



## Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse

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uucgt.org

**UUCGT Office is OPEN**  
**Monday-Thurs. 9:00-3:00**

### Minister

Rev. Alex Jensen  
alexjensen@uucgt.org

### Director of Music

Renée Herman Russell  
musicatuucgt@gmail.com

### Religious Education

Betsie Hammerberg  
dre@uucgt.org

### Office Administrator

Arica Eshelman  
office@uucgt.org

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2022 -2023

Chris Walter	President
Tom Darnton	Vice President
David Hassing	Secretary
Dusty Culton	Treasurer
Pam Hendrick	Trustee
Judy Myers	Trustee
Amanda Mangiardi	Trustee

**Board Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 18**  
**7:00 PM**

## JANUARY SERVICES Thread: "Finding Our Center"

Date	Service Participants	Title / Description
1.1.23	Lay Led Service Coordinator: Susan Smith	"Circle of Questions"
	Finding our Center	
1.8.23	Rev. Alex Jensen Coordinator: Amanda Mangiardi	"Question Box Sunday"
	What's the meaning of life? What is prayer, really? What about your favorite color? Ask Rev. Alex a question on your mind and heart in this service of thinking on the fly and finding our center.	
1.15.23	Rev. Alex Jensen Coordinator: Misty Sheehan	"MLK Sunday: Finding Our Center"
	The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. serves as an inspiring example of a leader who knew his center. What is his legacy today? How might we look to him in finding our own centers?	
1.22.23	Rev. Alex Jensen Coordinator: Pam Hendrick	"Holy Humanity"
	Humanism points to humanity's role and importance in making meaning and solving problems. Join us as we explore the sacredness of what it means to be human.	
1.29.23	Rev. Alex Jensen Coordinator: Mary Van Valin	"Our Deepest Values"
	Members of the congregation and our community share their values and what matters to them most.	

**THE PERFECT  
FUND RAISER!**

**The November Silent Auction fundraiser raised \$10,000 for our congregation!**

Thank you to all who made this event such a success, including Mary Van Valin, Nancy Doughty, Judy Weaver, Judy Barrett, Barb Culton. Thank you to all congregants who submitted something for the auction. It was a great night of fun, food, and music.



## MINISTER'S MESSAGE *from* REV. ALEX

Dear Ones:

UUCGT is entering an exciting time in this turn of the new year! Not only are we seeing a rise in attendance, but also a deepening in engagement within and beyond our community. The feeling across our congregation is infectious; it's clear that I'm not the only one sharing in this excitement!

It seems that our excitement is having a "snowball" effect; I hope you won't mind this reference in the midst of the heavy snow as of late! An emerging desire, from your elected Board and from many in the congregation, is to spend some time thinking about who it is we are yet becoming. Not just *thinking* about it, but actually *dreaming* of what is on the horizon. After an invigorating Board Retreat last Fall, the Board identified a clear desire to intentionally approach these questions: "Who are we now?" and "Who do we want to be as a community?". With additional excitement, it seems that our congregation is wishing to breathe new life and renewed energy into our Vision, Mission, and Covenant statements to reflect where we're at in this next stage.

The overwhelming message I received was that finding a sense of our shared *Mission* for who we are now—not just with the desires and wishes we've inherited, but also with new input and insights especially from those who are newer to us—is crucial for discerning our next steps together. Our congregation was born out of many dreams and desires from our early founders and forbearers: a place for children to flourish, thrive, and ask questions about the world around them; a presence in our area that stands for social justice and promoting the greater good; a community that unequivocally and recklessly welcomes the stranger, especially those who are marginalized or seen as "other" in wider society. Such powerful dreams and visions for who we are when we are best living out our shared values.

All of this dreaming has already cast a grand vision; a vision that called me to you. The enticing opportunity of a fresh shared ministry and a new partnership together, knowing that there is much we can and must do in this world of so much pain and strife. Your imaginations and dreamings have brought us to this next moment, where we ask ourselves these questions once again of who we are now and where we're going.

In the next year, some of your fellow congregants, leaders, and I will embark on designing a process that will allow us to tackle these questions. Building on this Vision for who we are, this emergent Task Force will attempt to craft new statements for our Mission and Covenant together that reflect the times we now find ourselves in. As we enter this fresh new year, we are given a chance to begin again; to examine the opportunity of this next year and to refresh and rekindle our commitments. I hope you'll join in as we set out in this next chapter of our community.

From your Minister, with faith and love,



Reverend Alex Jensen





## Our Next Chapter



Welcome to 2023, a year in which our board and our minister propose to lead a flowering of UUCGT with the help of our congregation. We will continue the work started while preparing for and calling Rev. Alex as our settled minister. Hereafter, we will call this process VMC, for Vision, Mission, and finally Covenant.

We have now entered our second year of Rev. Alex's ministry. We have settled in and gotten to know each other. We have endured administrative challenges. We have broadened and enhanced our ability to deliver our Sunday service message. We have recruited and preserved a talented staff. We have weathered the Covid pandemic. We are once again able to look beyond survival. Our board and minister are preparing to lead this next chapter with all of you being engaged in that process.

A helpful framework for understanding how our congregation works is to think about our vision, our mission and our covenant. A very short definition of each would be:

**Vision:** Where we want to go;

**Mission:** How we get there;

**Covenant:** The energy that moves us forward and holds us together,

Hence **VMC**.



Let's look back to the UUCGT board meeting in February of 2019. During that meeting, our board was in conversations with Rabbi Chava Bahle and Rev. Beth Marshall, wrapping up our time with the former and beginning our time with the latter. At that meeting, we began a chapter in our journey together, a chapter focused on recruiting, calling and settling a new minister. That chapter concluded at our November, 2022, Board meeting when our settled minister presented a plan to lead the congregation in an in-depth review over the next several months of our Vision, our Mission and our Covenant, our VMC. Our next chapter begins.

In the fall of 2020, the entire congregation was busy preparing to recruit and call a new settled minister. As part of that work, the October 2020 Board members formulated a Vision of a 5-year look ahead. Additionally, in the Fall of 2020 the Ministerial Search Team conducted an extensive Congregational Survey along with hosting numerous Cottage Conversations and Focus Groups. The Survey results were published in an 8-page Summary Report, along with a 1-page Summary of the Conversations.

Here is an amalgamated version of a Vision that incorporates work accomplished in 2020 by the Board, input from over 100 UUCGT Members and Friends during the Ministerial Search Team work, and current thinking:

*In 2028, we are a congregation growing in spirit, in numbers, in diversity, and in greater influence in the Grand Traverse region. We have a beloved settled minister. We are a congregation that includes diversity of ages, genders, abilities, racial and ethnic backgrounds and a number of young families. Our RE programs for children, youth and adults are thriving and contributions from our wonderful music program fill our sanctuary with beautiful music every Sunday. With all of this and enhanced Sunday Services, we are the spiritual home for our members and friends.*

*We know that the Grand Traverse area is a special place that needs and deserves special care, and our congregation is at the forefront of sustaining a diverse, vibrant and growing community. We serve as a beacon of hope for preserving the climate. Our Green Sanctuary inspires those who visit us and inspires environmental ministries at other area congregations.*

*Our membership is active and highly visible across the moral, social, racial and environmental justice activities of the Grand Traverse region. We are a source of guidance and healing for the larger community.*



Not to be confused with a “vision statement,” which would be much briefer, this proposed “Vision” has received little attention as we have gone about the process of recruiting, calling and settling a minister in the midst of a Pandemic. Over the next several months, through a coordinated series of services, workshops and conversations, Rev. Alex and a VMC Task Force will lead us through a spiraling process reviewing, developing and recommitting to our Vision, Mission and Covenant. Our goal is to complete this cycle with a covenant ritual at our 2023 Thanksgiving Gratefulness Gathering Sunday, November 19, 2023 at Gilbert Lodge.

Stay tuned to The Flash, future Beacons and Sunday announcements to learn how you can be involved with the work. Contact Rev. Alex or any Board member if you’d like to be more deeply involved in making it happen.

Submitted by Board-appointed **Short-Term Vision Imagining Task Force** members :

Barb Culton, Tom Darnton, Rev Alex Jensen, Chris Walter



## GREEN SANCTUARY



This year the Green Sanctuary Committee has decided to focus on the importance of native plants to the interdependent web of life that we are part of, and on our responsibility to give back to the natural world.

**“It will be the actions of each of us that will determine the fate of the world’s ecosystems.”**

In Douglas Tallamy’s book “Nature’s Best Hope” he proclaims that it will be the actions of each of us that determines that fate of the world’s ecosystems. As an entomologist, he has studied the relationships between the plants and insects that form the base of the terrestrial food web.

Since insects and plants evolved together they have formed mutually dependent relationships. The consequence of this is that as we remove native plants from the landscape, the insects that depend on those plants die out and then all of the animals higher up in the food web are put in peril too.

Similarly the plants that rely on specific insects for pollination produce fewer seeds and smaller fruit further jeopardizing other species.

He concludes that we can dramatically stem species loss by incorporating native plants into our landscapes, reducing the amount of land devoted to turf grass and changing how we approach caring for our yards. In short our yards need to be part of the natural ecosystem rather than separate, non contributing entities.

In January we will be reading and discussing the book “Braiding Sweetgrass” by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This book weaves together indigenous teaching, stories and science in order to help us “imagine a different relationship, in which people and the land are good medicine for each other”. To sign up to participate contact Misty Sheehan at [mistysheehan11@gmail.com](mailto:mistysheehan11@gmail.com)

As the weather warms we are planning to bring in Cheryl Gross, master gardener and president of “Plant It Wild”, to share with us and members for the larger community, how we can begin to incorporate native plants into our yards.

We also plan to work with our Landscaping Committee to identify opportunities to add native plants and remove invasive species from UU property. We plan to get RE involved in this effort by helping the youth create a pollinator garden.

-Andrea Walworth







## MEMBERS and FRIENDS



Changes to the online directory will be made monthly. To see the specific change you will need to go to the online directory at [uucgt.org](http://uucgt.org). Go to "About Us" Then go to "Members and Friends Only". You will need the password to get into this section. If you have not already done so, call the office to get the password.

- Pg 8 Stan Cain died
- Pg 14 & 20 Maynard, Judy & Gus (Agustin) Gurule - Apt change
- Pg 16 Jackson - Swap names for the phone numbers, Joanie is top, Mike is 2nd
- Pg 22 Moore, Jalene, remove home phone number (first one listed with no name beside it)

**Added: MEMBERS** Van Norstrand, Catharine and Newhouse, Mary and Dave

**Added: FRIENDS** Jensen, Kallie and Paul, and Irani, Alyssa



### NEW MEMBERS



#### Catharine Van Nostrand



I am a curious woman who has explored her spirituality. This is the first time I have felt at home in any congregation. As a grand daughter of a minister, I was raised in a Protestant church in my home town in Minnesota. My parents were bewildered at how I asked to visit various churches, synagogues, and places of worship. As an American Sign Language interpreter, I regularly interpreted services for Deaf people. But nothing fit right. I learned to express my spirituality through art, music, meditation, and quality time in nature. I wasn't looking for a church when I found this congregation, but it feels like home. Thank you for being such a warm and welcoming community.

#### Dave and Mary Newhouse



Dave is a retired Wildlife Ecologist, having worked for the US Forest Service (Wisconsin, Utah and Michigan), National Audubon Society (Great Lakes Regional Office), and Iowa Department of Natural Resources. He and wife Mary owned and operated a Wild Birds Unlimited store in Rochester, MN for 8½ years.

His interests and hobbies include travel, photography, bird-banding and wine- and beer-making, when he is not hiking with Mary and dog, Callie.

Dave was raised in the Christian Reformed Church, and has been part of Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and several United Church of Christ congregations.

Mary and Dave recently moved to Traverse City from Cadillac. She has lived in numerous other places, including Ohio where she grew up, Washington, DC, Missouri, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, Utah, and Minnesota. She now finds Traverse City is a great place to retire! She looks forward to getting to know UUCGT better.

She worked as a teacher; in marketing for a publisher; and as a Landscape Architect -- planning Indiana State Parks, US Forest Service recreation and interpretive areas, and National Park historic preservation sites. She and Dave owned a Wild Birds Unlimited store in MN, where she enjoyed sharing birds and nature with customers. Their son and 3 grandchildren live in Grand Rapids, MI.

Her interests include anything nature related, environmental and social advocacy, photography, and art (especially watercolor painting), reading, hiking, traveling, and enjoying time with family, friends and puppy, Callie.



## BOARD REPORT



The UUCGT Board of Trustees met on December 15. Many issues were discussed and acted on.

**Funds approved.** The Finance committee approved the Facilities Committee request for funds to pay for the black mold removal in the music closet.

**IT Task Force Update** - Rick Walter gave a report about the new hard drive, the Wi-Fi wiring problem, the update on the phone line/alarm problem. We are thinking about trying out a new phone system.

**A Shared Ministry Review** has been scheduled with Alex Feb 7 or Feb 14.

**The Facilities committee** proposed the new part-time hire of a Building Superintendent or Sexton to take care of daily upkeep and chores. That committee will research the necessary details for a formal proposal that will be reviewed by the Finance Committee before being presented to the Board.

**A New shelf has been installed in entry vestibule**, to keep vestibule tidy, created by Gordon Friese and Bill Edmondson who crafted the carpentry and installation. It is a beautiful reflection of the bench on the other glass wall that was crafted by Marvin Howe.

**The Shoveling Team** currently has 7 members, just shy of our goal of 8. A schedule is drafted for the winter. Responsibilities include: shoveling and/or salting front walks and assuring 3 exit doors in rear are clear for exit. Each shift-week begins on Monday and ends Sunday night. The person responsible will act alone unless there are larger snowfalls when the rest of the team is alerted to join the effort if they are available.

**Rust Floor stains in Social Hall** from stacked chairs: options to remedy this included placing a rug under the stacked chairs or move the chairs away from the glass windows to where the sofa is now. Then change the floor tile color in that area to dark brown, thereby masking the stains. The Board will discuss this further in January.

**Voices from the Congregation.** This month Barb Termaat from Healthy Congregation gave the history of this committee and their progress up to now. The committee would like guidance as to future goals for this committee. This committee should continue to educate the congregation on healthy communication and behavior. We all want this group to continue to educate the congregation on healthy communication and behavior through Sunday Service snippets. Workshops for Adult RE etc. All agreed this is an important aspect of our ministry.

**Next Meeting - January 18, 2022, 7:00 - 8:30 PM.**

## December 2022 Program Council Report



Fourteen individuals met December 9, 2022 via Zoom to review current status of various UUCGT programs and committees and to continue creative plans for the rest of the 2022 - 2023 fiscal year.

The Program Council sponsored FUNdraiser held at UUCGT on November 26 was a fantastic success. Fun was had by all, music was great, snacks provided sustenance, we got to see old friends and meet new individuals AND we raised nearly \$10,000 to help boost our general fund! Other Fundraisers will be contemplated for the future.

As this is being written, many are preparing for the Winter Solstice event tonight (12/21/22) at UUCGT. We hope this event is as exciting as last year and that you all were able to attend.

Program Council will sponsor a **Thanksgiving Gratefulness Gathering** at Twin Lakes Gilbert Lodge on Sunday November 19, 2023. Remember to put this community gathering on your calendar now. You won't want to miss it.

Chris Walter announced the Annual Budget Drive for pledging will be launched February 5th with the theme **"Rising With Abundance; Pledging with Our Hearts"**.

David Hassing reported the **Facilities Team** has reinstated monthly meetings on the 1st Monday of every month (Will reschedule Jan to Jan 9), to discuss current issues and address them. Professional remediation of the black mold issue in the Music closet will be obtained. A new shelf designed by Richard Miller and created by Gordon Friese and Bill Edmondson was installed in entry vestibule. This is a beautiful reflection of the bench on the other glass wall, that was crafted by Marvin Howe. A Shoveling team has been organized to keep the walks and exit doors clear of snow and ice this winter. If you would like to help, contact David Hassing. The team is also addressing fixing some missing shingle problems on the roof and issues with rust stains from the chairs stacked in the social hall.

During Committee/Team Check Ins, the 14 people attending reported for 23 committees or groups. This increased level of participation compared to recent months was invigorating. With more people involved, fewer items will fall through the cracks.

Renee, **Music Director** discussed future all music services, problems caused by copyright issues on YouTube, and possible Coffee House / Open Mike after Wednesday Night Supper. Charles Brackett informed us the **Art Exhibit** of Barb Culton's quilts has been hung and we discussed the possibility of additional temporary art being added to the Sanctuary that would fit with Sunday Services themes. Chris Lautz reported 10 individuals attended a **Discover UUCGT Orientation** Dec 4. Three new members joined December 18th and several more are interested in joining UUCGT soon. Chris Lautz also reported the **website** is being updated as regularly as possible and notices of **address changes** for members and friends are regularly published in the Flash. If any one notices an error, please inform Chris Lautz. Mary Van Valin reported **Green Sanctuary** is sponsoring a Braiding Sweet Grass discussion in the new year and will investigate possibility of availability of Inflation Reduction Act funds for upgrading our building renewal energy usage. The **Small Group Ministry facilitators** are meeting monthly and sharing best practices for their various Soul Matters and Creativity Matters groups. **Memorial Garden** and **Landscaping** are generally in hibernation for the winter but will be planning for activities come spring. **Endowment** has prepared some new Contribution cards which are on the credenza pin the front hallway. Chris Walter reported on Board activities and that a **Bldg Use Task Force** is working on revising rental structure and policy language. She also reported that Katie Short is now coordinating the **Kitchen Crew** for weekly tidying up of the kitchen.

If you are interested in getting more involved at UUCGT or just learning more at the place where it is happening, plan to attend our next Program Council via ZOOM ( **ZOOM Number = 817 1271 4419** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81712714419>) on January 13, 2023 at 3:00



Inclusiveness: “the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or intellectual disabilities or belonging to other minority groups.”

We pride ourselves in being inclusive. I feel good that we, here at UUCGT, accept all and promote all beliefs and in so doing enjoy greater experiences. Differences in the way of doing things can be enlightening and a fun learning experience. Differences enhance our lives.

Jesus accepted all and blessed all, not asking if they were his followers or just people off the street. He was inclusive, regardless of their past or individual differences.

Today the world has become again more divided and lost its higher goal of acceptance of all. There is a trend to be not only exclusive but to emphasize that way with hate and violence. We here at the UUCGT, have the opportunity to emphasize and embrace true meaningful inclusiveness. We do this with our actions, our talk, and with the symbols we cherish and display. Our LGBTQ+ flag is always proudly displayed in our front hall.

Our Christmas trees celebrate our wonder of the miracles of hope and charity for all. And at this time of year when we want to be most charitable and inclusive, we want the other symbols of giving and acceptance of all.

Baskets of fruit as harvested in Africa and works of Art proudly represent the celebration of Kwanzaa along with their 7 candelabra Kinara. Menorahs signify a miracle of burning oil when the Maccabees finally overthrew tyranny and oppression so freedom for all could again flourish. In displaying all, we celebrate the true inclusive meaning of Christmas

I hope each of you enjoyed a meaningful and inclusive Christmas and may you enjoy peace and love throughout this coming year of 2023.

*Emmy Lou Cholak— Chair Social Justice Committee*



## FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT



October 2022 YTD Income;	\$91,814
October 2022 YTD Expenses:	\$98,614
For Those in Need YTD	\$ 4.485

Our income improved this month. We had strong figures for donations for which we thank all of you who give to the General Fund. Our Auction and Dinner Fun Fundraiser was a success and we expect our final figures will come in December and will be over \$10,000.

Thank you Mary Van Valin and her team, John Hoffman and all the folks donating dinners and all who have helped. We had Solstice festivities that generous congregants have given to and we thank those folks. I just want to remind everyone to continue to make sure you make your 2022-2023 pledge payments, we are running behind our budget in that category about \$10,000.

Our expenses did increase and we still have issues with making gains on our deficit. We are running lower than expected on expenses but not yet showing a significant decrease in our deficit. Our cash flow figures still indicate possible issues with funding in March and April of 2023. Much will depend on the final December figures and how well we do in January and February.

Thank you for your generosity, please be sure that you continue to make your pledge and donation gifts. Consider making use of Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) in meeting your RMD Tax obligations. You may want to review that with your advisor around your charitable giving.

Remember this holiday season, the ways UUCGT impacts your lives. Ultimately, we will meet this deficit with less spending on/cutting programs or increasing our revenue or both.

Dusty Culton



**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse**

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## THE BEACON

January 2023