## From the Prez (November 17, 2023)

I invited everyone to a chalice-side chat after services last Sunday because the Board and I want to know you, to learn what sustains you within this community, and what you long for from being part of the community - what it will take to breathe even more vitality into our mission of welcoming, loving, growing spiritually, and seeking justice.

About 25 people attended the conversation. The key jumping off question was the following: Think of a moment during the time you've been involved with UUCSC that inspired you, moved you, or felt meaningful to you. From the sharing of those core meaningful moments, we extracted the qualities and values that allowed those moments to happen. And from there we brainstormed additional experiments that we could try to foster these types of moments that have touched our hearts. **See document below to learn more about the ideas that were generated in the very open, lovely, conversation.**

Many of you are aware that I'm very interested in the foundational concept of "covenantal leadership." Covenantal leadership reflects the notion that our lives, our joys, our sorrows, are woven together into the beautiful tapestry that is our congregation, our community. What follows, then, is that our responsibility as board members is not to make operational decisions—the committees and staff exist to do that—but to share in the lives of others and foster opportunities to bring people together. It is the care and love between us that is the foundation, the cornerstone, on which everything else is built. Strengthening the foundation is the task of the Board. The Boards wants to respond to the needs of this congregation – but we can't do that unless we ask you and listen. We plan to do this in various ways, including periodic chalice-side Chats.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Elizabeth Donovan and the previous Board for bringing the community back together, for rebuilding the committees and stabilizing the operational infrastructure after the pandemic. The stability of the congregation at this point, has allowed me and the current Board to empower our capable and amazing committees to "own" the decisions in their wheelhouse so the Board can focus on the bigger picture: mission, vision, enhancing relationships, and building toward long-term sustainability. Together we will journey together.

With great affection and gratitude,
Nancy

NOTE: Apologies! The Board and Rev Denis are rethinking the date of our ALL-CONGREGATIONAL meeting, previously announced as being held on February 4. No date to be saved yet! Details will follow soon.

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## Chalice-side Chat, November 12, 2023

**I. Think of a moment during the time you've been involved with UUCSC that inspired you, moved you, or felt meaningful to you.**

These are what was written on Index Cards, which I've informally grouped into similar categories, (apologies for any errors due to hard-to-read handwriting)

**Sharing / Receiving through a Sermon or Spiritual Reflection**

1. Doing a sermon or spiritual reflection, i.e., sharing what was meaningful to me with others.
2. When I was invited to do a sermon in a service, I felt included and invited to share.
3. Sermon by Dave Hurdis (how each person is prescient)
4. Times when people have shared spiritual journeys and they have particularly resonated with me.
5. Listening to Rev Denis' sermons.
6. There have been several sermons that have been moving. (e.g. Water communion)
7. The "Coming of Age" ceremonies

**Multi-generational**

8. The multi-generational presence.
9. Singing the kids down to RE
10. It was an intergenerational service where there was music with singing and instruments, and a child in the front was filled with DANCE and just danced and danced with NO fear or shame. My heart was filled and Inspired!

**Welcomed**

11. The first day I attended, a member reached out to me and gave me important information for a new transplant to this area. She gave me her phone and several leads to solve some challenging personal problems I was dealing with.
12. I moved from out of state, and it was a huge loss to leave the UU community I had been involved with for some time. From the first moment I felt welcomed and knew that "this was where I needed to be."

Service / Volunteerism / Being Helped

13. A "crew" of volunteers showed up to help me spread mulch in the church garden and then we all went out to lunch afterwards. Such wonderful friendships.
14. After George Floyd was murdered, Rev DL helped to organize an Anti-racism group. There was much to read and discuss. This group was large and very dynamic.

**Rev Denis**

15. This morning as I was looking out my window at all the beautiful leaves, I was thinking about going to Sunday services and knowing that Rev Denis would be there. I thought about how he presents himself and all the work he does – most recently I noticed he walks the walk, as they say. Rev Denis might burn out if he continues to be such an enthusiastic minister. Don't burn out Rev Denis!
16. Rev Denis visited my art studio and spent time really talking with me.

**Sharing / Receiving Vulnerability**

17. Joys and Concerns
18. Listening to joys and concerns and sharing my own. When my mother died I shared, unexpectedly, became tearful and many people offered comforting words after.
19. The chalice-side chat after EssJay dies – how people shared their memories Similarly, seeing all the folks whom I know who came to Nancy Rose's memorial service.

**Music**

20. Carry the Flame closing song
21. Singing together as a congregation.

22. Listening to the choir

**Within the UUCSC Community**
23. Writing about someone we loved and lost and getting to share it on the memory tree.
24. Lots of learning from others and their experiences
25. Circle times at Lindy Whyte Burrell's home.
26. A person reached out to me to start a Pema Book Club, and now 5 years later, we are a heartfelt 4-some.
27. Community (D4$+, picnics, antiracism group, support for me during stress and others in difficult life circumstances, differences welcomed and deepen the community-shared experience and identity, rather than a place where adherence and identification with any narrowness that is "common" to all. Belonging means expansion of, not a narrowing of identity, incorporates and enlarges, not limits and narrows.
28. I love the dinners.

**UUCSC in the Broader Community**
29. When we marched from UUCSC to Dale Carlia corner for peace – a huge group of all ages.

**II. What are the qualities that enabled these moments to happen?**

1. Welcoming
2. Loving / caring about each other's needs
3. Inclusive on any dimension (including accommodating to mobility challenged individuals)
4. Shared joys / shared sorrows / shared grief
5. Accepting without judgement
6. Helping others / service
7. Share Self and able to grow into the fullness of Self
8. Generosity
9. Being invited
10. Truth and Honesty
11. Non-judgmental
12. Building community / opportunities to come together
13. Awareness of greater world / the earth / all beings
14. Coming together
15. Collaborating
16. Accepting of emotions even as they change during a service: Joyful / tearful / Joyful …
17. Sense of humor
18. Opportunities to come together for social justice
19. Flexibility in trying new things / Creative / Innovation / Experimenting
20. The importance of Artistic expression

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**III. What "Experiments" might we do to foster more of these meaningful moments?**

1. Do additional activities that "pair" people up to get to know each other, like Sidekicks, or when we picked up hearts to share an activity special to someone.
2. Create more opportunities to get together after a service – e.g. a walking group; post-service discussion, more watermelon/lemonade events; occasional coffee hour…
3. Organize a regular gathering/group to talk about current events – how do events make us feel and what actions can we take in response?

4. Have an intention to make 1 personal invitations per month to someone you don't know well for coffee / getting together / chatting after services. (Your own personal sidekick program – watch it ripple!)
5. Making a point of introducing yourself to anyone you don't recognize after services. Intentionally help people to feel welcome. Spread the love!
6. Have inter-faith dinners or get-togethers
7. Do regular artistic fundraisers (like Music at Lily Pads?) [Jeanne Arthur interested]
8. Have an idea board – people with ideas can post them; other interested can indicate interest. When there are 3-4 people, the organizer can arrange a meeting to explore the feasibility of the idea and move it forward to implementation or not.
9. Make community volunteer opportunities available – especially opportunities for youth to volunteer.