

BUUF State of the Fellowship report

Harvey Johnson Board President June 5, 2022

I am pleased to report that the state of Berrien Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is GOOD.

We have continued to endure challenges in the past year due to COVID and the extra work of providing hybrid Sunday Services. We have prevailed due to the hard work and dedication of our paid staff and numerous volunteers.

As the president of the board, I would like to thank the current board, Joan Guilfoyle for being a fantastic Secretary keeping concise minutes and helping run the board via zoom from Minnesota. Dick Berndt, for being our Treasurer and helping to update our various systems and accounts. Bridget Lorenz for being the VP of the board. Vicki Dwyer Thomas and Lia McCoskey, for being board member Trustees (Member-at-Large).

As a representative of the board, I would like to thank some of our volunteers, Jim Fuller - building and grounds, Charles Long building and grounds, Terry Sundstrom – tech support with sound board and computer, Diane Gibbons – perennial plants and gardening, Linda Lobik – perennial plants and gardening, Vicki, Beth, Janice, Diane, and Lisa for cleaning the building. Todd Batson for stepping up and helping with mowing and grounds.

A Thank you to Brett Maccani for leading the Welcoming Congregation Committee, Clark and Nancy Gilpin for leading the Social Justice Committee, Glen Smith for leading our Endowment committee, Diane Gibbons for helping to lead and organize Green Sanctuary team activities such as Ethical Eating dinners.

Thank you to Beth La Fleur – Music Director and lead Technology volunteer.

Thank you to Candace Onweller our accompanist who helps us sound better than we are.

Thank you to Daphne for tireless childcare, along with others like Ana and Bridget who filled in when needed.

Thank you to Jim McConnell for leading and inspiring us each week during Sunday Services and for leading the monthly pizza making Soup Kitchen lunch.

And the biggest Thank you to our fabulous departing Office Administrator Joanne Krettek. Joanne has been helping to lead this fellowship for 4 years as quarter time Administrator putting in way more than quarter time each week. She pays close attention to all BUUF issues and rightly questions the board decisions and usually sets us right when we are slow and incomplete with our actions. I myself appreciate this thoroughness and devotion to task as I know that I am not so thorough and not so timely.

During the past year, you may recall that we re-occupied the Vawter Sanctuary and the Fuller Fellowship Hall in July of 2021 after being out of the building and holding Sunday services and all meetings via ZOOM for 18 months. Some of you may remember how with Gretchen Ohmann's help

we jumped into ZOOM services immediately following the COVID lockdown in March 2020. This was an incredible feat. I know other religious organizations that had no services at all for over a year because they were unprepared to run ZOOM services or have in-person services. So last July we launched into Hybrid services (zoom and in-person) with the help of Lisa Fuller, Joanne, Terry, Glen, Nico, Beth, David La Fleur and others.

Some may agree with me in saying that Sunday Services and RE and the after service social time are our main function to bind us together into a fellowship. Since last July, we have weekly provided our members and friends with top notch in person Sunday Services. As you know most Sunday Services include a load of people to make that happen. ZOOM and sound personnel, music personnel, story readers, fabric of life leaders, offering collectors, chalice lighting word readers, poetry readers, and more. This is our strength. Our cooperative effort. To discuss, to debate, and to sometimes vote and take actions. As we sometimes say for chalice lighting "We are the church of the open mind, the loving hearts, and the helping hands"

We weekly explore how to become our fullest selves, for our own benefit as well as the benefit of our wider communities. Thank you, Sunday Service committee, led by Lisa Fuller for leading us to have monthly themes for services, excellent services and for planning those services.

Accomplishments

We have been able to provide weekly Sunday Services uninterrupted. We took a brief in-person break in January of this year when COVID was peaking but otherwise we have accomplished excellent in-person/zoom services.

We have provided Religious Education, activities, and childcare for our children weekly under the direction of Joanne Krettek.

We have continued to provide Soup Kitchen lunches at the Salvation Army facility in Benton Harbor and have recently gone to monthly instead of bi-monthly. We will continue to need at least 6 volunteers to give a few hours at 9:30 am on the first Saturday of each month. Yesterday we made Pizza again for about 100 people.

The Green Sanctuary Team again assisted the Fresh Start Children's Garden community gardens in Benton Harbor under the direction of Emma Kinnard. We fenced a lot on Milton Street in Benton Harbor that will have a greenhouse to add to Emma's community garden projects. Diane Gibbons has been assisting by composting with Papa Vino's organic waste at a lot in Benton Harbor under the direction of Emma.

The Gilpin's have been leading the Social Justice committee with actions and partnerships and education to help create a beloved community in Berrien County. Brett Maccani has been leading the Welcoming committee to also work towards a beloved community for all persons in Berrien County.

The Future

What is the future of BUUF? What is our path? It will be a path directed by our members. We will strive to live up to our UU principles. We will strive to be open minded, loving, and helpful to all beings.

We will continue with excellent Sunday Services, I am confident. We will continue to provide religious Education and fellowship to our BUUF children under the direction of new DRE Brett Maccani who will start July 1.

We will continue to depend on many hands, since many hands makes light work. We will depend on those in the room and those on ZOOM. BUUF is a co-op. What you get out of BUUF is generally what you put in to BUUF. And remember, if you have not pledged to support BUUF, it is not too late. There is no set amount, it is up to you to decide. We have just ended our annual pledge campaign, but anytime is a good time to make a pledge of financial or in-kind support. Thank you.