

Oaklandon Unitarian Universalist Church
Annual Report 2013-2014
Sharon L Sims, President
June 1, 2014

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 2013-14

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 very good. We continue to experience financial stability and modest growth in our membership.

The OUUC remains a lay led congregation, with weekly attendance ranging from 25-30 adults and 10 to 15 children. Reverend Forrest Gilmore has continued his service as a consultant to the Board and has also done 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 new 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 board of directors has voted to keep costs within budgeted areas. 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 finance committee and our treasurers, our investments have shown modest growth, even during the recent recession.

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 \$40, 000.

Website and Social Media

The OUUC launched a website several years ago as a way to reach others searching for a spiritual community. In addition, we have a Facebook group where members post news and photos. This year, we also added an electronic newsletter. All of these endeavors are managed by some very dedicated volunteers. In the next year, the Board would like to organize and integrate all of these efforts, and to explore other means of increasing our virtual presence.

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. The Worship Committee meets regularly to solicit ideas for speakers and topics.

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 once a month on Sunday evening for a more extended practice, and at 9:45 am Sunday, just prior to church.

During the summer of 2014 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.

The Worship Committee will continue to plan for more formal or typical services beginning in September 2014.

Religious Education

The OUUC has a reputation for providing a comprehensive and interesting religious education experience for young children. Under the leadership of Tammy Mills, our RE Coordinator, our Religious Education program has flourished.

There has been increased interest locally in providing the OWL (Our Whole Lives) curriculum to our children and youth—and several UU churches are planning a weekend training for OWL teachers. Tammy Mills and Sherry Sims will be attending the training for the K-6 OWL course. They will become part of a new citywide OWL program that will allow us to maximize our resources for all UU children and youth in Marion county.

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 led 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.

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 Night Thoreau Spent in Jail" (part of the Indianapolis Spirit and Place festival), and "Corn and Sausage in Harmony". "Corn and Sausage" was written by local playwright Jim Troffatter, who has been involved with OCT for many years. 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 revenue generating activity for the OUUC.

OUUC members are invited and encouraged to participate in any aspect of the OCT. 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 decades and belongs to the congregation without mortgage or debt. The building is aging however and does require maintenance. The sewer repairs were completed in June 2013. In addition, because of the generosity of our members and friends, we are poised to replace the carpet in the sanctuary and to repaint the sanctuary. We have (through the efforts of Bonnie Jones) received 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 hope to update our sanctuary and to beautify the side lot as well.

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 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 Committee

organized church participation in local efforts to defeat HJR-3, the proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Members of all ages participated in these actions, contributing to the ultimate defeat of the amendment as originally proposed. The Board would like to increase the amount of money devoted to social justice in the coming year, in an effort to become more involved in our local community. The Benevolence committee has made over 400 small loans to people around the world through the Kiva Project. These loans support people in developing sustainable ways to earn a living, and we have had no defaults to date! Imagine the ripple effect of those 300 people and the people they support in turn. In addition, through generous donations from the congregation, we assisted the Shalom center in Bloomington, and supported the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The Worship committee continued their stellar work of planning worship services throughout the year.

Reflections from the President

It has been an honor to serve as your Board President again this year. We are a small but amazing congregation, and the love and caring that we share with one another is exemplary. 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 preserve what is important in our history while modernizing the appearance of our sanctuary?
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?
4. In what ways do you see yourself contributing to our growing and thriving spiritual community?

It has been a great pleasure (and challenge) serving as President for the past 2 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*

