



Evergreen
Unitarian
Universalist
Fellowship

2023 - 2024

Annual Report

www.evergreenuu.org

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President's Report to the Congregation

Chris Martinez, President of EUUF Board of Trustees

This time last year we were negotiating with a potential buyer for our Marysville building and we had not yet decided on where we were going to relocate. With hard work we were able to start off the church year in September at the Carl Gipson Center.

We are beginning to feel at home in the Cascade Room. Alli Curtis has set up an attractive and functional office/storage/meeting space in the suite of rooms tucked away in the north corner and the children are finding the plaza a safe and roomy place to be outdoors. Our small group ministries have continued, including the Book Group, WISE Women, the Men's Group, Big Questions, and Covenant Circles. Sarah Taylor initiated group dinners and a Building Your Own Theology class. We are planning for a series of innovative worship experiences this summer.

A new Committee on Outreach was formed by Jennie Lindberg seeking to build on the opportunities our new location provides. Of the numerous activities this dynamic group has initiated perhaps the radio announcements have reached the widest audience. Unfortunately, although we are delighted to welcome seven new members, we have lost ten active members this year. The ongoing activities of the Outreach committee are expected to continue to bear fruit in the long term.

In January our participation in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was significant. Later in the year a survey was sent to the Congregation resulting in the formation of a Social Justice Council that will facilitate and support each of our separate social justice priorities in the next year.

Our staff of Rev Joe, Religious Exploration director-JW Wenzel, administrator-Alli Curtis and choir director-Kathleen Goff managed our move with laudable creative problem solving skill. Late in the year we welcomed Bo Haywood as our new RE teacher. However the process of finding necessary additional staff for Religious Exploration and the music program has been challenging.

Our Stewardship campaign was a great success under Karen Winchell's guidance. There were record breaking levels of pledging by the Fellowship.



Otherwise our efforts at fundraising activities have been limited. We can look forward to rousing fundraising activities next year.

This year we have accomplished a level of stability at the Carl Gipson Center that will serve as a basis for growth and creativity moving forward. Our move has cost us in energy, resources, and in membership. That was to be expected. We are recovering from the huge expenditure of people power it took to relocate. With determination and love we have supported each other in this move, with gratitude and celebration may we move forward. I have been honored to have been part of the leadership during this past year and look forward to the capable leadership of Sandra Biggerstaff, our incoming president for '24-'25.

Your Board of Trustees President,

Chris Martinez



Leadership Development Committee

Desmond Smith, Chair

Members: Desmond Smith, Elaine Clark, Laurel Nisler, Barbara Johnson, and Sarah Taylor

The LDC works quietly in the background to find and develop the people in the Fellowship that have leadership ability, a vision of the future, and a commitment to the mission of EUUF to make our entire existence possible. It is composed of the Past Board President (Desmond Smith) and 4 members at large who are elected by the congregation to their positions on this committee. This year the members were (listed alphabetically by first name) Barbara Johnson, Elaine Clark, Laurel Nisler, and Sarah Taylor. Together this group worked hard to fill the open positions on the Board of Trustees, the Endowment Committee, and the LDC itself, ensuring that EUUF will continue to have hard working and insightful leaders at every level of our organization.

Endowment Committee

Dave Speights, Chair

The Evergreen Endowment Committee, upon which I (Dave Speights) serve with Marijo Duprey, Leala Davies and Chuck Taylor (emeritus) paid close attention to the quarterly online meetings of the socially conscious UU Common Endowment Fund (in which our endowment is wholly invested). We remain confident that its managers are carefully handling that fund in accordance with its mission.

Marijo has recently sat in with the Evergreen Board of Trustees as they plan the budget for 2024-25. She reports that, although the members plan to dip into the Endowment Fund, as allowed under Evergreen bylaws, they don't plan to withdraw an amount that would cut into the principal.



Stewardship Committee

Karen Winchell, Chair

Light Our Way - Pledge Drive for 2024-2025

As stewards of this beloved fellowship we have all taken part in the annual renewal of our membership pledge or reconnection as a vital spiritual community. We raised \$136,989 in pledges for the 2024-2025 church year. This number represents 80% of the aspirational goal of \$169,000. Remember, pledges are always welcome, not just in spring.

The Stewardship Committee formed after Karen Winchell agreed to serve in the chair position and members were recruited. Weekly meetings took place from January 9 through April 11 to plan and execute the pledge drive. Testimonials brought us stories of inspiration and spiritual growth from four members. We would have liked a youth testimonial, but another case of COVID-19 interfered. Next year we have a fun idea to include the youth perspective. Weekly email newsletter articles highlighted the focus on Evergreen's Mission to Welcome, Inspire and Advocate and kept the congregation informed about how much, when and how to make a pledge. A couple of skits for announcements got everyone excited to begin. Then on March 17 to kick-off the pledge drive, Rev. Joe Rettenmaier led the worship service Light Our Way, followed by a pizza and salad luncheon. On that first day of pledging, we received 48% of our pledge goal, surpassing the committee's wildest expectations. Positive responses were heard from folks that are still with us after many years of absence. Once again, the canvassers managed to contact 25 members and friends to complete the pledging effort. During the two-week canvassing period we received resignations of membership. Yet, there are newcomers, seekers and familiar faces not seen in a while so our outreach efforts are having an impact. All in all, our pledge household numbers have increased slightly. Let's keep that beacon shining Evergreen.

Special thanks to the many people who helped contribute to the success of our pledge drive, the Stewardship Committee members, the canvassers, the testimonial presenters and all the people who donated Gratitude Blitz items. The Stewardship Committee awarded special Certificates of Appreciation to three people, Marijo Duprey for her significant impact and exemplary efforts



in securing the tax money for the 2023-2024 church year operating budget, and Joann Haskins and Paula Bloomberg for designing and building the Lighthouse pledge gauge.

As a wrap-up to the pledging and canvassing, the Stewardship Committee wanted to provide every pledging household with a thank-you gift. Instead of a mug or shopping bag like you get when you donate to a non-governmental organization, we garnered donations from members and friends to distribute at the Gratitude Blitz on April 7. Everyone who was either present or responded to an email was given the gift of their choice from a wonderful selection. The experience of soliciting the donations was so easy, the congregation seems ready and willing to donate services, events and items for a future auction. Can we make this happen Evergreen?



Committee on Shared Ministry

The Committee on Ministry monitors and supports the shared ministry of the congregation, and has been meeting every month throughout this church year.

This year, we added a fourth person to the team and are actively seeking another, which would bring the committee up to a total of 5 members, per Evergreen's Bylaws. The COM's monthly meetings have focused on longer term vision for the ministry at Evergreen, as well as fielding/resolving compliments/complaints any Evergreen members may have expressed to the COM.

Sincerely,

Jennie Lindberg Rev. Joe Sarah Taylor Tom Gaskin

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee was composed of Rev. Joe, Marijo Duprey, Kathleen Goff, and Desmond Smith. Rev. Joe, Marijo and Desmond were Worship Associates over the course of the year, assisting the worship process by developing programming that supported the worship topic, selecting readings, leading worship elements like Joys and Sorrows and the Offertory, and working with Kathleen to select hymns and relevant music for the service. This group is also responsible for finding speakers for weeks when Rev. Joe is not in the pulpit, with Rev. Joe leading that search effort for most of the year. We didn't miss a Sunday, so things seemed to have worked pretty well.

The Worship Comm. is also supported by Alli Curtis and Tara DuNair who play critical roles in preparing and completing the worship script and slide show which contain all the presentation content for the service based on information they receive from the presenter, and the Worship Associate. It is a smoothly oiled machine that functions very well.

Membership

Alonna Chatburn, Chair

We have been excited to add 5 new members to our UU Fellowship this year. Attendees who were interested in being a member were invited to a class meeting with Rev. Joe and myself on April 21st after church.

We discussed the principles and the new values of Unitarian Universalism. Listening to the class members' journeys to UUism was meaningful. Rev. Joe presented the history of our faith with its twists and turns. Class members asked questions to learn more about some of the leaders and events.

Then a welcoming ceremony was held on May 19th. The morning started with breakfast for the new members. The welcoming ceremony was a very positive experience for all of us. Unique wooden chalices made by Chuck Taylor, a long-time member of EUUF, were given to each new member along with a booklet about UUism. Our new members were asked to sign "The Book" which includes signatures from the earliest days of EUUF membership.



Greeter Team

There are so many people that I would like to thank for their service as greeters! Our members and friends came into a new facility and helped develop guidelines for their role as greeters. They were flexible and saw where responsibilities could be added. Thanks to Alli, our office administrator, we had an on-line sign up which was helpful. Joy Lauderbaugh graciously took on the task of finding greeters for each Sunday. Judy Smith was an early bird and did a lot of the set up for us. Jennie Lindberg designed sandwich boards to put on the sidewalks to show the way to our services. If you at some point greeted at EUUF, thank you for your support and welcoming smile for those coming to our services. You made a difference for our fellowship as new members have joined us.

Alonna Chatburn



Pastoral Care Committee

The Pastoral Care committee under Rev. Joe's purview is pursuing a more personally tailored approach to our members' pastoral care needs. Our members' Pastoral Care concerns and needs should be communicated to Rev. Joe as soon as possible so he can assemble appropriate resources and outreach accordingly.

The committee continues to record the joys and sorrows expressed each week during Sunday services and shares those with the membership via the joys and sorrows Slack channel. Also, it's the committee's hope that as Evergreen progresses into the new church year we might once again be able to coordinate a Caring Team, which might deliver pre-cooked meals, groceries, or rides to members recovering from medical procedures or family emergencies.

Publicity & Outreach Committee

*Jennie Lindberg, Sue Gaskin,
Barbara Johnson, Skyler Malan*

The Outreach and Publicity Committee worked this past year to raise EUUF's visibility in the Everett community and to let the public know we moved from Marysville to Everett.

We began this by mailing 41 postcards to hand selected people who formerly attended, with a custom message letting them know of our new address and inviting them to check it out. This was in addition to the standard newsletter announcement that went out to the mailing list.

Signage

In the fall of 2023, we designed and obtained signs to direct people into the our meeting space from the street. Since we are not able to have our sign on the exterior of the building, it is important to have temporary sandwich board signs letting people know we are meeting. These signs are placed each Sunday morning on Broadway, directing people into the garage, on Wall Street, directing people to the main entrance on Lombard, and on Pacific Avenue also directing people to the main entrance on Lombard.

In addition, there are signs inside the building directing people to the meeting room where we are. This is important because there is another church that meets down the hall, starting 30 minutes before our service, and they start with very audible music. At least one person mistakenly found their way to this other church before finding ours (which was their original intent).

In addition, in the fall we placed an ad in the Everett Herald newspaper, running about four months. We did not hear any comments from people who had seen this ad, making us conclude that it probably wasn't effective enough to continue.

We also started a 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 a number of people have reported hearing our name on KSER, leading us to conclude that this is well placed. We continue with our sponsorship on KSER. 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 "

Website

We worked with Alli to make some minor changes to the website to make it more LGBTQ+ friendly and to remove a list of "negative values" which didn't seem to add to our public image.

Handouts to Promote EUUF

We are using a QR Code on all new advertising. We have designed and printed business card sized handouts with our address, website and Sunday morning meeting time, and QR Code.

Wintertide Festival

We organized EUUF attendance at the Wintertide Festival at the Gipson Center 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 350 cookies to 175 people.

Teeshirts

We designed and created new EUUF teeshirts and sold them for \$20 each. Several were donated to staff and their children. In general, the purpose of the teeshirts is to promote awareness about EUUF, but specifically we hope members will attend the Block party and wear them to show support for LGBTQ+ issues.

Welcoming Congregation

We initiated this and then passed it off to a new group that will work on re-instating our status as a Welcoming Congregation.

Everett Pride Block Party:

We are planing our presence at this event on June 15. We are splitting a table/booth with Sunnyside Village Cohousing (which is providing the awning, table, decorations etc). We are soliciting donations of cookies from members the same as we did at the Wintertide Festival that we can hand out. We are encouraging all EUUF members to wear their new EUUF teeshirts as they attend the festival.

Collaborative Ad:

We have 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. This idea was very well received by the other faith communities.



Meta

We have begun to have a presence on FaceBook and Instagram as an advertiser. We will be exploring this and tracking it's effectiveness. Alli is helping us with this.

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" throughout the year.

Common Ground Choir

Kathleen Goff, EUUF Choir Director

We have encountered many changes, challenges, and rewarding experiences during the year 2023 – 2024, and we continue our commitment to a healthy and robust music program at Evergreen.

Common Ground was confirmed to rehearse at CGC on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month, 3:00 – 4:30 pm. The piano tuner tuned the piano in the Rainier Room choosing the best of the two pianos residing there for our purposes.

Several Live Music Sundays have taken place with musicians from the congregation leading the music. Netta Beyerlein has agreed to be the interim accompanist for the Sunday service, scheduling month to month the weeks she will be available.

The search for a regular accompanist/choir director/music director is ongoing. We are looking for someone who will be in person at the Sunday services to rehearse, direct, and accompany the choir and the congregation.

We continue to use Soundtrap for practice and recorded music as we arrange for the choir to bring back live singing in the worship services.



Tech Team

Michelle Valentine, Chair

The EUUF Tech Team composed of Sandie Biggerstaff, Desmond Smith, Ian Clark, and Michelle Valentine worked diligently to train ourselves and get up to speed with the equipment and continual storage issues with our move to the Carl Gipson Center after selling our beloved building in July. Starting in September 2023 Fred Haist single-handedly set up the sound board owned by the Center, along with our two computers and one iPad. We continued to have Tara DeNair as our tech host while we handled the on-site technology. Fred did an amazing single-handed job for 4 months while we were trying to organize ourselves to set up pairs or mini-teams to provide the sight and sound for the Sunday services. Ian Clark joined us after the beginning of the year and brought expert knowledge to help us practice. Desmond identified a key problem with our hardware; we needed to replace one computer which was not up to the needs of our hybrid ZOOM service. Chuck Taylor had a slightly used new computer which he cleared of old material and gave it to the Fellowship to replace the deficient old HP. With a 2 hour round robin training session and Desmond keeping in contact with Jim Hagglund from the Center, we worked with a new audio adapter which solved our chronic problem of hooking together the sound from Tara and the YouTube or other videos with our local equipment. Going from audio problems for people at home hearing the service, to having only one or two major glitches every week, to getting 'almost there' by December, to achieving serviceable output most weeks, to finally having seamless audio-visual services has been our goal. We are there most of the time.

Each week it is a surprise to find what Center equipment we use weekly is missing from where we left it the previous Sunday. We like to say we are 'nimble' and can adapt to find a missing microphone, cord, or new battery by the start of the service! We hope to streamline the process getting down to one computer, one iPad for the Mevo cameras and one soundboard to meet our hybrid needs. As we say, "our tech team appreciates your continued grace in remembering that as we worship together, it's about connection, not perfection."



Covenant Circles

Susan C. S. Gaskin

We began the new church year in September officially moving into our new home at the Carl Gibson Center with all of the excitement, comfort and transitional challenges a new worship home has to offer. We have all been eager to help with this transition, allowing us a new perspective on the possibilities of growth for EUUF and our Covenant Circles.

Our four Covenant Circles and their leaders remain strong and continue to meet monthly. The leadership has changed in a couple groups, Sagit Billings has taken over for Sandie Biggerstaff and Marilyn Bosckis has stepped in to lead George Beykovsky's group. Happily, three of our groups have welcomed new members this year after our February Covenant Circle Sunday testimonial and information table display.

Throughout the fall, winter and spring all of the Covenant Circles have focused on serving the Fellowship by helping provide coffee hour snacks, set up and clean up detail.

Sue and Tom's Silver Lake Covenant Circle have supported and cared for one of their members who had some medical challenges this year. The group usually meets at Sue and Tom's home for the monthly meetings and at times they have used Zoom to prevent the spread of illness. Their topic selection and discussion is rotated amongst all of their members. They find this approach provides them with stimulating and fresh ideas for contemplation. They have gathered together to listen to Dennis Griffith's band play in Everett and enjoyed Dave Speight's yearly Kentucky Derby party together. In the months ahead we are going to focus on service to the wider community.

The Cedar Covenant Circle lead by Sage Billings has seen a few changes since her leadership began in October. It has been great to see this group grow together. The group has added new members and is currently meeting at the Carl Gibson Center. They are reading The Unitarian Pocket Guide that is given to new members. Sage reports that they are finding it rich with poignant topics. This CC is talking about serving the greater community by participating in the PRIDE Celebration and possibly voter registration.

Alonna Chatburn's Marysville Covenant Circle has welcomed new members to their group this year. They continue to be an enthusiastic group. They also



rotate their leadership for topic presentation and discussion. Their meetings are held in various member's homes. The group contributed to Heifer and a family in need at Christmas.

Marilyn Bosckis' new leadership of the north Everett Covenant Circle will allow her to have the meetings in her home which she says will hopefully be a plus freeing her from transportation issues each month. This group also rotates the presentation of the topic and discussion. In December they got together for a dinner outing and included family members and in August they will do this again for a picnic. The group is planning on an excursion with NAMI to a mental health fair on the eastside June 1st.

The Covenant Circle Leaders began the year meeting monthly but in February we decided we would meet every other month unless there was an urgent need for an issue to be addressed. We meet on Zoom to discuss how our Covenant Circles are doing, supporting each other with the challenges we face as leaders and discuss how to meet new challenges with kindness and inclusivity.

We find we are able to problem solve concerns that a leader/group, might have. If we need further assistance we will call on Reverend Joe.

In April we gave each of our members a short survey asking them to tell us how the CC was working. What they liked and if there were any changes they would like to see. We will discuss these surveys in June at our Leaders meeting.

We all continue to hope for the expansion of our Covenant Circles by encouraging and inspiring friends and members to take advantage of the benefits of joining a small group ministry.

With UU Warmth,

Susan CS Gaskin

Covenant Circle Coordinator



Adult Programs

Desmond Smith, chair

Evergreen offers a wide variety of programs intended to provide spaces and places for adults to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest. The programs are run by individual members or small groups, and they meet once or twice a month, for the most part. These include a Women's Group called W.I.S.E., a Men's Circle, several Covenant Circles, a book discussion group, and a philosophy discussion group called the Big Questions. Many of these groups have been active for years and found a way to survive the virtual world imposed on all of us by COVID restrictions. Most now meet in person, or use a hybrid approach with some in-person contact with virtual access for those that prefer it.

Occasionally other programs are offered, and this past year George Bykovsky and Sarah Taylor offered the Building Your Own Theology class, which was well attended. As a reminder to everyone, there are many classes and study topics that can be used as the basis of an Adult Program available from the UUA. You never learn so much as when you lead a discussion group, so don't be afraid to raise your hand and choose to lead.

