

Oaklandon Unitarian Universalist Church  
Annual Report 2014-2015  
Sharon L Sims, President  
June 1, 2015

Mission: Connect in love to grow and serve

#### Vision

We connect with our UU roots, one another, the teachings from many spiritual traditions, and our individual higher purpose during weekly worship services.

We reach into our community to serve the needs of our neighbors and to support social justice.

We connect to others using theater, music, art, and other forms of self expression, and create opportunities for members and friends to share their talents in a safe and respectful environment.

We offer programs and services that meet the spiritual needs of our members and friends of all ages.

We connect with other Central Indiana UU churches to create a larger community that maximizes our reach and resources.

We create a welcoming space in our building that reflects our dynamic, loving congregation, and allows us to offer programs in service of our mission.

#### Oaklandon Unitarian Universalist Church—Annual Report 2014-15

The by-laws approved at the 2010 Congregational Meeting require the President of the congregation to provide an annual report. This report is to highlight the accomplishments of the church during its fiscal year (June 1 through May 31) and proposed plans for the subsequent year. This report is organized by topics of interest.

#### **State of the Church**

The state of OUUC at the time of this report is good. We continue to experience financial stability and steady membership.

The OUUC remains a lay led congregation, with weekly attendance ranging from 20-30 adults and 8-10 children. Reverend Forrest Gilmore has continued to provide a monthly service. Our members, friends, and other outside speakers have provided worship services that feed our spirits and challenge our thinking as people of faith.

We have a strong commitment to provide a spiritual community that is free of dogma and creed. The OUUC maintains its membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association of

Congregations (UUA) and in the Midwest Region. The OUUC is a “fair share” member of the UUA, paying dues for all members of the congregation.

Individuals can elect to become a member of the OUUC by signing the Membership Book. Rev. Gilmore has conducted one "New to UU" class this year for existing and potential members.

### **Finances**

The OUUC operates on a balanced budget. The church has invested funds that produce some interest put toward our operating budget. In addition, we have a certificate of deposit that is to be accessed only in the event of a significant need such as a large repair to the building. Because of the strong financial oversight of the Board, our investments continue to show modest growth.

The operating budget consists of expenses for maintaining our space (such as utilities, supplies, repairs, etc.) and for programs (Sunday services, religious education, special events, etc.). The annual operating expenses of the church are approximately \$45,000.

### **Website and Social Media**

The OUUC launched a website several years ago as a way to reach others searching for a spiritual community. This year, we changed the format of the website to make it more user friendly. In addition, we have a public Facebook group where members post news and photos. This year, we also added an electronic newsletter, which has quickly become a central feature in our communication efforts. All of these endeavors are managed by the communications team, led by Kaye McSpadden—who has also been responsible for the ongoing work of the weekly newsletter.

### **Weekly Services**

The OUUC has maintained a traditional weekly service that includes music, meditation, readings, and a message. Members and invited guests provide the messages. Our long time worship coordinator, Jan Viehweg resigned her position this spring, and we are experimenting with new ways to plan and implement Sunday services. In addition, there is interest in planning more nontraditional services.

Kaye McSpadden has been regularly providing music. She has energized our small but dedicated choir, and we have provided some fantastic special music this year. We welcome anyone who would like to sing with us. The choir meets at 9:45 am Sunday, just prior to church.

During the summer of 2015 worship is scheduled to occur downstairs in the Fellowship Hall where air conditioning is available. The format for summer services is more informal to accommodate the location change. We invite your participation this summer—our discussion and thinking is always richer when we gather together. We cleaned and updated our nursery, and added a window to the door in that area for safety. In addition, we have added child care so our younger families can attend services in the

summer. We will resume services upstairs in September.

### **Religious Education**

The OUUC has a reputation for providing a religious education experience for young children built on learning and discovery. Under the leadership of Tammy Mills, our RE Coordinator, our Religious Education program has flourished. This year's focus began with the UU principles. The youth examined the principles in light of current events. In addition, the children learned about celebrations in other cultures and religions. Tammy also worked with the children around issues of bullying.

Two of our youth attended the OWL program this year, and Tammy Mills and Sherry Sims participated in training to deliver the elementary age OWL. In the upcoming year, the Citywide OWL plans to host the Senior High program in the fall.

In the upcoming year, Tammy will continue to develop curriculum that supports our mission; to collect data about attendance; and to increase our young people's ability to connect with youth in other UU churches. We are so lucky to have someone with Tammy's talents, skills, and enthusiasm guiding this crucial program.

### **Programs**

There are numerous programs in the OUUC that make up the fabric of our vibrant and growing spiritual community. Brief descriptions of these are provided below.

#### **Socrates Café**

The Socrates Café is our adult discussion group. The group determines a "question" for each session and adheres to group rules that allow free sharing by all members. This group meets every other Wednesday at 7 pm in Fellowship Hall, and is currently coordinated by David Silk. All are welcome to attend.

#### **Book Club**

The book club meets month September through May. We meet in each others' homes and read and discuss books representing a variety of genres—both fiction and nonfiction. The discussions are wide ranging, enthusiastic, opinionated, and just plain fun.

#### **Community Garden**

The community garden was provided to the OUUC as a result of a Boy Scout Eagle project. A group of volunteers created this space and suggested the rules for having a plot. Last year, both members as well as community friends used plots to grow vegetables and flowers. This year, all the plots are being used, and if we have surplus produce, we will contribute it to the Lawrence food pantry.

## Oaklandon Community Theater

The Oaklandon Civic Theatre (OCT) is a program of the OUUC. The OCT currently produces two shows per season or year. This year's productions included the tenth anniversary production of "Making a Killing"—starring many of the actors in the original show. The spring show was "Ghost Story", written and directed by Marsha Grant, an Indiana playwright. The OCT has partnered with other community groups and theatres in its activities. These collaborations help market the OCT to the wider Indianapolis community. The OCT supports the OUUC's commitment to the arts as part of our spiritual community.

Member Bonnie May, along with other volunteers from the congregation, has provided excellent leadership in creating innovative and fun themes for Intermission held in the Fellowship Hall. Bonnie's Café sells and serves dessert and beverages to patrons of the theatre. This is an additional fund raising activity for the OUUC.

OUUC members are invited and encouraged to participate in any aspect of the OCT—several serve as costumers, set builders, and painters. Each member and friend is encouraged to attend the OCT productions and bring at least one friend, which supports the church in many ways.

## **Goals and Opportunities**

The OUUC enjoys a rich and long history. Our current building has been on this site for over 90 years and belongs to the congregation without mortgage or debt. The building is aging however and does require frequent and sometimes expensive maintenance and repair. Because of the generosity of our members and friends, we replaced the carpet in the sanctuary and repainted that space. We received (through the efforts of Bonnie Jones) a grant from Indiana Historic Landmarks to complete the painting of the soffits and gutters on the building exterior. As we look to the future, we must attend to issues with our shifting foundation, and continue working on beautifying our grounds.

The board also anticipates continued growth of membership and participation in our spiritual community. This growth will allow us to involve others in the many programs and tasks required to accomplish our vision and mission.

As a lay led congregation we will continue to invite members and friends to share their messages and ideas as well as invite speakers and ministers from other congregations. The operation of our church requires the constant commitment and dedication of our members and friends. And we are doing a great job!

Our committees have been active this year. The Social Justice Team focused on three endeavors this year. We continued our participation in Kiva loans and the Heifer project. Kiva loans support people in developing countries create sustainable ways to earn a living, and we have had only one default to date! The RE kids vote on which animals to buy for the Heifer project—and they take this responsibility seriously. We have become a sponsoring organization for Raise The Wage Indiana, an effort to support raising the minimum wage in our state. We have developed an ongoing relationship with The

Cupboard—a Lawrence food pantry. We have contributed milk and eggs regularly, and have also committed to volunteering there twice a month. To date, both adults and youth have volunteered and the project is going very well. We also supported the Children’s Bureau by providing gifts for children at Christmas. In April, we initiated a Share the Plate program, contributing half of our weekly non pledged donations to organizations committed to social justice needs. Our initial recipient is the Cupboard. The generosity of our members and friends is astounding, considering our size. We are a mighty group!

The Building and Grounds team have completed a walk through of our building and have identified areas needing repair and maintenance. They have organized several work days at church, with members and friends doing some serious cleaning after the paint job, and also clearing and repairing our gardens.

### Reflections from the President

It has been an honor to serve as your Board President again this year. We are a small congregation, and the love and caring that we share with one another is nothing short of amazing. We should take every opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments. As we move into the next year, we should reflect on who we are, and what we would like to create for our church and our community. We have completed work on our mission and vision, and feel that it will guide our programs going forward. It is a wondrous thing to find a spiritual home, and we want to share that opportunity with others through our programs and our presence in our community.

As we pause annually, we reflect upon and celebrate our accomplishments, and consider these reflective questions:

1. How can we grow as a spiritual community?
2. How can we better meet our spiritual needs while serving our larger community?
3. How can we maintain and beautify our building and grounds while respecting the time and energy of our members and friends and attending to our financial resources?
4. In what ways do you see yourself contributing to our spiritual community?

It has been a great pleasure (and challenge) serving as President for the past 3 years. I look forward to supporting the new board in refining and reaching our goals.

Thank you for all you give to our thriving spiritual community!

– *Sherry Sims*