

**Minister's Report to the
UUTC Board of Directors
September 23, 2015**

It has been an unusually busy, but very good September. This month has included offering of all usual programs, PLUS presentation of the Ware Lecture; food prep and execution of the Day of Mindfulness; the All-Congregational Picnic and CRE Kick-off; and a jazz concert by Champion Fulton's band ... with a start-up retreat with our District Consultant, Kathy McGowan, to follow this coming weekend.

I have promised myself and the staff and numerous volunteers that we will work very hard to NOT schedule so many events so close together in the future. That was one of the glitches of "start-up mode" with a new minister. Lessons learned for the next time you have a new minister. ...

Nevertheless, as UUTC continues to transition from a **Pastoral** to a **Program** sized congregation, having "too many programs" (as opposed to "too few") is a "good problem to have," especially since all events were (or will be) well-attended. What is especially significant is that these **programs** brought many newcomers to UUTC, and also attracted members and friends who haven't been here for a while.

One of the key factors that led to success of these events was the administrative and program support of de facto Administrator RK Young, and de facto Director of Religious Exploration (DRE) Heather Layton, IT Guru Mark Allison, and CRE teacher Emily Atkinson – and of course countless volunteers. I am particularly pleased that the *Transylvania Times* (TT) ran a full-length feature story on Jazz Artist Champion Fulton (free publicity for UUTC) and that Emily's father underwrote the cost of a large ad in the TT to attract attendees to the concert. We also printed and posted numerous concert posters and handbills throughout Brevard, which also helps to raise public awareness of UUTC within our community. We have learned much from this endeavor and plan to improve our PR in the future.

The UUTC staff is extraordinarily talented and dedicated, and in order to grow the congregation, it will be necessary to increase staff hours – over time. As you are aware, I have already proposed expanding the role of the Administrative Assistant to full-time in order to support added programming to meet the needs of a congregation-in-transition from Pastoral to Program sized organization. This again brings us to the key issues I addressed in my August report to the Board: Staffing, Stewardship, and Space. All must be fully optimized to offer the best programs to the UUTC Community and beyond.

Children and Youth are becoming more noticeable at UUTC – by design. If this congregation is to thrive and grow at a rate that outpaces attrition due to old age, it is essential to attract younger individuals, particularly families with children. This, too, will require added staffing hours for RE programming and childcare in the future. More on that in later reports.

Our de facto DRE, Heather Layton, asked that I share with the Board our need to perform background checks for all people who work directly with children and youth. This procedure is required by UUTC policies and is also a best practice to assure the safety of our children and youth, while protecting the congregation from potential liability issues.

The need for background checks extends to the Youth Conventions (Youth CON's) at The Mountain. In addition, adult Youth CON advisors will also need a signed form from the congregation. Safeguarding our children and youth will require development of process and budgeting for all background checks, both retroactively as well as in the future.

Regarding the All Congregation Retreat at The Mountain, scheduled for the Halloween Weekend: based on feedback from the planning committee that there is limited interest for such a retreat at this time, we are leaning toward rescheduling the event until the spring of 2016. Based on RK Young's conversation with staff at The Mountain, there will be no financial penalty if we reschedule the Retreat in the spring – and we will have the entire place to ourselves if we have at least 50 attendees. Right now, we are looking at the weekend of April 29, 30 and May 1, when trees and flowers should be in bloom. I recommend that we postpone the retreat until that time ... and make every effort to have at least 50 people attend. To this end, we should also begin to budget for full or partial scholarships so that all who wish to attend will be able to do so.

We will have the “Intergenerational Blessing of the Animals Service” on October 4, and we are already distributing flyers throughout the community to invite members, friends and newcomers to attend. I have led this sort of service at three other UU congregations, and all have been well-attended and have traditionally attracted visitors. Heather Layton and I have been working closely with the Music Team to ensure that this is a lively, inspiring service for animal lovers. Those who have allergies or animal phobias are invited to listen to the service when it is posted on line.

As always, I appreciate the support of the Board and all other volunteers to support the life of this beloved congregation and our important work in the world. I look forward to sharing our message with others in the future.

Requested Action: Board Vote to Approve Rescheduling Retreat at The Mountain

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Paula R. Gable
Interim Minister