

## **Starting the new year with gratitude!!**

In normal time, it takes a small village to put on a welcoming, engaging, in-real-life church service.

In pandemic time, it takes welcoming and engaging to the Nth degree, and a whole lot more, to put on a virtual service that reaches out to members, friends, people passing by on the zoom or you-tube dial.

The last time an appreciable number of us were in the actual sanctuary was March 13, 2020, for the wedding of Eliza Hammer and Ripley Gage. The Word in the nation that day was already **“close down,” “stay home,” “Don’t go to church.”**

Two days later, on Sunday March 15th, we had a full, live service FROM the sanctuary, with Rev Abbey, Melody Bergey, David O’Connor, and Mike Stratoti delivering a stunningly normal (engaging, in-gathering) service. Since then we have gone from the usual wonderfulness, to better and better, reaching more people from farther away—New Orleans, Wisconsin, Old Muddy Creek (W VA), Los Angeles, France, Greece, and Bologna, Italy!, to say nothing of all the corners of the wide Philadelphia UU diaspora.

We are grateful to the amazing and sensitive professional staff that keeps us coming: Rev Abbey and Rev Hannah for their preaching, leadership, and sensitivity to us and to the wider community; our music director Chase Castle for his musical talents and sensitive ear, leadership, and encouragement; and business manager Norman Fouhy and administrator Nic Tenaglia, who keep our building, civic and fiscal organization afloat. Without them nothing.

In the past 10 months, I’ve spent time in a variety of church services across the country. What I’ve seen and heard makes me SO GRATEFUL for the time and talent that suffuse our services, and draw our widespread congregation together on Sunday mornings (to say nothing of during the week in meetings). We are here right now to recognize those people.

I read out their names at the meeting last Sunday: there are way too many to include them here—which makes me feel all warm and fuzzy, thinking of all the people who contribute to make a service happen!

**Technical operatives and advisors** occupy themselves with sound, lighting, integrating pieces of the service. Their work begins at 9:30 of a Sunday

morning Between 5 and 12 people gather to put the pieces together. Each service consists of approximately 70 to 200 discrete events. For example, the team composes a background of candles, music, and words just so we can sing a hymn. They verify the video and sound for the Minister(s), Worship Associate, Chalice Lighting Family, Virtual Ushers, Chat Chaplain, etc. We fine tune who is spotlighted and any other events in the service including the duration of coffee breakout rooms, etc.). And without **these** folks, nothing!!!!

### **Finance Working Group**

FWG works with Rev. Abbey and Norman on developing the annual budget, monitoring our adherence to the budget. They also regularly review our financial control, oversee our banking arrangements, and manage other ad-hoc projects as they arise. They've had their hands full this year.

**The Caring Ministry** is made up of people who have taken on the responsibility of reaching out to members and friends of the congregation in times of illness, bereavement, daily difficulties.

We are grateful for the extra load of caring they took on in this difficult year.

**The Stewardship Team** is responsible for the annual out-reach that supports the work of the church: Staff salaries, membership in the UUA, building repairs and upkeep, candles for the Christmas Eve service.... Their valiant work in this year of challenge has resulted in more pledges and a larger amount pledged than ever before. Rah Team! Rah, Congregation!

**The Choir**, between 10 and 18 people in these pandemic times, people who rehearse on their own, record (audio and video) on their own, then send the resulting track to Chase Castle who blends them into an anthem. Tons of work, especially from our director!! Some of the results may be seen at this address: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG\\_1vpOWIPb8-P19q6VU4Hg/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG_1vpOWIPb8-P19q6VU4Hg/videos)

**The First U Band** consists of 32 composers, vocalists, instrumentalists who, in the same steps as described just above, have produced at least one cover or original song each week to enhance the message of the service in groups of just a few or almost all of those named. Check here, for instance!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X-Xrtk1TTU>

By now you must be aware that it's not JUST the folks whose names were read who keep our church a lively and active congregation. The people above, certainly. But it doesn't take a village to keep a congregation going, it takes a congregation.

Thank you!!!!

Anne Slater,  
Board President  
January 25, 2021