

Annual Report for the Music Ministries at UUAA

submitted by rev. theresa rohck

Chalice Singers

Director of Worship and Music Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout leads the music ministries at UUAA, and serves as the director of the Chalice Singers. Due to the emerging Covid-19 pandemic, the music ensembles suspended rehearsals in mid-March 2020. This happened just days before the greatly anticipated 6th annual BIGsing, with special musical guest Melanie DeMore. The BIGsing for 2021 was also cancelled but we look forward to a particularly exciting event in spring of 2022.

The Chalice Singers are supported by an active team of volunteers from within the ensemble, who assist with score preparation, social events, the BIG sing, sectional rehearsals, and program note writing for the Order of Service. Of note is the work of the congregation's pianist-in-residence, Allison Halerz whose recorded music has been heard (and seen) in just about every service created during the pandemic. Allison also plays a vital collaborative role in rehearsals for the Chalice Singers, not only as pianist, but sectional leader and occasional conductor. Of note is the work of Debita Graham, the music librarian, who has recently completed an online database of the Chalice Singers music library. She and Robert Graham also sort, organize and prepare folders and scores for the choir at the start and end of each church year.

The lay-staffed **Music Ambassadors (MA) Team** continues to serve the broader UUAA community as a resource in responding to questions or feedback related to our Music Program. Team members are selected by and report to the Director of Worship and Music to serve staggered three-year terms. The MA Team for 2020-2021 is Jim McCargar and Kristin LeSueur (co-leaders), Deana Shields, and Priscilla Spencer. Priscilla rotates off the team and we welcome Debita Graham who will serve beginning May 2021. The MA Team coordinated weekly Chalice Singer zoom gatherings throughout the summer of 2020.

In Fall 2020, the group began to meet via zoom under the direction of Dr. Rideout, and prepared 2 pieces (in collaboration with the Chalice Bells) that were recorded and produced into a virtual choir video for use in worship. In 2021 the choir again prepared a virtual piece that aired in May. In each case, the Chalice Sparks were invited to participate as well in the virtual choir. Two of these choir pieces were

also featured in the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries' (AUUMM) Virtual Choir Festival in May 2021.

Chalice Sparks

The Chalice Sparks children's choir took a hiatus during the pandemic. However, singers were invited to join rehearsals with the Chalice Singers from time to time, and also met to prepare for the virtual choir pieces with rev. theresa via zoom. Those who were able to participate were part of the recorded virtual pieces mentioned above.

Chalice Bells

The Chalice Bells, under the direction of rev. theresa rohlck, continued weekly rehearsals on Zoom that involved creative ways to work on music without having the instrument at home! By Fall 2020, when the pandemic seemed unlikely to be over anytime soon, the individual handbells were carefully packed and distributed to the musicians, and rehearsals continued virtually. It was a year of learning and growth, as individuals and as an ensemble. The interdependent nature of handbell ringing realized in a virtual setting created new challenges that the ensemble bravely conquered. After recording the piece Dona Nobis Pacem for the Christmas Eve service, we heard from the arranger/composer of the piece, who was very impressed with what the bells and singers put together. The group looks forward to Fall and the possibility of safely meeting for in-person rehearsals, and to see how the skills that developed over the past year will translate when meeting in person. It is our hope to bring handbell music to worship frequently in the new church year.

AUUMM CONFERENCE

In 2019, our Congregation accepted an invitation from the Association for UU Music Ministries (AUUMM) to host their 2020 conference. The conference welcomes nearly 300 staff and volunteer music leaders, ministers, and religious professionals from the span of Unitarian Universalism. This conference is the Association's most active hub for peer-to-peer learning and dialogue, professional development, and resource exchange. This invitation is an honor for any community, as it is extended to music programs of health and high regard. Of note, the Association extended UUAA an invitation with hopes of learning more about the deeply-collaborative worship planning process here. As congregations across the denomination explore what it means to craft services as a team, our community has come to be known as

a leading resource for learning, and offers wisdom from seven years of successes, shortfalls, and deep reflection.

Due to the extended COVID-19 precautions in place, the AUUMM annual conference planning team has since cancelled the 2020 and 2021 conferences, inviting our community to host the conference in-person in summer of 2022.