

October 2026 Minister's Report to the Board

Submitted by Rev. Pam Philips

Leads Worship and Officiates Rites of Passage

Our September worship services focused on the theme of Beginnings, including acknowledging the opportunity to begin again in love (inspired by the Jewish high holy days) and overcoming the difficulty of beginning. Casey Akers preached a sermon on beginning with covenant. September marked the beginning of a new experiment with music – singing from a smaller list of hymns so that we become more familiar with the songs and thus more confident singers as a congregation. So far, the experiment seems to be going well. Thanks to music director Jared Gibbs for taking the initiative to suggest this endeavor. People also seem pleased to be welcomed to the service by board members. Thanks!

October's theme is Courage – and we started with an exploration of different kinds of ordinary, quiet courage.

I officiated at a renewal of vows ceremony on September 6th. We held a celebration of life for Art Buikema on September 20th.

Provides Pastoral Care and Presence

In addition to meeting twice monthly with the surviving spouses group, I've met with other folks who have experienced deaths in their families. I'm grateful they are open to talking about their grief with me. I expect there will be lots of feelings of anxiety as we approach the midterm elections.

Encourages Spiritual Development for Self and Others

The "Being UU" classes have begun on Tuesday evening (zoom) & Thursday afternoon (hybrid), and this timing seems to work well for the 15 people who signed up to participate. I am postponing the start of the [Shared Pulpit](#) because only three people signed up. I encourage board members to consider joining this once-a-month, Saturday morning workshop.

The Conversations on our Faith group is reading *The Book of Joy* by HH Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, and the Interfaith book group finished *Speaking of Faith* by Krista Tippett.

The Soul Matters small groups have started meeting. We have five groups which have the maximum number of participants. I reminded the congregation that everyone has access to the [small group packets on the website](#) and encouraged folks to read them (password is got soul).

I'm considering starting a group called "Let's Talk about God" because I've run across several people who would like to explore theism/deism.

Witnesses to Social Justice in the Public Square

I continue to meet with the Jim Crow / White Privilege subgroup of the Dialogue on Race. Doug Pfeiffer has been working on bringing the simulation they offered at the summer summit to UUC, working with the Anti-Racism Mosaic committee.

I will be offering the opening prayer at the NAACP Freedom Fund banquet this Saturday evening, where we have two full tables of UUC members attending. UUC is a bronze sponsor of the event.

Leads Administration

The Wi-Fi has become problematic, dropping during a couple meetings and twice during Sunday services. I've asked Lucas Machi (at his suggestion) to negotiate with Xfinity to get either fiber optic or higher speed to ameliorate the problem. He may also have some ideas about back-up systems.

The Connections committee is holding a Potluck on October 16th and a Newcomers Orientation on October 24th. I've sent out email invitations to fifteen people. We'd love to have a board member come talk to the group about how we govern ourselves. Franklyn Moreno has resigned after MANY years as the chief potluck organizers, but we are fortunate that Carol King and Ross Matthews have come forward to fill his shoes.

Greg Evanylo is convening the Grounds ministry meeting and arranging announcements from the pulpit in support of their Fall Grounds Work Day will be on October 31st.

Joe Cooley will be convening the Building committee to address several items, including researching and recommending a keypad system to replace locks/keys, doing an audit of signage (including in the building but also directing people here), and researching & recommending replacement phone systems.

I met with Ann Dornberg, Ann Ruple, Bill Baker, and Wayne Neu to discuss the Endowment Committee. I look forward to them getting planned giving back onto people's minds.

The auction planning team has met twice so far and has already collected 58 events/items to be sold. They've offered two very creative announcements during the service (pitting Star Wars and Star Trek fans against each other) to create excitement and encourage folks to participate by [donating](#), [bringing food](#), and attending [the event](#) on November 7th.

I've talked with Denise Martin about stewardship and reached out to other UU ministers in Virginia to see if we can have a zoom meeting of stewardship chairs from around the state to share how they do stewardship. It could be a great way of learning new and creative ideas we might want to incorporate into our campaign.

Serves the Larger Unitarian Universalist Faith and Leads the Faith into the Future

I attended our first monthly meeting of the Joseph Jordan Cluster of UU Religious Professionals in Richmond and then attended the Installation service of my colleague the Rev. Jen Raffensberger at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke.

I continue to meet with the Blacksburg Ministerial Association and work on the board of the Blacksburg Refugee Partnership.

Jamie and I will be traveling to St. John, Virgin Islands in January to preach on two Sunday mornings at the small UU fellowship there.

Away from Blacksburg

10/20 Joseph Jordan Cluster of UU Religious Professionals, UU Congregation of Charlottesville

11/9 – 11/12 Southeast UU Ministers Association Fall Retreat, The Mountain

DLFD Report to the Board –October, 2026

Children and Youth Programs:

- **Registration:** We currently have 39 families and 62 kids registered for 85 activity slots.
- **Children and Youth Programming:**
 - RE has been going well, with strong attendance in all classes.
 - I need a new Coming of Age advisor, as one left.
- **Youth Groups**
 - YRUU book sale is in full swing, with over \$300 raised in the first weekend.
 - YRUU and MSYG meet at Sinkland Farms this week.
 - I would still like to find another youth group advisor or two

Adult and Multigen Programming:

- 12 adults are registered for adult OWL, 7 made the first meeting.
- 7 adults attended the first Abolition, Transformation and Faith Formation offering.
- The first after service parents group meeting was very successful, with about 18 parents in attendance. They have decided to meet after service on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. I am working through the logistical challenges of supporting this with childcare for 20+ kids of various ages.
- Sunday Circle was very lightly attended this Sunday, it could be because the issue was a repeat of another presentation many of our regulars may have seen. We'll see how the next couple go, but we may need to rethink Sunday Circles.
- The next Games and Craft Night is Saturday, October 17 on the lower level (due to rental upstairs.)
- I'm still working on the Buddy Project, but hope to get it kicked off later this month.
- Scary to be Hungry will take place during the service October 25 and from 12-4pm outside the S. Main Kroger. Please donate generously!

Other DLFD Activities:

- In the past month I attended several online trainings/webinars, including the 2 day online training from Race Forward, "Facilitating for Racial Equity," and a UUA conversation about youth programming at General Assembly. I also met with colleagues online for the

Southeast LREDA (Liberal Religious Educator's Association,) and with a cohort of other religious educators working on credentialling.

- I have been helping enter items into auctria for the annual Auction.
- We have one more week to meet our goal of 600 boxes of stuffing! Bring your boxes (or cash donations) to vote this Sunday for Star Trek or Star Wars!
- I will be out of town Oct. 16-17 visiting my daughter in Fairfax

Administrator's Report to the Board

September 2026

FINANCIAL REVIEW/AUDIT

The Finance Team has convened a task force to assist with a comprehensive financial review (audit). I have compiled all the supporting documents needed for this review and distributed binders to Ann Ruple, who is leading the charge. The team plans to meet this month to complete the review. Please thank Ann Ruple, Joe and Linda Powers, and Tim Pickering for giving their time to this task.

ADVERTISING

Through our shared offering collection, we collected funds to purchase a printed advertisement in the program for the next concert of the Blacksburg Master Chorale. These funds will help support local musical arts, as well as help spread our values and invite the community to be a part of UUC. I also met with our small cohort of regional UU congregations to renew our sponsorship spots on Radio IQ/WVTF. To support this, UUC selected this cause as one of our weekly shared offerings, and also invited UUC folks to donate directly to a designated fund. This season, in addition to our on-air and online sponsorship "ads," we initiated a short-term matching challenge.

NAACP FUNDRAISING BANQUET

This year we are able to sponsor two full tables at the NAACP fundraising banquet. The banquet is on October 10 and 16 UUC folks will be in attendance.

RENTALS

We've had a very full season of facilities rentals. This is a time-consuming aspect of my job, but one that reaps many rewards. Not only does it provide extra income for UUC, but also helps our community and allows us to share our values. I created a contract with a local business who will host monthly potluck gatherings to create connection within their new community. While attending the Mabon event in September, one participant noticed the welcoming touches at UUC and attended a service last week. She later posted on social media about her positive experience. [Image redacted for public website.]

