

Annual Report – May 2019

Submitted by the Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Senior Minister

What a joy and a privilege this first year of ministry together has been. I continue to love our community deeply – who we are, what we believe in and stand for, and all that we are creating and building together.

As is frequently the case at the start of a new endeavor, this has been a year of relationship building and context setting: deepening the shared understandings and frameworks that will guide and support our work together. Addendums A-F (attached) reflect that foundation building work.

From a spiritual perspective, our strengths are many. The depth of skillfulness, insight, and downright brilliance that exists within our lay leadership and professional staff team is both beautiful and inspiring. We are well and capably led, with a wide range of strong programs and activities.

Some of our deepest challenges emerge precisely because of our strengths. It is not possible for a community to be as large as we are, with about a thousand human beings, without having strong and vibrant subgroups in which our members successfully find a sense of identity, friendship, and support. The challenge that naturally accompanies this strength is that the experience, wisdom, and perspective of any one subgroup does not necessarily reflect the experience or perspective of the whole. It takes effort to bridge across subgroups. It takes effort to discern what the larger ‘whole,’ of a thousand human beings, might think, feel, and desire.

The good news is that the skills that it takes to engage in cross-group relationship building are exactly the same set of skills that are needed in our wider, increasingly complex world today: we get to practice with one another the skills, patience, and presence that our broader world desperately needs. The Shared Ministries Team (SMT) has been an invaluable asset in this, serving as a conversation and thought partner for me and for our members; the SMT has also begun proactively helping interested community members deepen their communication and relational skills together. More such opportunities will be forthcoming.

One of our community’s beautiful strengths is the depth of our commitment to collaboration across our congregational system, what we routinely refer to as ‘collaborative leadership’ or ‘shared leadership.’ There are profound values embedded in this model. Among them: each one of us embodies unique gifts; unhelpful and stifling hierarchies can hinder our ability to live into those innate gifts. Even as we seek to liberate and honor the best potential in each of us, we, as a community, have limited ‘architecture’ - policies, procedures, and structures - supporting our UUAA core values.

Values are made durable by the processes and procedures that reflect them, and, institutionally we do not currently have the breadth and depth of policies, procedures, and structures that are needed to mediate the different needs and perspectives of a community as large and as diverse as ours. For example: as a covenanted community, how do we navigate differences of opinion? How do we navigate unkindness? Structures and processes need to be developed which can hold, and help us traverse, complex human realities, such as these. Some of this work is underway, but it will take years to create the ‘scaffolding’ that is truly needed. As we continue that work of structurally/institutionally building for our future, patience will be needed as we inevitably navigate tough issues for which we might not yet have processes, and as we revamp and update other structures/processes for a new day.

As we work towards deepening our institutional processes, there is also a need to align our staffing practices with our values. I inherited a staff structure which includes a currently unfunded senior staff position, which would typically cost \$80,000 - \$100,000 annually. Side by side, we have hourly wage employees, our childcare providers, who, up until very recently, were earning one-third less than the prevailing Ann Arbor rate for childcare work. In addition to remedying that, as of July 1, 2019, we will also correct the fact that our health benefit eligible staff have been receiving less than the UUA recommended health benefit; we will move from providing a 70% employer contribution towards health insurance premiums, to providing the UUA recommended 80% employer contribution. We have also grappled with the fact that there has been no plan in place to provide modest, inflation-based cost-of-living adjustments for our staff; this will change as of January 1, 2020. Last but not least, our salary levels do not adequately compensate some staff members for the work that they provide. We will be correcting this inequity, as well, over time, through a combination of, what we hope will be, increased congregational giving and the development of a sustainable staffing plan, one which directly supports the congregation's long-term vision and its practical needs.

Critical to everything that I have described above is the Board's leadership in helping our community discern our collective direction, our vision, and emerging out of that vision, two or three unambiguous strategic priorities. Differences of opinion in a community as large as ours often center around the allocation of the community's time, energy, and resources – the resources of which include, quite significantly, how the staff team is spending its time and energy. In the absence of a clear, compelling direction (vision), any individual can claim that their personal vision for the community is what the entire community should, in fact, be doing. Leading a process that helps us discern UUA's collective, shared vision, and the strategic priorities emerging out of that vision, is a key task for our Board of Trustees, one which they have been ably leading. Our Board is truly fantastic, and it has been a pleasure partnering with them as they have helped create and lead us through the initial stages of a visioning process. I look forward to continuing to support the Board, and our broader community, as this important work continues.

Even as we engage in all this good work, deepening and strengthening our community, we are a people infused with the spirit of love, who genuinely enjoy being together and learning and growing together. In that spirit, one of joyful companionship on life's journey, I would also like to offer you a 'sneak peek' at things to come in the congregational year ahead:

- Grades K-1 OWL (*Our Whole Lives*, lifespan sexuality education), fall 2019
- Adult OWL, fall 2019
- "The Art of Sacred Storytelling," six session participatory seminar, featuring The Moth's Satori Shakoor and the UUA Worship Team, first class session: 11/2/19
- Special guest musician Melanie DeMore, joins us for our Big Sing weekend, Mar. 14-15, 2020
- Honoring the Humanist Manifesto's 87th anniversary, May 2020
- Our second UUA Delegation to the U.S.-Mexico border, 11/10/19 thru 11/14/19
- Building an All Souls Altar, honoring our beloveds who have died, 11/3/19
- Halloween celebrations, at Friday Fun Night (10/25/19) and in our services (10/27/19)
- Movie Night with Rev. Manish, watching/discussing Jordan Peele's "Us," 10/4/19
- Honoring our congregation's 155th anniversary, May 2020
- and so, so much more...!

I look forward to our second year of shared ministry – thank you for being a part of all that we are doing, building, and creating together!

ADDENDUM A

(Previously published in the November 2018 UUAA Monthly Newsletter)

Senior Minister's Goals and Workplan for 2018-2019

In collaboration and consultation with the UUAA Board of Trustees, Rev. Manish has finalized the following prioritized goals, and summary work plan, for the senior ministry for the 2018-2019 congregational year:

- 1) Establish healthy, productive relationships with staff, key lay leaders, and key stakeholders.
 - This will be worked on via: one-on-one relationship building meetings with staff, key lay leaders, and key stakeholders;
 - attending small group and large group opportunities to meet congregants, as possible;
 - dropping in on our weekly Sunday coffee hours, as feasible;
 - updating the UUAA staff covenant; and,
 - participating in weekly individual and group staff meetings, regular ongoing meetings with the Board President, and monthly meetings and periodic retreats of the Board of Trustees and the Shared Ministries Team.

- 2) Continue the creation of Sunday worship experiences in which the majority of attendees regularly have a spiritually meaningful and engaging experience.
 - This will be worked on by: participating in regular weekly planning sessions with UUAA's Worship Team;
 - continuing to deepen one-on-one working relationships and spiritual relationships with members of our Worship Team;
 - providing ongoing leadership in Sunday morning worship; and,
 - supporting the UUAA Worship Team in articulating and sharing with the congregation the values that the Team is seeking to honor and bring alive through worship.

- 3) Support the Board of Trustees in developing and implementing a plan that moves UUAA towards articulating a vision for the congregation and, emerging out of that, strategic priorities.
 - This will be worked on by: consulting with UUA regional staff and other senior ministers of large UU churches on best practices; and,
 - participating in Board planning for and the development of a Board-led work plan that moves the congregation into visioning and strategic priority setting work.

- 4) Establish and support the new Shared Ministries Team.
 - This will be worked on by: creating, recruiting for, and sharing with the UUAA community the development of the new Shared Ministries Team;
 - helping develop operational understandings for this Team, by sharing knowledge, best practices, and guidance, as needed;
 - developing a Team covenant; and,
 - meeting monthly with this team, and regular ongoing meetings with the Team's Chair, to reflect with and support the Team in their response to issues, questions, and feedback.

ADDENDUM B

(Previously published in the October 2018 UUAA Monthly Newsletter)

Shared Ministries Team Framing Document

“... this is our covenant with each other: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another...”

As we enter a new era of ministry at UUAA, we will be experimenting with a new lay-staffed “Shared Ministries Team” (SMT) to support and nurture the overall health of the Congregation and its many thriving ministries.

The primary goal of the SMT is to **receive, reflect on,** and directly **respond to** feedback from the congregation, including feedback related to the professional and lay staff of the congregation, the congregation’s policies, and its ministries and programs. The SMT will serve as an open and transparent channel in responding to feedback or questions that may arise in our increasingly complex organization, in particular paying attention to areas/issues where it may become apparent that there is a significant critical mass of congregational interest.

At times, the SMT may wish to survey the congregation and staff to actively solicit feedback on a particular topic, but it is anticipated that most congregational feedback will be in the form of email, phone calls, and personal communications with the SMT and/or the congregation’s staff.

The SMT will work collaboratively with the staff to find a way forward on issues that warrant an adjustment of congregational policies or practices, and provide clarifying information when that would be helpful. The work of the SMT will reflect UUAA and UU values and the congregation’s governing policies, and will seek to strengthen the shared covenant-based fabric of our community.

Members of the SMT will facilitate “**right relationship**” conversations* in the event of significant conflict among congregation members or between congregation members and staff. If one of the ministers becomes the focus of a conflict, the minister and the SMT will work together toward an appropriate response.

The SMT, and its members, will remain fair and impartial in matters related to congregational life, not serving as an advocate for individual congregants, the staff, the ministers, or specific program areas of the congregation.

Members of the SMT will be selected by the senior minister in consultation with the Board of Trustees. Committee members will serve 3-year staggered terms. The committee will report to the senior minister and will submit an annual report on its activities to the congregation’s Board

of Trustees. The committee will be composed of 3-5 members who have broad knowledge of UUAA and its organizational systems, are generally trusted by the congregation and its members, and can be relied on to keep the best interests of the full congregation at the heart of their work.

* "Right relations exist within a group when its members share a sense of fellowship in an atmosphere of trust, respect and cooperation. Group members accept responsibility for their actions, openly share information and listen and clarify what they hear; they let others have their say, respect boundaries and confidentiality, refrain from harmful gossip about others, speak honestly and bring to light concerns about things which threaten the health of the congregation. When conflicts or differences of opinion arise, the group works to manage or resolve them through compromise or consensus." Drawn/adapted from: Sample Covenant of Right Relations, *(From UU Faithworks Shared by Rev. Deborah Mero, Interim Minister (2000-2002), All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist (UU) Brattleboro, VT)* **Maintaining Right Relations: Expectations and Remedies Adopted 5/6/01** (<https://www.uua.org/safe/covenant/sample>)

ADDENDUM C

(Previously published in the February 2019 UUAA Monthly Newsletter)

Sharing Our Values

By Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Cassandra Hartley, Lindasusan Ulrich, Glen Thomas Rideout, & Allison Halerz (UUAA's Worship Team)

Over the fall of 2018, UUAA's Worship Team met in retreat format over several days to articulate and clarify the values that we collaboratively seek to hold and bring alive in our Sunday services.

While the balance of how these values are reflected on a given Sunday morning may shift week to week, based on the topic, format, or other needs, it is our shared goal to hold these values as consistently central to our Sunday morning leadership in the community over time.

We welcome your feedback/ideas related to these core values, and invite you to join us in helping bring them alive in our community.

Worship Team Shared Values

Each week we work to create Sunday service experiences that are:

Inclusive

We honor:

- Unitarian Universalist principles, sources, and teachings
- UUAA's spiritual history and heritage
- Differing abilities
- Racial/ethnic diversity
- The full spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities
- All economic circumstances
- Pluralism
- A variety of learning styles
- People of every age
- Many ways to access the message (words, music, storytelling, etc.)
- Current life circumstances (grief, joy, stress, etc.)

Collaborative

We value:

- The unique spiritual gifts of each individual

- Shared leadership
- An open exchange of ideas
- Consensus-building
- Curiosity
- Creativity

Beautiful

We strive for:

- Professional quality
- Finely crafted words, music, and visuals
- Spiritual flow
- Well-woven, poetic liturgy
- Humor

Meaningful

We're committed to:

- Thought-provoking content
- Exploring new ideas and perspectives
- Challenging ourselves and the congregation
- Bearing prophetic witness
- Depth
- Conjuring the connective power of communal music

Relational

We're rooted in:

- Community-building
- Responsiveness to the energy and needs in the room
- Collegiality among team members that is warm, respectful, and playful
- Relationship with the wider world
- Relationship with UUism broadly

Moving

We seek to engender:

- Engagement with deeper values
- Connection to our best selves
- Inspiration
- Embodied worship
- Emotional depth
- Vulnerability
- Transformation

ADDENDUM D

(From our Service of Installation - April 2019)

Act of Installation

Members: We, the members of the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, have called you as our community's Senior Minister, with the charge to help shape and give life to our values, our hopes, and our dreams. We pledge to trust you, and the other leaders working alongside you. We promise to maintain a tone of love, respect, and supportiveness in all of the challenges we take on together. We expect you to always hold the best interests of the community, as a whole, in all that you do with us, and we promise to join you in that aspiration, even when it's hard. We know that we will live into these promises imperfectly, and when we do, we welcome your loving support in reminding us of these commitments.

Rev. Mishra-Marzetti: I am honored and delighted to have been called as our community's senior spiritual leader, with the charge of helping shape and give life to our values, our hopes, and our dreams. I pledge to trust you, and the other leaders working alongside me. I promise to maintain a tone of love, respect, and supportiveness in all of the challenges we take on together. I honor the expectation of always holding the best interests of the community, as a whole, in all that I do with you, and I welcome and need you to join me in that aspiration, even when it's hard. I know that I will live into these promises imperfectly, and when I do, I welcome your loving support in reminding me of these commitments.

Members: With great hope, love, and trust, we do hereby officially install you, Reverend Manish Mishra-Marzetti, as the thirteenth Senior Minister of our congregation. May we embark on this shared ministry as a united and loving community, energized to truly make a difference in our lives and in a world that needs us.

ADDENDUM E

(Drafted/agreed to by the Senior Staff Team - May 2019)

Vision, Role, and Purpose of the UUAA Senior Staff Team

The UUAA Senior Staff Team, which consists of the Senior Minister, Interim Administrator, Director of Worship & Music, Assistant Minister, & the Assistant Minister for Spiritual Growth and Development, hold the following as its vision, role, and purpose:

- providing senior-level management of, and coordination of, information, activities, and events at UUAA;
- serving in strategic partnership with one another, and our respective programs/groups, bringing alive through our example our institutional commitment to collaborative and shared leadership;
- providing UUAA a high-level vantage point for medium range and longer term planning of operational programs and activities;
- implementing the vision and strategic priorities of the congregation, ensuring that operational objectives/goals are in alignment with these;
- engaging in high-level, longer-term calendaring of congregational activities and programs;
- coordinating and collaborating on overall, longer term budgetary planning; and,
- serving collectively as a critical point of operational linkage with the UUAA Board of Trustees.

ADDENDUM F

(Process drafted/created April-May 2019, jointly between the UUAA Board and the Senior Minister)

Shared Leadership Assessment

DRAFT Procedure for Conducting a Shared Leadership Assessment
Between the UUAA Board and the Senior Minister

The assessment consists of two areas:

1. What: Content and focus of our work: Board's workplan, Senior Minister's workplan
2. How: Process and relationship of our work: our mutual covenant

As we participate in this assessment, we want to embody the following values:

- Mutual respect
- Mutual support
- Authenticity
- Honesty
- Love

The Process

Part 1: Content.

Check in on the Senior Minister's and Board's workplans.

- Are the items on the workplans still correct?
- Are the priorities still right?
- If so, what progress has been made?
- If workplans or priorities need to be adjusted, add, remove, or change items as needed, and revise the priorities as appropriate.

Part 2: Process and relationship

Check in on the Board's covenant with itself, the Board's covenant with the Senior Minister, and possibly the act of installation.

- How does our working relationship feel to the Board? How does it feel to the Senior Minister?
- Are we following our covenants?
- Do we need to make any adjustments to our covenants or to the way that we work together?

Part 3. Documentation

Document our shared, mutually-agreed-on understandings of the major points we covered in parts 1 and 2.

Timeline

- The Board and Senior Minister will test-drive this process in May-June 2019 to see how it works and revise it as seems appropriate.
- In fall 2019, revise the Board covenant with the Senior Minister to mention that we will engage periodically in this shared leadership assessment process.
- In fall 2019, modify this process to include a description of what we do if our observations are quite different. For example, what if either the Board or Senior Minister thinks everything is going well and the other partner thinks things are going poorly? Perhaps we might get some outside help or facilitation.

- Starting fall 2019, schedule a one hour meeting every three months for this shared assessment.
- Once a year, revisit the shared assessment process and adjust if needed.