

December 2023 Minister's Board Report

Greetings, Board members,

The holidays are a busy time for UUCF, and there is often great need from the congregation for pastoral care. That's why I'm especially glad that our newly revamped Caring Committee got off the ground last Sunday with the participation of eleven people. The committee will be divided into three initial parts: information gathering/sharing, meal trains, and follow-up/cards. There was also a lot of excitement about adding a Caring Visitor and Caring Listener program in the near future. These programs would involve the trained listener either being paired up with a congregational "buddy" in need of on-going connection, or serving as a temporary listener after a Sunday service for someone in need. I am planning a training in January for these programs for invited participants.

On a personal note, as we continue to recover from the havoc Covid wreaked on our congregational systems, I recognize the fatigue and frustration this causes. Fatigue can be witnessed in myself, staff members, and long-time leaders who sometimes feel they are carrying too much. Frustration occurs from all sides when there are expectations that everything should be running like it was in the past (which, even if possible, would not be ideal, given the new demands/opportunities of our current space in this new congregational digital age). Even something that used to be seen as fairly "simple," such as hiring a new bookkeeper or teacher, is very challenging these days for a variety of reasons. Overall, I'm happy with the slow but mostly steady progress this congregation is making, and I'm appreciating all those who are working hard to set a tone of non-anxiousness. It takes time.

The Planned Parenthood matching grant campaign begins today. UUCF will be highlighted in their communications with their supporters. The work UUCF has done to support Planned Parenthood is truly one of the ways we live out our values in the larger community.

While we are in the process of hiring a bookkeeper, there will still need to be further efforts to hire staff teachers, a youth coordinator, and (possibly) custodial help this Winter/Spring. I also see the remainder of the congregational year as a time to shore up and populate any committees that require further help. The Board's efforts this year and last year along with the volunteer drive have dramatically improved engagement with our committees. The remaining months of this year will be an excellent time to make sure those committees are meeting regularly and understand the work they are tasked with. My hope is that we begin the congregational year in Fall 2024 with strong, functioning committees all around, so that we can engage with our congregational mission in even more profound ways.

As always, your participation in the leadership of this congregation is deeply appreciated. May this holiday season bring you time for rest, reflection, and JOY.

In gratitude,

Rev. Dr. Jason Cook