

# 2015 Annual Report of the



## Our Vision for Justice in Minnesota



We are Unitarian Universalists from across the state of Minnesota - diverse, spirited, and deeply committed and firmly grounded in our UU principles of world peace, justice, and sustainability; we work together on focused programs of education, witness, and systemic change to create a world that works for everyone.

A key MUUSJA goal is to develop the capacity of Minnesota Unitarian Universalist individuals and congregations to work effectively for systemic change

and social justice. Because we do this work as Unitarian Universalists, we aspire to help Minnesota UUs develop and deepen our religious voice, and to bring this voice to the public square. We do this primarily through **Convening** and **Capacity Building**.

Because we aim to make a difference, we work to build a lasting social justice organization and to prepare UUs to use an action, reflection, collaboration approach to social change ~ action to combat root causes of injustice; reflection to evaluate our progress and ground our work spiritually; and collaboration with faith-based and secular social change organizations (including communities deeply affected by our target issues) to maximize our power and impact. Our collaborative work includes developing a social change infrastructure that shifts the political climate toward a social agenda that serves the common good.

# Growing Spiritually Grounded Justice Leaders

## UU-YELP!: Unitarian Universalist Youth Engaging Legislation Program

UU-YELP! was MUUSJA's first-ever youth program, designed to bring Twin-Cities area high schoolers together at the intersection of faith formation and social justice through legislative action.

During this program, which ran from October 2014 through April 2015, UU-YELP! recruited, mentored, and mobilized Unitarian Universalist youth in five metro-area congregations around a 2015 legislative issue of their choosing.

The goals of the program were to:

- Foster inter-congregational relationships among Twin Cities area youth;
- Help youth develop theological and spiritual reflection skills;
- Explore legislative action as one form of social justice work;
- And to examine the intersections between social justice work and our Unitarian Universalist history, theology, and principles.



Youth gathered for Issue Discernment Day in November of 2014, during which they heard from local leaders working for legislative change on four issues up for potential consideration by the legislature. They determined to focus on Single-Payer Healthcare. Then, in January of 2015, the UU-YELP! youth, including the Youth Interns, led a session at the Twin Cities Youth Con that included a training about how to talk to your legislator.

In the following months, youth followed the Single-Payer Healthcare issue through the news and shared discussion. While the issue ultimately never made it to the floor for debate, the youth learned a great deal about the legislative process, speaking about justice issues through the lens of their faith, and building inter-congregational relationships to harness our power and amplify our collective voice as Unitarian Universalists committed to building a more just and loving world!

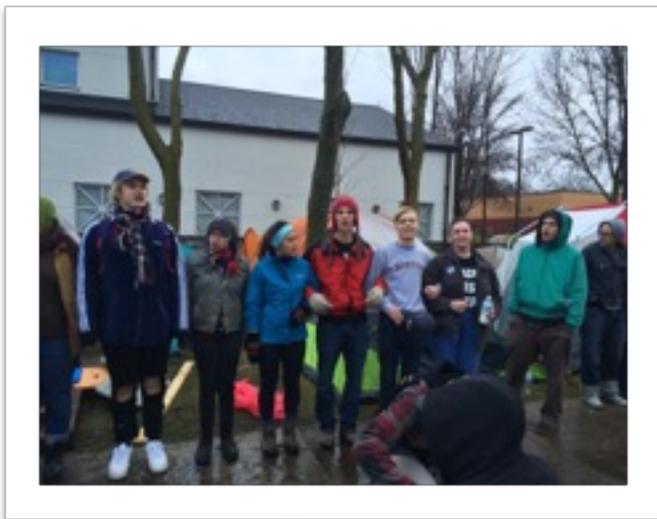
## YoUuth SOALS: The Spiritual Organizer/Activist Seminar for UU Youth

For the 2015-16 church year, MUUSJA built upon the success of the UU-YELP! program by creating YoUuth SOALS, an experiential program that was free and open to all Minnesota UU youth in grades 9-12. Growing out of an acknowledgement that we need a diversity of tactics and strategies to address justice issues in our state, YoUuth SOALS engaged Unitarian Universalist high schoolers in faith-based activism, congregational organizing, and grassroots justice work with a UU lens.



Meeting once a month between November 2015 and April 2016, youth dug deeply into the ways our faith calls us to work for justice, and developed skills to do this work effectively and accountably. Through worship, small group discussions, and monthly guest panels with local and national activists, organizers, and faith leaders, they explored the question, "What does it mean to be a UU social justice activist?"

YoUuth SOALS was created and facilitated by MUUSJA Executive Director Rev. Ashley Horan & Ministerial Intern Jack Gaede; two high school youth interns, Nelson Moroukian of Unity Church-Unitarian and Lazlo Zbichorski of White Bear UU Church, were also integral to the design and implementation of the program. A dozen youth from Twin Cities area congregations participated in the regular sessions, and YoUuth SOALS participants took a lead role in creating and facilitating the signature program during the annual Twin Cities Youth Con for more than 75 area UU youth. This program was funded by a grant from the First Universalist Foundation and a highly successful Faithify (online crowdfunding) campaign.



As a part of their ongoing learning and skill-building, participants were encouraged to develop relationships with groups already doing social justice work within their congregations, and to find opportunities to participate in leading projects, actions, and other activities for their own faith communities. All participants will be developing and leading a program for the youth track for the **MidAmerica Regional Assembly**, which is taking place here in the Twin Cities from April 29 - May 1, 2016.

## Monthly Convening Calls

How can we approach pressing social justice concerns through the lens of our faith? What can we learn from one another about building engaging, spiritually-rooted, effective social justice ministries in our congregations? These are questions Unitarian Universalists are asking in our 26 congregations across the state of Minnesota. Unfortunately, the distance between our churches and the culture of autonomy and independence we prize means that too often, our congregations have little relationship with one another, and social justice leaders often feel like they're going it alone.

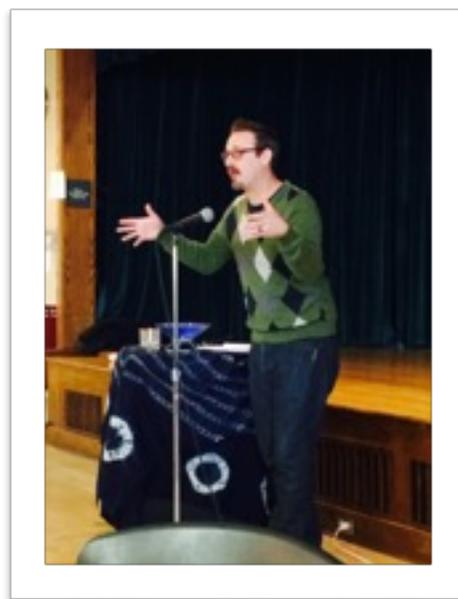


To build relationships and share best practices and mutual support, MUUSJA launched monthly Convening Calls in October 2015. These calls are held via Zoom, and are free and accessible to anyone with a phone or computer. Convening Calls happen one evening a month, and are facilitated by Rev. Ashley Horan and/or the MUUSJA Intern for Justice & Religious Leadership (Kevin Jagoe for 2015-2016). Each call offers either an in-depth exploration of a pressing social justice issue (e.g., Supporting Refugees, #BlackLivesMatter), or training and resources to help congregational social justice leaders develop their skills and effectiveness (e.g., Connecting to National UU Justice Programs, Building Community Partnerships, Principles of Social Justice vs. Social Service).

More than 50 Unitarian Universalists from 12 congregations across the state (and several from neighboring states!) have participated. Recordings of the calls are posted on our website, along with presentation slides and links to resources and information about each call's topic.

## 2015 Minnesota UU Justice Forum

On February 28, 2015 MUUSJA hosted a free interactive workshop with nationally-renowned author, educator and organizer Chris Crass, a longtime social justice organizer and anti-racist educator who has worked with Unitarian Universalists for over a decade supporting efforts to deepen UU anti-oppression social justice political education and action. He is the author of the books *Toward Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy* and *Towards the Other America: Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter*.



This participatory workshop was co-sponsored by several area Unitarian Universalist congregations, and brought together more than 100 people from within and beyond the UU community to talk about race, class, justice, and collective liberation, and how we can help create supportive and healthy culture that enables more of us to be effective anti-oppression leaders in our congregations and communities.

## Mid-America Regional Assembly

In April 2015, MUUSJA partnered with the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network (MUUSJN) and Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network - Illinois (UUANI) to present a compelling workshop at the first-ever MidAmerica Regional Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association. MUUSJA Executive Director Rev. Ashley Horan joined MUUSJN Executive Director Randy Block and UUANI Director Rev. Scott Aaseng to speak about the work of each of their State Advocacy Networks, and share reflections on effective organizing models, building power, and fostering spiritually-grounded work for justice within and beyond our Unitarian Universalist tradition.





## Justice Leaders' Covenant Groups

Effective, spiritually grounded Unitarian Universalist leadership for social justice requires not only concrete skills and long-term vision, but a sense of interconnection to others who share our values and our struggles. Social justice leaders need to intentionally cultivate relationships, resiliency, and reflection in our lives, so that we can keep meeting the heartbreak of the world with clarity, compassion, and creativity.

To this end, MUUSJA has launched monthly Covenant Groups for UU social justice leaders. Using Zoom technology, small groups of 3-5 people "meet" for 90 minutes a month. The inaugural round launched in October 2015, under the leadership of MUUSJA Intern for Justice & Religious Leadership Kevin Jagoe. Each session follows a standard small group ministry format, and focuses on a monthly theme (drawn from an innovative collaboration between MUUSJA and the Soul Matters theme-based ministry program). Between meetings, participants receive readings, reflections, and questions related to the month's theme. Through the six months of the program, participants get to know one another more deeply, find practices to renew themselves, connect to the sources of our UU faith, and process the justice work they are doing.

## Congregational Consulting & Workshops

In fall of 2015, MUUSJA launched a new Congregational Consulting Program with a pilot consulting workshop at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fargo/Moorhead. MUUSJA now offers consulting services to Minnesota UU congregations looking to:

- Integrate justice work into their mission and practices
- Train leaders in best practices for congregational social justice organizing
- Articulate a deeper sense of how our UU principles and values call us to justice work
- Build dynamic, sustainable partnerships with community and interfaith organizations

MUUSJA staff is available for phone and in-person consultation on a sliding scale basis depending on congregational needs and size. We work with congregations to plan customized leadership retreats, congregational workshops, or ongoing consulting relationships.



# Public Witness for Justice

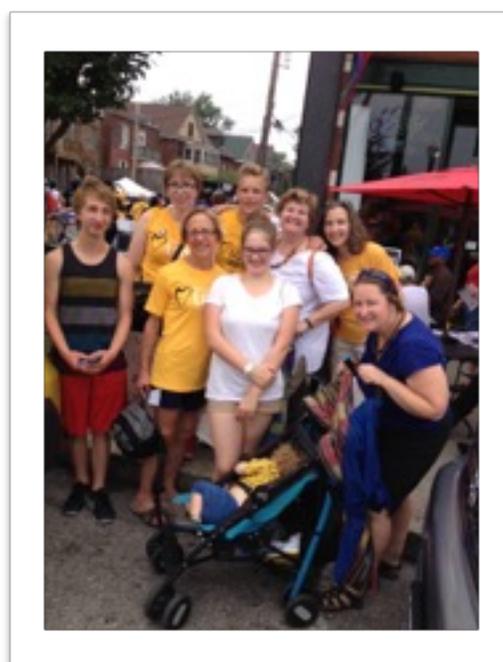
As the statewide advocacy network for Unitarian Universalists in Minnesota, MUUSJA plays the role of convener of both individuals and congregations, and frequently serves as the “dispatcher,” spreading the word about opportunities for immediate response to justice issues facing our communities and neighbors. With more than 700 contacts in our network, and ever-increasing relationships with organizations and communities across the state, MUUSJA has the ability to respond quickly to calls to work in solidarity with a wide range of partners throughout Minnesota. Grounded in our Unitarian Universalist tradition, MUUSJA prioritizes actions, movements, and causes that reflect our faith’s principles and values, and strives to help Unitarian Universalists articulate the spiritual grounding and moral imperatives that compel us to act for justice.

## Witnessing in Ferguson, MO



August 7, 2015, was the one-year anniversary of Michael Brown's killing at the hands of police in Ferguson, MO. Leaders there, including a large number of Unitarian Universalists working in solidarity with Black leadership, issued a national call for people of faith to travel to Ferguson on the anniversary weekend to march, pray, and act for justice in solidarity with all Black and Brown people facing disproportionate police violence.

MUUSJA sent a delegation of 7 Unitarian Universalists (including two high school youth) to participate in Ferguson Solidarity Weekend. The group, led by Rev. Kelli Clement of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, spent the weekend learning about the growing Movement for Black Lives, and building connections with Unitarian Universalists and other people of faith from across the nation who are all committed to dismantling racism and addressing the systemic issues of state-sponsored violence facing Black and Brown communities.



## Solidarity with Black Lives Matter & the Movement for Black Lives

Since the founding of the Minneapolis chapter of Black Lives Matter in 2014, and the growth in Black-led organizing for racial justice throughout Minnesota in the following months, MUUSJA has been organizing Unitarian Universalists across the state to show up in accountable, spiritually-grounded relationships of solidarity and support.



MUUSJA has convened Unitarian Universalist individuals and congregations on multiple occasions at the request of Black Lives Matter - Minneapolis and other Black-led organizations, turning out our constituents for actions, protests, rallies, educational events, and public witness. These events have included #ReclaimMLKDay 2015, #BlackFair, solidarity actions on behalf of the #MOA11, protests at City Hall and the Hennepin County Government Center, and many more.



MUUSJA also holds a seat on the core organizing team of MARCH - Multifaith Anti-Racist Change & Healing, an interfaith group of clergy and lay leaders committed to organizing predominantly white faith communities for racial justice.

MUUSJA is committed to being a long-term partner in statewide struggles to dismantle white supremacy, and to build a racially just and equitable Minnesota.

## Pridefest

MUUSJA has a long-standing commitment to supporting and affirming the LGBTQI community, and has historically played a key role in faith-based organizing for sexual and gender justice in Minnesota. For several years, MUUSJA has served as the convener of the Unitarian Universalist presence at the Twin Cities Pride Festival, and has organized the UU delegation to march in the annual Ashley Rukes Pride Parade.



In 2015, more than 50 Unitarian Universalists joined MUUSJA's parade contingent, representing nearly a dozen UU congregations from the Twin Cities metro area and beyond. Our parade theme was "Social Justice sUperheroes," and volunteers created colorful puppets and signs that embodied our faith's shared commitment to affirmation and celebration of all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual as beloved parts of our interconnected family.



Nearly a dozen MUUSJA volunteers also staffed the Unitarian Universalist booth at the Pride Festival, and engaged with festival attendees to spread the Good News of Unitarian Universalism to a wide audience of people, many of whom had long been told they would never be accepted as full members of religious community. Volunteers spoke passionately about finding their spiritual homes in one of our 25 Minnesota UU congregations, and extended radical hospitality and affirmation to everyone who visited our booth.



## Tar Sands Resistance March



Acting out of our long-held commitment to environmental justice, MUUSJA convened a sizable delegation of Unitarian Universalists to participate in the Tar Sands Resistance March in St. Paul, MN, in June 2015. Marchers joined together with friends from across the region to send a clear message: keep toxic tar sands out of America's Heartland, protect clean water, clean energy, and a safe climate! As people of faith, MUUSJA constituents from several Unitarian Universalist congregations around the state represented our moral voice in

this critical movement moment. MUUSJA was an official sponsor of the Tar Sands Resistance March, which was organized by our movement partners, including the Indigenous Environmental Network, Energy Action Coalition, Interfaith Power & Light, 350.org, National Wildlife Federation and Sierra Club.

# Issue-Based Advocacy Work

For much of its history, MUUSJA's primary organizing model revolved around issue-based working groups, comprised of members of three or more Unitarian Universalist congregations who shared a commitment to addressing a significant social justice issue through a UU lens. While Working Groups are no longer the sole or principal form of MUUSJA's work, several dedicated groups continue to build relationships across congregational boundaries and build their collective power to advocate for justice.

## Voting Rights Working Group

MUUSJA's Voting Rights Working Group has been a powerful force for advocacy and education about the importance of voting in our state since its inception in the early 2000s. Over the years, the MUUSJA Voting Right Working Group has advocated for justice in voting rights and elections on a wide variety of issues, including helping to defeat the racist Voter ID amendment that was on the ballot in 2012. A collaboration between MUUSJA and the Association of Universalist Women, and led by Jenny Thomas and Cathy Pernu, the Voting Rights Working Group's mission is to:

- Protect and promote voting rights, access and participation for all citizens, and;
- Work to have all vote counts be accurate, verifiable, secure and transparent.

In 2015, The Voting Rights Working Group commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and rolled out a comprehensive plan to work with congregations across the state to reflect on the role of elections in our democratic society and to encourage voter turnout for the 2016 elections.

The AUW/MUUSJA Voting Rights Working Group organized a Restore the Vote event organized by TRUST, hosted at Linden Hills UCC in December, 2015. They examined the challenges of employment and voting faced by people who have a criminal record in Minnesota. Those who attended learned about specific action they could take to restore the voting rights of 40,000 Minnesotans who have made their amends and are eager to improve their lives both by working and voting.



## Environmental Action Working Group

MUUSJA's Environmental Action Working Group has historically been involved in a wide array of environmental issues impacting Minnesotans, including sulfide mining, tar sands and pipeline construction, and clean and renewable energy.

2015 was a big year for the Environmental Action Working group, as they launched their Solar Gardens Program after many long months of research and preparation. A working group comprised of members from five metro-area Unitarian Universalist congregations researched solar gardens and evaluated developers, culminating in legal agreements with Minnesota Community Solar and have signed Partnership Agreements that will streamline the subscription



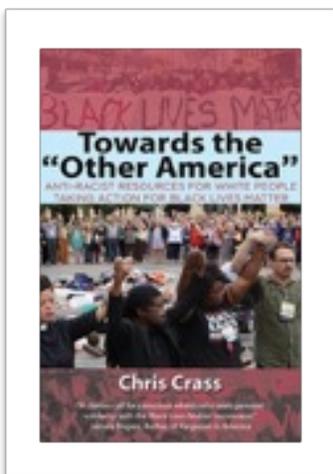
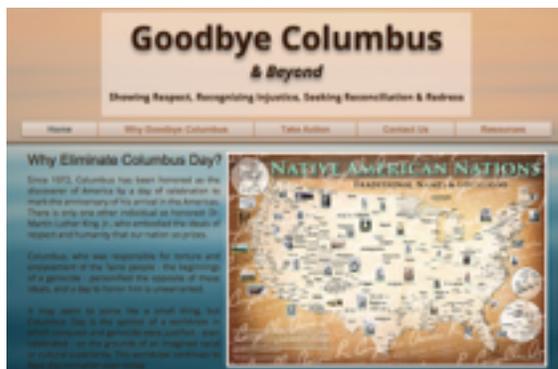
process for residential subscribers as well as create a pool of funds that may be used improve social justice programs of the member congregations. The primary goal of this effort was the reduction of carbon emissions and promotion of solar energy as the best renewable energy source for the future of our state and our world.

The initial participant congregations include

First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, Unity Church-Unitarian of St. Paul, Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship, and Oak Grove Presbyterian Church of Bloomington. The member churches are expected to also commit the Xcel Energy electricity accounts of their buildings to this program, which when combined with the residential subscribers could result in the direct reduction of as much as 8,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year. Per EPA guidelines, this is equivalent to almost 20 million miles of passenger car driving. Structured as a "pay-as-you-go" program, this agreement will allow subscribers to save money at the same time as they help save our future environment. Toward the end of 2015, sale of subscriptions moved to committees within the individual congregations, and the Solar Gardens Group became an independent organization, ending its formal relationship with MUUSJA.

# Congregational and Partner Outreach Efforts

- In coalition with local partners, a group of Unitarian Universalist members of the Northwoods UU Fellowship in Pine City, MN, have launched a state-wide campaign to officially change "Columbus Day" to "Indigenous People's Day" in Minnesota. The Goodbye Columbus campaign proposes a day to honor this country's original people and their descendants, and to be part of a broader recognition of past and present injustices against indigenous communities. The creation of Indigenous Peoples' Day is therefore a commitment to eliminate the discrimination that remains shamefully widespread in our communities.



•An interview with MUUSJA Executive Director Ashley Horan is featured in anti-racist author and activist Chris Crass' new book, *Towards the Other America: Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter*. Jamala Rogers, co-founder of Organization for Black Struggle, has called the book "a clarion call for conscious whites who seek genuine solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement." This is an excellent resource for personal development, or for use with your congregation's Racial Justice Team! Find it on Amazon or download a free e-book from [www.chalicepress.net/otheramerica](http://www.chalicepress.net/otheramerica)

- MUUSJA has continued its relationship as coalition member of **HIRE-MN**, working for racial and gender equity in hiring practices across the metro area in both public and private sector projects. HIRE-MN has been a key player in pressuring groups like Minnesota Department of Transportation, the City of Minneapolis, the Met Council, and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority to set and meet hiring goals for hiring women and people of color. Former MUUSJA Director/Organizer Ralph Wyman is the key liaison and consultant for this work.



# Behind the Scenes: Growing our Infrastructure and Capacity

## MUUSJA Granted 501(c)3 Status

In March 2015, MUUSJA was granted official 501(c)3 status as a charitable/non-profit organization, giving us fiscal and fiduciary independence. This transition marked the end of our formal relationship with the MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association (and previously the Prairie Star District), which had been serving as our fiscal agent. We are grateful for the support of the District and Regional staff over the years, and are excited to be moving into this new phase of our evolution.

## Training the Next Generation of UU Justice Leaders

MUUSJA Staff and Board share a deep commitment to not only fortifying the capacity of Unitarian Universalist individual congregations across our state today, but to participating in the spiritual formation of the next generation of Unitarian Universalist justice leaders. To that end, MUUSJA created learning and leadership development opportunities for several youth, young adults, and ministerial candidates in 2015:

- In the first months of 2015, MUUSJA offered a Communications Internship to a UU young adult who wanted to learn about non-profit communications strategy in an organization. The Communications Intern, Ben Knuth, worked 3-5 hours a week managing our social media, creating publicity campaigns, writing our newsletter, and building communications infrastructure with Minnesota UU congregations.
- MUUSJA hired our first-ever Ministerial Intern, Laura Thompson, for a summer internship in 2015. Laura worked closely with Rev. Ashley Horan, MUUSJA's Executive Director, to both explore the fundamentals of social justice ministry in the UU tradition and to provide support to several key MUUSJA activities, including 2015 Pride and our Summer 2015 Fundraiser and Celebration.
- In 2015, we launched the MUUSJA Internship for Justice & Religious Leadership, funded by a grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program's Fund for Social Responsibility and our first-ever Faithify (online crowdfunding) campaign. This innovative Internship is the first of its kind in UU State Advocacy Networks, and is designed to bring a Unitarian Universalist seminarian to MUUSJA for 10-15 hours a week between September 2015 and June 2016 to develop concrete skills, theological grounding, and leadership capacity for leading faithful, effective justice work within Unitarian Universalism and beyond. Our first MUUSJA Intern for

Justice & Religious Leadership, Kevin Jagoe, is a seminarian at Meadville Lombard Theological School, and also serves as the Youth Coordinator at First Unitarian Society. Kevin's portfolio for this internship centers on developing relationships with and among congregations in Greater Minnesota, and developing programming to nurture the spiritual needs of Unitarian Universalist lay leaders working for social justice in their communities.

- Both UU-YELP! and YoUuth SOALS, MUUSJA's high school youth programs, have been designed to incorporate the leadership and perspectives of youth. Both programs have included paid internships for two UU youth, who work closely with MUUSJA staff and are an integral part of designing and facilitating the program for their peers. UU-YELP!'s interns were Lucy West of Unity Church-Unitarian and Lauren Dalton of White Bear UU Church; YoUuth SOALS' interns were Lazlo Zbichorski of White Bear UU Church and Nelson Moroukian of Unity Church-Unitarian.

## **Building Relationships with Greater Minnesota**

The majority of Minnesota Unitarian Universalists (numerically and by congregation) are concentrated in the Twin Cities Metro Area, and so it is no surprise that MUUSJA has long struggled to build relationships with and provide appropriate resources for congregations in Greater Minnesota. This year, however, in response to requests from Greater Minnesota UU congregations, we made a decision to prioritize building these relationships and resources, and as a result have dramatically increased our programming for and connections congregations beyond the Twin Cities Metro Area.

In large part, this outreach and programming have been made possible because of the increased staff capacity we have added through the MUUSJA Internship for Justice and Religious Leadership, launched in September 2015. In the first few months of this Internship, Kevin Jagoe has already made connections with several congregations around the state with whom MUUSJA formerly had no relationship; he has also conceived and launched the new monthly Convening Call and Covenant Group programs, which are accessible to UUs around the state through online Zoom technology.

We have also prioritized communications with congregations throughout the state. We have increased our social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, and our newsletter highlights and promotes the social justice activism of our UU congregations and Partnering Organizations.

# Financial Growth and Stability: Funding our Future

MUUSJA is at an exciting point in our development. With visionary, energetic leadership from both Board and Staff, we are excited about pursuing new and increased programming, staff, and relationships that will help us live more fully into our mission of empowering Minnesota UUs to “unleash courageous leadership and collective power to build a just and loving world.”

With this excitement and vision comes the need to expand our budget and our funding sources so that we have the resources we need to do this important work.

## Monthly Sustainer Program

MUUSJA historically used a dues-based membership structure to fund its work: individual Unitarian Universalists contributed \$25/year to be members of the organization, and would sometimes make an extra donation at special events. This year, however, we have been moving steadily toward growing a more sustainable, regular revenue stream by cultivating a base of monthly sustaining donors. By the end of 2015, we had signed on nearly 25 sustaining donors, generously contributing nearly \$750 a month. While we hope to significantly expand the Monthly Sustainer Program in 2016, it is already on its way to becoming the backbone of our income structure, and has grown exponentially over the past year. Anyone interested in becoming a sustaining donor can do so [here](#).

## Special Event Fundraising

We continue to create one-time opportunities for donors to give. This year, these events included:

- **MUUSJA’s Annual Summer Fundraiser & Celebration:** Featuring a powerful keynote address by Lena K. Gardner and Pastor Danny Givens, leaders with Black Lives Matter - Minneapolis, this event brought in nearly \$10,000 in donations.
- **Give to the Max Day** continues to be a reliable funding source for MUUSJA. While we prioritized an end-of-the-year giving appeal over G2tMD this year, we still brought in nearly \$2000 in one-time contributions through this day-long Minnesota charitable event.
- MUUSJA launched our first-ever crowdfunding effort with a **Faithify Campaign for the MUUSJA Internship for Justice & Religious Leadership** in the summer of 2015. We exceeded our goal of raising \$1500 to fund this groundbreaking internship with the help of many generous donors from around the state and the nation.

## Grants

MUUSJA brings in a significant portion of our annual revenue through grant funding. In 2015, we received three significant grants that funded specific programming:

- **The First Universalist Foundation** renewed a grant request to fund our youth program, YoUuth SOALS, for \$5000. Grant money went to the Ministerial Intern and High School Youth Interns' stipends; Executive Director and other staff time; panelist honoraria; and overhead costs.
- **The Unitarian Universalist Funding Program** granted us \$9000 to launch the MUUSJA Internship for Justice & Religious Leadership. Grant money went toward the Intern's stipend and professional expenses; Executive Director supervisory time; and overhead costs.
- **The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability**, which sponsors and convenes the HIRE-MN Coalition, awarded us a grant for our work at that table for racial and gender equity in hiring in Minnesota. Grant money went toward compensating Ralph Wyman for his service as MUUSJA's Liaison and Consultant with HIRE-MN; Executive Director time; and overhead costs.

While grants will likely continue to be an important revenue source for MUUSJA, we are well aware that grant funding is short-term, and rarely funds ongoing operations expenses. As we move into the future, if we wish to sustain programs like YoUuth SOALS and the MUUSJA Internship for Justice & Religious Leadership, we will need to continue to expand our Monthly Sustainer Program and other revenue sources.

## Congregational Contributions

Unitarian Universalist congregations continue to be a significant source of financial support for MUUSJA's work. Some congregations include a contribution to MUUSJA as line-item in their annual budget; others commit to dedicating a Sunday offering to MUUSJA sometime during the program year. In 2015, we received just more than \$6000 from our Minnesota congregations.

# MUUSJA Leadership

## MUUSJA Staff

- Our Executive Director, Rev. Ashley Horan, works half-time for MUUSJA, and is the only contracted employee of the organization.
- In 2015, MUUSJA hired a consulting Communications Assistant, Jennifer Brook, who is contracted to work 5 hours a week on our social media, newsletter, and website. The Communications Assistant reports to the Executive Director.
- We continue to contract with a part-time Bookkeeper, who is supervised by the MUUSJA Treasurer, Jeffrey Snyder. Betsy Raasch-Gilman stepped down as our Bookkeeper in 2015, and was replaced by Denise Brewer.
- MUUSJA has had 8 paid interns in 2015: a Communications Intern, a Summer Ministerial Intern, four high school Youth Interns working with our 2014-15 and 2015-16 youth programs, the MUUSJA Intern for Justice & Religious Leadership, and the YoUUtH SOALS Ministerial Intern. The Executive Director supervises all interns.

## Board of Directors

The current Board roster is as follows:

- Gail Bishop, Board Co-Chair; 1st Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester
- Judy Goebel, Board Co-Chair, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
- Jeffrey Snyder, Treasurer; First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
- Taylor Putz, Secretary; First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
- Susan Dailey, Member at Large; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth
- Judy C. Foster, Member at Large; St. Cloud Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
- Sherri Knuth, Member at Large; Unity Church-Unitarian, St. Paul
- Ozzie Mayers, Member at Large; Spirit of Life St. Cloud
- Cheryl Moline, Member at Large; First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis
- Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, Member at Large; White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church

## Board Highlights

- In 2015, Rev. Wendy Jerome, Marcy Leussler, Susan Schonfeld, and Rev. Bruce Johnson's terms on the Board of Directors expired, and they left the Board. We thank them for their years of dedicated service.

- The Board held a visioning retreat in January of 2015, during which they endorsed MUUSJA's re-imagined role as a Convener and Capacity Builder for Unitarian Universalists across the state of Minnesota and beyond.
- The Board revised and approved the Executive Director's job description and compensation package.
- The Board created working committees for Personnel/HR and Communications, and later added additional focus areas of Fundraising and Volunteer Opportunities.
- The Board continues to work on policy development to clarify the scope and structure of MUUSJA's governance model, and to envision our growth in both programming and staff structure.
- In the fall of 2015, Board Members reached out to recent MUUSJA donors as part of its "Connect, Grow, Lead" listening and fundraising campaign. In these conversations with several dozen of our supporters around the state, Board members shared about new and exciting activities and focus areas for MUUSJA, and solicited feedback from constituents. The supporters were asked what they and their congregations dream of for MUUSJA's future and how we could better serve, connect to, inspire, and mobilize individuals and congregations to become a powerful Unitarian Universalist moral voice for justice. This end of the year fundraising, which included both one-time contributions and a significant number of new monthly sustainer commitments, has allowed us to project a \$15k increase in our 2016 budget, expanding to nearly \$72k for FY 2016 -- a 26% increase over 2015's \$57k budget.

# Watch Us in 2016!

## MidAmerica Regional Assembly

This year, we are thrilled that the MidAmerica Regional Assembly will be taking place here in St. Paul, April 29 - May 1, 2016! The theme will be "The WHO In the New Era of Unitarian Universalism," and programming will focus on questions like, "Who will we Unitarian Universalists need to be, to be relevant?" "How will we get there?" "Who will be joining us on this journey?" MUUSJA Executive Director Rev. Ashley Horan will be co-leading a workshop with Unitarian Universalist and local Black Lives Matter organizer Lena K. Gardener about how Unitarian Universalist individuals and congregations can cultivate spiritual and cultural humility, and show up as "Faithful Followers" in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives.

MUUSJA is also pleased to announce that on Friday afternoon, April 29th, prior to the opening ceremonies at Regional Assembly, we will be co-sponsoring a dynamic Capacity Building Workshop for justice leaders in the MidAmerica Region! The event will be held at Unity Church-Unitarian in St. Paul, and will feature tracks for Lay Leaders, Religious Educators, and Youth.

## The MUUSJA Internship for Justice & Religious Leadership

We will be partnering with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and their innovative Justice Building Innovators program to co-sponsor a second year of this important Internship.

## YoUuth SOALS

Our first round of YoUuth SOALS will continue through April 2016, and we will launch a second round of the program in November 2016. YoUuth SOALS 2.0, which will incorporate many of the elements of the 2015-2016 YoUuth SOALS model, will have a special focus on faithful leadership for Racial Justice in the congregation and beyond!

## Regional Justice Gatherings

As a part of our ongoing commitment to bringing congregations in Greater Minnesota into deeper relationship with MUUSJA and with one another, we will be planning in-person gatherings for clusters of congregations throughout Minnesota. During these day-long gatherings, we will help congregations grow their social justice leadership skills, and build relationships with one another. Gatherings are planned for Southern, North-Central, and North-Eastern Minnesota.

## Online Programming - Covenant Groups & Convening Calls

Once again, we will be offering an array of opportunities for justice-minded Unitarian Universalists across the state to connect with one another using online technology. Watch your MUUSJA Newsletter for announcements about monthly Convening Calls, and to sign up for our next round of Covenant Groups!

***This annual report has been created at the request of the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance's Board of Directors.***

Respectfully prepared and submitted by:

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