

Report to the UUTC Board  
Rev. Bob Renjilian  
September 2022

PERSONAL:

- Christy has been in PA for a two-week stretch this time, but will be back in time for the Emma's Revolution concert on Sunday.
- We're doing more settling into our home in Etowah - solar panels which will offset our annual electric use (awaiting county inspection and Duke connection).
- I'm singing with the Asheville Gay Men's Chorus at Blue Ridge Pride on Saturday, Sept. 24. We are discussing the possibility they would perform here at UUTC next Spring. I had fun singing at a senior living center with the Barbershop Chorus guys Sept. 19.
- Once the rains left town I've been able to ride my bike to church more often!
- It is possible I will need to be in PA mid-October for a few days, and I will alert Staff and Board Officers in advance.

UUTC RETREAT AT THE MOUNTAIN:

As always (even in rain) The Mountain is a magnificent setting for a retreat. Our chant for the sessions together was "Where do we come from, what are we, where are we going?" (From the hymnbook). We were a small group, about 20, and that gave us a chance to get to know each other better. Activities were designed to draw out people, explore our values, and ended with a discussion (using an Appreciative Inquiry approach) of what has given us positive energy at UUTC, and how we might have more of that. Some things mentioned were the Pie Day event, seeing the large number of teens in the OWL class, Dignity Project, Grow-Getters, Eclectics performances. Events with music and food tended to be remembered. Others emphasized the groups which give heart (love, connection) in balance with interest/intellect such as women's group. I was surprised by the way that Memorial Services made the list too, as they are celebrations of life - as are receptions.

Where does this lead? This should be a good grounding for leadership to go further in the discovery and dreaming of where we could be. This is a good priority for us as leaders.

IN THE WIDER MOVEMENT:

I met (online) with the regional cluster of UU Ministers.  
I participated in an online book discussion group with UU Ministers.

REFLECTION ON "NEXT NORMAL"

Despite a rise in reported cases in Transylvania County there seems to be more confidence that we can navigate through this. The Choir has expressed they no longer feel a need to test on Sunday mornings, so we will "pause" that ritual. With President Biden's declaration that the pandemic is ended, and with some news reports that tests are less effective with current variants, this is not unexpected.

We have enough tests on hand to quickly reverse the “pause” on a Sunday. I will not be ordering a larger inventory until we use that up.

I also note the recent participation of members who had been formerly reluctant to attend due to health vulnerabilities. It is good to see rising confidence leading to their participation and re-engagement.

**CHILDREN’S RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION:** Kevin and I checked in with each other about the start of children’s classes. The opening of classes could take place a little later this year (Sept. 25), due to the retreat and then the Water Communion services. I commend Kevin for going to intensive training as part of a team of three from UUTC, for the OWL teacher certification for younger ages - as this may lead to a Kindergarten-1st Grade or elementary-age Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education class.

#### **ADULT RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION:**

The Spiritual Explorer’s sessions have started in September, with two well-attended sessions so far. Coordination is by Earle Rabb, with Ernie Mills and Carter Heyward announced as the initial co-leaders.

#### **PASTORAL CARE:**

I’ve been in touch with folks by phone, and offered home visits if desired. LHHH is doing a wonderful job of keeping tabs on congregants, and I give a particular shout-out to Ann Rabb who not only visits but also keeps LHHH team members informed via email.

I announced a work party at a member’s home, and was part of the work crew that Sunday afternoon. Hauling building supplies may not seem like ministry, but the connection, support, and side conversations do.

#### **EXTRA CONNECTION**

I am picking random Sundays (maybe monthly) to be available for going out to brunch/lunch with congregants after Coffee Hour. The first Sunday went well, with the chance to converse with three congregants at Grammy’s Restaurant in Brevard. After the retreat, this seemed a good way to add another means of connecting over food - and might give opportunities for folks who otherwise don’t come to Fellowship On The Green.

I attended the Fellowship On Tap send-off for Jon and James at Oscar Blues on September 12. This too was a wonderful way of sitting and chatting with folks, as I rotated to the different tables.

#### **WORSHIP:**

I preached from The Mountain on September 11 during the retreat. This was a technologically tricky accomplishment, and was “iffy” up to the final minutes before the service, but we had a clear signal to UUTC once we switched platforms. The reconstruction of recorded bits is being done by Kathryn Burleigh, so that this can be posted for those who were hoping to watch from home. I also led the Water

Communion service on Sept. 18, and am back in the schedule of being the worship leader most Sundays of the month now that summer is over.

I met with the Worship Team, and we have concluded that it is best if UUTC remain on a single service indefinitely (although we can revisit two services decisions if things change, such as more than 70% of chairs filling up). This has been something that CRE and Choir agreed was good too. We have also started plans for Holiday services. This year we'll try Christmas Eve at 4:00pm and 6:00pm, and Christmas Day (a Sunday this year) John Austin is willing to help organize a morning of carols (I will be off). We'll also have a "Somber Holidays" vespers service led by me again on the late afternoon of the first Sunday of December, a Solstice service organized by Janice Canon, and the New Year's Burning Ceremony as the service on Sunday, January 1.

I also met (online) with a group of ministers to discuss the upcoming Soul Matters themes. Our conversations help deepen our various approaches to preaching, enriching our individual perspectives in ways we hope enlarge our congregations appreciation of the themes.

#### IN THE COMMUNITY:

I participated in an Ecusta Trail cleanup project.

#### COMING UP:

Emma's Revolution concert at UUTC on the evening of Sunday, Sept. 25. We had a great boost in ticket sales with a Sunday announcement, but will need more sales to be able to cover the performer's cost.

UUTC Yard Sale, Saturday, October 1.

Wonderful Wednesday presented by Luanne Algood will be held Wednesday, Oct. 5. We have two dozen folks signed up so far, and we're hoping this grows to be one of the larger turnouts. The addition of the sign-in sheet for folks on Sunday mornings may be making it more convenient for congregants, while others are finding the Realm sign-in to work for them.