

March 2022 Executive Report
Rev. Amy Petrie Shaw

Our Mission: Grow ethically and spiritually, serve justly, and love radically.

Ministry (Rev. Amy Petrie Shaw)

The UCDSM Store is fully launched and can be found at <https://first-unitarian-church-of-des-moines.myshopify.com/>. Communication staff have hired Katherine Sutton to design a nice “swag design” to go on UCDSM tee shirts, mugs, hats, etc.

After reviewing the Adult Faith Formation survey, Rev. Amy is scheduled to meet with Walter Pearson and Greg Nichols to discuss creation of more small group ministries, and explore other needs indicated by the survey

The Widening the Circle class will end on April 5, 2022. Notes from that class are attached to the end of this report. These notes offer suggestions for further exploration and change at UCDSM

Lifespan Learning (Devon McClurken)

- 5-6 OWL started in February with 9 youth total.
- At Home in Our Church concluded in March before Spring Break and now ToolBox of Faith is being offered.
- K-2 OWL will start in April and will run alongside 5-6 OWL until it concludes in April.
- COA and OWL continued in person.
- YRUU had their Youth Led Service in March and now are working on a joint session with COA youth and volunteering for the Planned Parenthood Book Sale.
- Children’s Chapel remains part of the service and youth are part of the Chalice Lighting.
- Volunteers for supervision of youth during the latter part of the service are being sought and are needed once more youth attend the service.
- CUUPS, Heart Sangha, Humanism and Sage have been meeting online.
- Soul Matters has continued.
- Rev Amy’s Widening the Circle class will conclude on April 5th, 2022.
- Tai Chi was brought in two days a week and will continue with volunteers from the group.
- The Adult RE Council has meet several times to talk about Sage forums and other classes for Adults to Seniors. A survey was sent out and we received over 150 responses from the congregation including Members and Friends. Many of the responses were about starting up the many affinity groups again and that information was passed on to the membership committee and direct asks of people if they are starting them up again.

Circle Groups or Chalice groups have been also considered be a Small Group Ministry that could be started up again in the fall and spring of next year.

Membership and Community

Membership Committee (Ellen Taylor/Marilyn Lantz)

A UU & You class was held on March 13th, 2022. Six potential new members/repeat visitors attended. Another class is tentatively scheduled for April 24th, and there are 20 people who will be invited. Ellen Taylor and Marilyn Lantz have joined Membership along with Dylan Cue.

Caring Ministry (Jude Cigrand)

Jude Cigrand spent time this month working with Jill Moser and staff to fix problems in the Caring Ministry Google phone. He attended the Pastoral Care meeting, and made several friendly check in visits

Card Ministry (Jill Moser)

Two Joys and Concerns this month were sent to the group list for card, email, and phone support

Pastoral Care (Ann Mowery)

Pastoral Care had 26 contacts in March. Rev. Amy had 7 total contacts.

Childcare (Hannah Notch)

Minimal activity this month. Childcare is offered on Sunday mornings and by request.

Stewardship (Liz Bredesen)

- Stewardship is planning the last 3 months of events for the church year. The last 3 months represent nearly \$100,000 in pledges.
- We are working on sending letters and pledge cards to outstanding pledges from January through March.
- YTD (August - March) we are down \$12,332 from the prior year. We would like to see testimonials during services in the coming months to elevate the awareness of the importance of pledging.
- We are working on recruiting members for the Stewardship Team.

Facility/Grounds (Doug Aupperle)

No events.

Communication Group (Barb Royal, Deidre Fudge, Liz Bredesen, Louise Alcorn)

No report received. The group continues to meet

Social Justice/Outreach

Asylum Seekers (Morgan Dredge)

The Immigration Justice team is helping to set up another apartment for a refugee family arriving in April.

SJMLT (Katie Allen, Sally Boeckholt, Ron Heideman, Doug Aupperle- Social Justice Ministry Leadership Team)

A Vegan Forum & Potluck sponsored by Green Sanctuary was held in March. There was much active discussion

Hymns Writing by Enslaved African People: Doug Aupperle shared an NPR article that tells about some white congregations paying "royalties" when they sing hymns that come from the Negro spiritual tradition. They say it's a matter of racial justice. Doug suggests that the SJMLT lead this discussion at First Unitarian.

The Trans Lives Festival sponsored by TAG was held Saturday, March 26, 11:00-4:00.

The next meetings are Thursday, April 7 at 7:30pm and April 28th at 7:30pm

FEDS (Bruce Martin)

FEDS is glad to report full return to the homeless shelter on March 7--i.e., indoors serving, which had been suspended for Jan. & Feb. due to COVID, plus some prep. and delivery of food, which had continued. Hopefully we are fully back for good.

Faith in Action (Steve Gilson)

The FIA partners for the year are Knock and Drop and Just Voices and they began as partners in September. There were no volunteer opportunities or events for our partners in March.

Harvey Harrison is scheduled to do a Forum on April 10 at 11am to update the congregation on the current status of Just Voices events and activities

Green Sanctuary (Ron Heideman)

- Lilian Hill is a Middle School student who has organized Climate Strikes this school year. She plans to host her next climate strike on the west steps of the Iowa State Capitol. Strikers are encouraged to create their own signs, posters, or banners. The next strike will be April 19 at 2:00.
- There will be an Earth Day Rally Friday, April 22nd, 12pm-4pm at Cowles Commons, 221 Walnut Street, Des Moines.
- The next Green Sanctuary meeting will be Wednesday, April 13 at 7:30 pm on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86447729617?pwd=SStPZGRPaWlwZ1Z6VE1DTlVZkNUUT09>

- Side With Love, Green Sanctuary 2030, and UU Ministry for Earth joined for a day of community nourishment, resource sharing and skill-building at the Congregational Climate Convergence: March 22 @ 12-3:30 pm CT to support local eco ministries
- Vegan Forum and Potluck: “Preserving our Planet with Plants” was held on 3/20/22. The 30 minute presentation had three components: 1) eating habits can be self-destructive; 2) spirituality of healthy eating; 3) Veganism is good for the environment. About 30 people attended
- GS is still discussing a policy statement from GS about Reusables vs. Disposables. Linda G will try to find a statement that will guide us in composing a policy statement.
- There is not a commercial composting company in Des Moines. We could compost ourselves. It would be more expensive and labor intensive.

Family Promise and FFFF/PPP (Elaine Imlau)

Family Promise

- Family Promise—29 volunteers provided 132 hours to provide meals and overnight supervision at Faith Lutheran’s Gathering House duplex.
- In preparation for hosting back on our home site in mid-June volunteer drivers need to update background checks on file the head office, fees covered by the head office. Volunteers working directly with families need to renew background checks through our church office. When we first got involved, the fees were paid by the church.
- Elaine Imlau needs to know what checks need to be made, how much they will cost and how the cost will be covered.
- While inspecting our Family Promise storage closets down in the large activity room, it was noted that a large cluster of stuff was piled just inside the door. This must be cleared out before we can host. This will be cleaned up during the day of service in May

PPP/FFFF Kickoff

- Began preparations for the event to be held at the end of April. The kickoff event was held later than usual since there has been so much fundraising lately with FUMAF, the kitchen remodel and stewardship spread out through the year.

Write Here, Write Now (Bill Brauch/Donna Wallace)

In March church members wrote Senators Grassley and Ernst and Representative Axne to ask them to press the Biden Administration to rescind Executive Authority established by the Trump Administration that serves as the basis for expelling thousands of asylum-seekers without a chance to plead their case.

AMOS (Barb Klubal)

Project Iowa Anniversary Celebration

In 2008, the need for a way to assist people with finding living-wage jobs was identified in a series of AMOS house meetings. Three years later, Project Iowa (<https://www.projectiowa.org>) was born. Since then, over 700 Iowans who participated in Project Iowa's free programming now have careers that offer a living wage and stability for individuals and families.

On March 24, 2022, AMOS leaders gathered in Des Moines to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Project Iowa. \$12,000 was raised to support its programming, and 100 commitments were made to help grow Project Iowa by contacting elected officials and supporting graduates.

All-AMOS Meeting

The agenda included planning for the upcoming 2-day Organizational Development Training scheduled for April 29 and 30 at Central Presbyterian Church in Des Moines. All members of First Unitarian Church are welcome. Pre-registration is required. For details, see the attachment. Register here by April 22nd.

Let's Talk/Des Moines Public Schools

AMOS' school mediation program, "Let's Talk," works to interrupt the school to prison pipeline. It was recently highlighted by Axios. The article includes quotes from AMOS leader Cheryl Hayes from Bethel AME Church Des Moines. <https://www.axios.com/local/des-moines/2022/04/04/des-moines-public-schools-violence-conflict-mediation?fbclid=IwAR3GR6pwvJFCOtrpRPMMOZDGrLDkkSXNLtnv5h15y2iOOAcTMZR-iifMSb0>

Mental Health

Bill Brauch is sitting on Polk County mental health working group as an AMOS representative. The group has been meeting weekly to determine funding for mental health that will come from Federal ARPA dollars.

Crystal Loving and other AMOS leaders recently met with new CEO of Broadlawns Medical Center to begin a working relationship with AMOS.

Other AMOS Actions

Ankeny AMOS leaders have organized in support of an additional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position to serve in the Ankeny School District. At a recent Ankeny school board meeting, AMOS pastors Fr. Michael Amadeo, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, and Pr. Beth Wartick, Resurrection Lutheran Church, provided testimony in support of every learner in the district.

To view Fr. Amadeo's testimony:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1095046347714574

<https://www.kcci.com/article/iowa-ankeny-parents-rally-in-support-of-diversity-hiring/39633302?fbclid=IwAR3dfWLnT9pcPpkZb9ZFUnADvPprUc8qeGO2Z9LuMQIZyKTZ3P7voTPz1GY>

Affordable Housing Research

Continuing its research into workforce/affordable housing, AMOS leaders attended the annual Polk County Housing Trust Fund Affordable Housing Week Symposium on April 7. The group has also met with representatives of several local organizations that provide supportive and affordable housing and with the Executive Director of the Iowa Finance Authority, the public agency that funnels funding to housing among other things.

Upcoming Events

The next AMOS Delegate Assembly will take place on Sunday, May 15 from 2:30 – 4:00 pm at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Ankeny.

The agenda will include an action with the candidates for Polk County Attorney. This is the first competitive election for this position in 30 years and will include AMOS' priorities around restorative justice and language access. The Delegate Assembly will also include ratifying AMOS' 2022-2023 budget. Each AMOS member institution is encouraged to send a strong delegation

to give your voice in your organization of organizations.

A poster for AMOS Organization Development Training. The background is a dark grey with a blurred image of people working at a table. The text is white and centered. At the top, it asks 'How connected, financially strong, and mission relevant is your organization coming out of the pandemic?' and lists skills to be covered. The title 'AMOS ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT TRAINING' is in large, bold letters. Below that, it lists dates and times for two days. The location is 'Central Presbyterian, 3829 Grand Ave, Des Moines, IA'. Pricing is listed as \$35 for members and \$50 for non-members. A registration deadline and URL are provided at the bottom. The AMOS logo is in the bottom right corner.

How connected, financially strong, and mission relevant is your organization coming out of the pandemic? This training will cover concrete skills to deepen relationships, find new leaders, and strengthen your organization.

**AMOS
ORGANIZATION
DEVELOPMENT TRAINING**

Fri, Apr 29, 5:30-8:00 pm (includes dinner)
Sat, Apr 30, 9:00 am-5:00 pm (includes lunch)

Central Presbyterian
3829 Grand Ave, Des Moines, IA

\$35: Members of AMOS institutions
\$50: Non members

Register by Apr 22 at
<https://tinyurl.com/2p89t33b>

AMOS | A Mid-Lives Organizing Strategy

Transgender Action Group (Gianfranco Berardi, Doug Aupperle)

- The Trans Lives Festival on March 26th was a strong success
- For the Trans Lives Festival, we had 12 local trans artists and craftspeople exhibiting and selling.
- There were 9 local trans musicians and performers, including one high school student, one college student, and 7 adults.
- We had two local queer-owned food trucks.
- There were also 12 trans-affirming non-profit organizations connecting people to services and resources.
- Between 450 and 500 people, including families with young children, teens, adults, and seniors attended the festival during its 5-hour run.

Leadership Group (Katie Allen)

Leadership is organizing a Church Life Revival

When: Sunday, May 22nd - 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Where: Raccoon River Park, Cornflower Shelters A & B

What: Potluck, fun, share and connect! Plan on creating a table/display about your team, and be prepared to sign folks up to be part of it, and/or to share what you are all about!

There is a meeting/workshop scheduled for all leaders on April 2nd, to work on ideas for how to draw people in, generate excitement, and plan together

Service Attendance:

March

3/6/22 Renewing Faith with Lillian Keairns, Rachel Brauch, Cady Sullivan	67 +29 Zoom
3/13/22 I am Yours, You are Mine, Rev. Amy	56 +40 Zoom
3/20/22 Learning to Lament, Rev. Amy	88 +29 Zoom
3/27/22 I am a Patriot, Rev. Amy	77 +29 Zoom

Podcast Status

The First U Think podcast has had 507 downloads in the last 90 days, and 144 in the last 30 days. There have been 1,654 total downloads and our curve continues to trend upward.

First U Think can be found anywhere you download podcasts, or here on our UCDSM Buzzsprout page <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1609618>

UCDSM Store Sales \$1,465.55 this FUMAF total for all time \$3,578.78

Widening the Circle of Concern

Notes and Recommendations

Session 1 Information

[WTCoC pdf here](#)

Widening the Circle of Concern Report simple with Audio Recording for the Visually Impaired
<https://www.uua.org/book/export/html/43821>

Widening the Circle of Concern Report Online
<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

Timeline for the Black Empowerment Controversy
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop15/178882.shtml>

Findings Related to the Southern Regional Lead Hiring Decision, Spring 2017 Commission on Institutional Change (the timeline is on pg 15 of this report)

https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/findings_related_to_the_southern_regional_lead_hiring_april_2017.pdf

The UUA Hiring Controversy

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/critics-challenge-uua-hiring-practices>

Don Southworth (Former Head of the UU Ministers Association) Letter

<https://www.uuma.org/news/news.asp?id=349323>

What is BLUU?

<https://www.blacklivesuu.com/about-bluu>

BLUU Funding by the UUA and the Deficit Caused by the “Golden Parachutes” Given to Departing UUA Staff

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/bluumemo>

Session 2 Governance

What informal structures do we have in our UCDSM community that might be functioning in inappropriate ways?

- Internal hierarchy- some people may be seen as more important
- People with resources seen as pillars
- Recruitment of committee members and leaders is done within the leader’s friend group, leading to complacency and lack of change
- Not reaching out to people we don’t know
- Hidebound
- No one person should be in a position for more than 3 years
- Can’t break in- shadow leadership
- Those who “know the ropes” have the privilege
- Lots of unwritten rules
- Closed culture
- Nominations to Board and other big committees are done in closed circles (opaque processes)

Overly complex structures can be a deterrent for change, especially when a community has a shrinking pool of volunteers.

Are any of our community’s structures duplicative or unnecessarily complex?

- Robert’s Rules of Order- moderators must offer grace

- To get to a Board meeting and feel comfortable you have to know the Board- the Board has to come to the people, and let people know them and why.
- Board needs to encourage attending Board meetings
- Complexity of policy governance confuses people
- Board turns over before it really jells

How do we encourage practices towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in the work of our groups and governance?

- Pairing new people with someone
- Actively support every person's right to interacting out of their own personal and cultural competencies and roles, without expecting white centering
- A la carte roles- allow people to volunteer for tasks in alignment with their skillset rather than rigidly defined roles
- Entry into volunteering with small asks, targeted asks
- Examining the problems- look at the problematic issues, allow time for reaction, and don't be afraid or embarrassed that a problem exists.
- Have the courage to speak truth about specific and systemic problems
- Tell Us About It should be used more effectively and with accountability

How is our community participating in regional work? How are we influencing the direction of our region of the UUA and holding it accountable to these goals?

- Transparency and communication for those on the Boards of the denomination- they have to tell us what is going on
- Procedure for getting delegates should be more visible
- Delegates have to represent the church- must gather data then vote and tell us how they voted
- What did you learn when you represented us?
- Hold forums before GA so that people can understand the issues to be voted on, and gather data

Policy Governance Pros

Allows a congregation to take action on its own. A large number of rights for the people Membership offers huge space to work and act

Congregational Polity Pros

- The congregation are the "stockholders" for policy governance just as the congregations are the stockholders for Congregational Polity

What Do We Need To Do?

Making agreements across cultures

Flattening hierarchy

Build in time to think before decisions

Session 3 Congregations and Communities

- We had a denominational liaison, and no one stepped forward when she stepped down
- Information needs to be sent down to the congregation from denominational representatives
- We need to go back to having a liaison
- Need to do congregational straw poll on how the church feels about issues so GA delegates vote with guidance (same with the RA)
- We need hospitality roleplay so people know what goes on- how to build connections across communities
- Accept cultural practices without examining
- Get rid of scholarships- include everyone
- Value time talent and treasure
- Need to get congregational feedback
- Need for multicultural audit
- We look for intellectual participation rather than embodied participation; need to make space for varied participation styles and encourage people to try various styles of participation
- Alternate service experiences
- Multicultural space, and experiential space need to be here
- Hearing the stories of the people- what's good and what's bad
- Build partnerships across faiths
- Setting up systems of accountability
- Audit, looking for truth and reconciliation
- HOW DO WE GET THE CONGREGATION INTERESTED????

Session 4 Hospitality

- Make Joys and Concerns more accessible- able to do as they come in or on a chat or online in advance
- Want to be heard at time they are occurring- get basket back for Js and Cs at last minute
- Need to greet everyone the same way
- Need ushering and greeting guide, guide to nametag creation
- Need direct asks to do the next thing- welcome you into the next thing
- Youth member on the board
- House banned books here!

- Get more promotional material out about BLUU and DRUUM
- Check on local affinity groups for BIPOC people
- NEED TO MARKET WHAT WE DO HAVE TO OFFER rather than what we don't
- The uncommon denomination marketing should be revisited

Session 5 Living Our Values in the World

- We learn by developing relationships
- Particularly 1:1 relationships
- Whole church reads are important.
- Webinars could be used to invite the community in
- Art can be used to get people talking in a non-threatening way
- Create theater events open to the public (The Laramie Project and other shows which reflect our values)
- More musical events open to the public

Questions to Answer Next Year

- What is our purpose? Open discussion about how we do this. We always have to come back to love
- What is our vision?
- Performing plays? Reading them? Is this a way to reach out?
- Film series over a month with a source of action?

- To what communities of color are we accountable? Zuli Garcia/ Knock and Drop, AMOS, JUST VOICES,
- We don't have a community to talk about ouches- do we need a Right Relations Committee?
- Better conflict resolution policy needed?
- Core team and discussion about the 8th principle and what it means to be a UU (Board?)

Session 6 Religious Professionals

- Be a liberating church not a liberal church- do something
- Searches must be inclusive- no tokenism
- Make it possible for professionals of color to apply
- Congregation needs to be prepared, receptive, and open- read Centering
- Need to make sure staff bonding can happen
- Use job fair rather than online/intense interviewing. More relaxed

Session 7 Education

- Share stories from minority cultures
- Provide religious depth with cultural relevance
- Provide comfort
- Seek out the people with a willingness to share their story
- Make Christianity welcome
- “Faith Statement” may be the wrong statement- make a Faith Statement or make a Statement of Ethical Position, or Answer the Great Questions (ask the kids)

SESSION 8 Innovations and Risk Taking

- Serve younger generation in the way they want to be served. Asking the younger generation to step forward into leadership
- Looking at senior church along with young church
- Younger people should be stepping forward
- Should be a partnership- elders are there and willing to be part, but it must be collaborative, not patriarchal
- Need a strong Sunday School program
- Need young leaders to teach Sunday School AND need to recognize they may not be able to
- What about charging a fee for participation in RE? Could use the funds to cover hiring teachers
- Parents must find own substitutes- maybe have bank of older members who might do it if asked
- Treat it like Family Promise and offer slots to fill
- Technology and expectations have changed AND some people don't have the technology or the ability to cope with that
- Go to collaborative learning, collaborative leadership- increase fellowship
- Gold and Silver dinners- restarting groups for older and younger to meet together for fun
- Need Grief Circles and Lamentation spaces

Cultural Borrowing

- Don't mock a culture or use it as a zoo exhibit- learn from it, teach what it means for those actually doing it
- Shared events with black and brown churches are highly desired- what do we need and what can we give in these exchanges?
- Great Forum topic- real vs symbolic rituals

Session 9 Restoration and Repairs

- How did UCDSM react to Centering?
- Restoration starts with a sermon or forums, discussions, meetings. Everyone has to work it through. Don't tell them we have to do reparations, just give great examples to illustrate need.
- Beyond slavery- tension in DSM city council.
- Look to the UUA for centering
- Work must center black and brown voices

Session 10 Accountability and Resources

- Sad and angry that people feel unheard, so must find ways for them to be heard- wrap congregation into this discussion.
- Individual responsibility must be built in everywhere
- Covenant is required- we must have it and be accountable to it
- Making people feel valid is essential
- SURJ helps with accountability, so does Great Plains Action Society. How could they hold us accountable?
- Leadership needs to foster ARAO work
- Have to see the leadership behind the ARAO work
- Need a Right relations Team- Quakers have Peace Teams and we might like that wording better
- Focus on IMPACT not INTENT when there is a problem
- If you offer critique, you must be willing to help look for solutions

Session 11 Where Do We Go from Here?

1. Begin to work on each of these areas. Wrap the congregation in. Maybe Do one area a month.
2. Need to do a forum to vote on whether to approve the 8th principle before GA if at all possible
3. Need to begin the discussion on how all of our actions of oppression also oppress the Earth

Final Thoughts

- **It all comes down to welcome- making it safe to ask how to join the community and safe to remain in community**
- **Making it up as we go along, in conjunction with the people in the room, is the best. It has to be a living breathing thing to make meaning.**
- **Refuse to be frozen**
- **Be accountable**
- **Be transparent**