

Report on behalf of the MidAmerica Region Board of Trustees

May 14, 2021

As stated in the Bylaws of the MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association, (Section 1. the Purpose): *The Region shall work to support, enrich, and extend Unitarian Universalism in the defined geographic area. The Region shall work in collaboration with the Unitarian Universalist Association.*

The purpose of the MidAmerica Regional Board of Trustees, the only active Regional Board in the country, has been less formally defined, but it has always inherently been about connections. Your Regional Board spent time this year working to articulate that purpose more clearly.

This conversation led to the adoption of the following **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the MAR Board is to strengthen and make more explicit the connections between our congregations, the Region, and the UUA.

In close cooperation with the MidAmerica Regional Staff Lead and the UUA Director of Congregational Life, we provide support and advice to assist regional staff in their work. We exercise financial oversight for the MidAmerica Region. We are responsible for convening and connecting to the congregations in the MidAmerica Region.

In our effort to strengthen connections, individual board members have continued to contact different congregations each month to better understand their needs, successes, and challenges. Wherever necessary, we've helped connect them to additional Regional or Association supports. This was in conjunction with the development of a National Advisory Council which asked us to pose specific questions to congregations during our interactions with them. The scope of the Advisory Council is changing, so stay tuned for information on opportunities to get involved, especially if you are interested in conversations regarding Article 2 of the UUA Constitution.

While not articulated in the new mission statement, we have also continued to work individually and collectively as a Board to address and change conditions that consciously or unconsciously sustain white supremacy culture. To that end, all members and staff have been reading and discussing the 2020 Commission on Institutional Change Report: *Widening the Circle of Concern*. And while the Board is diverse by measures other than race or ethnicity, this work is being done knowing that we do not have the added benefit of the firsthand voices and lived experiences of people of color.

The Board again faced significant turnover during the 2020-2021 year. Four new members were elected following last year's Annual Regional Meeting in April: Rae Jane Araujo, Hans Kelson, Autumn Mahoney, and Jim Moir. Then there were two resignations, with Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan relocating outside of the region and Brian Bach leaving for personal reasons. We thank both for their service. We then welcomed Patty Notch and McKenna Revel who were appointed in February 2021. We thank the Nominating Committee for their tireless efforts to seat a full Board, and we know they remain committed to increasing the representation of Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color and among elected positions within the Region.

Regarding one of the Boards' other responsibilities, I am pleased to report that the Region's financial status is strong. For all you accountants, staff have shifted from a cash-based to an accrual-based accounting system. Staff also successfully transitioned to both receiving and delivering professional development and support remotely via online platforms. While not always ideal, especially for personal relationship building, the remote delivery made the support more accessible and cost effective. I'm so pleased congregational leaders have embraced these virtual offerings (even if out of necessity).

Speaking of staff, I want to express appreciation to Rev. David Pyle, who joined us just as the worldwide pandemic was emerging in the fall of 2019, and to the entire MidAmerica Staff Team. They do so much for the Region both behind the scenes and now literally in front of the cameras! What many of you may not know is that our Region has the smallest staff size of any Region, yet we aren't the smallest geographically or demographically. The skills and expertise of our small but mighty team is certainly unrivaled.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the service of David Lauth, who will be leaving the Board in June after serving two full terms, including two years as President. His dedication and leadership to the Region and our entire Association cannot be overstated, and we appreciate his many contributions to the Board.

It has been an honor serving the region as President of the Board since July. I'll leave you with the closing words of my congregation: "May faith in love, and hope for community, keep us growing and changing together. Peace!"

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Lemmer
President, MidAmerica Region Board of Trustees