



The Spark

The Newsletter of
the Chalice Lighter
Program Committee
Fall 2020

The Central East Region (CER) Chalice Lighter Program works to encourage new congregations to form and existing congregations to grow in members as they work to increase connection, justice, and compassion within the congregation and surrounding community. Your donations through regular and special contributions support the expansion of UU congregations individually and in clusters. This edition of *The Spark* highlights two approaches to accomplishing the mission of the Program.

UU Congregation of Binghamton, NY Awarded \$40,000 Grant to Assist with Major Renovation



The CER Chalice Lighter Program Committee is pleased to announce the award of a \$40,000 grant to the UU Congregation of Binghamton, NY as a significant contribution to its \$1.7 million renovation project. New square footage will include a Children's Chapel and meditation room, meeting room, and expanded entries and office space. Most of the building is being gutted and repurposed to include: a commercial grade kitchen to use to provide meals for the hungry in the community; gender neutral bathrooms; more private office space for the minister; a larger social hall for meetings and gatherings of the congregation, cluster and outside groups; energy-efficient building systems that will reduce its carbon footprint and serve as a role model for other non-profits; improved accessibility for congregants and visitors; and entrances that are more welcoming and recognizable as a UU congregation in the community. The renovation is mission-driven, allowing for existing and new internal and external programs to flourish in this congregation of 161 members and 38 children. Here is a link to a virtual tour of their work in progress: <https://youtu.be/9YdoFGpTZzk>

Binghamton is a Welcoming Congregation and a Green Sanctuary, has a new Social Action model, and has begun Family Worship. It has a covenantal partnership with the UU Church of Cortland, 45 miles away. Both congregations share recorded services, annual spirituality retreats, musicians, and Binghamton's ministerial interns and Commissioned Lay Minister have led Sunday services and adult RE courses at Cortland.

Congratulations, Binghamton.

CER Chalice Lighter Program Committee Received Donation from Easton, MD UU Congregation

Since the merger of the four districts, the Region's Chalice Lighter Program Committee has focused on our core business—encouraging, reviewing, and approving grants to congregations and clusters for growth through improvements to buildings and facilities; additions to ministerial and other staffing resources; and innovative ideas that might not fall neatly into a specific category. Currently, we raise money for funding of grants through asking for a modest amount—\$20 three times a year to members and friends in the Region. Sometimes, we receive donations from individuals and congregations. In this edition of *The Spark*, we want to thank and acknowledge the gift of the UU Fellowship at Easton, MD in honor of the June 2019 installation of the Rev. Sue Browning as their settled minister. (Reverend Browning currently serves both the Easton Fellowship and the UUs of the Chester River in Chestertown, MD.) This gift is especially meaningful as it helps us to enhance our grantmaking program. Thank you, Easton! As many of us say in our local congregations, "Donations are greatly appreciated and gratefully accepted."