

Writing Sample
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Contents:

- 1** **“Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Protested...”**
A press release prepared in response to an alt-right Christian protest of the organization

- 2-4** **2024 UUCA Impact Report**
Yearly impact report prepared for donors. Both written and designed by Shay Stewart-Willis. All internal graphics designed by Shay Stewart-Willis.

- 5** ***Radical Welcome as a Catalyst for Congregational Growth***
Introduction for a video conference presentation delivered at the 2023 Unitarian Universalist General Assembly. Watched by over 1,000 conference participants.

- 6** **Giving Tuesday email copy, 2023**
Giving Tuesday occurs during the last week of UUCA’s yearly Stewardship drive.

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

January 9, 2024

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Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Protested for Progressive Values

ATLANTA, Georgia — On Sunday, January 7th, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta (UUCA) was protested by members of the Christian Right.

Unitarian Universalism is a nondogmatic faith that affirms values of compassion, curiosity, and social justice. Members hold diverse spiritual beliefs, and Unitarian Universalist theology sources wisdom from humanism, science, art, and world religions.

The protesters did not identify a specific affiliation with any church or political group, but they expressed dissent with UUCA's affirmation and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community, their female minister, and their lack of explicit worship of Jesus. One protestor held an amplified megaphone and shared their homophobic, islamophobic, and misogynistic theology in an attempt to disrupt UUCA's Sunday worship. Other demonstrators held signs that read, "Eternity in Hell is a long time to be wrong" and "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

In response, members of UUCA held a peaceful counterprotest. Congregants held pride flags and signs that read "Black Lives Matter." Following the conclusion of worship, they played joyful, affirming music and danced on the sidewalk. Senior Minister Rev. Taryn Strauss spoke with the protestors, challenging their theology with her own, stating, "You are not born into sin; you are born into blessing.

Rev. Strauss has also provided the following statement regarding the incident: "While we affirm the protester's first amendment right to free speech and the freedom of assembly, our theology remains clear: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary and queer folks are born into blessing and are a beautiful part of the whole of creation. We at UUCA love and cherish our LGBTQIA members and community. We believe in Original Blessing, that all people have the potential for good and are blessed at birth, and that Heaven and Hell are human-made creations here on Earth. We believe in and work toward a just, fair, and peaceful world where all are welcomed at Love's Table. Our congregation holds a diversity of beliefs, sexual identities, racial identities, and cultures, and we celebrate that diversity every Sunday at 11 am!"

UUCA is a vibrant, innovative hub of engagement for Atlanta and beyond, where together members transform lives through courageous action and soulful connection. As one of the largest Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States, UUCA grounds itself in innovative worship and the goal to advance justice for people, our Earth, and all life on it. With roots in Atlanta going back more than 120 years, UUCA works to continue the Atlantan legacy as the cradle of the civil rights movement. Visit their campus at 2650 N Druid Hills Road NE and learn more about their mission at www.uUCA.org.



IMPACT REPORT

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta | 2023

“WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF BELONGING.”

We have had a tremendously active year at UUCA! We are in our second year on our North Druid Hills campus where we are crafting a new era together. We practice radical welcome on Sunday mornings as congregant guides accompany visitors and members into our house of belonging. UUCA has launched and reinvigorated a number of ministries this year, many of which are highlighted in this report.

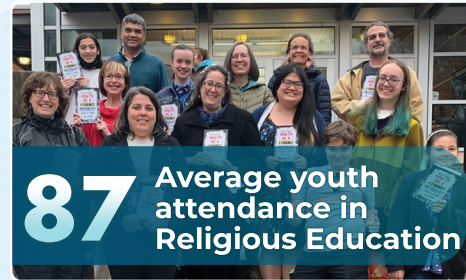
We are halfway through our Year of Devotion. We continue to invite you into deeper devotion of your time, effort, resources and offerings to the altar of your spiritual life and religious community. In the coming year, we hope to invigorate UUCA through the depth of offerings and ministries rather than the breadth of various opportunities. Showing up to your faith life, to this community that needs and loves you, and to yourself is worth the effort. Our contributions of time, talent and treasure are how we make this place a house of belonging and becoming.

Rev. Taryn Strauss
Senior Minister



SOULFUL CONNECTION

From widening political divides to collective overreliance on technology, it's easy to feel disconnected. UUCA is proud to cultivate soulful connection, empowering our members and friends to deepen their relationships with themselves, their peers, and the wider world.



SOULFUL CONNECTION

Youth Group Attends Mountain CON

Under the direction of our Youth Ministries Coordinator, Eli Shuford, our Senior Youth are meeting for monthly events including assisting at Nicholas House and the recent Senior Youth Convention at The Mountain. Five senior youth joined the congregation as members in 2023.



Pulgram Gallery Connects Perspectives

Opening the year with *Gods of Change*, an exhibition on Afrofuturism, Pulgram Gallery hosted five shows in 2023. Each show opening featured a film screening and live poetry or an art talkback. We celebrate the opportunity to visually connect with local artists and our quarterly worship themes.



Our Whole Lives Transforms Youth Futures

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a UU Religious Education program that changes lives! UUCA has offered this lifespan sexuality curriculum for both our own youth and the broader community. Families who are not members contribute a small fee to take part, allowing this program to help power our congregation.



A Wide Range of Musical Guests Keep our Congregation in Tune

Our music program welcomed over 28 guest artists to Sunday worship this year. From Nachlanta Bollywood fusion dance to the UUCA Quartet, myriad genres served as catalysts for connection. Thank you to all congregants who have shared their talents!



COURAGEOUS ACTION

In a world of myriad interconnected struggles toward justice, UUCA is honored to be the place where you rehearse the world you wish to see. Our devotion to community, equity, and change is a direct expression of our action-based faith.



68 Trained in Radical Welcome



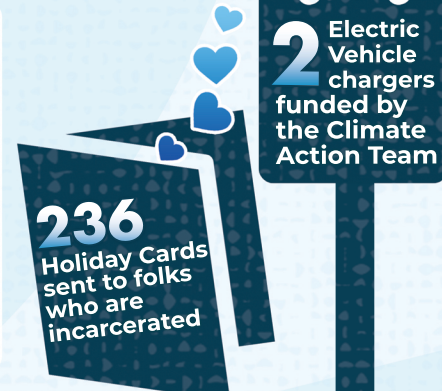
25 Demonstrated against SB 104



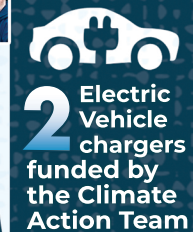
23 Embraced spiritual self care at the ARE retreat



77 Youth served by the Immigrant Action Giving Tree



236 Holiday Cards sent to folks who are incarcerated



2 Electric Vehicle chargers funded by the Climate Action Team

>\$20,000 Contributed through Share the Plate



Recipients:

- LOST N' FOUND YOUTH
- LAHAINA MAUI FIRE RECOVERY
- ATLANTA SOLIDARITY FUND
- TOCO HILLS COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
- GA INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT
- EL REFUGIO
- NICHOLAS HOUSE
- UUA DISASTER RELIEF
- ABUNDANT LUUV



\$2,722 Average pledge

COURAGEOUS ACTION

Interweave LGBTQ+ Fellowship Reinigorates our Pride Presence

UUCA was back at Atlanta Pride in full force this year! 15 congregants staffed our booth, and UUs from across Georgia joined us in the annual march. We are a congregation that loves the queer community loudly and proudly!



Nicholas House Community Partnership

Our Homeless Advocacy team has established and strengthened our relationship with Nicholas House, a shelter that keeps families together while experiencing houselessness. They held another successful service day in November to lend a hand with house upkeep and repair.



The John Bolton Baking Ministry

Courageous action also encompasses the diligent acts that make our community welcoming and warm! The Baking Ministry has been renewed by Barbara Begner and Carol Ann Arvan. They lead a team of volunteers who prepare baked goods to enjoy on Sunday mornings.



Taking Courageous Action Against Police Brutality

In February, UUCA held a lawn demonstration against police brutality. As Unitarian Universalists, we honor the worth and dignity of every human being, and thus we have a responsibility to speak out against racism and structural injustice.



TRANSFORM
LIVES THROUGH
COURAGEOUS
ACTION &
SAFE &
CONNECTION

YOU are UUCA!

Our impact is made possible by you.

Thank you to all who have ensured we continue our transformational work!



If you've not yet made your stewardship pledge for 2024, head to uuca.org/pledge

Pledges fund operational costs, from electricity to sheet music to staff!



Want to empower our community with a one-time holiday gift? Celebrate our impact at uuca.org/give

Select "donation" from the dropdown menu.

Radical Welcome as a Catalyst for Congregational Growth

April, 2023

When was the last time you felt truly welcomed? It probably wasn't at a big box department store, despite the smiling workers in matching vests. It probably wasn't at a contentious Thanksgiving dinner, even though the food was good and everybody knew your name. No, the last time you felt truly welcomed was the time someone expressed genuine investment in deeply knowing you. The moment could've been at a gay bar, a coffee shop, an open mic, or a church. You were wanted there. All of you.

This is what it means to be *radically* welcoming. At many organizations, it's easy for *welcome* to mean a smile and a cup of coffee. Radical Welcome supports these warm entry points, but it doesn't stop there. Radical Welcome challenges us to embrace a culture of intention and inclusion that begins the moment a member or visitor encounters our congregation.

The word "radical" is derived from the Latin "radicalis," meaning, "of, relating to, or proceeding from a root." When we say "radical welcome," what we mean is a welcoming philosophy that gets to the root of true acceptance and hospitality. What is the root you might ask? People. The people you are welcoming are the core focus of successful church hospitality, membership cultivation, and growth.

People-first welcome requires transformation and interrogation. What is the experience of a new visitor upon entering our church? Do multiple members speak with them warmly, or do they awkwardly struggle to break in amongst existing social circles? Does the existing congregation know how to thoughtfully engage with new faces who are different from them? There are urgent practical matters at hand too- does this individual, regardless of their gender, have an accessible place to go to the bathroom? Do they have clear, meaningful ways to deepen their connection to the existing community? Do any of the faces in the pictures on the walls look like them?

Come with us as we explore the five core pillars of Radical Welcome! Join us in the milestones and misadventures of this ongoing major cultural shift in our congregation.

You are the Power of our Community!

Your Pledge Matters Now More Than Ever

What do you imagine when you think of UUCA? Maybe you hear the beautiful music of our choir or remember the taste of coffee and our Baking Ministry's pound cake. Perhaps you recall a Small Group Ministry meeting in one of our campus classrooms or a particularly moving message shared on a Sunday morning.

All of UUCA's programming is made possible by you. Congregant pledges make up 80% of our community's funding. From the electricity that keeps our campus warm to the staff that empowers our transformational work, our programming and operations depend upon our congregants' generosity.

This Giving Tuesday, we need those who have not yet pledged to help secure our future. Your pledge is a testament to our shared values and the strength of our community. We can empower you because you empower us. Please consider contributing today.