

2014 Annual Report of the Interim Minister
“The ground shifts; nothing is static”

Everything about our existence¹
points toward change,
flexibility, and
dynamic re-creation.

And it’s hard because
change involves loss.
Can we hold the losses well,
while not holding ourselves back?

The ground shifts, sometimes slowly,
sometimes like an earthquake;
reminding us that the solidity
we often love and seek
is an illusion...
nothing is static.

In last year’s annual report I drew your attention to the five points of focus in a time of transition: heritage, leadership, connections, mission, and the future. I’d like to revisit each one, reflecting on the extraordinary discoveries and new directions you have embraced in this time.

Heritage: You are as proud of and diligent in caring for these buildings and grounds as ever you were. Over these two years your leadership has also begun to consider whether and how the budget reflects, or should reflect, the whole mission of the congregation. You are coming to consider the importance of investing in the development of your staff and volunteer programs as thoughtfully and diligently as you do your buildings. I celebrate your embracing the wider picture your mission asks of you.

Leadership: Your understanding of the need and even the desirability of shared and evolving leadership has deepened as you have formed new committees and passed the baton of leadership in others. Unless volunteers ready to advance in leadership have an opportunity to lead, in their own best way, any congregation will remain the charge of a small group, and enthusiasm for the bigger shared picture will not become a moving force in congregational life. I think you really know this now. I also believe that you understand that until devoted and skilled leaders are willing to step aside so that others can take up the work, others will not feel invited to do so.

Connections, Mission, and the Future: Through Community Dinners, Covenant Groups, Deeper than Coffee Conversations, conversations and planning with the Search Committee, Transition Team, Personnel Committee, Board; through work with our children, with worship, with music, art, membership, increasing our A/V impact, finding a right interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education, reaching out to denominational leaders and trainings, and on and on, you have extended your connections to one another and to the wider UU community

¹ Mishra-Marzetti, Rev. Manish, Bless the Imperfect, pps. 49-50, adapted

dramatically during these transition years. Through your support for the Harbor Homes initiative, the outreach collection, the UU Chalice Lighters program, Cereal Sunday, and on and on, you continue to extend your connections to the wider community of which we are a part.

With the blessings of the work of the Board, Transition Team, Personnel Committee, staff, and many who contributed to the work of revisioning our staffing and budgeting needs as a congregation of roughly 245, you have smoothly navigated the hard challenges of alignment; understanding together the support you need to give your staff, and the support you need them to give you. This accomplishment alone is astonishing in its thoughtfulness, inclusiveness, and completeness. I've not had the privilege of serving a congregation that has done this work so well.

But you didn't stop there. You also got through several big challenges to who you are as a community: deciding together how to address the indictment of a member of the congregation with respect for the worth and dignity and safety of all; deciding together how to respond to extensive water damage to the building in this cold winter; responding together to the incomplete search for a right settled minister, and turning your enthusiasm for this church in the direction of welcoming a new interim minister and a new interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education. To each challenge, I think, you responded by asking your collective selves, "what is the response our faith asks of us; what is best for the whole congregation?"

Each member of your devoted staff has challenged me to be the best minister-leader I can be, and each one has forgiven me repeatedly when I fell short of the mark. Nobody gets it all right all the time; yet the staff here is committed to being a strong support team for the congregation's mission, people, and minister. I leave each one of them with a profoundly grateful heart.

This is your church, your faith, and as you live, so you live the future of this faith into being, here and in all the rest of your lives. I have been filled with awe at the growing trust you have in one another, in your leaders, and in your staff to be fulfilling the promise of your goals to become a congregation of people who welcome and embrace and affirm the stranger, who want to take an active role in being with, mentoring, and learning from your children and youth and young adults, who want to understand the many blessings of good communications and right relations, and who, indeed, are, together, a beacon of hope to a wider community in need.

New experiences lead to new truths,
the natural course of life
always pushing us
toward greater understandings
of what it means to be human.

Thank you for the extraordinary privilege of serving you for these past two years.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Olivia Holmes*