This year, CareNet was reanimated, after being somewhat in hiatus. Karl Lisovsky took over coordinating its activities. While originally set up to deliver meals, send cards and provide rides for those in need, we have discovered that people's needs don't always fall so neatly into those three categories, though those tasks still constitute the structure of CareNet to some extent. We have a core group of about two dozen people, maybe fewer, who have been participating.

In the fall, we held a fete where people brainstormed about the purpose and mission of CareNet and affirmed their willingness to participate. Many at this meeting said CareNet should be more visible. Since then, we have developed a logo and some business cards and are planning to become more visible. For the moment, we are responding to requests as they come in, and handling them pretty well. We have been visiting one house-bound cancer patient and giving her rides to various appointments, have given a few other rides, provided meals to a family with a child in the hospital, parents of a newborn, and a young adult conference downtown. Numerous cards have been sent as well.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR
Nurit Gordon

I started my work at UUSM at the end of August last year. It has been a pleasure working here and getting to know members up close and personal as time goes by. My goal is to improve efficiency and the smooth operation of the church and to make sure the office and the church are a welcoming place for members, staff and visitors, while maintaining low expenditures and trying to increase income.

Personnel

I reorganized all staff information and put in place new procedures for hiring and keeping HR records. We signed up with a new payroll company as the one we used when I came on board was making mistakes on a regular basis. Job descriptions were revised to reflect the actual duties of staff.

In addition to our paid staff we established a routine schedule for office volunteers for 4 days during the week. The volunteers answer the phones and the door, assist with mailing and copying and are greatly appreciated by the office staff who can work with fewer interruptions.

As we approach the summer, the office is going through changes; Rebecca is out on maternity leave, Holly left at the end of April and we are in the process of hiring a new Finance and Administration assistant.

Facility

We have re-organized the front and middle office spaces. We removed the old carpet, moved the office assistant's desk to the middle office and added a small sofa and coffee table in the front office so it is more welcoming to members and visitors and has a waiting area. We installed heaters in the offices and minister's study, installed a security pad at the alley entrance to the kitchen and we are in the process of doing the same at the Arizona door so we can rent the rooms on the second floor to additional groups.

After reviewing our rentals process and rates, we have increased recurring groups' rental rates, as some of the groups have been paying the same rent since 1968. We placed a locked deposit box in the cottage so the group officers may leave rental payments in the box and will not need to come to the office to submit payments. We are in the process of creating brochures for event rentals and we plan to increase rental income in the coming year. We are changing the lock on the Arizona door, which will happen in the next few weeks. We have reduced the number of

newsletter mailings from 260 to 185 by promoting electronic subscriptions so we can save paper and postage, and we hope to reach an even lower number this year.

IT

We have upgraded our membership database software and installed new routers and boosters so we have Wi-Fi in all of our buildings.

ART WALL

Beverly Alison, Carol Ring, Nels Hanson

The Art Wall has been exciting, stimulating and varied this year. We are anticipating our second annual childrens' art exhibit in May featuring our own talented youth. In June artists living at Step Up On Second will share their deeply felt and complex pieces with us. In July Faith In Action will again remind and inform us of their dedicated annual focus. In April the Art Wall Committee invited church members to view a collection of Outsider art and hear a talk about the museum quality collection. It was well attended and appreciated. We anticipate welcoming an expert on contemporary art who will share some of her firsthand knowledge and evaluative skills with us. Thanks for your kind words and encouragement.

HIKING GROUP

Phillip Bonacich

The Hiking Group meets on the second Saturday of every month at 9am at the church. Attendance varies from half a dozen to a dozen. Most hikes are less than 5 miles long and are no further away than Malibu. Children have been on our hikes. We are thinking of doing some urban/architectural hikes in downtown L.A.

MEN'S GROUP

Phillip Bonacich

Our group has four complementary missions: to be a discussion group, a social group, a service group, and a support group. Most of our semi-monthly meetings are taken up with a pre-decided discussion topic relevant to the members. Occasionally we have social events (a Super Bowl party, for instance). We also intend to be of use to the church and the wider community through volunteer activities. Finally, we support each other in times of stress.

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE (LRP)

Patricia Wright

"LRP's role is to look far out, see where we need to be, check in with members to confirm that LRP's wishes match up with congregational wishes, and figure out what resources we need to get us there."

The Long Range Planning Committee consisted this year of Ken Alexander, Phil Bonacich, Rebecca Crawford, Katrina Daly Thompson, and Patricia Wright (Chair). We continue to meet monthly (third Wednesdays at 7pm in Forbes Hall).

The realization of our vision continues to be our focus.

"We want to build a church that is an agent of transformation, central in individual people's lives and in the community at large. We desire to reflect our larger community and its diversity and to be a place where people feel welcome, well connected, valued, and loved."

We are following a four step model framework (based on the Tennessee Valley UU Church LRP):

- Step1: Define strategic areas based on input and formulate vision statements for each.

- Strategic Areas:
 - Depth of Spirit: the inner dimension
 - Breadth of Church Community: responsibility and caring for others within our community
 - Height of World Community: reaching beyond our church community
- Step 2: Present the visions to the congregation for discussion and revision.
- Step 3: Ask committees, Board, and staff to suggest goals and objectives to realize the visions.
- Step 4: Long Range Planning presents to the congregation long term goals for the next 5-10 years, supported by specific objectives and action items.

Our work so far has resulted in a statement of our vision for the depth, breadth, and height of our church along with our current footprint and goals and objectives for the future. We plan to work with the Board and the congregation in the coming year to prioritize steps towards achieving our vision.

MUSIC PROGRAM

Seth Houston, Director of Music

This has been an exciting year for music at UCCSM. Our services have been enlivened by a thriving choir and a rich program of guest musicians. We have enjoyed concerts and other musical events. Our congregational singing has grown through use of the teal hymnal, a singing retreat, and many songs taught by ear. We have also enjoyed hearing children in our church community sing on several occasions.

This has also been a time of transition. Louis Durra, our organist of many years, resigned in January. He is sorely missed. We welcomed Seth Houston as director of music last summer, but a change in life plans is taking him to Chicago. Through all of this, though, the program has continued to thrive.

Our church choir has had a very successful year. The group keeps sounding better and better, and has grown in size to as many as 22 singers in a rehearsal and 20 at a church service. Highlights include the Christmas Eve services, joint performances with the choir from Unitarian Universalist Church of Studio City, and a Broadway-themed Dining For Dollars fundraiser concert. The choir has excelled at repertoire ranging from classical works by Handel, Vivaldi, Mozart, Haydn, Dvorak, Faure, Vaughan Williams, and many others; to world music from Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia; popular songs such as "Imagine," "That Lonesome Road," and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered"; American music from African American, Native American, and New England shape-note traditions, South African and American civil rights and freedom songs, and much more.

The church has also enjoyed a rich program of guest musicians, both from within the church community and from the Los Angeles area, especially at our 9am services. Musical guests have included: vocalists Moira Smiley, Nova Safo, Travis Sherwood, Diana Newman, and Chris Bingham; singer-songwriters John Flynn and Justin Roth; violinists Moni Simeonov and Clara Kim; cellists Lynn Angebrannt and Evan Kahn; Andrew Carney, trumpet; J.G. Miller, French horn; Ken Alexander, flute; Bronwen Jones, clarinet; organists Ann Elizabeth Thiermann and Matthieu Latreille; pianists Anne-Lise Longuemare, Ryan Humphrey, Karen Hsu Patterson, Kelli Horton, and Lauren Fraley; the early music ensemble Flos Campi; members of our choir; and many more. We have also enjoyed concerts by Ann Elizabeth Thiermann and other organists (celebrating the 30th anniversary of our organ), John Flynn, Flos Campi, and various recitals, as well as our Saturday Spotlights and Dining for Dollars concert.

Looking ahead, our music program faces several challenges, as well as opportunities. In the next few months, we will be hiring a new director of music as well as a new pianist/organist. This gives

us a chance to re-vision our music program, to assess what we like about our current music program and to imagine in what directions we'd like to see it grow.

Special thank to all the singers who have sung in the choir throughout the year, to our guest musicians, and to all others who have supported the music program through the year. May music at UCCSM continue to thrive!

PLANNED GIVING
Gar Allen (chair) and Beth Rendeiro

The Planned Giving group has the goal of educating church members and friends about the important role bequests and giving play in the financial health of UCCSM. You may not be aware, but for many years now, our church deficit has remained manageable due to the generosity of members who chose UCCSM as a beneficiary of their estate. Without these gifts, our church would, literally, not be able to afford the programming we provide. This year the committee held two events. The first was in September, 2011 billed as a "conversation" about generosity where past donors shared ideas and support for Planned Giving initiatives. The second event was the Wills and Estate Planning Workshop in March, 2012. Chris Bradford, a local estates and trust attorney, was kind enough to donate two evenings of his time to our events and we are deeply indebted to him for all of his time and efforts on the church's behalf. Approximately twenty people attended the March workshop and everyone stated that they found it helpful. Please contact Gar, Beth or Jerry Moore if you would like to participate in this venture, either as a donor or as a committee member.

PROJECT DAZZLE
Bob Dietz, Liz Fuller, Rhonda Peacock, Beth Rendeiro, Pam Teplitz

Project Dazzle will soon launch the new church website. We are excited to showcase the depth and breadth of the new site. Our goal is to launch before July. The committee has accomplished a number of items on our "to do" list.

First, a new church logo was designed, voted on by church members and selected. Publicity materials are in the process of being updated. A style guide is being created to ensure cohesive branding of church materials.

Second, the service in the sanctuary now streams live into Forbes Hall where knitters, folks with talkative babies, coffee servers and others who wish to can enjoy the entire service or the parts they're most interested in from outside the sanctuary. The AAHS speakers from Pitzer College and Harvard University were recorded, put on DVDs and posted on the church's You Tube Channel. Thank you Jason DeVita, James Witker, Will Coley, Greg Wood, Bob Dietz and Tom Ahern for making all of this happen. We expect most future sermons to be available on the new website for those who are house-bound, unable to make it to church, too far away or who would just like to listen again.

Third, we are pleased that the entire campus is now wireless. Look around for signs on the walls that provide the network and password information needed to log on from your laptop. Thank you to Steven DePaul for working to install new speakers, finding inexpensive wireless microphones and, in general, keeping the audio needs of the sanctuary and Forbes in mind.

With gratitude we thank everyone who responded to our Fall 2011 appeal to complete the fundraising needed to receive the full matching grant from the Spirit Level Foundation. We are now spending the money to complete the website. Watch the June newsletter for exciting updates.

Our new programmer (hired after the first one disappeared from the Dazzle job to work as the full-time technology director for Occupy! Las Vegas) is working smoothly with our project manager, Liz, and designer, Pam to get the site up and running ASAP. We lost a couple of months during the search for the elusive programmer. Other committee members are working on content (rentals page, membership page, etc.) for the site, trying things out to search for bugs and, in general, working to bring the new website to all of you as quickly as we can. We expect training on the new site for church staff members to begin in June. The training will include how to put information on a page, how to use the various components such as adding events, registering for a class, donating to the church, etc. as well as use of our church's AV technology.

Please let any of us know your thoughts and dreams for Project Dazzle. We appreciate communal creativity!

DINING FOR DOLLARS COMMITTEE **Melanie Sharp**

Melanie Sharp remained as Chair of Dining for Dollars. Sue Moore continued on the committee, with Sue Bickford as a new recruit. Rhonda Peacock again created her very successful Dining for Dollars catalog of events, which generated lots of interest and laughs. Further help was received from Peggy Rhoads, Kit Shaw, Kevin Miller, Pat Gomez, Marjorie Annapav, and Garland and Farrokh Allen. Nels Hanson again supported the process by maintaining the Access database. The auction during the last two Sundays in February raised almost \$30,000 – and within the March timeframe, we went over \$30K. We collected 99.99% of the money by the end of April, in part because of Nancy Howell's pleasant reminder phone calls. And as of mid-May, we have collected the entire total that was bid.

Melanie resigned the committee as of the end of April, and Melissa Weaver has volunteered to become chair for this coming year.

WEEKEND & SPECIAL EVENTS SEXTON **Tom Ahern**

I have been doing the weekend sexton duties for about three and a half years. I work Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The job can be divided into three different parts – working the Sunday services, doing maintenance Friday through Sunday, and working for groups that rent our church space.

Each job has its own rewards. It's gratifying to be responsible for our Sunday services. This entails setting up and breaking down – the sanctuary sound system, the chalice, the "gong," and baskets for our food donations. It also entails setting up Forbes Hall – the bookstore, tables for different groups, notably Faith in Action and the Greeters Table, and bringing out and putting away the parking signs. I also maintain all restrooms and make sure they are cleaned and stocked. The most challenging part of this job is between the services or after the second service, when many people require my help. It is important to remain calm and treat every request with a smile and respect.

The second part of my job is maintenance from Friday through Sunday. This requires cleaning the sanctuary, office, Forbes Hall, Forbes upstairs rooms and the cottage. Cleaning floors, vacuuming rugs, cleaning windows, and cleaning and stocking bathrooms are the main tasks.

The third part of the job is working our facility rentals. I consider this along with working the services as the favorite parts of my job. I think the rentals are very important – they are mostly memorials, music events, weddings, etc. I get to meet different people or groups I would not otherwise get to know. I try to go all out and provide the best service possible. I'm not just there to take out the trash. I can say that I get many compliments for my work. People are usually very

appreciative for all I do. I am proud to represent our church in this manner. The number of rentals has been down this past year. Hopefully it will pick up.

In closing, my work with the church has provided me the opportunity to work with and get to know our visiting Minister Erika, plus continuing to get to know Nurit, Holly, and Kevin. They are all great people and work very hard for our church to get the job done. I look forward to continuing to do my work and helping our church in any way I can.

ORDER OF SERVICE & OFFICE ASSISTANT Rima Snyder

As order of service and office assistant my main jobs are to prepare the email announcements that go out on Thursdays, and to prepare and print the order of service for each Sunday's services. I also do the orders of service for any memorial services that the church holds and for the Vespers evening services. I maintain and update the online database for the email distribution list, and enter the visitor information from each Sunday into the church database. I send the visitor information to the Membership Committee for follow up.

As part of the preparation of the Sunday order of service, I do a certain amount of layout and graphic design for the various "flyers" announcing activities and events. This can include working with RE and other groups and committees.

I send out a reminder to the volunteers every week: greeters, ushers, coffee servers, Sunday office volunteers and book table volunteers. This can include follow up with the committee coordinators if there are substitutions that week. I also send out a reminder to the RE volunteers each week and send confirmation to Catherine. In addition, I provide general office support by answering email requests and phone messages and working in the office on Thursdays and Fridays. Some of the work, including sending out the volunteer letter, I do from home. My current allotted time for the job is twelve and a half hours per week.

NEWSLETTER MAILING VOLUNTEERS Peggy Kharraz

The newsletter volunteers gather at the end of each month in order to see that the hard copies of the church newsletter get mailed in a timely manner. Copies of the newsletter are printed in the office and the volunteers fold, seal, label and stamp them and take them to the post office.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE Barbara Gibbs (chair), Carol Ring, Rhonda Peacock, Charles Garrett, Leonard Cachola, Sanna Egan, Bettye Barclay, Stan Morris Support Team: Wendi Gladstone, Linda Van Ligten

This was a year of major changes among committee members, having lost five members to other committees, etc., including chairperson Pat Gomez. Though we were unsuccessful in filling that leadership position this last year, it now appears that formulation of a co-chair position is viable, and that is currently in the making.

From April 2011 – April 2012 we welcomed 27 new members into our congregation.

The Membership Committee continued to execute focus and effort to make UCCSM a friendly and welcoming community for all, with the goal to lead interested persons down the path toward membership and then to help new members become connected in and to our community.

Below are listed the activities initiated and provided toward this effort in 2011-2012.

- Sunday morning pre-service Greeters program, of some 20 members, rotated on a weekly basis (1-3 at a time), serving at and around the Visitor's Welcome Table on the front patio. This group was chaired by Barbara Gibbs.
- Sunday morning Welcome Center table, for meeting/greeting/informing visitors during the post-service coffee hour.
- Newcomer Orientation for visitors occurred monthly and included the minister, Religious Education director and Membership Committee personnel.
- UU & You wine and cheese events for interested and potential new members were held both in the fall and in the spring.
- New Member Recognition services and receptions were planned, coordinated and facilitated both in the fall and in the spring.
- Christmas Eve reception was planned and executed for the second consecutive year, following both Christmas Eve church services.

Sunday morning's coffee/cookie hour, whose chairperson is Nancy Howell, falls under the purview of Membership and as such we supported the important services provided by Nancy and her service team.

The Membership Committee greatly appreciated the ongoing support of Reverend Rebecca Bijur, administrator Nurit Gordon and her staff, sextons Tom Ahern and Kevin Roller, and all those who facilitated the effectiveness with which the Membership Committee worked to achieve its goals.

SECOND SUNDAY SUPPER **Kate Schlesinger, Coordinator**

Second Sunday Suppers are a wonderful way for our community to enjoy each other's company in a relaxed setting. Once a month, UU Members, friends and guests of all ages share a delicious pot luck meal in beautiful Forbes Hall.

This year we tweaked the Second Sunday Suppers' tradition by taking a decidedly UU community approach to preparing and hosting the suppers. The idea was to share the work and reach a greater sweep of church members. Now, each month, a different committee volunteers to host the dinner. The hosts provide an entree for 30-35 people, a few bottles of wine or other beverages, sets up and cleans up on the date of the event. Other attendees bring side dishes, salads, desserts, and more wine! Some committees like to present a pre-dinner activity or have a food theme.

Some lovely examples were the Knitter's Spaghetti Dinner (because it looks like yarn!), RE's Valentine dinner and valentine-making activity; an especially delicious dinner from the music committee, and an informative presentation on the UU history of Mother's Day by the Peace and Social Justice Committee.

We look forward to continuing this warm and delicious tradition in the year to come as more committees sign up to host a Second Sunday Supper.

AAHS Group Report **Len Harris, Ian Dodd**

AAHS--Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists & Secularists is the freethought group of UCCSM open to all religious skeptics and those curious about a naturalistic life stance. The purpose of the group is to create fellowship for non-theists of all varieties within the UCCSM community, offer educational opportunities about religious non-belief, and promote a secular and rational worldview. The group was formed casually in June, 2011 by a small handful of long-time UCCSM members.

In its first year of existence, AAHS has grown to over 60 members, usually with 20-30 attending monthly meetings. A typical agenda may include book discussions, a look at news items and events of interest to non-theists, or the opportunity for a church leader to address the group to share common concerns. AAHS has sponsored a number of events for the UCCSM and larger communities as a means of outreach and to promote our goals. These include:

- "The Rise of Irreligion" with Dr. Phil Zuckerman and Greg Epstein, Harvard Humanist Chaplain. Our inaugural event attracted about 180 people to hear these two speakers in a lively, engaging talk that is available on DVD and the UCCSM YouTube channel.
- Dining For Dollars: AAHS sponsored a dinner party inspired by a new edition of the strictly secular Thomas Jefferson Bible with the editor as the guest speaker who gave a fascinating program to a small group of high bidders about the third President's views on church/state separation and his relationship with the Unitarian church of his day. Our event raised over \$1200 for the church.
- AAHS partnered with Adult Programs to sponsor Dr. Darrel Ray in a public talk based on his book "Sex & God: How Religion Distorts Sexuality". About 50 people, including several OWL facilitators, attended.
- Teaming up with fUUsion, AAHS hosted an intergroup BBQ for Generation Atheist, a Meetup.com group catering to 20- and 30-something non-theists, who were curious to learn more about our church and Unitarianism. After attending an 11 o'clock service, over 50 people from the various groups enjoyed fellowship, freethought and free-flowing refreshments until late in the afternoon in the courtyard.
- AAHS has made financial contributions to Project Dazzle (the revamping of the UCCSM website) and Interweave, the LGBT outreach committee.

Planned or possible future events include partnering with other area freethought groups for public events and charity work, an AAHS member will be delivering the sermon at a regular Sunday service in the fall, and a reprise of our Jefferson Bible event open to the entire church community.

For more information about AAHS, contact:
Len Harris--aahs@educational-partnerships.org
Ian Dodd--ianbdodd@me.com

COVENANT

Love is the doctrine of this church.

The quest of truth is its sacrament,

And service is its prayer.

To dwell together in peace;

To seek knowledge in freedom;

To serve humankind in fellowship;

Thus do we covenant with each other.