

## NEIUU Board Chair Report for 2022 Annual Meeting

### 2021-2022 Accomplishments

- Held services on alternative Sundays from June to January with outdoor in-person services at Phelps Park & Twin Springs during the warmer months and remotely the rest of the year.
- Returned to in-person services at the Lingonberry in February (after a false start the first Sunday of January) and to an every-Sunday schedule in March.
- Continued to offer a Zoom option and recording of most in-person services
- Donated almost \$3,500 to LIHEAP, Community Action Christmas Program, and Share-the-Plate Recipients
- Participated in the Decorah Pride Parade
- Began working on “Moving Beyond Land Acknowledgements”
- Instituted an increased honorarium for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) speakers

While our list of accomplishments isn't as long as it was pre-pandemic, we've done pretty well considering. The board is hopeful this year it will be safe to resume additional activities. We've heard from multiple members recently is that it's time to have some fun, time to add back some of the social events where we can reconnect and have conversations about both important and frivolous matters. We've started a FUUN committee to get things rolling.

Other goals for the coming year include: increasing connections to the community, inviting new members and friends to the fellowship, adopting the proposed UU 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.

Coming back to in-person services and holding other events also means the gift of your time to the fellowship is more important than ever. Sunday services require many different kinds of assistance: greeters, service leaders, hospitality, running the Zoom camera. Or maybe you'd like to join the FUUN committee?

Thank you to everyone who helps in the work of the fellowship especially Otter, Karen Esterl, Carolyn Corbin, those who have helped in various roles at services and my fellow board members.

Let's make this next year a time to reconnect with each other, with our UU principles, and with the community.

## Decorah UU Membership Report April 2022

In the past year, no new members joined the Fellowship. As the pandemic continued, many services were held virtually and many people remained hesitant to gather in person with others outside their household. Overall, it remained a challenging environment to attract and engage visitors who may become interested in becoming members.

The table below shows the number of Members and “Friends” in the Fellowship, including a 3-year lookback. Each year the Fellowship seems to have a few members requesting to change their status from “Member” to “Friends” for varying personal reasons.

Visitors and guests are an important recruitment opportunity for the Fellowship. The average number of visitors in 2021 was three. The table below shows a comparison to previous years.

Year	Fellowship Members	Fellowship Friends	Avg Visitors Per Service	Avg Attendance Per Service
2022	41	21	---	--
2021	43	22	3	19
2020	48	15	4	25
2019	49	12	6	31

When meeting in person, we engage with and follow up with guests to help ensure they feel welcome and, if they become a more frequent visitor, encourage them to consider becoming a member. It’s important for us to continue to add new members to increase the diversity and vitality of our congregation. Furthermore, generally when a person become a member instead of a repeat visitor, they invest more of their time, talent, and/or treasury in the Fellowship.

When meeting in person, each of us has an opportunity to create a lasting, positive impression with guests. We can wear our nametag so it’s easy for visitors to become acquainted with us. We can talk with visitors and thank them for coming. Furthermore, we can engage visitors in conversation by asking them a few questions about what they thought of the service, how they found out about our Fellowship, and if they have any questions about UU. Additionally, we can ask them to share their names and email address so we can follow up with them. We invite guests to be added to the email list so they can receive Otter’s regular updates regarding what is happening each week, but they must explicitly grant permission to do that.

As we look ahead to the time when we fully “return to normal”, I welcome all to increase our impact with visitors and current fellowship members. In-person meetings at The Lingonberry gives of important visibility and this can be further capitalized when we all act an advocate for membership.

Respectfully submitted,

*Detra Dettmann*, Membership Chair

# Sunday Services Committee Report for Annual Meeting 2022

*Submitted by Karen Esterl and Carolyn Corbin*

Multiple members of our congregation have made our Sunday worship services possible: providing ideas, sharing music, reading, facilitating, hosting Zoom, and so on. Karen Esterl and Carolyn Corbin have continued to be the primary programmers, determining topics and presenters inspired by worship themes, holidays, calendrical observances, and current events.

Our annual theme for the past liturgical year (September 2021-August 2022) comes from the prior UUA General Assembly: "Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage." Every month has also had a theme of focus, e.g., gratitude in November and nature in April. These monthly themes were shared with all service leaders at the beginning of the liturgical year and have been posted to Decorah UU's website. Not every service in a particular month is necessarily theme-related; rather, the theme serves as a focal point and source of inspiration for one or more services.

Since our 2021 annual meeting, we continued every-other-Sunday services until March 2022, when we resumed meeting every Sunday. The every-other-Sunday pattern was observed in recognition of the larger strain on volunteers as we continued to navigate COVID. Up until January 2022, our services were held either completely virtually on Zoom or outdoors, typically at Phelps Park (with an opportunity to participate via Zoom). We were able to hold one in-person service in January before we had to go back to Zoom for a few more weeks due to a rise in COVID numbers. We have returned to in-person services at the Lingonberry since February 20, 2022. Having enjoyed our summer outdoor services last year, however, we do plan to have one outdoor service a month June-August. We also look forward to resuming our annual tradition of the Memorial Weekend potluck this year!

We hope you will continue to find Sunday morning services meaningful and encourage you to take part as you are able. Additional service leader volunteers are always welcome. Our greatest need is having a service leader coordinator, i.e., someone who coordinates which service leader leads which service. The coordinator also trains new service leaders and helps to develop and maintain service leader resources. (Please note that we already have a robust library of such resources in Google Drive.)

If you are interested in volunteering with Sunday services in any capacity--planning, leading, speaking, coordinating service leaders, etc.--please connect with Carolyn, Karen, or Otter Dreaming.

## **Update on Our Whole Lives (OWL) – April 2022**

The “Our Whole Lives” (OWL) sexuality education program continued to be on hiatus since the start of the pandemic.

According to Lara Martinsen-Burrell, the facilitators for Jr/Sr high have met together and are trying to get the class that was paused back together. There was a lot of energy around it and then it fizzled. And now coordinating the teacher's schedules is tricky. They hope it will happen before the next school year.

Lara also spoke with Sandya Purohit Caton recently to plan a 4th to 6th grade class for next fall. More information will be available soon.

Lastly, some time ago Lara contacted a trainer to see about hosting a facilitator training in Decorah. She plans to reach out again soon.