

*Shawnee Mission UU Church*  
*Annual report June 1, 2016-May 31, 2017*

This was a stellar year for Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church. The Rev. Rose Schwab was called unanimously by the congregation in May 2016. Her first Sunday in the pulpit, not including candidating week, was August 21, when her sermon was titled “We’re All in This Together.”

Prior to that, the religious education program held its third summer camp, in June, for children, drawing 100 participants and 40 volunteers. About 40 participants were from outside our community. The camp, Hogwarts School of Magic and Fun, was actually Rev. Rose’s first engagement with the congregation outside of candidating week. She made an appearance at the camp as the “Minister of Magic,” and was a big hit.

The board’s first meeting, in June, was occupied with determining where to cut the budget because of a shortfall in the annual canvass, due in large part to a lackluster second interim year. A second plea for money raised more than \$17,000, about half of which was used to keep our custodian, Pepe, on staff. Cuts were still required in many other areas. The staff did get a two percent cost of living raise.

In the fall we conducted a capital campaign, the Bowerbird Campaign, raising around \$900,000 to replace much of the roof and all of the rooftop air conditioning units, around 17 in all. The campaign was named for an Australian bird which Rev. Rose had referred to in a sermon. This was our first capital campaign since we bought our building in 2011. The work will be done this summer.

A second fund drive, our annual stewardship canvass, raised another \$430,000 in the spring. Two fund drives in one year was a lot to ask of our members, but they came through. The spring drive raised enough to cover our operational costs, but it was not enough to pay for the hoped-for hiring of two part-time positions, a Membership Coordinator and an Office Assistant. In the spring drive we canvassed 214 households and received pledges from around a dozen new households.

This year the board adopted a new practice regarding the budget. Rather than asking the incoming board to make any cuts to the budget in case of shortfall, the budget meeting was held in May, so that the current board could handle that responsibility, rather than having the new board tackle the budget as its very first obligation.

In February we reported 303 adult members to the UUA, up from 298 the previous year. We had 169 children and youth enrolled. We had 207 households. Our budget, set in June 2016, was \$494,920. As of the end of the year we have about 200 children and youth who attend regularly. That includes 15 youth and 26 Junior Youth.

Here are attendance stats that reflect our journey:

Worship Attendance averages

2013-2014: 179 - Thom's final year

2015-2016: 149 - last year

2016-2017: 193 - this year

Religious Education attendance of children and youth

2013-2014: 68

2015-2016: 60

2016-2017: 65

Forty-one people have signed the book since June 2016. Our current membership is 317, but we will drop 13 members at the end of June. Eight others are in question because they have not replied to the spring canvass. Most will probably stick, but we may lose a couple of them. This will put us about at the number we reported for the February certification to the UUA. That is 5 to 6 percent higher than the previous February.

Membership Numbers: 41 people have signed the book since June 2016. Current total is 317, but we will drop 13 for sure at the end of June (technically they are still members until then). Eight more remain in question because we have had no reply from the canvass. My guess is most of these will resolve one way or another, but we could lose another couple. This will put us about net or slightly less than our January certification, but about a 5-6% increase over the 2016 figure.

We had ten adult religious education offerings this year: ***Meditation for a Whole Life*** with Amy Harth, ***Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*** – viewing and discussion with Ted Glenn, ***Disarming Robbery with a Glass of Wine*** – podcast listening and discussion with Adam Wathen, ***Exploring Your Stories for Healing and Empowerment*** with Amy Harth, ***Beyond the Partisan Divide*** with Alex Knapp, ***The Perils of Giving Advice*** with Amy Harth, ***The Most Prophetic Three Minutes in Television History*** with Linda Trout, ***Identity Discussions*** with Caroline Dawson, ***Risk: Risk Letting Your Counter-Culture Self Loose*** with Adam Wathen and Nancy Mays, ***Risk: Resist Standing Up and Risk Sitting Down*** with Adam Wathen and Nancy Mays, ***Thrive Instead of Survive This Summer: An Introduction to Conscious Discipline for Parents*** with Carrie Rolling.

Special happenings in religious education this year include the following:

- Move to thematic Religious Education with Soul Matters (previously Tapestry of Faith)
- Our structure on Sunday mornings changed to facilitate volunteer help. We moved from weekly classes with one monthly special (Service is Our Prayer, Children's Fellowship, or Children's Chapel) to 1st Sunday Children's Chapel, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays Classes and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays Service is Our Prayer.
- Held our first Adult Teacher Orientation
- Hired an official Jr. Youth Group Instructor
- Started our Youth Ambassador Program
- Began our ongoing Youth fundraiser with Chalice Coffee
- Christmas Pageant/Val Pal/Easter Egg Hunt
- Several multi-gen services

A Social Justice Council was created, with board members, Adam Wathen, Marcia Rinehart, Nancy Mays, Yvonne Gibbons, and Joan Langmack. It began publishing a newsletter to keep members informed of social justice issues.

In September we hosted a candidate forum on the topic of criminal justice. It was hosted by Dave Helling of the Kansas City Star. On January 11 many members and Rev. Rose participated in Lobby Day in Topeka, marking the start of the session of the Kansas Legislature. Rev. Rose returned in April to preach at a Climate Justice event.

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In April Rev. Rose conducted a Pastoral Care Training. It was attended by around 50 people. This year we began using a new recycling bin from our waste hauler. Members were urged to bring reusable coffee cups from home. This year we created a membership photo directory for the first time since 2002.

At the beginning of the year the Board of Trustees was composed of Marjorie Rice, president, Don Skinner, vice-president, Randy Burdge, treasurer, Kris Koehler, secretary, and board members Adam Koehler, Brian Nelson, Gaby Kusko, Tiffany Johnson, and Penny Burdge. Zack Irwin served as past president. Early in the year Penny Burdge resigned and was replaced by Jo Ella Hoye. Kris Koehler resigned midyear and was replaced by Gail Robertson.

In October, the board and Rev. Rose participated in a Ministry Start-Up Weekend, led by the Rev. Ian Evison, lead minister of the MidAmerica Region of the UUA.

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A labyrinth took shape on the church's east lawn in the fall. In the spring, extensive landscaping, consisting of trees and shrubs, was added. The Chartres-style labyrinth, loved into being by Carla Norcott-Mahany, was created by several scores of volunteers. David Schwartz and Kent Johnson were the primary designers and creators of the labyrinth, leading teams of volunteers through the various phases of laying it out on the ground, removing sod, building a base of aggregate and sand, and cutting and fitting bricks to line the paths and turns. Scores of friends and members created colorful bricks to decorate the labyrinth. The labyrinth was made possible by memorial donations from the families of Barry Daneman and Dick Rinehart. The labyrinth was dedicated May 6, 2017 with appropriate ceremony.

This year was also the congregation's **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** year. That milestone was celebrated with a social justice project in October. We assembled grocery store coupon pads for Harvesters' Check-Out Hunger program. Our auction, which raised \$40,000, had a sixties theme and then in February we had a "Party Like It's 1967" dance. On May 6 we dedicated the labyrinth and the following day we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a worship service, recognition of founders, a congregational photo, and a catered picnic. A plaque was also created to honor the founders. David Butterfield created a special logo for the anniversary.

In a staff realignment, our bookkeeper Kim Enyart went down to eight hours a week. Deb went up to 37, picking up the Benefits Manager part of Kim's job. Kim's responsibilities now are that of bookkeeper. The third part of her job, Payroll, was farmed out to a private firm. Rev. Rose facilitated these changes.

The board adopted a new **rental policy** this year. Each member gets one free room rental a month, in an effort to get more people into our building. This year we reconstituted a Committee on Ministry.

This church year our **Share the Plate** program collected more than \$18,000 for social service and social justice agencies. We started in June with the Salem Food Pantry. Others, in order, were Healthy Living Projects, Safehome, After the Harvest, Crosslines, Harvesters, Planned Parenthood and Southern Poverty Law Center (following the election!), the Minister's Discretionary Fund, Kansas UUSC, Rosehill Elementary, KC for Refugees, Kansas Faith Action, and UUSC Justice Sunday (May 28, 2017).

**The SMUUCH Community Garden** launched in 2013 with the help of a Kansas State Grant that funded the irrigation system. Year four finds 18 gardeners including four Lenexa city residents, raising organic produce and flowers. The big garden news is the addition last summer of a cedar pergola and stone paver base with funds from the annual plant sale and volunteer labor from Eagle Scout Aaron Master and Troop 257. We have been able to maintain our plot fees at \$40 as we reimburse the church for water and we provide organic compost and tools. The annual plant sale took place in the church parking lot on Mothers Day, May 14.

**Cross-Lines** — Recruiting volunteers for the four activities needed to keep our Cross-Lines hunger relief project functioning became increasingly difficult in the 2015-1016 fiscal year. About 17 volunteers were needed each month for shopping, chopping (food prep), cooking and serving. Also, the church member who had been subsidizing the monthly groceries decided to place those funds elsewhere in congregational-sponsored activities. In response to these issues, the coordinator consulted with the Cross-Lines Outreach program director and we reduced our involvement to providing a cooking team for the food provided by Cross-Lines and a serving team to offer the food to their guests. In addition, we still provide 200 brownies baked by a SMUUCH volunteer in the church kitchen and five gallons of milk which is donated by another member.

To continue this effort, 10-12 volunteers plus a coordinator are needed each month. The number of individuals utilizing the soup kitchen varies with the time of year. Monthly numbers vary from 140 to 200-plus. The current funds will help feed Cross-Lines guests this summer when the numbers swell because of families with children attending this soup kitchen. The Hunger Team will determine soon if donations will continue to be requested for this project.

Gaby Kusko was named local liaison to the **2018 General Assembly**, which will be held June 20-24 in Kansas City. A large number of volunteers will be needed from our congregation. We will also be encouraged to offer home hospitality.

The Green Guitar coffeehouse, now in its second year, offered ten musical events this church year. (On June 11, 2017 there will be one more). The ten averaged 79 tickets per show.

In May the congregation helped bridge three youth, Moira Linn, Will Padek, and Zach Ragan.

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