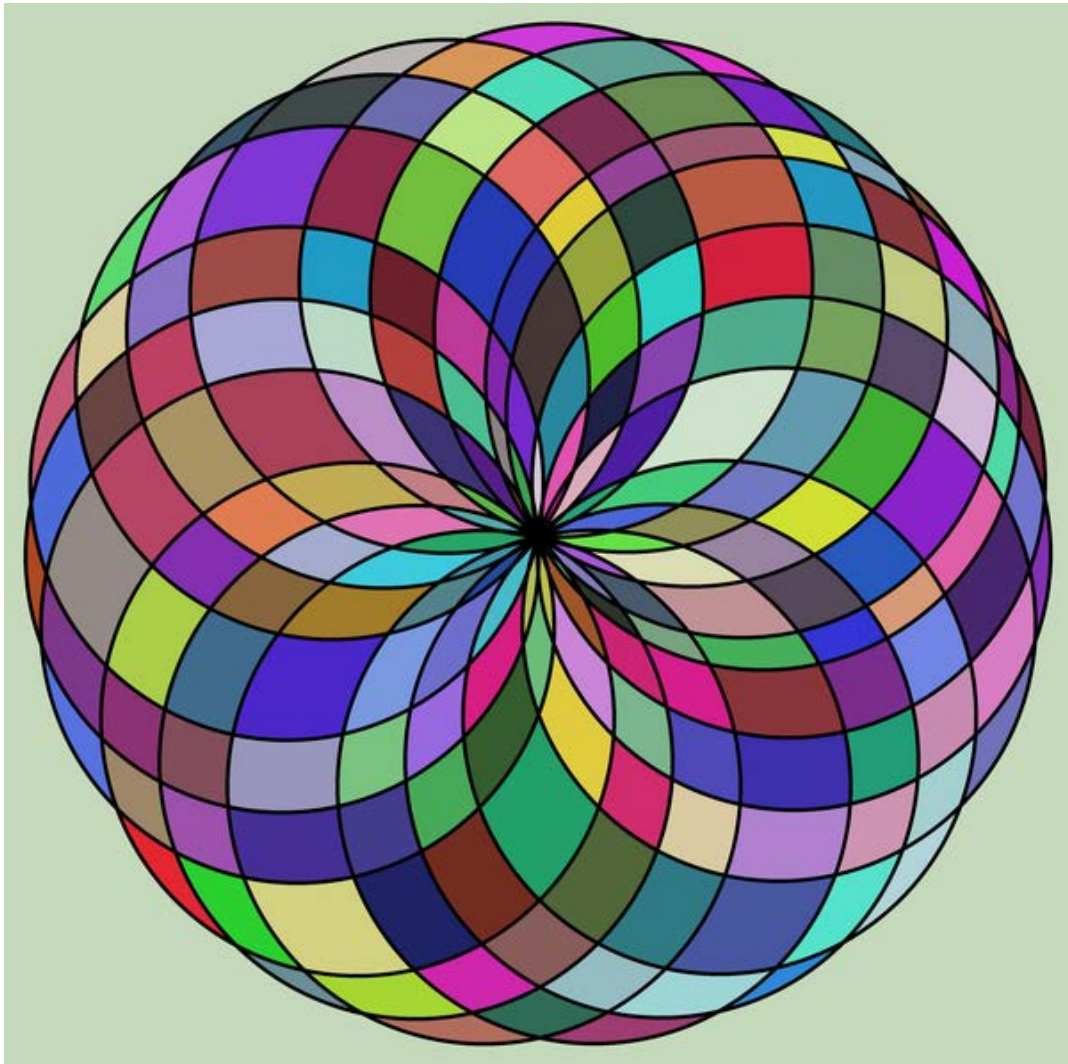


Inland Northwest UU Community Progress Report



July - December 2020

INUUC Progress Report

Introduction

Our new Spokane UU Community was formed on July 1, 2020. Following a year of struggle, frustration, and disappointment, a total of about 100 UUs left our 133 year old congregation at UUCS to begin a new adventure. Some of us resigned in the spring of 2020, 49 people submitted a group resignation on July 1 and some left later. All acknowledged that UUCS was no longer a place where we belonged.

Calling ourselves NewUU Spokane, we flailed and floundered for a bit, working to create a semblance of order out of chaos. A Forum was created to share information and communicate with each other, and a weekly emailed Newsletter followed. We held Town Halls on Zoom to share feelings and ideas, hopes and fears. People used their own resources to provide technical resources, and support our Sunday “Soul Weaving” services, brought with us from UUCS.

Mid July, all interested were invited to meet via Zoom with the UUA regional leads for this area, and they were supportive and helpful. Slowly, our community evolved and formed Circles to address things like Pastoral Care, Finances, Healing, and Communications. Soon more Circles were formed and their many activities and accomplishments are described in this Progress Report.

At this six month point in our history, much as been accomplished, and more awaits doing. Some are frustrated with the slow pace of actions, others express dismay that we are moving too quickly. We work to find the balance between comfort and fear, inertia and headlong activity. Some new people have found us, and we welcome their fresh eyes. We struggle with issues of inclusion and exclusion, and want to fully embody “all are welcome here” in a deep and meaningful manner as we create our own beloved community.

January 2021

Alliance for Racial Equality (ARE) Circle

The ARE Circle was started by Libby Fitzgerald in July 2020. The work this circle has completed has been to: Create a mission statement, Establish a goal, Form an annual budget, and host two discussion groups focused on the New York Times series, The 1619 Project

Our mission is to build an antiracist movement of the white Unitarian Universalists working to: Understand whiteness and privilege, Unlearn and challenge white supremacy, Confront racism in ways that are accountable to communities of color.

Our goal is to provide leadership development for ARE members in our church community that is: Anti-racist, Anti-oppressive, Multicultural. Our annual budget is estimated to be \$1,900. This includes funding the 21 Day Racial Challenge Workshop America.

Looking ahead, we will be creating a plan to implement our mission and goals. Our members include Elizabeth Fitzgerald , Warren Carpenter, Marilyn Carpenter, Martha Nichols, Sandy Nichols, Lannie MacAndrea, Liz Moore, Stephanie Samson, Linda Moulder, Joan Perkins, Claire Cerling-Matlen.. For more information, please contact: Elizabeth Fitzgerald - libbyfitz@comcast.net or Warren Carpenter – warrencarpenter01@gmail.com

Communications Circle

In July 2020, Scott Fitzgerald started the Newsletter Circle. It was re-purposed as the Communications Circle in September 2020, as we realized our New UU Community (now the INUUC) was maturing quickly and needed more than just a simple, internally distributed newsletter to communicate with prospective members and the larger community our church inhabits.

Since then, we have continued to produce/distribute the newsletter while planning for our web site: a domain and web hosting have been secured and we are poised to begin site design/development. In addition, we've discussed creating a range of community outreach materials (advertisements, media talking points, letters to the editor and short articles) to announce our presence and speak to potential new members and friends.

Looking ahead, we intend to debut our new web site in phases, as we learn more about the needs of our members, as well as create a PR strategy and expand our mailing list.

Our members include Scott Fitzgerald, Erin Fitzgerald, Ariel Ocker, Dustin Hall, Amy Teel, Patty Bedalov and Elissa Lowe. For more information, please contact Scott Fitzgerald, scott.fitzgerald@comcast.net.

Covenant Writing Circle

In November, 2020, Lannie MacAndrea started the Covenant Writing Circle to use the information collected by the Big Picture Circle and begin the formal research to understand the central importance of a covenant to our community and to draft one that will be a sacred promise to ourselves as individuals and to our community as a whole.

Since then, we have set up a Slack app to collect material, and met to begin setting the questions that could help guide us and to discuss ways to provide the wider community opportunities for feedback to the Circle and for comment on the covenant drafts. Looking ahead, we plan to work with our Pacific NW Healthy Congregations Team, specifically Rev. Carol McKinley, who is a very experienced leader of covenanting processes in congregations.

Our members include Bonnie Overlie, Bob Stilger, Carol Bryan, Linda Moulder, Joan Perkins, Claire Matlen, Erin Popelka, Caitlin Lake and Lannie MacAndrea.

For more information, please contact Lannie MacAndrea at lanniemacandrea@msn.com

Finance Circle

On July 18, 2020, Ian White started a Finance Circle with a post on the Forum and a call for others to join in. Cheryl Conn and Marie Bjork-Haugen were his first volunteers.

Our UUA Regional staff advised us that one of our first tasks as a community was to find a fiscal sponsor so we could accept gifts and pledges, and pay for community needs. After some research, we contracted with the Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund, a well-respected local 501(c)(3) organization, for a period of up to one year. The Fund generously covers all transaction expenses, and charges no fees.

We began accepting donations in September, and gratefully appointed Stephanie Samson as our volunteer bookkeeper and liaison between our community and the Fund. The Finance Circle solicited budget requests from each Circle, and compiled them in a community-wide budget, which was shared on the Forum, and reviewed by the IRC at their first meeting on October 11.

Since then, we have received over \$19,000 in donations from approximately 50 people. In addition, we have developed a process for reviewing, approving, and paying expenses, and provided monthly financial reports on the Forum.

Looking ahead, we plan to develop budget priorities in case sufficient funds for all requests are not available, and continue to closely monitor and manage our resources.

Members are Katheryn Alexander, Marie Bjork-Haugen, Warren Carpenter, Rick Eichsteadt, Martha Nichols, Bob Stilger, and Anna Vamvakias.

For more information, please contact any member of the team, or email neuufinance@gmail.com.

Governance Research

In December 2020, Stephanie Samson and Sara Bauer volunteered to help research and present ideas to the INUU Community about the permanent governance structure that will be adopted, and so officially kicked off the Governance Research Circle. We have just begun meeting and getting our bearings as to what we are tasked with and how we will work as a team. As a way to get more familiar with Sociocracy, we have decided to use it to govern our own circle.

Looking ahead, we will be creating a covenant for the work we are doing together. We will also continue looking into how to best proceed with the work we are tasked with.

Our members include Anna Vamvakias, Patty Bedalov, Warren Carpenter, Stephanie Samson, Sara Bauer and Marion Hammer. For more information, please contact sara.b.bauer@gmail.com or stephaniesamson@comcast.net.

Healing Research Circle

Kathryn Alexander started this Circle to find expertise to support the healing from church related pain and trauma for INUUC participants. We've been talking with Dave Mentz, Lauren MacNeill, and Rev. Sarah Millspaugh from the Healthy Congregations Pacific Region Team as well as Rev. Elizabeth Stevens from the Palouse UU church. We have also been reading books to find those that we feel would be beneficial for a book group based on healing church related anguish and trauma.

We have a contract that has been approved by the Finance Circle and the IRC with the Healthy Congregations Team and Rev. Stevens is willing to join them. We have scheduling information that we will be sharing the first week of January. We are working the Rev. Sarah Millspaugh to schedule a Sunday sermon on healing and we will be holding a Town Hall on January 13th (mark your calendars) to explain all of this to you and to introduce everyone and answer your questions.

Our members include Kathryn Alexander, Elissa Lowe, Erin Fitzgerald, Patty Bedalov, Maureen Smith and Jan Evancho. For more information, please contact Kathryn Alexander, kalexandertoo@gmail.com)509) 934-5930

Interim Representative Circle (IRC)

At a Town Hall on September 3, our community decided to form two significant Circles. One was a Circle charged with making decisions for our new community for a period up to one year. Elizabeth Love Sheehan and Marie Bjork-Haugen volunteered to convene and facilitate this Circle of Circles.

Each Circle was asked to select two representatives to represent them, and volunteers were sought for two Member At Large positions. Thus, our group of 24 people (including facilitators) was formed. First called the “Interim Decision Making Circle,” members renamed themselves “Interim Representative Circle” to better reflect the intention of the group to represent all voices in our community. As Circles are formed, complete tasks, and disband, new IRC representatives are welcomed, and those who have completed tasks are thanked for their participation and move off the IRC.

Since then, we have met monthly and began getting to know each other and the work of the Circles represented. We agreed to norms for interacting with each other, and reviewed and discussed our overall budget. Nine members participated in a day-long UUA training on board development, and others are beginning an 8-month UUA leadership program in January.

In addition, the Naming Circle shared their process and recommendations, and asked the IRC to finalize a permanent name for our new UU community. We are now the Inland Northwest Unitarian Universalist Community, IN UU Community, INUUC. We also agreed to create this Progress Report to inform our community of what we have accomplished in our first six months.

Looking ahead, we formed a Circle to explore options for affiliation with the UUA and bring recommendations back to the IRC. This Structural Documents Circle is charged with then coordinating the tasks necessary to become part of the UUA, and will bring in others to assist with specific needs.

IRC members and the Circles they represent are:

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| • ARE (Allies for Racial Equity) | Libby Fitzgerald and Warren Carpenter |
| • Communications | Elissa Lowe and Ariel Ocker |
| • Covenant (Circle formed Nov. 2020) | Lannie MacAndrea |
| • Finance | Rick Eichsteadt and Anna Vamvakias |
| • Governance Research | Sara Bauer and Stephanie Samson |
| • Healing | Kathryn Alexander and Patty Bedalov |
| • LGBTQ+ | (vacant) |
| • Naming Circle (Task complete Nov. 2020) | Amy Teel |
| • Naming – Big Picture Ideas
(Task complete Nov. 2020) | Anna Vamvakias and Erin Fitzgerald |
| • Parents | Claire Cerling-Matlen and Lex Woolston |
| • Pastoral Care | Anna Marie Martin and Martha Nichols |
| • RE | Caitlin Lake |
| • Soul Weaving | Maureen Smith |
| • Structural Documents Circle | Amy Teel |
| • Members at large | Phyllis Thayer and Cheryl Conn |
| • Facilitators | Elizabeth Love Sheehan and Marie Bjork-Haugen |

For more information, please contact Marie Bjork-Haugen mariebjork@aol.com or Elizabeth Love Sheehan elovesheehan@gmail.com

LGBTQ+ Circle

In August 2020, Elizabeth Love Sheehan started a LGBTQ+ Circle to support LGBTQ+ people both within our church and in the wider community.

Since then, we have begun to organize ourselves, and invite others to join with us. Looking ahead, we plan to create our priorities in January, and become more active.

Our members include Adam Bodhi, Elizabeth Love Sheehan, Erin Popelka, Lex Woolston, Maureen Smith.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Love Sheehan elovesheehan@gmail.com

Naming Circle

On August 6, 2020, at the Town Hall on Naming, Jan Evancho, Libby Fitzgerald, Julie José, and Amy Teel volunteered to start the Naming Circle.

We were asked to research and evaluate existing name suggestions for the new church, and to try to add new name ideas. Between August and October, we brainstormed, researched, and evaluated name candidates, and also sought multiple rounds of feedback through town halls, the forum, email, and Soul Weaving coffee hours. We narrowed the choices to two candidates, and in November we hosted one last town hall for community discussion before giving the two names and all of the feedback to the IRC to make the final decision.

Our task is now complete and our Circle is done. For more information, please contact Amy Teel at amy_teel@yahoo.com.

Naming Circle – Big Picture

We began in September and continued meeting mostly weekly through November. Our Circle began after a Town Hall meeting hosted by Lannie MacAndrea. We were asked as part of the Naming Project to look at the Big Picture of who we are as a congregation and who we aspire to be. We were the companion to Circle to the group that actually worked on determining a name for the congregation.

We hosted two Town Halls, posted weekly on the forum and sent out individual emails to the community in an effort to provide an inclusive experience for the church.

At our final Town Hall we offered a Word Cloud as a snap shot of who the congregation sees itself to be and a Jamboard process for working with who we aspire to be. These two products can be used in a variety of ways in the future by the Covenant Circle and any other Circle who would like to explore who we are and who we aspire to be.

Our task is completed and now our work has been given to the Covenant Circle to provide them with information on what the congregation has told us about what is important to them.

The members of our Circle included: Kathryn Alexander, Erin Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Love Sheehan, Maureen Smith, Bob Stilger, Anna Vamvakias

For more information please contact Erin Fitzgerald at erinfitzgerald@comcast.net.

Parents Circle

In late September 2020, Caitlin Lake, Claire Cerling-Matlen, Lex Woolston, Maureen Smith and others, started the Parents' Circle because we wanted to gain some clarity on what our new community would offer parents and children. We agreed that we were all burned out on Zoom meetings, but that we still wanted to offer something to parents and children, both during the pandemic and afterwards.

Since then, we have not met as a Circle, though we had a successful outing to a pumpkin patch, organized by Caitlin Lake. We hope to meet again soon, but the stresses of homeschooling during a pandemic, the lack of childcare due to same, and constant Zoom meetings have taken their toll on us and meant that another responsibility is just too much for many of us.

Our members so far include Anna Marie Martin, Caitlin Lake, Claire Cerling-Matlen, Erin Fitzgerald, Heather Sullivan, Joan Perkins, Lex Woolston, Maureen Smith and Terra Price. For more information, please contact Caitlin Lake, Claire Cerling-Matlen or Lex Woolston.

Pastoral Care Circle

The Pastoral Care Circle began meeting in early August to offer assistance to members of our community who are in need. The members include: Caitlin Lake, Joyce Robinson, Martha Nichols, Doug Huigen, Marion Hammer, Anna Marie Martin, Ann Donahue, Linda Moulder and Anna Vamvakias. The PCC has organized itself into smaller circles based on tasks.

The mission of the Circle is: *The Pastoral Care Circle endeavors to create loving hands of care around the awe and mystery of every life.*

The (draft) covenant is: *We covenant to act on our values, show up, listen in love, nurture community and imagine the long view. We offer non-professional emotional, social and spiritual support. We offer a safe place to: connect, build relationships, heal, sustain, guide, reconcile, talk about death and refer to a professional and/or social service organization.*

The PCC established a help line, pastoralcare4uu@gmail.com, and has answered several requests for everything from food resources to a listening ear. There are many members of INUUC who have volunteered to provide needed services. Linda and Caitlin have just completed facilitating the formation of 11 Neighborhood Groups, giving the larger INUUC a local focus. PCC acts as a conduit from our members to resources in the larger community as well as supporting helping activities at INUUC. PCC leadership attended a six hour leadership training session facilitated by the Pacific Western Region of the UUA. In addition PCC is represented on the Finance Circle and the IRC. The work of Pastoral Care will be ongoing.

Feel free to contact the leadership circle of the PCC for more information: Anna Marie Martin [anniemdiv@gmail.com]; Joyce Robinson [joyce_rbnsn@yahoo.com] and Martha Nichols [marthaporter1@hotmail.com].

RE Circle

In September, several folks including Erin and Scott Fitzgerald, Maureen Jones Smith, Caitlin Lake and Claire Cerling-Matlen started our RE Circle by doing a Zoom meeting. We all are invested in, and want to prioritize, religious education and children's and family ministry.

Since then, we have gotten the Parents Circle together for a trip to the Pumpkin Patch, explored curriculum on the UUA website (there's a ton!), test ran a Circle Time over the summer and, along with the Parents Circle, adopted some families for Christmas. In addition, we have reached out to existing congregations (Palouse, University Unitarian Church) to inquire about perhaps joining their RE efforts. That hasn't panned out yet but we are hoping the slump of the holidays and the New Year will end and that will begin

Scott Fitzgerald has created a recurring Zoom link for Sundays at 11 am. The time is not rigid; folks are welcome to join as coffee hour ends. During that time, we will be listening to a story and/or doing an activity. We will be putting a call to the Circle and the community for future hosts/vacillators. (Rachel Kohler from the Corvallis church has been maintaining an incredible catalog/site with activities and stories. It can be found at <https://afire.online/living-the-stories>)

Our members include anyone invested in RE. This Circle is not fleshed out or exclusive. For more information, please contact anyone listed above.

Soul Weaving

In February 2020, Maureen Smith started the process of creating Soul Weaving because many at UUCS wanted an alternative service to Todd Eklof's mostly humanistic services. A proposal to the church leadership emphasized the value of adding a supplemental service at UUCS focused on spirituality and emphasizing the UU principles. Permission was given in late March to begin Soul Weaving gatherings, but before that happened, Governor Inslee announced a state-wide shutdown of most meetings in order to slow the spread of COVID-19.

So, on April 12, the first Zoom Soul Weaving Service was held! Rachelle Strawther offered to use her ZOOM account and to assist with the technology. Maureen, Rachelle, and Kelly Rae Matthews planned and presented the first couple of services and later added anyone who chose to be involved.

During the month of June, a number of UU's left UUCS, taking Soul Weaving with us as the base for our new Unitarian Universalist community. In August, our Circle created a Mission Statement, and we strive to embody its charge in the Soul Weaving services: *Soul Weaving is an inspiring space for those seeking community, equity, hope, and justice. Through our UU Principles, world religions, and diversity of lived stories, we will help each other create lives filled with curiosity, compassion, and empathy, feeding us to work together for a better future.*

The Soul Weavers schedule, organize and produce the services, including reaching out to and working with visiting ministers and speakers. This group also finds and gets copyright permission for the music we use, Lay Lead the services, teach others how to do this, run the coffee hour and do back-up tech roles. Some 20 people participate periodically in our services, in addition to the many UU Churches and their ministerial staff who have reached out in support.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand our planning groups, hire a tech person, create ways to get more participation by more INUUC members in services, purchase memberships in music 'libraries.' We plan to continue to present a wealth of diversity of all kinds in the people, themes, music, religions, and theories through guest speakers and ministers as well as the abundance of knowledge and spirituality within our INUU Community.

Our members include: Ann-Scott Ettinger, Ariel Ocker, Marie Bjork-Haugen, Maureen Smith, Rachelle Strawther, Scott Fitzgerald, Stephanie Samson. For more information, please contact UUSoulWeaving@gmail.com and one of our Weavers will get back to you in a timely manner.