

UUCP Annual Minister's Report

Reverend Pippa Jones

One of the unexpected silver linings from the COVID-19 pandemic was the use of platforms such as Zoom to connect people worldwide. When I first discussed with Rev Sonia the concept of holding online services for UUCP, I was hesitant. I was unsure whether we could really come together digitally on a Sunday and experience community through a screen. How wonderful to find instead, Sunday after Sunday, a very real and palpable sense of journeying together, intimacy and connection. The miles melt each time we have an online service, and I am always buoyed up by this extraordinary opportunity of being together and creating sacred space. A huge THANK YOU must go to all those behind the scenes that make all this possible - Liandra Pires, Jon King, Michael Meyers-Jouan, and Rev Sonia Ketchian, who provide technical and social media support.

Thank you must also go to the entire community for your ongoing welcome into your midst, and affirmation of my role as Associate Minister. Last month I celebrated my 50th UUCP service! Between June 2024 and 2025 we have covered so many themes and topics of inspiration together. My services have marked special moments in the calendar: Pride Weekend; World Indigenous Peoples' Day; Sukkot; Winter Solstice; Christmas Eve; Chinese New Year; Ramadan, Women's History Month; Pesach (Passover); and Mothers' Day. I have also shared teachings from great spiritual luminaries such as the Dalai Lama, Rainer Maria Rilke, Krishna Das, the Buddha, and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Together we have explored texts such as the Gnostic Gospels, the Tao te Ching, and the Upanishads. Our exploration of Ganesh, the Hindu deity, was the inspiration for a UUCP trip to the Hindu Temple in Queens which is devoted to Ganesh. More recently, the account of my time in the South African wilderness with Sicelo Mbatha (the "Black Lion") has prompted us to create a circle to read together his book "Alive in the Wilderness."

Wherever possible and relevant, I love to include the input and offerings of some of my friends and colleagues from Cape Town in order to broaden UUCP's sense of worldwide interconnectedness. In these past 12 months I have included Hans Moolman for Pride, Ann Paton on Mindfulness, some of the young people from my Interfaith and Intercultural Youth Programme, and Rabbi Andrea Kuti.

A very special highlight last September was the screening of the SABC documentary "Compassion in Action", directed by my partner Sharon Farr, which featured the Youth Programme. This was especially important for me as I want the UUCP community to feel connected to and a part of the work that I do in Cape Town. I am an extension of the community in service to South Africa and beyond - an out-working of the African traditional principle of ubuntu: "I am because we are."

UUCP Annual Meeting 2025 Addendum

Special thanks must go to Arlene Holpp Scala and Deborah Pires not only for their wonderful leadership but also for the beautiful way they hold space at the end of each online service, offering valuable feedback and stimulating post-service conversation. Also, to Rev Sonia Ketchian for being a constant inspiration to me in her loving pastoral service to the community which she offers in countless life-giving ways.

by Rev Pippa Jones
UUCP Associate Minister
Member of Cape Town Interfaith Initiative