

# UU Church of Greater Lansing

## Settled Minister

Lansing, Michigan | MidAmerica Region

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**Anticipated Start Date:** August 2019

**Term:** N/A

**Percent Time:** 100% Time

**Minimum Salary + Housing:** \$88,000 | The Board set a total package maximum of \$122,500, which includes S/H and the cost of all benefits. We estimated the cost of benefits for a sample minister profile, and thus estimated the S/H amount listed; this is negotiable depending on experience and allocated benefits.

**Benefits:** Self-employment offset tax; Retirement Plan; UUA Health Plan; Other Health Plan; Disability Coverage; Term Life Insurance; Dental; Professional Expense Allowance

## Questionnaire

### **Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff**

The minister is chief of staff, and has a collegial, collaborative relationship with the staff. The minister conducts regular staff meetings (usually weekly). The minister has a collaborative role with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development, who is responsible for programming education functions for children, youth and adults, and with the Director of Music, who is responsible for the Music Program. The minister supervises, and works collaboratively with, the Membership Coordinator and Congregational Administrator, who handles most administrative tasks and supervises the Office Assistant and Bookkeeper.

### **Primary areas of focus for the minister in this role**

The minister articulates a vision for staff as it relates to the overall mission of the church. The minister communicates with staff as appropriate to ensure smooth running of all church programs. The minister leads staff meetings, and provides

support to staff as needed. The minister conducts annual reviews for each staff member directly supervised.

### **Desired strengths of the minister**

The most highly desired strengths for the minister based on the congregational survey and comments in the focus groups are:

- Interpersonal skill (ability to communicate, counsel, empower, etc.)
- Empathy (genuine interest in and concern for others)
- Collaborative and cooperative approach
- Open-mindedness (receptive to new ideas)
- Reliability, stability
- Sociability, warmth, ease in interacting with congregants

Although the item 'strong preaching/oratory skill' was not as highly rated in this question (possibly because of the 'oratory skill' phrase), the two most highly rated roles/functions of a minister were 'Preparing and leading inspiring worship services and celebrations' and 'Challenging and stimulating the thinking of the congregation.' A sampling of comments from the focus groups that provide additional depth to these descriptions are: "having joy in the services," "someone who can lead change and is comfortable with change," "someone with real emotional depth," "down to earth & very open class-wise," "supports social justice in the church/community."

### **Ongoing momentum we would like to continue**

- Continue to pursue goals of being a welcoming and engaging place for new people to be and to facilitate community outreach and involvement. A committee addressing diversity and inclusion (made up of 4 autonomous "teams" representing LGBTQ+, racial/other diversity, accessibility, and economic/class diversity) is in developmental stages, and hopes to raise awareness about systems of oppression and strategies for dismantling them. These groups are focused primarily inward, on the congregation, within the context of the church. However, increasing members' understanding of, and competence in, confronting/challenging oppression within our congregation and denomination, presumably, will increase the likelihood we will actively address these issues in our non-church communities.

- Continue discernment of how the congregation and the community at large can best utilize our space while continuing to maintain and upgrade the property; facilitate short and long-range planning for the use of our grounds and the west wing (currently not renovated and empty).
- Continue integrated, theme-based worship [including children/youth programming] in which readings, sermon, music and other elements support a cohesive worship experience; maintain our tradition of strong, worship services and other activities (whether minister or lay led) that form the core of our religious community.

### **Programs and traditions we want to maintain**

- Excellent relationships with strong, collaborative staff.
- Meaningful parts of the worship service, including inspiring opening words about who we are, and closing affirmation in unison holding hands
- Active, rich music program. Includes adult chalice choir, jazz combo, folk group and women's chorus. Our music program has grown to include "extracurricular" (i.e., outside of worship) programming as well as hosting of outside music performances in our wonderful new facility with excellent acoustics.
- Strong Religious Education program.
- Culture of hospitality (we have a dedicated and finely tuned Hospitality Team with enough members to rotate responsibilities throughout each month).
- Strong sense of community, with connection to others.
- Vibrant social justice work. We have a long, proud history of social justice work and coalition building in our personal lives, within the congregation itself, and increasingly by working collaboratively with other organizations. We sponsor monthly "special plate" collections that benefit community nonprofits.

### **Participation of children in the worship service, and the frequency of inter-generational services**

Children (K-6th grade) attend the worship service each week for the first 15-20 minutes, including a Story for all Ages shared by the minister or celebrant. Then the congregation sings them to their RE classes. Children and youth participate in several special services throughout the year, such as Bread Communion for All Ages near Thanksgiving; Holiday Service for All Ages, when the congregation joins together to tell the Christmas story from a UU perspective; Surprise Service for All

Ages; Coming of Age Service, when middle school youth share their faith statements with the congregation; and our High School Service which is planned and led by high school youth. We also offer multigenerational services for all ages (every 1-2 months) for selected topical services such as our Water Communion Ingathering in September; Rituals of Remembrance near Halloween; Martin Luther King, Jr. service; and Easter.

### **Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning**

- Traditional Christmas Eve service (2 services at 5pm and 7pm).
- Good Friday – a layperson has organized a Jesus Christ Superstar singalong on Friday evening for the last several years. In past years sometimes the minister has conducted a Good Friday service at the church.
- There is a community-based interfaith Thanksgiving service which the settled minister often participated in as a leader; all congregants are invited.

### **Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation**

Yes, achieved in 1998.

### **Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation**

No, but a group is working on this goal. The Board has endorsed these efforts.

### **Other ways in which the congregation lives its values**

- Accessibility: We have four gender-neutral bathrooms, and a completely accessible building. When the old school building we purchased in 2014 was renovated in 2015-16, all new construction followed ADA guidelines. We are working on AIM certification.
- Environmental sustainability: Whenever possible during the renovation, we used LEED specifications to reduce energy use. There has been discussion of installation of solar panels.
- We display a rainbow flag outside the building and are involved in Pride activities.
- We have a large Black Lives Banner (BLM) banner displayed on the front of the church building, and congregants hold BLM signs near the busy street in front of the church each Sunday after worship. We have held a 'White Supremacy' teach-in and have active groups involved in anti-racism work.

- We have a relationship with Attwood Elementary School, a nearby school in a low-income neighborhood, and the relationship is expanding.
- Preparations have begun to use part of our property for a community garden that would serve nearby immigrant/refugee neighborhoods and others in the local community. The area has been fenced in, and should be opening for use in spring/summer 2019.
- Art exhibits have been planned to coordinate with social justice activities and priorities.
- ESL (English as a Second Language) classes are offered for refugees in the neighborhood, in collaboration with Refugee Development Services and a Sewing Circle is held for the women students. The initiation of language and citizenship training for refugees and immigrants as part of our Social Justice ministry, after our move to Lansing, was the basis of a 2018 Breakthrough Congregations Award from the UUA.
- Monthly plate collections with all cash and designated checks supporting local and national organizations.
- Children and youth in the RE program raise funds for social justice projects.
- Anti-racism and anti-mass incarceration work through the Committee to End the New Jim Crow (CENJC), includes facilitating and supporting other local groups, providing meeting space, collecting books for prisoners and families.
- A Third-Sunday Event is held in our church building most months to show films or feature a speaker related to Social Justice issues. This is advertised both to congregants and to people outside the church. The November event is Mid-Michigan Immigration Coalition's annual fundraiser for Guatemalan schoolchildren, Fiesta Pequeña.
- Support of gun control, with leadership involvement and active participation in the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. Our church hosted the local Concert Across America to End Gun Violence, part of a nationwide event in late September.
- We just began offering preferred pronoun stickers for name tags.
- We just installed a "Blessing Box" near the church sign to share toiletry items and paper products.

- Vibrant Sunday morning forum (scheduled before the worship service) with participants demonstrating a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- We look critically at ourselves to assess needs for personal and congregation development and opportunity to grow.
- During the period of decision-making about possible relocation to a new building, we engaged in an effective democratic process, with dedication to the process and to making sure all voices were heard.
- We take seriously being in covenant with each other and working on a process for resolving conflicts.

### **Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation**

Yes, for over 20 years. This is important and seen as a very high priority in our budgeting process.

### **Lessons the congregation has learned about nurturing ministers and ministry**

A minister called in the 1990s was diagnosed with cancer before she arrived. While she underwent treatment and recovery, the beginning of the ministry was delayed with full support from leaders and the congregation. The minister was nurtured later through a traumatic event where police mistakenly raided her apartment, and then episodes of threatening and homophobic cartoons. The person responsible for the cartoons was ultimately identified and, since he refused to apologize, was legally barred from trespassing on church property for a year. After he returned, our bylaws were amended to protect members from threats. We believe that the minister was able to lead us through this crisis, because we were there for her during her time of need. Throughout her ministry there was explicit recognition that the ministry consisted of a partnership between the minister and congregation, with evaluation discussed to address roles of minister, staff and lay leadership.

Our latest settled minister had no previous ministerial experience and the lay leadership consciously discussed ways to assist with transition and development, which led to a very successful 15-year ministry. In our church, part of the role of the Committee on Ministry is to support the Minister. While the Committee has a charge to help the Minister better understand the congregation, a primary responsibility is to help the congregation better understand the Minister, their needs and agenda. The Committee is designed to be a sounding board for the

Minister, a supportive team, and a nurturing circle. We believe the leadership of the church understands its responsibility to support the Minister and educate the congregation about how Ministry works.

### **How the congregation has evaluated its ministry and its history with ministers**

After challenging episodes with ministers in the 1980s and 1990s, the congregation engaged in evaluation and reflection prior to calling our previous settled minister (Rev. Bert) who stayed for 15 years in a very productive and stable ministry. Evaluation of the minister is conducted according to UUA guidelines, with primary responsibility by the Board.. A separate support team is organized to provide support to the minister and is named by the minister (and affirmed by the Board).

### **What cottage meetings and surveys tell about the congregation**

Our congregants said they value the Social Justice work this church does, even if they aren't personally doing to the work. They love the diverse music and some believe it just keeps getting better. This is a church that loves to sing. We have a strong sense of community that plays out in many ways: appreciating the people they meet, the small groups, working together to prepare our new home for occupancy, doing the hard work of creating the new community garden. Many expressed their value for the opportunity to seek their own spiritual truth and feel this frees them from past negative religious experiences. Finally they value the challenge to grow and learn here at UU Lansing, appreciating the intellectual depth found among members that allows them to think critically. These were the most often mentioned out of 22 different things focus group participants listed when asked what they value about UU Lansing. What isn't listed is the passion they spoke with as they answered our questions.

When asked what a minister should know about what makes us unique, here are some of the responses: The move to south Lansing was risky and intentional and many want the church to become a part of the local community. We are a welcoming, very active church. We are a community of diverse beliefs, and want to be inclusive but don't know how. We are not seeing enough new faces. We are brave and willing, and have a passion for working toward Social Justice. Some said we are ready for the challenge of radical inclusion. Others want you to know we are "way too lily-white (for the most part), and way too upper middle-class, too academic and we are trying to do something about it." Others want you to know we value informed, intellectual discussion and our proximity to Michigan State

University. We are open to growth and engagement with those who are already UUs but don't know it. Overall, we have very diverse opinions and we value our community.

The search committee gathered anonymous information from 260 congregants via online (mostly) survey and from about 80 congregants in focus groups. For the survey, Members accounted for 77% of respondents, while 23% were Friends of the church. More than half of respondents (58%) have been affiliated with UU Lansing for more than 10 years. In terms of age, 66 to 75 year-olds were the largest respondent category (36%), followed by 56 to 65 year-old respondents (21%), those 76 or older (16%), those 46 to 55 years old (13%), and those 36 to 45 years old (9%) . Only ten people between the ages of 18 and 35 (~ 4%) completed a survey. While that is not likely representative of the congregation as a whole, it is fair to say the UU Lansing is similar to most UU congregations, in that the majority of its members/friends are older adults.

Among the most important factors in respondents' choice to be affiliated with UU Lansing, were the following, reported by 80% or more of respondents (in order of most to least important): Welcoming environment for all people, Sense of belonging/Connection to others, Celebrate/affirm liberal religious values, Sermons (inspirational, informative presentations by the minister), Minister, Unitarian Universalist principles, Worship service, Intellectual stimulation, LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, Music, Social action/Community service activities.

The most important reasons for attending worship services, reported by 80% or more of respondents included (from most to least important): Sense of belonging/connection to others, Celebrating/affirming liberal religious values, Opportunities for self-reflection, Inspiration/Spiritual uplift, and Intellectual stimulation/Learning.

Respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the UUA's Non-discrimination Policy. Each of the 8 respondents (3%) who did not indicate agreement with the policy provided written clarification stating that they did, in fact, agree with the policy but hoped the committee would give serious consideration to candidates from historically oppressed groups or emphasized the importance of good spoken and written English language skills.

Among strengths identified were the music program (including the choir), religious education, our new building and the potential it represents (particularly as a vehicle for greater connection to the community and other organizations), lay leadership, a feeling of community or belonging, and warmly welcoming guests and visitors.

Among issues or problems to address was concern about the church's financial health, as a result of the purchase of our new building, a lack of diversity (racial, age, class/education), difficulty moving from principles/convictions to action, lack of clarity about procedures and policies, insufficient staff size to meet the needs of the congregation.

### **The work that the minister(s) is expected to do on their own**

- Prepare sermons and lead worship services about 3 times per month during the church year.
- Write column for monthly newsletter.
- Ongoing supervision of and support for staff members.
- Conduct annual evaluations of staff directly reporting to minister.
- Coordinate regular staff meetings.
- Write monthly reports for the Board.
- Take responsibility for pastoral care, with assistance from trained congregants.

### **The work that the congregation is expected to do on their own**

- Conducting lay-led services in summer and about once per month during the church year.
- Some committee work.
- Organize many of the Social Justice activities.
- Hiring a minister.
- Conducting congregational meetings according to the by-laws.

### **The work of the congregation and minister(s) that is shared by both**

- Providing inspiration and vision for future planning.
- Leading the work of the church to fulfill the mission and goals (the minister is ex-officio to all committees).
- Planning the schedule and participants for Sunday worship services; the Celebrations Committee collaborates with the minister.

- Working with the celebrant (volunteer who gives announcements and does some textual readings), Director of Music and other staff members to ensure high-quality worship services.
- Setting agendas for Board meetings.
- Program Council agenda and tasks (coordinating information and schedules among all groups)
- Stewardship
- Leadership development
- Pastoral care visits and tracking of congregants; the minister recruits, trains and supervises pastoral care assistants, and conducts monthly meetings for communication.

**Work of the congregation and minister(s) that is neither shared by the two, nor is expected to be done on their own**

No answer.

### **Description of a typical Sunday at the congregation, including a typical Sunday worship service**

- 9:00 am – Worship participants meet to talk through the Order of service and review all transitions (rising, seating, who does closing, etc.). Sound checks are completed while the Celebrant sets up the sanctuary for the morning worship.
- 9:15 am – Two hour-long discussion groups meet at this time. The larger Chapin Room Forum that focuses on current issues and other lively topics, and a more intimate group called Let's Grow, which focuses on interpersonal connection and reflection.
- 9:30 am – The Hospitality Team gathers to set up social hour and assign duties for the morning.
- 9:30 am – Rehearsal for music group of the day.
- 10:25 am – The Director of Music leads the congregation in Gathering Music prior to start of worship service.
- 10:30 am – Our one-hour Worship service begins. Currently we are using “Soul Matters” Sharing Circle and following the suggested monthly themes. A typical service includes: Call to Worship, Musical Introit, Chalice Lighting, Opening Hymn,

Welcome Statement (see below) and greeting others followed by singing a round, Story for All Ages with children sung to classes following story, Candles of Joy and Sorrow, Meditation or Reading, Offertory, Musical Anthem, Reading, Sermon, Extinguishing the Chalice, Closing Hymn, and Unison Affirmation.

- Following the service, folks gather in our Social Hall and Atrium (with coffee/tea and usually snacks) for fellowship and gathering information about the various programs, initiatives and events occurring at or supported by UU Lansing.
- Every Sunday people are invited to join our action of support for Black Lives by holding a “Black Lives Matter” sign from 11:45 to Noon in front of the church.
- Social Hour (including clean-up by the Hospitality Team) concludes around 12:30 pm. Some committees may meet in the afternoon or special events may occur in the afternoon or early Sunday evenings.

-----Addendum: The Welcome Statement includes the following words (sometimes expanded) along with introductions and announcements: "Wherever you find yourself on life's journey, we welcome you to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing. It matters that you are here. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We affirm that Black Lives Matter; we believe that every person has the right to affirm their own gender identity, and we fight for equity. We welcome people here from all faith traditions including the no faith tradition and recognize that this land is sacred to the Anishanabe peoples. We commit ourselves to do what we can to heal the wounds of the past, to hold our Earth in reverence, and to work for greater love and justice in the world. After the service you are all invited to join us for coffee and fellowship in our Social Hall. You are also invited to join our action of support for Black Lives by holding a “Black Lives Matter sign” from 11:45 to noon along Pennsylvania Ave. The signs are available at the table in the Atrium where you can learn more about this action.

### **Religious education and exploration in the congregation for children, youth, and adults**

Our religious education experiences for children and youth explore Unitarian Universalist identity and heritage, world religions, Judeo-Christian heritage, and social justice, inviting them to consider for themselves what is spiritual, religious, and true. Classes are divided into age groups (preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school), led by volunteers, and held during the worship service.

We use theme-based ministry in worship and religious education to engage children, youth and adults in the same topic each month. This provides opportunities for families to connect and to explore theological concepts more

deeply. New in 2018, our themes are from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle, a network of UU congregations who follow the same themes and share resources.

Preschoolers are introduced to our UU faith through the Chalice Children curriculum, which provides experiences around the strength of community and life issues we all share. Our elementary children participate in workshops that relate to the monthly themes, where learning is experiential through art, games, drama, science, video, nature, music, storytelling, cooking, or language arts. Our 7th-8th graders alternate each year between the Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality education program and the Coming of Age (COA) program to explore life's big questions and articulate personal values and beliefs. (Since 2006, we've sold or distributed 250 copies of our COA curriculum to UU congregations around the country.) Our high school youth, with the support of adult advisors, determine their own activities and goals for the year. Typically, they engage in social action, community building, worship, and leadership development.

Volunteers for all of our children and youth classes are parents and other adults from the congregation who prioritize RE and enjoy these age groups. A rotation schedule gives volunteers the opportunity to both volunteer and attend worship. However, our switch to one service because of our move to a larger building has reduced those opportunities somewhat.

During the summer, we offer a multi-age RE class and bring in a variety of "special guests." These are members of the congregation who share an interest, passion, or hobby with the children. For five years now, we have offered Chalice Seekers Summer Camp for children entering kindergarten through sixth grade, with middle school and high school youth serving as counselors.

The Adult Religious Education Steering Committee provides adults with opportunities for continued spiritual and intellectual growth. Volunteers from the congregation offer new classes each season. Offerings explore Unitarian Universalist faith traditions, other faiths, and social justice; provide a safe environment for spiritual growth and development; foster a community that promotes exploration, joy, and wonder; and support each person's search for truth and meaning.

### **How the congregation defines good preaching and worship**

We have much diversity in spirituality, and an open, non-judgmental approach to theological perspectives is essential. Most of the congregation considers the worship service to be a critical element (in the survey 83% said the worship service was a very important or extremely important factor for their affiliation with

UU Lansing). In the survey 96% said 'Preparing and leading inspiring worship services and celebrations' was very or extremely important. One element of that involves 'Challenging and stimulating the thinking of the congregation,' which 91% said was important. There is appreciation for a service that flows easily and has a theme where music, readings, sermon and other elements of the service fit together coherently.

Generally agreed upon comments in the focus groups related to excellent worship services were:

- A unified sermon – basic, direct and to the point
- Joy in the service
- Music is important, both related to performed music (by one of the choirs or other musical groups) and singing hymns together.
- Sermons that are down-to-earth; with emotional depth; thoughtful; inspiring; stimulating; compelling; challenging.
- Balanced services, with the minister speaking from both the heart and the head.
- Good speaker, clearly articulated language, understandable

The survey asked about interest in various topic areas for sermons. Over 60% of respondents agreed the following topics were of interest (listed in order of most to least interest): Societal and/or social justice issues, Exploration of diverse cultural perspectives, Psychological or philosophical perspectives on life's issues, Encouragement to act on personal convictions, Spiritual/religious implications of science and modern technology, Defining UU principles, and Lives and teachings of historical/religious figures.

### **Things a prospective minister should know about the theologies of the congregation, including where to find inspiration, comfort, and conflict**

The congregation is diverse in terms of theology. Among the most important current religious or theological Influences, Humanism was the most frequently cited (54%), so a humanist approach and language are important. Other influences reported by at least 25% of respondents were (in order of most to least reported): Agnosticism (40%), Buddhism, Atheism, and Naturalism/Earth-centered theology (each approximately 28%). Both Native American spirituality and Christianity were rated highly by approximately 24% of respondents. Taoism, Mysticism, Paganism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Wicca were rated as important influences by fewer respondents (ranging from 8-16%). In the survey,

65% thought non-religious (e.g. literary, humanist) texts or traditions were very important, while 27% thought that Judeo-Christian texts or traditions were very important. While the majority of respondents who indicated a prior religious affiliation reported a form of Christianity (63% including: Protestant, 43%; Catholic, 16%; and, Evangelical, 4%), fewer indicated that it is a primary influence in their religious/spiritual lives today.

A small, but significant, contingent of members is uncomfortable with references to God and this has, at times, caused tension. A very small number of members who feel strongly about eschewing references to God do not attend worship services but, rather, participate exclusively in Forum, a discussion group with an intellectual and humanist orientation.

Congregants find inspiration and comfort in being together, in hope for the future, and our closing words: "With strength in love, we are building community, growing and changing together. Peace."

### **Ways the congregation handles conflicted situations**

We have a clear Safe Congregation Policy that defines how to handle many situations. The minister has authority over all conflicted situations (except when named as part of the conflict). Staff members have a covenant with each other, and the minister may be asked to help resolve disputes.

In the past few years, we have become more familiar with restorative justice techniques. One congregant is a professional in this field, and several congregants have received training. In a conflict a couple of years ago between two members, a restorative justice professional assisted the minister.

Before we moved out of the Grove St building, several group meeting times were scheduled for congregants to meet and express their feelings about the move.

One recent conflict example is the revelation of an ongoing pattern of harassment and antagonism of a bi-racial/black youth by a white youth and fall-out from the delayed handling of the situation by leadership. The minister and the church president became involved. An external restorative justice/mediation professional led a group of people affected by, and invested in, resolution of the situation through a "Restorative Circle" meeting, with follow-ups. Those involved will continue to discuss ways to avoid and/or manage such situations in the future.

We have a congregational covenant to indicate ways of being in relationship, and we need to work on the process that is used when there are conflicts or violations of the covenant. Our community has a strong foundation of connectedness, but we

still need to learn more about effective strategies for talking about conflicts. This is a “growing edge” for us.

## **Role of music and the arts in the life of the congregation**

The appreciation and celebration of music and art are central to the life of our congregation. Congregational singing is at the heart of every service and is cherished by our members. In addition we have “special music” each service to amplify the message being delivered from the pulpit. Our four larger ensembles participate in most of the services between September and May: Our mixed-voice Chalice Choir, the Women’s Chorus, Jazz Combo, and the Folk Band, are our primary volunteer musicians, with other services utilizing soloists and smaller ensembles. During the summer months, we have a variety of congregational and professional musicians supplementing our services.

Our Director of Music is Lyle Brown (LB), who coordinates the overall program, conducts the Chalice Choir, leads the congregational singing and works with all the groups, the minister and various speakers to plan worship. He holds the Master of Music degree in choral conducting and is a member of several national choral ensembles. He has been conducting for forty years, a professional church musician for over 35 years and affiliated with UU churches for over 30 years. Our Women’s Chorus is led by an undergraduate music major from Michigan State University. Our keyboard musician is a graduate music major in piano performance.

Permanent art in the sanctuary includes a large woven display created and donated by a professional artist who is a member of the congregation; arrangements were a collaboration of Rev. Bert, the artist and input from the Board and Interior Design Team operative during the building renovation. Several art pieces in the Atrium enrich the experience after church and at other events, including a mobile of origami peace cranes folded by congregants. A permanent display of natural wood with flying glass birds was created, also by congregants, to commemorate donors to the Capital Campaign. Art from a variety of sources is displayed in rooms and hallways throughout the building – most of this is by local artists or artists in the congregation; pieces usually symbolize our Seven Principles or multiculturalism.

Temporary art exhibits in the Social Hall and Atrium are planned to emphasize multiculturalism and art from marginalized groups. The Social Justice Committee team that decides on organizations for donations (Second Sunday Plate Collections) and the art team coordinate whenever possible, sometimes to great success, e.g., when we have a second Sunday plate collection we often have a

display that reflects our beneficiary. Our most exciting show recently (Sept 2018) was coordinated with the Committee to End the New Jim Crow, who asked us to do a one-man show for an ex-convict. Martin Vargas was incarcerated for 45 years, and for the last 25 years or so he has been making a huge body of 2-dimensional artwork. The show was successful for him emotionally and financially, for us by increasing foot traffic into the church, and for the congregants who had never before had a chance to honor and know, a little, an ex-con.

Both Rev. Marsh and Rev. Bert have called on the artists in the church to illustrate theology. With their support and interest art has grown to be an integral part of our identity.

### **The governing structure of the congregation and how the minister is a part of this structure**

Governance. UU Lansing has a long tradition of strong and independent lay leadership, bringing both strengths and challenges in relation to our structure of governance. Under Rev. Kathryn Bert's leadership, we began to evolve away from a Board-centered structure toward one in which the Minister, as chief of staff, provides oversight of staff and works with the Program Council and other volunteers to achieve yearly ministry goals while the Board focuses more on long-term mission and the policies to meet it. Currently the Board has a leadership structure to elect a President (1-year term), and President-Elect, as well as Vice President for Finance and Secretary. After finishing the 1-year term, the President serves as Past President for 1 year. The Board engages in annual evaluation of the minister.

During the summer of 2018, the Board authorized a UU Lansing Governance Study Group to review the congregation's current governance structure [informally described as "modified policy governance"] and recommend ways in which it might be improved upon to better position ourselves for continued growth.

Leadership. Throughout UU Lansing's recent extended period of congregational transition, we have found ourselves navigating a number of lay leadership challenges. The purchase, renovation and move to our new church home in Lansing required countless hours of dedicated leadership above and beyond normal leadership expectations. This intensive effort left a significant number of leaders exhausted and ready to step back from active leadership. Then, at the beginning of the interim ministry period, as chairs of several major committees decided to step away from their previous roles, we began to acknowledge both the loss of Rev. Bert's steady, behind-the-scenes, nurturing recruitment of emerging leaders and our own lack of a defined process for leadership development and

succession planning. We have chosen to view the resulting “leadership vacuum” as an adaptive challenge in which we have the opportunity to review and revise the form and function of committees. For example, this past summer (2018), a newly revitalized Nominations Committee (now referred to as the Nominations & Leadership Development Committee) intentionally shifted beyond its oft-perceived role of “begging” congregants to serve, leading to their hosting of a Focus Group [September, 2018] to explore ideas for promoting leadership development at UU Lansing. In addition, several Committee members will facilitate a 2 hour workshop in February, 2019 entitled “Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice” that Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom has created in conjunction with his book (of the same name).

### **How the work of the congregation happens**

Work gets done by a combination of paid staff and volunteers; collaboratively as compared to a topdown structure. E.g. a team of Sunday morning volunteers led by the Membership Coordinator greet people each Sunday, and are responsible for setting-up and cleaning-up for Coffee Hour and making sure visitors are welcomed. Celebrations Committee members assist the minister each Sunday (e.g. by designating a “celebrant” to help with logistics and announcements) and also plan lay-led services. Pastoral care is implemented with pastoral care assistants to help the minister. One of our challenges is consistent communication.

### **Recent successful work of the congregation**

- Anti-racism/anti-oppression work: Placing a large BLM sign outside the church and congregants carrying BLM signs on the main street outside the church each Sunday morning; worship service featuring a Lansing BLM leader and honoring 4 high school football players who “took a knee” in fall 2018 amid criticism.
- Successful exhibit of 2-dimensional artwork of Martin Vargas, an ex-convict (incarcerated for 45 years) now on parole, with follow-up partnership with MSU and the Refugee Development Center for art classes for refugees taught by Martin.
- We hosted a training weekend for OWL leaders across the region – participants spent 2 overnights with home hospitality, with all meals cooked by congregants in the church kitchen.
- The collaboration with Attwood Elementary School is expanding. We hosted a graduation ceremony for students with large attendance from the school community and congregants. A school representative said: “[the recently established] clothing closet is absolutely essential for our students and families,

who struggle to make ends meet. It is utilized every day, multiple times a day by students, and our Attwood clothing closet would not exist if not for the UU Lansing congregants' time, money, and donations.”

- We received a 2018 Breakthrough Congregation award for establishment of programs for refugees and immigrants as part of our Social Justice ministry.
- We have considered ourselves a “teaching congregation” for about 10 years, with training of five future ministers through internships, and other types of relationships. In addition our church is a training site for the ASL interpreters program at Lansing Community College.
- We are in the process of submitting an application to be a “Free-Thinker Friendly” Congregation.
- We have an active group engaging in the process of Green Sanctuary certification.
- Seventh Principle group obtained grant through the Audubon society to support a native plant garden in front of the building.
- We are in the process of completing requirements for AIM certification.
- Starting in 2014, we took on a large task (purchasing and renovating our new church home) that was positive and empowering as we realized how well we could work together toward a common goal. Also, as we worked together to meet the challenges of the new building and grounds, we changed our perception of ourselves from mostly affluent liberals who like to talk to one another to more of a community that can be a force for good in the larger world. That inclination may have been there all along, but the momentum of the work together to do aspects of the renovation of our new building and grounds makes it feel more realistic. We have the courage to undertake healthy kinds of risks. As a congregation, we have weathered some potentially divisive situations, with the ability to see the deeper issues and work through them.

### **The work within the congregation which is slow, stuck, or not attended to**

- Covenant groups/small group ministry – before the move to the new building, we had a vibrant set of covenant groups and leaders, but just before and during the move we focused on Beloved Conversations groups and then on renovation, and there was not enough energy or time to continue covenant groups. There is enthusiasm within the congregation to reactivate a small group ministry program.

- Denominational Affairs – we usually have a full contingent of delegates to Regional and General Assemblies, and those members conduct a Sunday worship service for communication / inspiration of the congregation, but we do not have a good system for getting the congregation involved in discussion of national initiatives.
- Involvement of college students and young adults -- a previous intern made excellent progress in organizing a Young Adult group, but this is currently stalled. Several times in the past we made some efforts to create a campus ministry, but these have not been successful.
- Leadership and coordination related to Social Justice initiatives – there are several vibrant active groups dedicated to specific social justice topics (anti-racism, ending mass incarceration, immigration issues, gun control issues), but we need better leadership to maximize these efforts, since our previous Social Justice chairperson stepped down. More help is needed, perhaps a paid, part-time Social Justice coordinator.

### **How money is raised within the congregation**

- Fall pledge drive.
- Fundraising, including the spring service auction, and a craft and cookie sale in the late autumn.
- Bequests, either to the Endowment Fund or undesignated.
- Designated giving, which may be specified for specific “wish list” items, or be undesignated.
- Plate collection in worship services on 3 Sundays per month (once a month the collection is donated to an organization).
- Rental income.
- Capital Campaign.

### **The most recent capital campaigns in the congregation**

From 2010 -2014 the idea of a capital campaign had been considered and researched with a UUA Consultant who indicated that \$1.2 million dollars was a reasonable amount for this congregation to raise over a three year period. Consideration had been given to remodeling the old building at 855 Grove St. in East Lansing and earlier two buildings had attracted the congregation’s attention that resulted in failed bids for various reasons.

The congregation voted in 2014 to purchase and renovate the school building at 5509 S. Pennsylvania Ave. A capital campaign was initiated.

That said, the “pent up demand” created by those experiences led to excitement about purchasing 5509 S. Pennsylvania and a Capital Campaign in 2014 -15 raised promises of \$1,042,500 between Nov. 2014 and July 2015. A secondary campaign extended some promises and brought in new promises amounting to \$151,000 by July 2018. We are still receiving new and revised promises. Several congregants have increased their promises in the past few weeks to help with additional "mortgage" payments before the 5-year construction loan needs to be refinanced.

### **Debt that the congregation has**

The balance on the \$900,000 construction loan from Dart Bank (obtained with a UUA mortgage guarantee) is about \$450,000, for which we are making interest and principal payments. We have a loan from our Endowment Fund of \$150,000, for which we are making only interest payments. We are in the process of borrowing an additional \$100,000 from the Endowment Fund to make a large principal payment on the bank loan (mortgage) to reduce monthly interest payments.

### **How the congregation feels about its stewardship**

Fairly good, since the budget of the church has been increasing annually and people have met the challenge. However, building maintenance costs are increasing and we have a large mortgage. We do pretty well talking about money. The last couple of years have been challenging with the building purchase, renovation and higher maintenance costs. We think the UUA Wi\$dom Path workshops offered by the minister a few years ago were effective and we would like to see that program offered again. The Board is working on reactivation of an active Stewardship Committee to provide more leadership in this area.

### **Role of the minister(s) in stewardship**

Both the recent settled minister and the interim minister have taken active roles in the fall pledge drive, both by writing letters to the congregation, helping with committee work, and talking to the congregation about the importance of contributions.

### **The ten largest pledges within the congregation**

- 12,000

- 11,520
- 10,000
- 10,000
- 10,000
- 10,000
- 9,000
- 9,000
- 8,000
- 8,000

### **What a prospective minister should know about the building and grounds for the congregation**

For many years we had recognized the deficiencies of the previous building with respect to accessibility, space (for worship services, RE classes, programming, storage, and administrative functions), and parking. In 2014 we made the decision to buy an old school building that had good construction, but was in poor shape inside. The new building is 3 times the size of the previous building, has over 9 acres of land, is fully accessible, and has adequate parking for now, with room to expand. Major renovations were necessary, and the architect used LEED specifications and ADA requirements when changes were made. All occupied areas are air-conditioned, allowing comfortable year-round use. All staff have individual offices (the minister's office has an electric fireplace - the brick fireplace was hidden behind a wall in the building when we purchased it) and 8 classrooms are available for RE. The sanctuary seats about 350 and has a large back-stage area with some locked storage. The Social Hall seats about 120 people at tables, and a functional kitchen is adjacent. There is a large, well-equipped workshop. We are still learning how best to use our building and what its quirks are (roof, plumbing, alarm system).

One wing of classrooms is still available for development; planning for this area is a goal. In 2017 we had discussions about the possible use of this space for HeadStart classes (our zip code is an area of high need). However the HeadStart office could not offer a long-term commitment to funding.

Volunteers have been working to landscape the grounds near the building entries and the newly re-established Memorial Garden. Landscaping emphasizes easy-care native plants and trickle irrigation. Fencing for deer exclusion has been installed around a planned community garden. A modest children's play area has been built. A Blessing Box for free distribution of paper products has been installed. There is a large barn used to store gardening supplies and equipment. It has a new roof but the exterior walls are in need of attention. Grassy areas and a wooded lot remain to be developed.

### **The condition of the buildings and grounds**

The condition of the portion of the building that we use, as well as the grounds, is fairly good now (see answer above). There will need to be replacement of parts of the roof in a few years. We have a restricted fund ("savings account") for large building expenses that we contribute to each year. The alarm system has not been fully implemented. There is one wing of the building that has not been renovated, and future funding would be needed to plan for and renovate that portion. It has heat, however.

### **Expectations of the congregation for a minister(s) around pastoral care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation**

The minister has the responsibility for pastoral care, and has an active team of pastoral care assistants that help respond to congregational needs. The minister schedules monthly meetings of the pastoral care assistants and has started a series of three half-day workshops per year for training and to share experiences and information. We do not expect the Minister to provide all pastoral care, and do not want the Minister to attempt to provide care for problems that should be dealt with by other kinds of human service professionals. The congregation expects that the minister will take responsibility for planning pastoral care, and will be actively involved in pastoral care / spiritual guidance / counseling / home and hospital visitation, with assistance from qualified and dedicated volunteers.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around children and adult religious education**

The Director of Lifespan Faith Development is responsible for directing RE programs. Our tradition is a minister who is strongly supportive of children, youth and adult RE, and has a collaborative relationship with the DLFD. We work to create vibrant, interactive stories for all ages and multigenerational services that are truly engaging for children, youth and adults.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around community building / facilitation skills / coffee hour and social times**

Community building is an expectation. We have a vibrant community now and that has been a strength for many, many years. We are looking for ways to maintain and enhance the community, including small group ministry. Survey respondents indicated that 'Fostering (a) sense of fellowship/community, helping people connect' was one of the minister's most important roles; 88% rated it as very or extremely important- the fourth most important ministerial role or function.

Focus group participants commented on their desire for a minister who is outgoing, at ease socially, and accessible to congregants, which is in line with survey data. With respect to coffee hour and social times, there are few concrete expectations. It would be appreciated if the minister was involved periodically, but consistent involvement is not expected. Currently, it is our practice for the minister to stand at the sanctuary exit in a receiving line with the day's celebrant; this provides an opportunity for congregants to greet the minister, comment on the service/sermon, or indicate a desire to connect in another way, at another time.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around committee / task force work**

Most of the committees and task forces are fairly independent, and will ask the minister for assistance when needed. Some kinds of committees or task forces will more closely interact with the minister than others. The minister is an ex-officio member of all committees. Two-thirds of survey respondents (67%) identified 'Coordinating and guiding the efforts of lay leaders' as an important ministerial function, but far fewer (15%) identified 'Leading committee work' as something they want the minister to devote their time to.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around leadership development**

Leadership development has recently been identified as a goal, and any assistance the minister can provide would be very welcome. The Nominations Committee has primary responsibility for recruiting congregants to formal leadership positions, and they have recently prioritized identifying and implementing strategies for leadership development and mentoring of potential leaders. The church has a cadre of knowledgeable, committed lay leaders, many of whom have had key roles in the church's leadership for years, even decades. When asked about church/congregational strengths to be maintained or further

developed in the near future, one focus group participant said, “The engagement of congregants. I'd like to see us find ways to engage folks more on the periphery, and I suspect that might mean getting some other folks to step back.”

We anticipate that the minister will mainly offer guidance on leadership development, as their time allows, and/or in response to specific requests. The previous settled minister played a role in identifying potential leaders from among congregants and sometimes extended personal requests or invitations to get involved with a specific initiative or area of church life.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around membership and membership growth**

Membership growth is one of our main goals and was identified by both survey respondents and focus group participants as an important goal for the next several years. While fewer than half of survey participants (47%) identified ‘Fundraising and recruiting new members to the church’ as a very or extremely important ministerial function, congregants expect the minister to provide engrossing sermons and inspiring services, to participate in Newcomers classes, and to hold meet and greet style sessions for new attendees periodically. We look forward to discussing ways to work effectively together with the minister, based on skills and interests.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around staff relations and supervision**

The Personnel Manual states that the staff serves the congregation by serving the Senior Minister. The minister is chief of staff, leads staff meetings, and provides annual evaluations for staff. The minister is expected to have a collegial relationship with our very skilled, dedicated staff. Staff members have expressed they want a minister who will support their work, work on site rather than from home, and plan ahead so the staff can collaborate on worship plans.

### **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around anti-oppression work / social justice / social action**

The congregation has several vibrant groups active in anti-oppression and social justice initiatives. We would welcome the minister’s involvement as feasible. In the congregational survey, in response to the question ‘How important to you are the following roles/functions for the church’s next minister?’ 74% of respondents said that ‘Encouraging and engaging in social activism’ is extremely important or very important. There are many opportunities in this church and region, and the minister can determine how these efforts fit with other priorities.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around interfaith / community work**

Our previous settled minister was active in interfaith work in the Lansing community and that was a benefit and inspiration for social justice work. For example, her relationship with the Imam at the Islamic Center of East Lansing led to our opportunity to worship for four weeks in their building, when we had to vacate our old building before the new one could be occupied. Our goal is to continue involvement in interfaith/community work and to continue to build partnerships in the south Lansing community. In the congregational survey, 66% of respondents said that 'Providing visible leadership in the community beyond the church' was extremely or very important. We would like the minister to have some involvement in interfaith / community work, but would expect that lay leaders also participate in that function. We would like to have a minister who is comfortable engaging in initiatives in the community, and there are exciting opportunities based on the minister's interests and time availability.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around denominational activities**

UU Lansing usually has a full contingent (7 delegates) at Regional Assembly (MidAmerica Region) and General Assembly, plus a few attending non-delegates. We also have two members serving the MidAmerica Region - one on the Board and one on the Nominating Committee. It would be great if the minister chooses to participate, but there are no specific expectations.

## **Expectations the congregation has for a minister(s) around other areas not already addressed above**

None

## **How trust is built between the congregation and the minister**

Our last minister who left in good standing after a fifteen year ministry, came to us directly from the seminary. In her wisdom she introduced the concept of "right relationship" to the congregation and urged us to draft, implement and nurture covenants in all standing committees with a sought after goal of avoiding triangulation. This would serve to promote more honest and direct communication and trust between members - and the minister when appropriate. To give the foundation of right relationship solid underpinnings, she implemented a host of on-going covenant groups that served to shape the culture to one more conducive to creating and embracing the Beloved Community.

The creation of trust is a product of experiencing and promoting respect, holding positive intentions, valuing honest communication and understanding vulnerabilities over time within a culture that upholds a Beloved Community as an ultimate goal. This can best be achieved through persistence, perseverance and good will. The minister and congregation worked hard and joyfully to make this a reality.

After the minister left, she was asked from her perspective how trust with the congregation was achieved. She explained that while she didn't realize it at first, in hindsight she and the congregation had been following what Brene Brown espoused in defining trust through the acronym "BRAVING."

- Boundaries ("There is not trust without boundaries.")
- Reliability ("I can only trust you if you do what you say you'll do" again and again.)
- Accountability ("I can only trust you if when you make a mistake, you're willing to own it, apologize for it and make amends. I can only trust you if when I make a mistake, I am allowed to own it, apologize and make amends.")
- Vault (Keeping a confidence)
- Integrity (Brown's definition of integrity: "Choosing courage over comfort, choosing what's right over what's fun, fast or easy, and practicing your values not just professing your values.")
- Non-judgment (You and I both can struggle and ask for help)
- Generosity ("Our relationship is only a trusting relationship if you can assume the most generous thing about my words, intentions and behaviors. And then check in with me.")

She believed that with her persistence in modeling "BRAVING," along with the congregation's eagerness to work towards improving relations with all concerned, trust was firmly established.

### **Why people leave the congregation, and why new visitors do not return**

While we don't have a process to get specific feedback, perceived reasons for visitors not returning include "not enough reference to God" or "too much reference to God" in the worship services. The worship services may be perceived as homogeneous, with not enough diversity. Also visitors may not get involved in

programs to make connections, or there may be unanticipated changes in the demands in their lives. A growing edge for us may be meeting visitors with ears and mind open to hearing who they are and sharing what we have to offer them.

### **Any expectations there might be about a minister's family and personal life**

We are a congregation that has welcomed into our pulpit single and partnered people, old and young, straight and gay, people who “look (stereotypically) Ministerial,” and those who do not. We can truly say that family and other personal factors have no bearing upon the kind of Minister we could be comfortable with. We are looking for a Minister who wants to call us home – someone who wants to make a commitment to our community, our church and to us as individuals. Family is welcome to participate to the extent desired.

### **One mistake a minister could make that would seriously affect the ministry**

Our church has a strong tradition of shared administrative leadership. The congregation would feel alienated from a minister who was not comfortable working in such a collaborative environment. Also, our congregation will be disappointed if the minister is not a strong preacher with clear delivery of intellectually and spiritually inspiring sermons consistent with the humanist religious orientation of the majority of congregants.

### **Questions the congregation would have liked to have been asked which were not included here**

None

## About UU Church of Greater Lansing

### Contact Methods

**Email:** [office@uulansing.org](mailto:office@uulansing.org)

**Phone:** (517) 351-4081

**Website:** <http://www.uulansing.org>

#### **Meeting Address**

*Same as mailing address*

#### **Mailing Address**

5509 South Pennsylvania  
Ave.

This Congregation **does not have** a 501(c)(3) status of its own

## Congregation Life

### **Describe your Congregation and its culture:**

We are a welcoming congregation. Although the congregation is currently “graying” we are eager to welcome new friends and members of our new neighborhood: younger members, young families and with our recent move to a building many times larger than our previous home, we have plenty of room.

We are an active congregation with many and varied skills, interests, passions and quirks. We work well together as evidenced by our move in 2016. It really took the entire village to pack up everything we would need while we were a “congregation on the move” and homeless for 6 weeks.

We are intrepid. Our friends at the Islamic Center of East Lansing invited us to have our services in their gym for an entire month. Then for the next few weeks we worshipped outside on our own property in the rain and sun (we didn't have our occupancy permit yet), worshiped in a city park and were encouraged to visit other services. We painted part of the building and repaired walls because our Capital Campaign fell a little short and that meant if we wanted the job done, we needed to do it. After moving in, our wonderful Grounds Committee has been busy doing the hard labor of nurturing the soil by removing invasive species and creating gardens of native plants. They are creating a community garden, which will be ready for the 2019 planting season. We are inviting our neighbors to join us.

We reach out into the wider community now that we are settling into our new church home. Because there is a large population of refugees and immigrants living on the South Side of Lansing, and because our new building has many classrooms, in January of 2017, we were able to partner with the A+ English Language School to offer free morning ESL classes and citizenship tutoring to this population. We are currently working with the Refugee Development Center offering free ESL classes, childcare, and a sewing circle.

We have a passion for Social Justice. In June of 2017, anti-immigrant militias planned a march through a neighboring refugee housing complex. Our minister worked with the Refugee Development Center, local police agencies, other ministers, and the Peace Education Center, to offer our church as a sanctuary for

any who needed it at this time, and as a base for the Peace Team to assemble. Our members can often be seen at demonstrations at the state Capitol – standing for gun violence prevention, the women’s march, the science march, fair treatment of refugees and fair immigration laws, Raise the Age. The Committee to End the New Jim Crow and Third Sunday events draw attention to social justice issues and encourage us to take action.

We are generous. Attwood School is a 4-6 grade Tech Magnet school. Their Communities in Schools Site Coordinator wrote, “I reached out to the UU Church to see if the congregants would be interested in a donation of clothes to the school for our students. One conversation with several members became two meetings became more meetings and incredibly generous donations of clothes and books. A few months after those donations, we were given a large check from the congregants to continue their support of Attwood. A couple months after that, I was in talks with the Ministerial Intern to build and support the Attwood clothing closet. Currently, we have weekly volunteers in the school helping us sort and support the clothing closet; all of which is possible because of the Unitarian Universalist congregants.”

We have much to learn. We want to be inclusive but we need to learn how. We know we need a minister who can help lead us on this journey. We need to be more inclusive and listen to those with disabilities. Some of us are ready for the challenge of Radical Inclusion. Another learning edge for us is recognizing our need to develop leadership in our own congregation. We recognize that we can’t simply take for granted “someone else will do it.” Our volunteers can become worn out and if there were more of us volunteering we could each do a little.

We love music. Music brings us together on Sundays and we love to sing. Our choirs and bands are talented and bring us joy. The Folk Band, Jazz Combo, Chalice Choir, Women’s Chorus are all volunteer, under the leadership of our professional director.

We think education of children and youth is important. We have a great RE program, with inspiring classes for children, OWL and Coming of Age for middle school youth, and a vibrant high school group. We are pleased that 250 other churches have seen fit to seek out our curriculum for 'Coming of Age.'

We seek meaningful, relevant, cohesive worship services. Sunday morning services provide an oasis for all of us - a place to be calm and focused and experience this beloved community up close and personal. From the Welcome to our Closing, “With Faith in Love we are building community growing and changing together. Peace.”

Our Mission Statement is: “The Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing is a welcoming religious community that encourages freedom of belief and responsibility of action. Inspired by love, we honor diversity, work for justice, and continue to learn and grow throughout our lives.”

Our Congregational Covenant is: “As we build beloved community here and in the wider world, I will help cultivate a welcoming environment in this sacred space. I will listen and speak with empathy and honesty, in times of agreement and disagreement. I will strive to understand other viewpoints. I promise to respect and nurture myself and others as we each pursue our life paths and spiritual journeys.” This statement is prominently posted in social gathering areas and referred to often in church programs.

**Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:**

- **Accessibility:** We have four gender-neutral bathrooms, and a completely accessible building. When the old school building we purchased in 2014 was renovated in 2015-16, all new construction followed ADA guidelines. We are working on AIM certification.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Whenever possible during the renovation, we used LEED specifications to reduce energy use. There has been discussion of installation of solar panels.
- We display a rainbow flag outside the building and are involved in Pride activities.
- We have a large Black Lives Banner (BLM) banner displayed on the front of the church building, and congregants hold BLM signs near the busy street in front of the church each Sunday after worship. We have held a ‘White Supremacy’ teach-in and have active groups involved in anti-racism work.
- We have a relationship with Attwood Elementary School, a nearby school in a low-income neighborhood, and the relationship is expanding.
- Preparations have begun to use part of our property for a community garden that would serve nearby immigrant/refugee neighborhoods and others in the local community. The area has been fenced in, and should be opening for use in spring/summer 2019.
- Art exhibits have been planned to coordinate with social justice activities and priorities.

- ESL (English as a Second Language) classes are offered for refugees in the neighborhood, in collaboration with Refugee Development Services. A Sewing Circle is held for the students.
- Monthly plate collections with all cash and designated checks supporting local and national organizations.
- Children and youth In the RE program raise funds for social justice projects.
- Anti-racism and anti-mass incarceration work through the Committee to End the New Jim Crow (CENJC), includes facilitating and supporting other local groups, providing meeting space, collecting books for prisoners and families.
- A Third-Sunday Event is held in our church building most months to show films or feature a speaker related to Social Justice issues. This is advertised both to congregants and to people outside the church. The November event is Mid-Michigan Immigration Coalition's annual fundraiser for Guatemalan schoolchildren, Fiesta Pequeña.
- Support of gun control, with leadership involvement and active participation in the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. For the third year, our church hosted the local Concert Across America to End Gun Violence, part of a nationwide event in late September.
- We just began offering preferred pronoun stickers for name tags.
- We just installed a "Blessing Box" near the church sign to share toiletry items and paper products.
- Vibrant Sunday morning forum (scheduled before the worship service) with participants demonstrating a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- We look critically at ourselves to assess needs for personal and congregation development and opportunity to grow.
- During the period of decision-making about possible relocation to a new building, we engaged in an effective democratic process, with dedication to the process and to making sure all voices were heard.
- We take seriously being in covenant with each other and working on a process for resolving conflicts.

**Link to your Safe Congregation policy:**

<http://uulansing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1.1-Safe-Church-Policy.pdf>

The Worship Service is held each Sunday at 10:30-11:30am. During most services, we offer Religious Education classes for children/youth in preschool through high school as well as a staffed nursery for children up to age four. Some services (10-12 per year) are designed for all ages to enjoy together (at these, nursery care is provided). We have a cry room in the back of our Sanctuary provided for infants and caregivers. During the summer months, the worship services are still held at 10:30am, with most of the services conducted by lay leaders or visiting ministers. RE classes are reduced in scope but activities are provided for all ages. All worship services are American Sign Language interpreted, and our Sanctuary is equipped with a Hearing Loop System and headsets. Braille and large-print hymnals are available from the ushers. The dress code is casual.

## Personnel

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Paid Hours per Week</b>	<b>Year Started</b>
John Marsh	Interim Minister	40	2017
Teresa Putnam	Religious Educator	40	1997
Kathy McWilliams	Congregational Administrator	40	2007
Lyle Brown	Director of Music	20	2014
Beth Scanlon	Acting Membership Coordinator	20	2018
Yan Zheng	Pianist	10	2018
Jen Cronkhite	RE Assistant	5	2016
Cathy Smeage	Bookkeeper	6	2018
theresa rohlck	Ministerial Intern	20	2017

Name	Position	Paid Hours per Week	Year Started
Jeannie Miernik	Office Assistant	25	2006

**Additional personnel notes:**

We pay American Sign Language interpreters on a weekly basis for interpreting at each Sunday worship service.

## Congregation History

**Provide your Congregation's founding history:**

John H. Sanford, Universalist minister and newspaper publisher, could be considered the father of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing. In 1847 he came to Lansing from Ann Arbor and formed a Universalist society. On March 16, 1849 the church's incorporation papers were signed. Several different Lansing buildings have been home to the Universalist congregation over the years. During the 1940s several Unitarian families moved to the Lansing area from Ann Arbor. They founded the Unitarian Fellowship of East Lansing and Mason, affiliating with the American Unitarian Association in March 1949. In 1957, Lansing area Universalists and Unitarians merged four years before the national merger took place.

**Date founded:** 3/16/1849

**Describe important events in your Congregation's history:**

In 1971 the church purchased the former fraternity house at 855 Grove Street and for a period of time shared the space with Kehillat Israel (a Jewish congregation now located in Lansing), a day-care center and Fellowship for Today (spiritual community). Over the years the congregation worked to make the 855 Grove Street building meet the needs of our congregation. Interior walls were removed and dorm rooms transformed into religious education classrooms. Long-time members remember when a wall mostly divided the space used for worship services, and the joy experienced when it was removed in 1975. The assembly hall (sanctuary), front entrance and the Marion Vaughan parlor were added in 1983.

Two worship services were initiated in 2001 under an interim minister to alleviate crowding. After the arrival of Rev. Kathryn A. Bert as our settled minister in 2002, there was growth in membership and stability occurred within the congregation, with enthusiasm for Rev. Bert's ministry.

The building's deficiencies, including lack of accessibility, insufficient parking, and too little space for worship services and program became more prominent. During the years 2005-2009, the Strategic Planning Committee considered various options related to the building. In 2011, with participation from a UUA consultant, the Board and Strategic Planning Committee recommended exploring various relocation possibilities. In August 2014 we became aware of the school building for sale at 5509 South Pennsylvania Avenue that was completely accessible with sufficient parking. At a congregational meeting in November 2014, members voted on the proposed purchase, which passed with 89% voting in favor. In January 2015, the Board delineated two overarching values that should be general priorities in all planning for the building and grounds: Welcoming/ Inclusiveness/ Accessibility and Environmental sustainability.

After extensive renovation, including much work done by the congregation, we moved in on June 1, 2016. Only 4 days later, on June 5, we held the first Sunday morning worship service. Over the next year, volunteers took on many new tasks, including relocation and design of the Memorial Garden with rededication by our interim minister, maintenance and design of the grounds around the building, elimination of invasive species including destructive Japanese knotweed near the building, building maintenance and installation of a new roof.

During the construction, move, and follow-up period, a lot of time and energy of both congregants and staff was focused on meeting immediate deadlines. However, the relocation has facilitated rededication to a variety of Social Justice efforts and the initiation of new programs, including English as a Second Language classes, for refugees and immigrants who live in the community near the church, and partnership with an elementary school nearby in which most students are low-income.

## Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2017	Now	Other	theresa rohlick	Ministerial Intern

<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
2017	Now	Interim	John Marsh	Interim Minister
2002	2017	Called	Kathryn Bert	Minister
1998	2005	Affiliated	Patricia Jimenez	Endorsed Community Minister
2001	2002	Interim	Kimi Riegel	Interim Minister
2000	2001	Interim	Wayne Robinson	Interim Minister
1996	2000	Called	Barbara Edgecombe	Minister
1995	1996	Interim	Norman Naylor	Interim Minister
1994	1995	Called	Maryell Cleary	Pastoral Care Min.
1987	1994	Called	Angeline Theisen	Minister
1986	1987	Interim	Robert Lehman	Interim Minister
1984	1986	Interim	Maryell Cleary	Interim Minister
1976	1984	Called	Denise Tracy	Minister
1970	1974	Called	Robert Green	Minister
1964	1968	Called	Thomas Smith	Minister

## Membership & Finances

The data for the table below comes directly from the UUA's annual congregational certification.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Pledge Income</b>	<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Youth Enrollment</b>	<b>Avg. Attendance</b>
2018	\$483,280	\$459,506	316	102	252

Year	Total Pledge Income	Total Operating Expenses	Membership	Youth Enrollment	Av. Attendance
2017	\$455,998	\$453,021	320	114	233
2016	\$443,739	\$419,007	319	112	233
2015	\$412,642	\$460,184	314	114	235
2014	\$374,520	\$431,190	305	123	244
2013	\$397,895	\$443,774	320	114	224
2012	\$409,556	\$436,655	338	92	210
2011	\$363,300	\$387,340	350	103	210
2010	\$345,518	\$386,218	351	104	259
2009	\$334,381	\$393,742	355	108	263

## Demographics

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

5-9%

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?**

10-24%

**Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation**

Approximately 60% are female and 40% are male based on a partial review of the church directory. Of the 239 responses to the gender question on the survey, 68% were female (cisgender only), 29% were male (including 1 transgender male), and 3% (N=8) identified as non-binary or other.

**What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?**

1

**What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?**

3

**What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?**

37

1

**What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?**

We intentionally moved in 2016 to a building in south Lansing with a lower economic, as well as racially and ethnically diverse, population. We are in the process of learning how to reach out, attract and support our neighbors in healthy, productive ways. There has been informal mentorship and encouragement to increase volunteer leadership diversity. The Diversity & Inclusion Team was initiated in part to explore strategies toward this goal. The recent efforts by the Nominations Committee to enhance leadership development includes diversity priorities. In the spring 2018 search for a new Membership Coordinator, the hiring team talked about being intentional about trying to hire a person of color, including defining minimum qualifications for the position to permit flexibility in selection of the person to hire.

## Accessibility

**Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible? Yes**

**Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes**

**Assisted listening system details:**

There are assisted listening systems both in the sanctuary and in a large meeting room.

## Resources & Programs

**List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:**

BLUU teach-in.

**Describe your religious educational programs:**

Our religious education experiences for children and youth explore Unitarian Universalist identity and heritage, world religions, Judeo-Christian heritage, and social justice, inviting them to consider for themselves what is spiritual, religious,

and true. Classes are divided into age groups (preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school), lead by volunteers, and held during the worship service.

We use theme-based ministry in worship and religious education to engage children, youth and adults in the same topic each month. This provides opportunities for families to connect and to explore theological concepts more deeply. New in 2018, our themes are from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle, a network of UU congregations who follow the same themes and share resources.

Preschoolers are introduced to our UU faith through the Chalice Children curriculum, which provides experiences around the strength of community and life issues we all share. Our elementary children participate in workshops that relate to the monthly themes, where learning is experiential through art, games, drama, science, video, nature, music, storytelling, cooking, or language arts. Our 7th-8th graders alternate each year between the Our Whole Lives (OWL) comprehensive sexuality education program and the Coming of Age (COA) program to explore life's big questions and articulate personal values and beliefs. (Since 2006, we've sold or distributed 250 copies of our COA curriculum to UU congregations around the country.) Our high school youth, with the support of adult advisors, determine their own activities and goals for the year. Typically, they engage in social action, community building, worship, and leadership development.

Volunteers for all of our children and youth classes are parents and other adults from the congregation who prioritize RE and enjoy these age groups. A rotation schedule gives volunteers the opportunity to both volunteer and attend worship. However, our switch to one service because of our move to a larger building has reduced those opportunities somewhat.

During the summer, we offer a multi-age RE class and bring in a variety of "special guests." These are members of the congregation who share an interest, passion, or hobby with the children. For five years now, we have offered Chalice Seekers Summer Camp for children entering kindergarten through sixth grade, with middle school and high school youth serving as counselors.

The Adult Religious Education Steering Committee provides adults with opportunities for continued spiritual and intellectual growth. Volunteers from the congregation offer new classes each season. Offerings explore Unitarian Universalist faith traditions, other faiths, and social justice; provide a safe environment for spiritual growth and development; foster a community that promotes exploration, joy, and wonder; and support each person's search for truth and meaning.

N/A

## Surrounding Community

**Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:**

UU Lansing is located in the tri-county region (Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties) that is referred to as “greater Lansing.” This region extends from Lansing in a roughly circular area with a radius of approximately 35 miles, and population of about 480,000. The demographic makeup of the greater Lansing tri-county (from <http://www.purelansing.com/Demographics/Population-Data>) is: 76% White; 9% non-Hispanic Black; 0.4% American Indian; 5% non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander; 3% multi-race; 7% Hispanic.

The demographic makeup of the city of Lansing is much more diverse than that of the surrounding region. Data for the city of Lansing (from Wikipedia) is: 65.3% White (61.4% non-Hispanic White), 21.9% African American, 0.8% Native American, 2.8% Asian, 5% from other races/groups, and 4.6% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 10.0% of the population.

Lansing is generally described in terms of sub-regions of the city, and we are located in the south part of Lansing, and often refer to our community as south Lansing. The zip code (48911) in which we are located has a higher concentration of people of color than the city of Lansing, with major racial composition of approximately: 50% White; 29% Black; 5% Asian; 5% two or more races; 11% Hispanic. Also, there is a large immigrant/refugee community residing in the neighborhood of our church – we are interacting with that population in several ways described above. Attwood Elementary School, with which we have established a relationship, is less than 2 miles away; their student population is 46% African-American, 24% white, 19% Hispanic and the remainder from other categories.

The three major economic contributors for greater Lansing are state government (Lansing is the capital of Michigan), Michigan State University in East Lansing, and the automobile industry. The State Capitol Building in downtown Lansing (less than 5 miles), and nearby areas, are places where people gather, parade, and march to educate and express support. UU Lansing congregants or groups are frequently present and often with banners in support.

The greater Lansing area has many recreational and cultural options. Recreational options locally include lakes and rivers, bicycle trails (one is located adjacent to our building), hiking trails, state and local parks (some with campgrounds), and other parts of the state have extensive opportunities. Nationally touring cultural events (e.g. concerts, theater, Broadway plays) are presented at the Wharton Center at MSU, and there are many excellent museums, gardens, and theater groups (both amateur and professional theater) in the area. MSU, as a Division 1 NCAA institution, sponsors 24 intercollegiate sports as a member of the Big Ten. In addition, Lansing has professional minor league baseball and soccer teams.

The cost of living, especially the cost of housing, is lower in Lansing than in the rest of Michigan and many other parts of the country. For example, median home cost comparisons are: Lansing - \$81,500; total Lansing-East Lansing area - \$141,400; Michigan - \$142,100; St. Paul MN - \$212,100; Denver CO - \$421,900.

**Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:**

As a result of the move to a new building, UU Lansing has found new opportunities for outreach and engagement with people and organizations in the wider community. Because there is a large population of refugees and immigrants living on the South Side of Lansing, and because our new building has many classrooms, in January of 2017, we were able to partner with the A+ English Language School to offer free morning ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and citizenship tutoring to this population. Although the A+ School closed at the end of June, 2017, we were able to develop an ongoing relationship with the Refugee Development Center (RDC) in the fall of 2017, for them to use our classrooms to offer free evening ESL classes, childcare, a sewing class, and a summer youth camp. This past summer, in partnership with RDC, a community dinner was held at the church to which refugees and UUs were invited. Plus, our Community Garden Team has been working to invite and encourage our newcomer neighbors to participate in our Community Garden Project, which will begin in summer of 2019.

In June of 2017, anti-immigrant militias planned a march through a neighboring refugee housing complex. Our minister worked with RDC, local police agencies, other ministers, and the Peace Education Center, to offer our church as a sanctuary for any who needed it at this time, and as a base for the Peace Team to assemble.

In the past year, after four Lansing Catholic Central High School football players “took a knee” and were criticized, congregants were very active on their behalf, interacted with others in the community to provide support, and we held a worship service to honor the youth and recognize their families, with the Lansing Black Lives Matter leader as speaker.

We have also developed a relationship with Attwood Elementary School in south Lansing. Excerpts from letters written by community leaders are included below. (Full letters will be included in the electronic packet.)

From the Refugee Development Center: "The Refugee Development Center began its partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Church a couple of years ago out of a shared mission and passion to support the local community. Although it seems logical that if people have good intentions change will come, it isn't a given. Partnership and community work takes time. It takes a deep listen into the needs, the work, the hum of the community. Our experience working with UU of Greater Lansing showed just that commitment. As the need and opportunity presented itself, we grew together. We grew from a support agency to a tenant. We started with a couple of evening classes to 12 English classes a week with childcare, youth summer camp, sewing circle for women, a community dinner, and the beginning of a community garden. The community has responded not only with attendance, but out of genuine appreciation. One Lansing Newcomer stated, "We love it here. I come to English class, bring my daughter, learn to sew, and see my friends." With open doors and a dedication to follow the lead of the community, the UU is a true community partner. The UU is a resource for newcomer refugees and long standing Lansing friends. We are grateful for the UU of Greater Lansing."

From Attwood School: "To be frank, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing is our largest, most consistent donor and one of Attwood CIS's most important partnerships. The clothing closet is absolutely essential for our students and families, who struggle to make ends meet. It is utilized every day, multiple times a day by students and our Attwood clothing closet would not exist if not for the UU Lansing congregants' time, money, and donations. The generosity I have experienced with the UU Church congregants is unmatched."

From the Peace Education Center (hub for Peace and Justice in the Greater Lansing Area): "The Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing has been considered one of the core supporting churches of the Peace Education Center. Until a year ago the UU Church annually financially supported PEC and had representation on our board. We were housed with the UU Church for many years until its move to S. Lansing made adequate space for PEC unavailable. We miss the involvement of UU in our leadership."

From the City of Lansing: “The Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing is an excellent asset to our community. We worked collaboratively a few years ago to get the necessary approvals and permits in place for the Church to locate at 5509 S. Pennsylvania. The Church has since made substantial improvements and brought new life to the property/building which had been sitting vacant for a few years. We are so glad that the UU Church of Greater Lansing chose to move into the City of Lansing. The community and spiritual resources that the Church provides to our community are very valuable and much appreciated!”

**Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.**

This is a difficult question to answer and none of the following characterizations should be viewed as universal! We are a diverse congregation that enjoys its diversity. Nonetheless, the Search Committee offers these brief comments:

- We lean toward humanism theologically.
- We lean toward a progressive political viewpoint.
- We are largely middle-class economically. We would like to see more working class folks in the congregation.
- We have small numbers of non-white members, and their numbers are growing more slowly than we would like.
- A significant number of us put time into social action, both through the church and through outside groups.
- We hold on to some traditions, like monthly lay-led services and an All-Church Memorial Day retreat, while we have left others behind or altered them due to growth, like spoken joys and sorrows and the Wheel of Life service.
- We greatly enjoy fellowship over food and look for opportunities to feed each other.
- Many of us are or were educators or government employees, but many other professions are represented.
- We have many retired members, but the problems of an aging congregation are partly checked by vibrant RE and Young Adult programs (which need to be reactivated).
- We have a long history as active GLBTQ allies, from the early days of the AIDS crisis through celebration of marriage equality.

