



Evergreen
Unitarian
Universalist
Fellowship

2024 - 2025

Annual Report

www.evergreenuu.org

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Minister's Annual Report

Rev. Joe Rettenmaier

Last September as I returned from summer travels to our church year together, I was inspired to guide us in reimagining our congregation's sense of home and community reputation. Although I wasn't aware of this call within me at that time, I did find myself in brainstorming sessions with you all and reinvigorated group discussions with fresh takes on where Evergreen could grow to now. In short, it's been a year to expand our communications within and beyond our walls. A year to ensure that members, staff, visitors, and community partners participated in renewing some shared values, some shared covenants, and our shared mission.

As we moved through fall into winter, I focused on guiding our worship services into new dimensions. From the pulpit we explored climate justice, the sanctity of beloved democracy within our congregations, the new call for trans/nonbinary family support, and so much more. I worked to reallocate responsibilities among our worship team, moving us toward fostering a collaborative, spiritually safe, welcoming "container" of faith discovery.

I was also asked by the Social Justice Committee to serve as Chair for the year. Together as a team we helped guide and nurture Evergreen's return to engaged social justice. Social justice took on more meaning this year as the congregation sought support and response to national changes. I shifted our works to a more project-based model so more voices could engage in service to LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, climate change, and more.

Also this year, I've found inspiration – as I hope you have too -- in all of our collective group discussions, social hour conversations, and pastoral care one-on-ones. Inspiration that propelled all of us to solidify our concerns and dreams into what I see as a kind of "unofficial" mission that emerged this year – supporting the love at our center and engaging in local community movements so Evergreen can thrive into the moment.

With the holiday season came another opportunity: introducing a new "Sunday of Service for All Ages" concept. Because our rental reality pushed us into separate rooms a few Sundays last winter, I pivoted my collaborations with you all to tap into our momentum in social justice, intergenerational learning, family fellowship, and Sunday worship, to hone hands-on learning from local community leaders, onsite actions, and donation projects into

Sunday services. As a result, this total collaboration approach between RE, Social Justice, Worship and partners helped break through some restrictions that had settled over Evergreen's outward community engagement. I believe we all see now how our morale and membership has risen during these increasingly alarming American times. That indicates we are filling a vital faith need in Everett and Snohomish County. We can be proud of helping to fill that need with every open-hearted welcome we extend.

Our music ministry has undergone renewal, too, and I remain immensely grateful for our dedicated volunteer musicians whose creativity and devotion and pluck breathed new life into our services and rehearsals. Their energy positively buoyed my teachings as I managed our transition to new music ministry, bidding a loving farewell to Kathleen Goff and a loving welcome to Diane Figaro. The joy of Diane's collaborations is reviving Evergreen's joys....

Throughout the year, many of us have continued to organize shared ministry around pastoral care, social justice, and worship arts that raise and praise more voices. I believe ministry should lead members and visitors alike to celebrate liberation, faith backgrounds, and deep listening to one another's lived truth.

With the help of dedicated LGBTQ+ members and the Committee on Ministry, we're also on the path to renewing our Welcoming Congregation designation with the UUA. I am so very proud of everyone's hard work and unwavering dedication to this longer term effort -- volunteers, staff, our youth, guest speakers, new community partners, and more.

Beloveds, I do believe Evergreen's outward ministry is blooming as we settle into our warm community center tenancy. I notice team meetings and fellowship conversations bringing to light personal transformation stories and steadfast dreams of indomitable loving justice. When you notice it too, let it remind you why we do what we do.

With faith, warmly,
Rev. Joe



President's Report to the Congregation

Sandie Biggerstaff, Board of Trustees President

Looking back over this church year I am struck by the sense of the fellowship entering a phase of blossoming.

One of the biggest blossoms is the music program. The addition of our new music director has seen a reinvigoration of the choir and live music almost every week. A band has been formed and it is also performing at services.

Our services are becoming more diverse and inclusive as more of our members share the pulpit with Rev. Joe. Last summer's programs of lay led services were so well attended that we have decided to keep on renting the Cascade View room for this coming summer. There have also been Sundays of Service giving us the opportunity to learn about and help various organizations in our community. RE kids have also led several services.

The fellowship itself has grown, as all those who attended the May 18th service could see. And among those new members are some families with young children. Seeing more little ones at our services is such a delight.

Participation in Social Justice has also grown. Driven in large part by the direction the federal government has taken. (I missed the protests of the 60's but now, knowing I am with friends, have found the courage to get out there.) This was the second year that members marched with our banner in the MLK walk in Everett and handed out cookies at the programs that followed at the Gipson Center. Over and over it is brought to my attention how much easier participation has become since we left the old church building and all it's issues behind, and moved to the Gipson Center. There was an EUUF table with our banner and cookies to hand out at the Everett Pride event which was very successful despite a downpour. More recently our banner was seen for a split second on King 5 News coverage for the Hands Off protest sponsored by Indivisible. And for those who aren't able to be on the ground there are always cookies to



bake and load into biodegradable bags for distribution at various events.

The process of visioning our long term future was begun at the first Sunday BrUUnch in January. The second will take place after the congregational meeting. This is Step 3 of the long range plan created when the decision to move was made. At that time the Gipson Center was our best option and we were under a time constraint. Now we have the time to really look deep and think and share and dream.

I want to thank all the volunteers, committee leaders and members, and the staff for the blossoming we are experiencing. Your work and dedication has made this possible.

Sandie Biggerstaff

President, EUUF BOT 2024-2025

Leadership Development Committee

Chris Martinez, Chair

Committee members: Sarah Taylor, Paula Bloomberg, Elaine Clark, and Chris Martinez, chair

The LDC met at church a number of times discussing priorities, candidates, progress. After 3 years of female leadership and a year at least with minimal male members it seemed important to look for male candidates for Board members for next year. It was also considered important to recruit newer members. At the beginning of this year new members were far fewer than at present. There was only one new member who consented to candidacy. As we were concluding our work many new members joined and next year's LDC will have many new wonderful people to choose from.

We did not consider possibilities for training this year but future LDC committees may want to pursue the Board's interest in Sociocracy and UUA options.

The Bylaws proscribe that the LDC and Board appoint a Stewardship Chair Designate. Tom Gaskin was in that role this year and will be chair next year. His recommendation was requested and his recommendation for this role is Kirsti Dodrill. She is a new member of the Fellowship and was a capable member of the Stewardship Committee this past year.

Endowment Committee

Chuck Taylor, Chair

Members of the Endowment Committee this year are:

Chuck Taylor (Elected 2024 for a 2-year term)

Laurel Nisler (Elected 2024 for a 2-year term)

Leala Davies (Elected 2023 for a 3-year term)

Members may serve for up to 2 consecutive 3-year terms, so no new members need to be elected this year. Ideally, terms should be staggered. Two new members will need to be elected in 2026, and the duration of their terms should be adjusted accordingly.

The Evergreen Endowment fund is invested in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF). There is a lag in the determination of the value of the UUCEF because the value of the aggregate depends on the value of its many holdings, many of which are not available promptly at the end of each month. As of this writing, the latest available official valuation is for March 31, 2025.

Fund values:

June 30, 2024 \$1,918,487.42

March 31, 2025 \$1,973,275.34

Gain: \$54,787.92

The majority of the funds in the Endowment Fund came from the sale of our Marysville building. In addition, the Fellowship also holds Certificates of Deposit in the amount of \$500,000 from that sale.

During the course of the year the members of the Endowment Committee monitor the performance of the Endowment Fund through participation in quarterly Zoom calls with the UUCEF managers.

Past performance is not a guarantee of future performance, particularly in the current political atmosphere.

For the Endowment Committee,
Chuck Taylor

Worship Committee

Our Worship Team has grown this year beyond just Rev. Joe, Marijo Duprey, Diane Figaro, and Desmond Smith to include Ian Clark, Sandie Biggerstaff, and Michelle Valentine as our worship tech experts. Marijo and Desmond have asked Rev. Joe to return to being the primary scheduler and outreach to our guest speakers throughout the year. As a team we continue to widen the circle of voices and collaborations that create worship services each week. We also have worked to vary the service formats throughout the year which congregants and visitors alike



tell us they appreciate. We are thrilled to now have Diane Figaro's leadership talents and presence on the team! Our work is also soundly supported by Tara Dunaier, Ian Clark, and Alli Curtis. We're happy to once again report that worship team is a smoothly collaborative engine that adapts lovingly to serve the congregation's worship needs.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is offered to all members of Evergreen. Rev. Joe continues to guide a more personally tailored response to care needs. Since this requires coordinating lay member skills, community resources, pastoral counseling, trauma informed ministry and more, Pastoral Care concerns and needs should be communicated to Rev. Joe as soon as possible so he can assemble appropriate outreach. Pastoral Care's "response groups" have also helped fill caring support needs which arise throughout the year like bringing meals or groceries to households experiencing a loss, helping find rides, or visiting those recovering from medical procedures or family emergencies.

Membership

Alonna Chatburn, Chair

Rev. Joe and Alonna Chatburn were delighted to talk with many EUUF friends. We held three Path to Membership classes. These included having friends introduce themselves, discussing the six UU values with love at the center, learning about the history of UU, sharing their personal journey to UUism and giving them a packet with the essential steps to complete membership. Friends may become members at any time, contact Rev. Joe or Alonna.

On May 18th, the EUUF congregants welcomed eleven new members. They were given the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide and a beautiful wooden handmade chalice by Chuck Taylor. The ceremony included the welcoming of new members by the congregation. It was heartwarming!



Greeter Team

Alonna Chatburn, Joy Lauderbaugh and Judy Smith

The Greeter's Committee was active each Sunday morning. Friendly volunteers donated their time and efforts to create a welcoming atmosphere with Joy Lauderbaugh and Judy Smith, who chaired this team. Their tasks included greeting people, distributing name tags, taking attendance and posting signs on the street corners. Greeters gave and received miles of smiles!

We continue to look for more volunteers to help with larger and smaller tasks and we'll be trying new ways to involve more people in this crucial role for Evergreen.

Publicity & Outreach Committee

Members: Jennie Lindberg, Sue Gaskin, Skyler Malan
(Note, Barbara Johnson was a member for half of the year).

The Outreach and Publicity Committee continued the work to raise EUUF's visibility in our new neighborhood of Everett.

Signage

The greeters are putting our signs out each Sunday morning on Pacific Avenue, Wall Street and on Broadway near the parking garage, and bringing them back in after the service. This helps new visitors find us.

Public Radio Sponsorship

We have continued our sponsorship at the local Everett public radio, KSER (this is not referred to as advertising, but instead is called sponsorship). The costs are lower than the newspaper and it is the demographic we want to reach. Our sponsorship currently is:

“Support for KSER comes from Evergreen Unitarian Universalist Fellowship offering liberal religious education for children, youth and adults in the heart of Everett. Learn more at EvergreenUU.org “

Promotional Handouts

We have designed a simple handout of our activities (directing people to the website for details of how to attend) and this is placed in a rack in the lobby of the Gipson Center. We are working on a two-fold brochure that will be added to this when completed. QR codes are placed on both to help people navigate to our website.

Tee-shirts

People have been wearing their new EUUF tee-shirts, and we are planning a new order for this spring.



Wintertide Festival

We organized EUUF attendance at the Wintertide Festival at the Gipson Center for the second year in December and promoted EUUF as well as members crafts for sale. We had solicited donations of cookies from members and packaged these into wax paper

baggies with a EUUF label. EUUF volunteers gave out cookies to 277 people (fewer than the previous year because of lower attendance at the festival). We had excess donations which were frozen and used for the MLK event the following month.

Martin Luther King Junior March and Rally

This was a big success, as 25 EUUF members attended the march and 43 attended the rally. We had a table at the rally and gave out 170 bags of cookies.



Everett Pride Block Party

An entire day of rain made this Block Party not quite as festive as it could be but we did give out cookies (which unfortunately became soggy!). Again, this year, we split the table with Sunnyside Village Cohousing, which provided the tables and awning (and split the cost of the table). Many EUUF members wore their new EUUF tee-shirts as they attend the festival.

Collaborative Ad:

We created a joint collaborative ad with the Everett United Church of Christ, Temple Beth Or, and Trinity Lutheran which announces our collective support of LGBTQ+ issues during the Pride Block Party. This idea was very well received by the other faith communities. We are running this ad again in 2025.



Attendance at protests and marches

There have been several local political protests and marches in the spring of 2025. Over 20 EUUF members have attended wearing their EUUF tee-shirts, and carrying our banner. This raises our visibility and links us to progressive actions.

Voter Registration

We had a table at the Everett Farmers Market in the summer of 2024, once a month for three months and registered people to vote.

Future plans:

- Continue with sponsorship at KSER, changing the message to be relevant to the season
- Continue to work on Meta Advertising, social media, because it can be targeted and focused.
- Continue to work on outreach through the Everett Farmer's Market and offering voter registration with EUUF volunteers.
- Continue to work on the Everett Pride Block Party as described above until the event in June.
- Advertising events: we will use Event Bright, Meet up and other social media sites to promote special services as "events" through-out the year.

Music

Diane Figaro, EUUF Music Director

Adding to our musical strengths as a congregation, this year, a new Music Director, Diane Figaro, PhD in Musicology, was hired. Diane is a pianist, singer, choir director, and ethnomusicologist. Vibrant live music with piano accompaniment has been established as a weekly part of worship.

Our choir, Common Ground, currently has about 8 members, and our band has approximately 5 members. We have also had wonderful musicians perform who are outside these groups.

Evergreen music ministers have created a beautiful tapestry of music offerings this year. They bring to their ministry a wide background of music training, performance, and deep love for music-making, including in worship settings.

Diane will keep providing piano accompaniment and leading the singing over the summer when the choir is on break. Additionally, we will have special musicians.



Covenant Circles

Susan C. S. Gaskin

We are now at the end of our second church year at the Carl Gibson Center and feel happy about our new growth in membership as we are more settled in our new home.

After trying to recruit new leaders and members in the fall, December was blessed with the exciting welcome and start of a new Covenant Circle which meets on the first Sunday of each month after coffee hour at the Carl Gibson Center and is led by seasoned co-leaders Nancy Miller and Sarah Taylor. The participants are a combination of old and new members and friends of the Fellowship. They began their first meeting with fifteen in number. The room was too small to accommodate everyone and flowed into the hallway. This was a great problem to have! For the second meeting Sarah and Nancy were able to secure the larger Rainier Room to accommodate their Covenant Circle member numbers. Currently they have 12 members. Nancy Miler reports that “the Ohana Covenant Circle is an inspiration to each other, earning Gold Stars for participation and effort.”

Skyler and Alonna attempted to begin a second Newcomer CC meeting due to continued interest by new friends of the Congregation. They met twice with a different participant attending the meeting each month. Alonna and Skyler were invited to speak at the Ohana CC led by Nancy and Sarah to invite folks to join them to hopefully skim off a few volunteers from their group to boost their numbers and build another new group. But after three meetings the Ohana CC group was content to remain with their leaders and bonding group. Skyler and Alonna will advertise and start again in the fall with the hope of stirring up more interest in Covenant Circles.

We began in September with four active Covenant Circles. After many years of meeting together Marilyn Bosckis' Covenant Circle chose to end their group.

Two Covenant Circles have welcomed new members to their flock, the third CC group is new and the fourth CC group remains spiritually, content and at capacity.

In the winter, all of our Covenant Circle groups donated warm clothing to the Cocoon House and food to our local food bank.

The Cedar Covenant Circle led by Sage Billings has nine dedicated members who meet at the Carl Gibson Center. They recently added an additional half hour to their meeting time each month which allows them to more deeply appreciate each others insights, reflections and company as they continue to explore the rich content of the Unitarian Pocket Guide. Sandie Biggerstaff will take on the leadership of the group in July as Sage will be our new Board President.

Alonna Chatburn's Marysville Covenant Circle continues to be an eager and committed group of nine members meeting each month on the first Wednesday afternoon in Alonna's home. They find that sharing the leadership and presentation of the topic and discussion amongst the members keeps everyone engaged. Wider community activities they have been involved with include the Humane Society and the National Heifer Association.

Sue and Tom's Silver Lake Covenant Circle of eleven continues to be enthusiastic and supportive of one another. They meet monthly at Sue and Tom's as well as other members homes and on Zoom as needed to keep everyone healthy. They enjoy the rotation of thoughtful and stimulating topic presentations among the creative Covenant Circle group members. Next month they all look forward to their CC hosting a EUUF fund raising event at Sue and Tom's home: "Stimulating-Never Boring Board Games".

The Covenant Circle Leaders decided to meet monthly to help support each other in these tumultuous times. We all have worked hard to try and minimize the stress of our Covenant Circle members by presenting a variety of topics on hope, humor, meditation, and healthy strategies to minimize stress, allowing our groups to talk about ways to unite, support and care for one another in community. Throughout the strife of the times our groups have come together to create stronger bonds of trust and friendship with one another. We have found that we are able to problem solve concerns that a leader/group might have. If we need further assistance we call on Reverend Joe.

At the end of June we will offer a Covenant Circle training for new leaders. We hope to encourage several people to join us as leaders so we can begin one or two new Covenant Circles in the Fall. In September the Covenant Circle Leaders will have a potluck lunch at Sue Gaskin's home to celebrate the success of our Covenant Circles and look ahead to the new year.

With UU Warmth,

Susan C. S. Gaskin



Religious Exploration for Children & Youth

JW Wenzel, Religious Educator

Vision: We are a compassionate, interconnected community of spiritually-rooted carbon-based life forms living our values.

Summary

The 2024-2025 program year has been marked by significant growth, curriculum transitions, and innovative community-building initiatives. RE attendance has grown substantially, particularly following the November 2024 election, requiring adaptations in classroom management and programming. The program successfully pivoted from less engaging curriculum to more responsive approaches.

Program Growth & Participation

Attendance Trends

- **Summer 2024:** Steady attendance with new visitors from Pride in the Park and Street Parties
- **Post-Election Growth:** Significant increase in family participation following November 2024 election
- **Current Status:** Expanded age range requiring differentiated programming approaches

Age Group Development

- **Youth Program:** Strong engagement with climate activism, service planning, and RPG-based curriculum
- **Younger Children (3-7 years):** New demographic requiring specialized programming and classroom management
- **Families:** Increased cohort building and parent engagement

Curriculum Evolution

Soul Matters Transition

- **Challenge:** Soul Matters curriculum proved less engaging than previous year
- **Decision:** Discontinued in February 2025 after multiple attempts at adjustment
- **Timeline:** August 2024 - February 2025

Building a Better World Implementation

- **Launch:** February 2025
- **Focus:** UU world-building through Role-Playing Games
- **Reception:** High engagement from both youth and children
- **Approach:** Values exploration through gameplay and collaborative storytelling

Service-Based Learning

- **Youth-Led Service:** March 2025 - well-received community worship experience
- **Skills Development:** Youth gained insight into worship team operations
- **Future Plans:** Quarterly youth-involved services under consideration

Major Initiatives & Events

Mystery BUUddies Program (March 2025)

- **Participation:** 40 community members (exceeded expectations)
- **Format:** Secret buddy assignments with weekly prompts and card-making
- **Outcome:** High retention rate (fewer than 5 dropouts)
- **Culmination:** April 13th community party



Winter Solstice Pageant (December 2024)

- **Significance:** First rehearsed pageant in many years
- **Participation:** Multi-generational involvement with varied roles
- **Challenges:** Space and scheduling limitations identified for future productions
- **Reception:** Well-received by congregation



Family Gatherings

- **December 2024:** 13 children/youth, 7 adults - movie night and fellowship
- **Format Evolution:** Activities for children, discussion groups for adults
- **Goals:** Service projects, mentorship opportunities, potential preschool meetups

Youth Gatherings

- **Youth-led fellowship opportunities:** Games, movies, and service creation

Youth Climate Activism

- **Youth Climate Con:** Multiple youth participated at University UU
- **Peer Leadership:** Youth received peer-to-peer counseling training



Professional Development & Training

Family Ministry Training

Ongoing Program Focus Areas:

- Diverse understanding of "family" concepts
- Family systems and developmental theories
- Congregation as family dynamics
- Successful family ministry components
- Shared ministry enhancement
- Supporting ministry within families
- UU faith integration at home and community

LREDA Engagement

- **Fall 2024 Conference:** Focus on rest and parental care
- **Whole Church Faith Development:** "All we do is faith development. All we teach is Unitarian Universalism. The congregation is the curriculum."
- **Professional Networking:** Regular participation in webinars and professional gatherings

Additional Training

- UU Institute modules completion
- Volunteer sustainability workshops
- UU History 101 certification

Parent & Family Support

UU Parenting Circle

- **Initiative:** Response to identified community need
- **Format Possibilities:** Initially online with plans for in-person gatherings
- **Purpose:** Support parents raising UU children
- **Community Interest:** Strong support from current parents

Family-Friendly Improvements

- **Hands on Worship:** Reestablishment of service activities for children
- **Accessibility:** Identified need for baby changing facilities
- **Parking Challenges:** Noted concern for families arriving at peak times

Challenges & Adaptations

Space Limitations

- **Summer 2024:** Open space challenges with increased younger children attendance
- **Shared Facilities:** Ongoing adaptation to CGC space sharing



Curriculum Responsiveness

- **Soul Matters:** Required mid-year curriculum change due to engagement issues
- **Age Range Expansion:** Necessitated differentiated programming approaches
- **Classroom Management:** Continuous adaptation to meet diverse needs

Timing Considerations

- **Mystery BUUddies:** Future programming may shift to winter months to avoid spring conflicts
- **Holiday Programming:** Maintained no-programming policy for Christmas Eve and week between Christmas and New Year's

Future Opportunities

Program Expansion

- **Our Whole Lives:** Strong community interest in comprehensive sexuality education
- **Non-Sunday Gatherings:** Exploring alternative meeting times
- **Preschool Programming:** Potential meetup development

Community Integration

- **Whole Congregation Events:** Games, food, and social gathering facilitation
- **Worship Integration:** Children and youth involvement in regular service components
- **Mentorship Programs:** Intergenerational relationship building

Service & Leadership

- **Youth Leadership Development:** Continued expansion of youth-led initiatives
- **Community Service Projects:** Integration of service learning into curriculum
- **Climate Action:** Continued support for youth environmental engagement

Looking Forward

The RE program has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and growth throughout the 2024-2025 year. Key success factors include:

- **Responsive Programming:** Willingness to pivot curriculum based on community engagement
- **Community Building:** Innovative approaches to relationship development across age groups



- **Professional Growth:** Continued investment in staff development and best practices
- **Family-Centered Approach:** Recognition of whole-family ministry needs

The program is well-positioned for continued growth with strong community support, engaged families, and dynamic programming that reflects UU values while meeting diverse developmental needs.

