

Minister's Report to the UUTC Board

March 2024

A DIFFERENT STYLE OF REPORT

For this month I will highlight areas which may not be the official "Goals" listed for me, but are well worth sharing. Please be assured I am still leading varied worship services, pastoral care, and engagement in social justice and community, etc. You are welcome to ask questions.

OLD BUSINESS:

Minister W-2

I have received a correct W-2 this month that had been completely redone. I know this was an expense for UUTC - Thank you. Box 1 now includes all items reportable to the IRS, including the cost of Long Term Disability insurance premiums. Having LTD declared as taxable is best practice as UUTC learned after Rev. Illene's leaving for medical reasons. Box 3-6 are now blank/zero, which is correct for ministers (no Social Security or Medicare - I have to handle those through tax filing on form SE, as ministers are "self employed" for social security purposes).

Staff Annual Reviews

I completed the Annual Reviews with RK Young and Kevin Lausch - the two that I directly supervise. The process was enhanced beyond the process outlined in UUTC documents in order to bring a collaborative conversation to the process *before* the written review. If RK and Kevin feel this was helpful, we will bring a future proposal to update the procedure in our documents. I believe this is a humane and respectful way to engage with high-functioning manager/leaders, and much more congruent with my supervision style, still in keeping with the spirit of the procedures.

NEW - KEEPING FRESH and FOCUSED:

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

I attended a workshop on a "Vital Decade of Ministry" offered by the UUA. This was helpful to me as we've come out of COVID and I am focused on the ways my ministry is energized and engaged with the hopes and vision of this congregation. The leader was Larry Peers, ordained UU minister and former UUA staff member and consultant for the ecumenical Alban Institute. This writing I quote below, by Mark Nepo, (a poet and spiritual adviser, and New York Times listed #1 author) was one of the inspirations for our conversations with each other during the week (I also used this with the College Walk UU Group this month soon after my return). I found the process useful to align my sense of calling with the reflection of ministerial experience, and what that reveals of my

work (vocation) through this next span of years. I share this in case it is also inspiring to you:

Inner Curriculum by Mark Nepo

Often, giving ourselves over to the life of experience yields the next phase of our Inner Curriculum.

For each of us has our own language of wisdom, the way every tree casts its own pattern of light and shadow, though they all draw on the same Source.

With every heartbreak, discovery, and moment of joy, with every lift of presence that touches us where we didn't think we could be touched, with every cut and confusion, another letter in our alphabet of wisdom is decoded.

Take a step, learn a word, feel a feeling, decode a sign. Accept a truth, translate a piece of the mystery written in our heart.

Day by authentic day, we learn our inner language. To be conversant in the web of relationship that our authenticity reveals is the work of the soul.

I am energized by the conversation with leader and participants. Being taken out of the local context for a week, to think more broadly about the arc of my calling, and take inventory of the gifts that I bring to ministry, is refreshing. Here is another quote that resonates with me (from M. Craig Barnes, and no I don't think we're in a holy mess!) and speaks to what may be the challenge of ministry through the coming era:

The challenge is seeing the blessings that flow onto all of the things we dare to call ordinary and routine. This is what people need - a good pastor who has learned to see the sacred subtext of what appears to be just the next thing... functioning essentially as angels who keep saying "Behold!" They knew the ground of the church was holy even when it was a holy mess.

There was also something of a church administration "refresher" mixed into this otherwise more spiritual/cerebral focus. We had presentations from the UUA Office of Church Staff Finance, helping us understand how our church staffs are eligible for benefits, important deadlines, the UUA staff's help and resources for heads of church staff (and Boards, finance and other key leaders) and re-introducing us to the existence of the "Benefits Tuneup Workbook" (which I'd already distributed to staff and Treasurer earlier in 2024).

Again, thank you for this continuing education opportunity. I have not yet turned in the invoice, but I will, and I consider it a good use of Professional Expenses (especially in a year without an in-person General Assembly).

INTERFAITH:

I have been working with Ken Albright, the pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (along with representatives of other congregations) to plan an ecumenical Earth Day observance tentatively set for April 24. John Austin has been invited as well.