

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON
ANNUAL REPORTS
2022-2023



ANNUAL REPORTS 2022-2023

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Other reports and financial records may be available at the June meeting.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON

UCS Annual Meeting Warrant June 10th 2022

- I) Budget for next fiscal year
- II) Proposed UUA 8th principle to address racism
- III) New business –Discussion of Visioning Sessions

45 voting Attendees: Exceeds quorum requirement of 34
17 on zoom: / 28 in person attendance:

Article 1 - Approve Annual Meeting minutes for June 11 2021.

Highlights from the notes:

Article 1 -

Capital improvement projects that exceed \$10K will require church approval at the annual meeting or a specially called meeting of the congregation

Article 2 - Ministerial leave fund - establishes annual budget requirement of \$4K to cover expenses for substitute ministerial services when minister is on parental leave, sabbatical, or emergency leave.

Article 3 -

Article 4 - Proposal to reduce Endowment Committee from 7 to 5 members was denied.

Article 5 - Proposed fiscal 2021 budget plus amendment for a stipend increase of \$1400 for ministerial youth coordinator at offsite youth retreat was unanimously approved.

Article 2 - Accept Annual Report by Officers and Committees;

Highlights from President Rory's Report -

Outline of hybrid Services

Reverend Trisha Brennan worked as interim Reverend while Reverend Jolie was on parental leave. Member participation has suffered during the pandemic and even though attendance is half as what it has been the budget remains healthy and has been the same for the last 3 years.

Pressing issue is on how to arrange the schedule for programs

Reverend Jolie to receive her full fellowship with the UUA.

Attracting new families to join UCS is key;

Actively reaching out is the best way to connect with the community

Unanimously accepted

Article 3 - Motion to accept the 8th UU principle

Barbara read the 8th principle:

"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Motion and a second to adopt the principle

Discussion ensued

Vote:

Two abstentions

One no vote

All others yes

Motion passes

(Continued on page 5)

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(Continued from page 4)

Article 4 - Approving the 2022 Budget

2021 Review: Expenses and Pledges are both coming in in line and relatively equal to each - \$357K

2022 we're continuing to grow, the Board is proposing a budget with a modest increase \$362K - \$3K planned deficit (similar to last year).

Important note: the budget is set at 95% of pledges and historically pledges come in at or above 100%.

A highlight of this year's budget are merit and living increases for Professional staff compensation particularly in light of recent of inflationary pressures

Move and seconded to accept the proposed budget for next year

Additional discussion:

Karen has done a WONDERFUL job as Treasurer

Reverend Jolie's installation not in current budget

How do we get money in; additional funds could be requested of the BoT if it was something larger than what could be handled with the discretionary funds

Concerns over inflation - buildings and grounds has increases based on expected inflation

Discussion for expansion in clubs

Aim 2 Proposal should be reviewed in the new year, includes needed audio/video system upgrades as well as upgrades to the building.

Budget Unanimously passed

Article 5 - Approving Nominating Slate

Valerie asked that given her new role as President that her name be removed from the Endowment committee

Patty Fitzgerald agreed to fill an open position on that committee

Bi-laws calls for 7 Board Members and there are two open slots.

Ex-Officio committee is suppose to be a Finance Committee members

BoT to review the structure of the committee to fill vacancies

Nominating Slate was unanimous approved,

Moved and accepted with modification that Patty Fitzgerald will take the place of Valerie White

Article 6 - New Business

Visioning; How are we evolving

Valerie White Thanks the congregation

Chris Raskin Thanks outgoing BoT members - Rory and Karen

Lauren Grasso - Father's Day Picnic sign up for salad, side, dessert;

Shout out of Christina and Christine for RE program - online form in annual report for link to sign up

Is their a tribute planned for Mel

Meeting adjourned 8.48pm

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Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees shared an in person retreat and continued to hold monthly board meetings by Zoom. We've dealt with issues large and small: from "the sky is falling" (read sanctuary ceiling) and "We have to propose a deficit budget" to "Can we pay part of the cost of a Tai Chi instructor?" Board members are dedicated, hardworking, mutually supportive and good-natured; I've enjoyed working with them as I complete the first year of my fourth term as President! We say farewell to Gautam Trivedi as he completes his term and thank him for his service.

Valerie White, President

Treasurer's Report for the 2022-20223 Church Year

2022-2023 has been a year of uncertainty for many families due to inflation and fears of recession. Our books are not yet closed for the year, but as of mid-May we have received 77% of our operating pledges and 76% of our overall revenue projections. We anticipate that by the close of the fiscal year, we should receive 95% or more of our remaining pledges.

It is not surprising that expenses have increased in many areas. Salaries are fixed for the year, but many "big ticket" items have increased dramatically. For example, insurance is \$1,600 over budget, B&G has seen price increases in many services, and health insurance will be \$6,000 over budget this year.

Due to this unanticipated rise in expenses, we will be over budget for this year. We anticipate that UCS will be over budget by \$3,000-\$4,000 out of an overall operating budget of \$360,000.

The larger concern for next year is that expenses continue to rise while operating pledges are expected to remain flat. The proposed 2023-2024 budget includes a modest 2% cost of living adjustment for our staff, along with increased expenses across the board. As an example, the cost of health insurance has risen from \$12,518 to \$20,376 in two years, while pledged revenue has been flat for two years.

For 2023-2024, we are anticipating overall expenses of \$386,000. When combined with a small increase in pledged revenue, this means that we will run an estimated budget deficit of \$29,000 for 2023-2024.

UCS does have healthy reserves, and in conversations with the UUA it has become clear that these types of budget deficits have become more common over the last two years due to economic pressures. However, in the long term, budget deficits will not be sustainable and UCS needs to increase pledged and non-pledged income accordingly to maintain current levels of staffing and services.

2022-2023 Summary Highlights

- Operating pledges and total income should come in within 95% of projection
- Event rentals have generated \$3850 in income versus a \$1000 in projection
- General insurance will be \$1,500 over budget, health insurance \$6,000 over budget
- Total B&G expenses will be within 5% of estimates (nice work!)
- Increased security across all of our accounts with 2 factor authentication
- Improved processes around automated bill payment

Committee Members

David Nichamoff—Treasurer
Karen Zelevinsky
Peter Raskin

Annual Report of the Minister

It has been a year of reconnection and renewal here at the Unitarian Church of Sharon. Newcomers of all ages have been visiting us for Sunday worship almost every week, which is expected in the life of a congregation under normal circumstances, but there was something of a lull for us during Covid. Happily, many of our newcomers have stuck around, attending worship regularly, participating in RE, enjoying church events, joining committees, and joining as members. Many of our existing members and friends have delighted in reconnecting with one another after the pandemic kept us apart in many ways since 2020.

For the first time since I began as your minister, I am reflecting back on a year that was not primarily marked by Covid-19. The pandemic and its aftermath continue to impact our lives and the life of our congregation, but there have been significant shifts in the nature and scale of those impacts. Vaccines, boosters, treatments, testing, use of masks as needed, and other interventions have made it more possible to live with Covid-19 in our midst, though of course many are still significantly impacted, particularly people who are immunocompromised. Here at church, for the first time since March 2020, we made it through an entire church year without any interruptions to our in-person gatherings. Our Safe Reopen Task Force made the decision to disband, after almost three years of dedicated service in guiding the church's Covid response, policies, and procedures to reduce risks for our membership. They left us in good shape to follow public health recommendations of the town, state, and CDC as needed, and we thank them for all they did to keep us operating as safely as possible during such unprecedented times.

We have a wonderful and dedicated staff here at UCS. Our Interim Director of Religious Education, Christine Bulman, completed three years of interim work with us, helping our program reflect, regrow, and envision what's next. As we embarked on a process to search for a settled DRE, we discovered we had one right in our midst. Our Search Team, Board, Personnel Committee, RE Committee, and our congregation as a whole are excited to welcome Christine as our settled DRE. Our church is also well-served by our Congregational Administrator, De'En Tarkpor, our Youth Ministry Coordinator Caroline Dixon who grew up in our congregation and has just completed her first year on staff, our Music Director Mel Springer, our Adult Choir Director Jennifer Spencer, our Children's Choir Director Forbesy Russell, our Lead Childcare Provider Mary Baker, and our Custodian Maria DiBattista. We also welcomed Nancy Drake Simpson to our staff as Assistant Childcare Provider. Thank you all for your hard work in service of our congregation.

We had a surprising development in our Sanctuary this fall when several members noticed that the ceiling appeared to be collapsing. The insurance inspector verified that, yes, the structure that holds the ceiling in place had indeed cracked. We pivoted like only a congregation who has heartily weathered multiple years of a global pandemic can, and set up a temporary worship space in Program A/B. We held services there from mid-October through the end of November. Many thanks to Christine and our RE program for their flexibility as our worship services took over their primary classroom space! Once the ceiling was stabilized, we returned to our Sanctuary in December. Many thanks to Rory McGregor for captaining this effort. The ceiling still needs repair, a topic which I hope we take on soon as part of a long-awaited capital campaign, AIM II.

Each year, I work with our Board of Trustees to set my goals for the church year. These are areas of particular focus in addition to the baseline tasks of the minister: worship and rites of passage, pastoral care, supervising and supporting staff, working with committees and lay leaders, social justice witness in the public square, and serving our larger UU faith. This year my goals were: support the integration of our 8th Principle into our congregation,

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offer new spiritual enrichment for adults such as Adult RE and a support group, and to lead the search team for our settled DRE. Towards the first goal, I supported our Anti-Racism Working Group in offering educational opportunities such as a three-part screening of the PBS documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, and regular coffee hour conversations which came to be called “Alco Convos.” The more we challenge ourselves to understand and uproot oppression from within ourselves and our institution, the more we will grow our souls, and I remain committed to bringing this work to life here at UCS. Towards my second goal, I convened a Care-giver Support Group and continue to host its monthly meetings, and I offered Adult RE on Transcendentalism and a book study on *Zealot* by Reza Aslan. Our DRE search team included Rebecca Kinraide, Beth McGregor, Alisha Sarang-Sieminski, Charlotte Dussault, and Nick Giammaria. Thank you all for your input and participation. It was a pleasure working with you, and I think we got a pretty great result!

We tried a few new things in worship this year. In partnership with our Worship Committee, I shortened our initial welcome script and shifted its tone slightly to set a more worshipful mood. Now we say the words of our covenant as we light our chalice, underscoring the ritual significance of both of those elements. I also added Spirit of Life, considered by many to be one of our most beloved UU hymns, to be sung each week in preparation for Joys and Concerns. And to further center and ground us before we are invited to share our Joys and Concerns, I have been leading a moment of meditation. To truly speak from our hearts during Joys and Concerns can bring us together in a moment of connection, and it is important that we do not use this time for simple announcements.

There are so many lay leaders who make the magic happen here at UCS, and all on a volunteer basis during a time in our culture when they tell us volunteerism is “down” across the board. Many of our long-timers report feeling tired and many of our newcomers or newer-comers report feeling overwhelmed or overbooked. What to do? We are called to meet in the middle, adapt as needed, support one another, and to celebrate how we do, actually, show up for our congregation week after week. I know there are many demands on everyone’s time, so I am deeply grateful to everyone who helps out in all ways, small and large. Thank you to everyone who chairs our committees, serves on committees, subcommittees and Task Forces, maintains our building and grounds, serves on our Board, makes coffee, greets, brings flowers, and so on and so on.

I continued my active participation in the Sharon Interfaith Clergy Alliance and I joined the Leadership Council of my local chapter of the UU Ministers Association. These collegial connections are an important part of my continued growth in ministry. I will attend General Assembly in person in Pittsburgh this year, along with our four delegates who will be a mixture of virtual and in-person attendees: Gare Reid, Barbara Nelkin-Rose, Beth McGregor, and Tom D’Avanzo.

We mourned the death of Jim Mullin this year, a former President of our congregation and beloved member of this community. He died on December 25, 2022 and we held a memorial and celebration of life here for him on January 6, 2023. We continue to miss him and added plaques in his memory to the wooden candle troughs he crafted for us.

To serve as your minister is a constant source of joy and a blessing in my life. I am continually moved by your care for one another, openness to change, and conviction that we can be part of the work to make the world a better place.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Jolie Olivetti

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AIM II

There was no AIM II activity this church year.

Beyond Our Walls Committee

The Beyond Our Walls Committee is tasked with overseeing and fostering relationships within Unitarian Universalism, in collaboration with our minister. These include:

- (1) The Five Points Cluster of local UU congregations (Canton, North Easton, Foxboro, Stoughton, Sharon and Brockton)
- (2) Our Unitarian Partner Church in Gyulakuta, Romania
- (3) The Unitarian Universalist Association, including the New England Region and UUA national headquarters in Boston.

Chair: Jim Mullin (until his death this year)

Members: Beth McGregor (acting chair), Elaine Price, Colleen Tuck, Valerie White, Barbara Nelkin-Rose.

The committee has been relatively inactive this year, particularly since the illness and death of chair Jim Mullin. We would welcome new members and greater activity, and know we need to share information more effectively.

Five Points Cluster: Our primary activity has been engaging with the Five Points Cluster of neighboring congregations, sharing ideas and resources, and organizing shared worship services, workshops, and meetings. One or more of us attend bimonthly Cluster meetings of representatives of the congregations. While the Cluster's activities have been reduced in recent years by the pandemic, which halted almost all in-person gatherings, and the related closing of the monthly Community Closet at the Brockton church, which the congregations had all contributed to staffing and running, the Cluster remains active and useful. For instance, the Canton congregation has shared its collection of PDF files to print Wayside Pulpit signs, and we've been invited to take part in several workshops and book discussions held by other congregations. Shared Cluster worship services are usually offered (in person and online) on holiday weekends when some congregations may not hold their own services. A few of us participated in Stoughton's delightful FEAST service on New Year's Day, and we hosted guests from other Cluster congregations at our service on Feb. 19, Presidents' Day weekend. We're invited to North Easton on May 28 for a special Memorial Day service. Several of us participated in a March potluck dinner and discussion session on the proposed revisions to Article II of the UUA Bylaws (the UUA Purposes and Principles) hosted by First Parish Stoughton.

Partner Church: We have a longstanding relationship, over 30 years, with a small, struggling Unitarian congregation in Gyulakuta (Fintinele) Romania. They are one of many historic Hungarian-speaking congregations in Transylvania, once an independent country and the original home of Unitarianism in the 1500s, then subsumed by Hungary, and after World War I by Romania, where as an ethnic and religious minority they face discrimination and limited opportunities. Colleen Tuck and Rev. Jolie have been our main liaisons to their minister (who serves two larger congregations as well) and their members. Each year we send funds to help pay for an accompanist for their once-a-month services and a subscription for each family to the regional Unitarian magazine. We have been a longtime member of the UU Partner Church Council and followed its decision to dissolve and turn over to the UUA International Resources Office the functions we've used, like transfer of funds to our partner.

Unitarian Universalist Association: Along with Rev. Jolie, we have tried to keep the congregation informed about denominational activities and options for participating in governance, particularly about the proposed changes to the UUA Bylaws being considered at General Assembly this year and next. If there is sufficient interest, we can hold another meeting about that issue. So far Rev. Jolie, Tom D'Avanzo, Beth McGregor and Barbara Nelkin-Rose have committed to serve as our congregation's delegates to GA this year on June 22-26 in Pittsburgh or online; there is still one delegate slot open.

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Buildings and Grounds

Well, we start this report off with the biggest event of the year, namely the sanctuary ceiling. During a service this winter a look at the ceiling over the piano raised the question "Does that look right? The ceiling is falling!!!" Upon investigation our eyes did not deceive us. In fact, a couple of supports in the attic failed and yes, the ceiling was beginning to fall. Fortunately, we were able to get a very quick response from a contractor who was able to stabilize it. Only a few weeks of worship needed to be held in A/B. Pulling it back up will be part of AIM 2.

This was a year for pigeons which found homes in our belfry. One may have noticed their droppings on the front stairs. As we were deciding the best course of action it was noticed that a hawk had started to hunt in the area. Suddenly no more pigeons. And an avoided cost.

We finally have upgraded the thermostat in the Vestry. With remote access to it we will be better able to schedule occupied setpoints.

And finally, the dumpster corral gave out. We now have a new, working corral.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee would like to thank everyone as we transitioned to post pandemic operation. We appreciate the concerned but positive attitude everyone had as we 2 years ago transitioned in and now out of that difficult period.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lindsay Drisko, Chair
Gare Reid
Rory McGregor
Jack Armstrong
Colleen Tuck
Wilbur Edwards
Doug Wilbur
Andrew Plumridge
Courtney Hopkins
Ellen Schoenfeld Beeks
Kate Parker O'Toole
Nolan Howard
Sean Bisson Donahue
Alex Mathews

B&G: The Meetinghouse Memorial Garden

The concept of the Memorial Garden was approved by the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Church of Sharon.

Until recently the Committee has had few meetings or members since 2006, but has been lovingly cared for by Susan Olsen Drisko and Jean Zaniwski and others over many years. During a "Coffee in the Garden" last spring, several people expressed interest in becoming new members.

Around 2000, Garden Policies were created: Purpose, Administration of the Garden, Conditions for Participation in the Garden, Design and Creation of the Garden and Reporting. These guiding policies were set over 22 years ago.

Thank you to Susie Grey, a founding member and master of attention to detail. Over the years we've had significant changes: The Master Plan was put on hold by the potential renovation of the Sanctuary (AIM II) which would most likely affect plantings near the building. And more recently, the landscape has shifted with the loss of 3 mature trees. The Purpose of the Garden has not shifted but the newly assembled committee is examining all guidelines.

The Purpose of the MHMG as stated in its Policies:

"The Meetinghouse Memorial Garden shall be dedicated to serve as a place of loving memory and peace. It shall provide:

A walk of beauty at all seasons with color, texture and fragrance.

A place of remembrance

A place to feel connected to nature with benches for viewing and reflecting.

Shrubs that provide food for birds."

The revitalization of the committee allows us to examine the past as we move into the future. New members according to the Policy have been named by the Board of Trustees.

As usual, and very importantly, if any one wishes to help water/weed during the summer, please contact any of us.

Committee Members

Ellen Schoenfeld-Beeks, Chair

Susan Olson Drisko, Susan Edinger, Courtney Hopkins, Alison Reid,

Jean Zaniwski

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Caring Committee

Caring Committee

The Caring Committee of the UCS, working closely with the minister, exists to provide thoughtful attention and assistance to our members and friends with the understanding that we all need support at times in our lives. The Caring Committee works in concert with Rev. Jolie Olivetti throughout the year to identify members/friends in need of support. Once these members/friends are identified, the group leads the effort to connect members in need with volunteers who can assist with driving needs, visits and other types of communication, as well as food drop-off/deliveries. The committee also hosts a Memory Tea for the community to share recent losses and maintains a small food share box to meet immediate needs related to food insecurity in our community.

The Caring Committee requests for assistance are sent out to the broader volunteer base via phone, e-mail and/or the UCS list-serve. This volunteer list consists of church members and friends who may be called upon to help others as they are able at a specific time of need. This list is continuously updated – in the last year, announcements were made in church, a notice was put in The Chalice and a request was sent via the church's social email group to collect new volunteer information.

The committee meets monthly to review what members or friends may be in need of some kind of assistance or what programs or groups might be of interest to our community.

Caring Committee Covenant:

Our group focuses on facilitating confidential (as appropriate) support for members and friends in need, connecting individuals to support wherever this connection can facilitate growth and success for the individuals involved.

Membership Guidelines:

To respect the confidentiality of the members in need and provide thoughtful and consistent support, the Caring Committee requests that members agree to serve a minimum term of two (2) years and attend 80% of monthly meetings (held during the church year, not summers) over this period.

Members agree to maintain all information in confidence outside of the monthly meetings, unless the individuals receiving support have explicitly stated that they either: 1. Do not want this information kept confidential, 2. Have publicly notified the church members (such as via Joys and Concerns) of an issue and/or 3. Asked specifically for the Committee to notify the community of their situation. Even with these requests for sharing information, discussions held in the committee itself are confidential and not to be shared with non-members, unless the group has explicitly stated otherwise.

All documentation (such as meeting agendas) with individual names will be kept confidential and appropriately disposed of (so that others cannot read this information) after each meeting/event.

Individuals who are interested in supporting the Committee but are not able to commit to the timelines above may be offered special projects (outside of the monthly meeting) based on the needs of the committee/church members.

Members can serve multiple terms – requests to continue or retire from the committee are requested by the end of April so that the Chair and/or Co-Chair have time to recruit new members for the following year, if needed.

Membership is capped at eight (8) members unless the committee agrees that there is value in expanding beyond this number.

Leaders (Chair and/or Co-Chair) serve in two-year (2) terms. Existing members of the committee are all eligible to request the role of Chair. An individual must first serve at least one two-year (2) term to qualify for Chair and/or Co-Chair.

Membership Process:

1. Potential committee members can contact any current member of the Caring Committee to begin the membership process discussion.
2. A minimum of two current committee members will sit down in-person with the potential member to discuss the guidelines (see section called "Membership Guidelines").
3. If the person applying agrees to the guidelines and there is space in the committee, the

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two interviewing members can bring the nomination to the rest of the committee for a discussion during a regularly-scheduled monthly meeting.

4. If the committee agrees that this person should join, they will be invited to the subsequent meetings and begin their term.

Church Community Integration:

The Caring Committee will follow the church childcare policy (for any event that requires childcare) and other appropriate guidelines/rules such as the sustainability initiatives around use of the kitchen. These policies will be referenced in the appropriate committee documentation (so that the Caring Committee will follow the most up-to-date version).

Committee Members

Rev. Jolie

Ivy Krull - chair

Joyce Bramhall

Evelynne Swagerty

Peggy Moran

Rumni Saha

Jean Zaniwski

Elizabeth Maranzano

Choir: Adult Choir and Children's Choir

Children's Choir

We're back! We have had a great year—up to 12 children! The kids are lively, creative and enthusiastic to perform a wide range of songs, some of which we compose and choreograph ourselves.

Forbesy Russell

Adult Choir

Choir report: Reunited and it feels so good! It was wonderful to reunite, even though some of us continued to mask. The adult choir revisited some old favorites and learned some new music. We rejoiced in presenting our annual Solstice Service. We still miss Linden Fingerson and Dan Hughes and would welcome new members.

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Committee on Ministry

The UCS Committee on Ministry (COM) was originally formed to assist Rev. Jolie in the evaluation process she had to go through to obtain Full Fellowship as a UUA minister. Once this was completed the committee met with Rev. Jolie to determine possible next steps, including the possibility of disbanding. After some discussion about other possible roles, we agreed with a suggestion by Rev. Jolie to focus on assessing the ministry of the church, specifically by doing a collaborative assessment of each UCS committee.

The COM then spent time developing the process we would use to do these assessments, emphasizing that they had to be done in full cooperation with the Committee to be assessed. The purpose of the assessments would be to identify the assessed committee's strengths as well as areas where change might be needed.

The first committee to go through this process was the Social Justice Committee which was very supportive of this process. The assessment process included interviews with SJC members and the Chair, as well as a survey of the Congregation. The final report took longer than expected but was completed earlier this year, and the SJC will review its findings and recommendations during a retreat later this year.

Meanwhile, the COM will do its own self assessment concerning the process used for the SJC assessment. We are also reaching out to other UCS committees to determine their level of interest in undergoing a cooperative assessment for their benefit.

Members are Barbara Nelkin-Rose, Mia Joiner-Moore, David Slater, Allison Reid and Tom D'Avanzo (chair). Rev Jolie participates in COM meetings as her schedule allows.

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Endowment Committee

The current task of the endowment committee is to make members aware of the possibility of contributing to the endowment by including the endowment fund in their estate plan. When the monies in the endowment reach \$50,000 the committee will have the additional responsibility of deciding with the board of trustees about whether and how to spend the interest from the endowment to benefit the church. Currently the fund has \$25794.66.

This year we had a cottage meeting on the endowment on November 12, after a testimonial on the endowment the week before. We also developed a plaque that will recognize those members who intend to contribute to the endowment fund. The plaque will be in the form of a paper document in a picture frame so that has additional members indicate their intention new names can be added. The plaque has been approved by the board of trustees and what remains to do is to send a letter to the membership of the church asking who intends to contribute, usually by including the church their estate plans. After is done we will print the document with those names on it and place it where the board of trustees has suggested, near the AIM 1 plaque.

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Fellowship Committee

Mission Statement

The focus of the Fellowship Committee is to provide support to church members and committees as they create activities and programs as well as helping bring new programs to life to meet the needs of the community. We strive to strengthen current programs and build new avenues of connection for church members and friends of all age groups with diverse interests. We also try to integrate newer members and friends into the life of the congregation through our activities.

Overview Summary

Fellowship meetings were conducted mostly virtually for convenience. However, in-person meetings did take place if there were identified tasks to be completed, such as supporting preparation for the yard sale and making a visual display for the Open House. Fellowship continued to oversee the church's social media accounts and utilized this platform to advertise upcoming events. This year allowed for a greater number of potlucks and social gatherings to occur, including the popular Bean Supper. The committee worked together to produce a "how to" video for hosting coffee hour in hopes of getting more folks involved. Fellowship's fire pit had another successful winter, keeping storytellers warm at the Tiny Love Bonfire event. Fellowship also launched a new all ages activity "Craft and hang". This provided creative, art based entertainment during social events and coffee hour.

Committee Members

Lauren Grasso -- Co-chair
Sadie Dussault -- Co-chair
Patty Fitzgerald
Susan Edinger
Chloe Kline
Kate Barber
Ken Zienewski
Jean Fox
Rev. Jolie Olivetti
Gautum Trivedi - Board Liaison

Information Technology (IT) Committee

Information Technology (IT) and Website Committees

The **IT committee** is called upon to address computer and/or telephone-related issues that come up sporadically throughout the year. Normally, these issues can be resolved remotely but sometimes an issue requires someone to be on-site to fix the problem.

The **Zoom task force** was established in 2020 to create and maintain Zoom accounts to support the needs of the UCS community during the COVID-19 emergency. These Zoom accounts are being shared to limit the cost associated with this new situation that we continue to find ourselves in.

The Zoom task force works with Rev. Jolie, Christine Bulman, the Worship Coordinators, and guest speakers to create slide decks before each Sunday service. The Zoom task force then live-streams the Sunday services using a new camera purchased in 2023 that enhances the Zoom experience for participants. Slides - including hymn lyrics - are displayed and the chat feature is used to supply supplemental information. There is also someone assigned to enforce a waiting room which is monitored to limit any disruptive behavior.

The **Website committee**, along with the IT committee, is responsible for keeping the UUSharon.org website content and components up to date. This is accomplished through updates submitted or implemented by committees for their webpages and updates made by the website committee for front page and general content revisions (such as new board members and committee chairs each June). De'En Tarkpor, the UCS Congregational Administrator, updates the Order of Service page weekly and the minister's blog and upcoming worship service information each month. De'En also makes sure the banner on the home page, the Worship Services page, and the Order of Service page each have the correct information/link so participants can easily joining the hybrid Sunday services through Zoom. The Zoom task force records, edits and posts the audio of weekly sermons to uusharon.org/worship/sermons.

Julie Armstrong is the **UCS calendar facilitator** and maintains the calendar to ensure Zoom accounts are assigned for remote and hybrid events and ensures conflicts are avoided in any physical spaces that are reserved.

Hardware

We have been fortunate to have received good quality donated computers that continue to serve us well. However, they are getting older and are being replaced as needed.

Software

Quick-Books is being used for accounting and a platform called Breeze now handles Membership, Stewardship, and Religious Education requirements. The congregation is encouraged to create a Breeze account to see other congregants' profiles as well as to maintain their own. The platform serves as your Membership Directory.

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As a non-profit, UCS continues to get free website hosting from DreamHost. Both the main site, UUSharon.org, and the 'Not Just Another Coffeehouse' website, notjustanothercoffeehouse.org, are hosted there along with email accounts and discussion/distribution lists supporting those domains. MailChimp is used to send out UCS announcements to the community. For informal discussion, sign-up at <https://www.uusharon.org/keep-in-touch/email-lists/> to get updates from fellow congregants who joined the 'Social' discussion list.

IT and Website Committee Members

Jeff Rose; Chair, Julie Armstrong; Calendar Facilitator.

Zoom task force Members

Glenn Rivard, Edele Panessidi, Jonathan Slavin, Christian Roulleau, Jack Armstrong, Chuck Bordman, Jan Sargent-Tracy, and Jeff Rose.

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Membership Committee

The Membership Committee for 2022-23 continued its efforts to encourage growth and to help newcomers deepen their involvement in the Unitarian Church of Sharon.

Outreach efforts

At each week's services, a Membership representative was positioned in the lobby to welcome visitors, answering questions and inviting a deeper conversation. We provided a printed form that would allow them to share contact information, request a conversation with the minister and/or RE director, and sign up for the church's e-mailed newsletters and updates. The after-service coffee hour was offered as an opportunity for casual conversations and for introductions to members of the UCS community with similar interests. The committee representative would send a follow-up note via post card or e-mail to reinforce the connection.

To appeal to the larger community, the committee installed an eye-catching banner on the fence facing North Main Street and Post Office Square. Proclaiming "Deeds not Creeds" as a reflection of a foundational UU philosophy, the banner also listed service times and the church's website.

Adjusting to new normal

The transition from hybrid to largely in-person services provided challenges for newcomers, but the committee was able to maintain contact with a number of families interested in our congregation. We also conducted several induction ceremonies during Sunday services for individuals and families who completed a formal membership application and were accepted by the board of trustees.

Breeze directory

The committee encouraged wider use of the church's new Breeze database system, which serves as an interactive directory allowing easy access to contact information for the congregation's members and friends, among other features. By logging into the system, individuals can review and update their shared listing as well as confidential details, such as pledge history.

Gains and losses

The arrival of new members continued even as a number of longtime members departed in the last year. As of May 20, 2023, committee records showed the UCS with 158 adult members, compared with 171 in spring 2022, as well as 77 friends of the congregation.

Committee members

Co-chairs Jean Zaniewski and Terry Fitzgerald are joined by Elaine Price, Kathy Farrell, Peggy Moran, and Rumni Saha.

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Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is responsible for presenting the slate of officers for the upcoming fiscal year which is found in the Warrant for the Annual Congregational Meeting of the Unitarian Church of Sharon.

For the 2023-2024 slate, we were responsible for identifying candidates for 3 positions on the Board of Trustees – Clerk and two Trustees-at-Large. In addition, we are responsible for identifying individuals to serve on the Endowment Committee, as well as the Nominating Committee.

In addition, as requested by the Board of Trustees, we assist in identifying candidates for other roles in the congregation as needed.

The following Nominations for the 2023-2024 fiscal year will be presented at the annual meeting:

Board of Trustees

We are grateful to Valerie White for her leadership this past year as President of the Board of Trustees. Valerie will be continuing her term for one more year.

We are also grateful to Chris Raskin, who will continue her term as Vice President of the Board.

We are happy to announce that Courtney Hopkins will serve a new term as Clerk. We thank Courtney for her continued service.

We are grateful to David Nichamoff who will continue for one more year as Treasurer.

Jon Slavin has agreed to serve another term as Trustee-at-Large on the Board. We thank Jon for his continued service.

Rebecca Kinraide continues her term as a Trustee-at-Large on the Board. We thank Rebecca for her service on the Board and her continued support of the Religious Education Committee in her liaison role. We are happy to nominate Kim Miller to a new term as a Trustee-at-Large on the Board. Kim and her family have been members of the Unitarian Church of Sharon since 2012. Kim previously served on the Worship Committee. We are grateful for Kim's willingness to serve and are excited to have her join the Board of Trustees.

We are grateful to Gautam Trivedi, who completed a full term as a Trustee-at-Large, as well as a one-year term to fill David Nichamoff's vacated position when he took on the role of Treasurer. We thank Gautam for his years of service on the Board.

Endowment Committee

We appreciate the service of David Schoenfeld, who served as Chair of the committee and completed that service. We are grateful for his willingness to serve a new term as a committee member.

Nominating Committee

We are excited to have a new team for our Nominating Committee. We welcome Elizabeth Maranzano to the Nominating Committee as incoming Chair. Elizabeth and her family joined UCS in 2011. She has taught RE for many years, and joined the Caring Committee this Spring. She also served on the Safe Reopening Task Force during the pandemic. We are grateful to have her serve on the Nominating Committee.

Meg Dussault is joining the committee to serve a new term. Meg and her family joined UCS in 2013. She has been involved in RE as a Grade 6-8 and Grade 1-2 teacher for OWL. Meg has also served on the Worship Committee and was Co-Chair for a year. She has served as a lay minister on a few occasions.

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We welcome Meg to the committee and thank her for serving in this role.

We are happy to have Elaine Price join the Nominating Committee to serve the remainder of a vacated term. Elaine has been a member of UCS since 2010, and part of the Membership Committee since 2011. She is also on the Five Points Cluster Committee. We thank her for her willingness to serve.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank those who have served their terms and given so much time and energy to the church. We mourn the loss and honor the long term service of Jim Mullin, who was serving on the Endowment Committee. We are deeply grateful for his contributions to our church.

We continue to work to locate additional members for the Endowment Committee. We welcome members who are interested in serving on this committee. We are excited to have a new slate of members for the Nominating Committee. We are very grateful to Julie Armstrong who stepped up to help fill vacated positions and support the transition.

Respectfully Submitted, Nominating Committee
Interim Nominating Committee Members
Susan Nichamoff
Julie Armstrong

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee's purpose is to:

- Ensure that the UCS follows best practices for employees, as established legally and guided by UUA recommendations, in consultation with the minister, and guided by UUA recommendations,
- Recommend annual salary increases for all employees to the Board of Trustees,
- Review and update position descriptions and salary ranges, and
- Recommend personnel policy changes to the Board of Trustees

The Committee approved recommended changes to the DRE job description based on recommendations from the RE Committee. The Personnel Committee also approved of a recommended salary range for the DRE position, based on new UUA guidelines.

After review of the new UUA compensation guidelines, which placed the Unitarian Church of Sharon in a new geo index that was more expensive than previously and with concern about inflation, recommended significant salary increases for most staff to bring their compensation into the new UUA ranges. The resulting increase in the budget was not supported in the results of the Stewardship Campaign. The Personnel Committee supports the Board of Trustees changes to the compensation plan, with a 2% cost of living increase for staff and an 8.5% increase of the DRE position, bringing that position to the UUA recommended minimum. It should be noted that our salary plan for next year results in the Minister's compensation being below the UUA recommended minimum.

Committee Members

Susan Olson Drisko (Chair), Edele Panessidi, Marcia Tranavitch, and Colleen Tuck.

Religious Education Committee

Registration & Attendance

48 individuals, 27 families served (20 families actually registered)

Nursery/Early Childhood (ages birth-4): Consistently served one child with up to 3 in attendance occasionally.

SpiritPlay: 23 children (grade 5 and under) attended Sunday morning RE with average attendance of 12.

Crossing Paths: 7 youth grades 5-8 with an average attendance of 4

Coming of Age: 6 youth, 6 mentors

SYG: 7 youth with 2-4 in attendance at meetings

JYFG: 2 events, one was attended by 1, the other was attended by 5

The overall numbers are consistent with last year though the decrease in high-school families (6 seniors graduated last year) was replaced by an increase in elementary-aged families (3 new families joined this year and 4 others newly participated in programs).

Worship

- Family Service Survey: it is an important feature of church life for families that they would like to see remain in place.
- As a result of RE visioning this spring, at the request of families, RE content will be tied to family worship content moving forward.
- Well-attended this year, including an increase due to a thematic tie-in with the interfaith exploration that the middle-school class did this year.
- Two family services per month were devoted to: Unitarian Universalism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, explore core tenets as well as comparing and contrasting them to Unitarian Universalism.
- Traditional "Revels" holiday service and this year brought back the shadow puppet theater. Although we simplified the shadow puppet production over years' past, it remained a bit of a heavy lift for all (children included!) This is not to say we wouldn't do it again, but we need to continue to find ways for children to be involved and empowered in presenting a holiday delight for the congregation that are manageable!
- Children's Choir continues to be a presence in worship services with several new children joining this year! Children's Choir often coordinates with RE/Worship content.

Curricula/Programming

- SpiritPlay: (grade 5 and under) 2-4 volunteers trained in the SpiritPlay model

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which we launched at the beginning of the year. This model includes a story using props followed by wondering questions and free-choice time. It is within held in a ritual flow of the morning including opening/closing circles.

- We did not have the people power to create the stories and props weekly (it works much better if you have them already at your disposal!)
- Noted throughout the fall that opening circle and story followed by the 30 minute family service is a lot of sitting for children, so we played with the structure of the morning all year..
- The ritual flow of the morning was appreciated by the children as was the choice-time. In evaluating the program at the end of the year, it was clear that choice is more important to the children than we realized.
- Multi-age group was overall beneficial although had its pros and cons. Next year, we will do a hybrid of age segregation (opening circle and age-appropriate activity) and mixed aged (choice time).
- Volunteers: Mary Baker (staff), Barabara Nelkin-Rose, Kristen Hoemke, Pam Baker-Webber, Sadie Dussault, Jenny Theiler, Suha Roustom
- Crossing Paths: Although the class was small with an average attendance of 4, it was rich and enjoyed by parents as well as the lead facilitators, especially the interfaith visits.
- This curriculum includes 11 religions. We had time to cover 6.
- Volunteers: Mike Quinn, Christian Roulleau with parent assistants: Valerie Vigo-da, Alena Lieto-Trivedi, Maria Ikonitskey, Rebecca Kinraide
- Coming of Age: Six 9th and 10th graders completed the Coming of Age program.
- We departed from the topic format used for the past decade or so; a small sub-committee choosing new topics. Sessions with the Minister/DRE/Youth Coordinator and Mentors were newly created by the staff team.
- Mentor sessions: small-group-ministry style 1 evening/month.
- Culminated in a CoA worship service.
- Staff/Volunteers: Jolie Olivetti, Christine Bulman, Caroline Dixon, Mentors: Glenn Rivard, Susan Mooney, Gare Reid, Lauren Grasso, Margaret Berges, Peter Raskin
- SYG: See Youth Ministry Report. Youth Advisors: Jon Slavin, Janet Schmidt,

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- SYG: See Youth Ministry Report. Youth Advisors: Jon Slavin, Janet Schmidt, Lauren Grasso, Forbesy Russel, Rory McGregor, Caroline Dixon
- JYFG: See Youth Ministry Report

Staffing

- Caroline Dixon began working at UCS as the Youth Ministry Coordinator in August this year.
- Nancy Drake-Simpson was hired as a Nursery Assistant this year.
- Mary Baker continued to work on Sunday mornings as an assistant to the RE program. She trained in SpiritPlay, set up the classroom weekly, assisted in class and with Revels. This was possible up until there was a regularly attending toddler in the nursery and she was needed upstairs. Mary has been indispensable in this capacity and very helpful in evaluating the needs of the children in relation to the physical space and activities and supports we offer.

Interim Work:

The developmental tasks of interim time:

- Coming to terms with history
- Formal sessions in 2021 and 2023
- Throughout the interim time Christine regularly reflected this back when she heard it.
- Developing your unique identity as a program
- [Values/Vision doc](#) as a result of formal sessions
- Renewing linkages with UUA
 - Christine maintained a presence in UUA networking events and LREDA membership representing UCS
 - Christine regularly reported on national trends and practices in RE
- Renewing the vision and looking to the future
 - Formal sessions in 2023 resulting in a further refinement of the RE model that

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includes project-based, hands-on approach, youth agency, integration with family worship, and newly envisioned volunteer schedules for next year.

- There is an acknowledgement that the RE program is vital and important to the life of the church and to families, children and youth, *while at the same time, it can be a challenge to staff and support the RE program with volunteers. There is a strong desire among stakeholders to continue to find way to make RE happen that are sustainable, joyful and spiritually meaningful for volunteers.*

As this interim period now draws to a close, we can confidently say that we accomplished the tasks that are recommended by the UUA.

Professional Development

DRE:

- Member of LREDA national and regional chapter
- Member of Guild of Interim Religious Educators
- Member of NE Region UUA DRE network
- Attended a leadership training in nature-based worship and hopes to continue to find ways to create outdoor worship experiences for all ages at UCS.
- Will attend Faith Development week at Star Island this Summer
- Will take a UUA Renaissance Module that meets weekly over the summer on Teacher Development

Youth Ministry Coordinator

- How to train and orient Youth Advisors (UUA)
- Youth Ministry Practicum (UUA)
- OWL Facilitator Training (UUA)

RE Committee

- Renewed it's charge, it's vision for RE and it's membership this year!
- Re-established "portfolios" or support roles that committee members will adopt beginning next year
- Conducted a series of four meetings open to all to again look back as well as forward to develop an RE vision for the future. Including Sunday morning structure next year as well as a map of adolescent programs for the next five years.
- Welcomed four new members this spring including a new Chair. The committee extends it's appreciation to Sean Bisson-Donohue who served as Interim Chair for

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the first half of the year.

- This committee has worked hard over the past two years to create and support RE programs that have contributed significantly to the post-pandemic re-activation of church life here at UCS
- The RE Committee extends its deep gratitude to Jessica Plumridge for the many years of service as she resigns her post. She has given selflessly to the RE Committee not only in offering years of thoughtful input and on-the ground support, but also in maintaining the “staffing” portfolio - seeing to hiring process of several Youth Ministry staff. Thank you Jessica!
- RE Committee Members: Joyce Bramhall (Chair), Nick Giammaria, Chloe Kline, Mike Quinn, Karen Woods, Alisha Sarang-Sieminski, Amanda McGregor. Rebecca Kinraide - Board liaison to the REC

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Bulman, Interim Director of Religious Education
Joyce Bramhall, Religious Education Committee Chair

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Youth Coordinator

SYG and JYF Programming Attendance

SYG- We had a range of 2-7 youth at each meeting
An average of 2-4 youth attended each meeting
7 different youth came to these meetings

JYG- We had 2 events this year for JY
We had a range of 1-5 youth at these events

SYG growth and highlights 2022-2023

Leadership capacity

Youth planning and running the entire service as well as hosting PanWaf Breakfast

Youth planning and participating at the Cedar Hill Retreat

Youth shifting to proactively communicating about events, attendance, and changing to an every other week schedule

Youth planning and visioning for next year

Structure and content

Created set goals for SYG based on components of a well-balanced youth ministry program

Developed training and group agreements for Youth Advisors who support SYG

Events and Outings

SYG had 2 outings this year (Ikea and a Game Night at the Norwell Church) and two more to come (SYG Dinner Out and Kayaking with the Norwell Youth Group). These outings had between 2 and 5 youth attend. We also had the Cedar Hill Retreat which was attended by five youth.

We also hosted many events at UCS including- (Game Nights, Cookie Decorating Party, PanWaf Pizza Planning Party)

The Youth Led Service was a major success of SYG this year. We had 8 youth participate in the planning of and hosting of the service. The PanWaf Breakfast was also a huge success this year. We invited the 8th graders to participate and, including them, we had 13 youth hosting this event.

Caroline Dixon

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Rental Committee

The Rental Committee establishes policies and procedures for renters, reviews any unusual requests, and recommends rental rates to the Board of Trustees. Most rentals are very routine and are managed by the Church Administrator, who is responsible for the administrative and financial details.

Rental Income:

Total income from rentals in the church year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 is \$4,066. The renters were a wedding and two piano recitals:

Rental income has increased as a result easing Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. A youth drama program is a regularly-recurring renter on Fridays (and occasionally Wednesdays) which paid \$2,250.50 in fees. Other rentals were primarily for music recitals and performances.

Non-Rental Use

Occasionally, the Rental Committee permits organizations to use our premises rent-free if their purpose has a public benefit. The Boy Scouts used our premises for their used electronics collection day.

Committee Members

Julie Armstrong, David Nelson, Ken Zaniwski, and Colleen Tuck, Chair

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Social Justice Committee

At the Unitarian Church of Sharon, we believe that all members and friends play an active role in our collective work for social justice. All are invited to participate in outreach, service activities and advocacy efforts, fundraising programs, and, through our Sunday Brown Envelope offerings, to contribute to organizations that work for social justice locally, statewide, nationally, and globally.

We thank everyone for the many ways in which you multiply our collective efforts to make a real difference in a troubled world. The purpose of the SJC is to create a range of means for participation in social justice efforts by offering opportunities for education and action that will foster the ethical and spiritual growth of people of all ages, strengthen our community, and create a culture of activism that will make the world a better place.

2022-2023 Social Justice Focus

This year the Social Justice Committee worked to continue and broaden our connections to other groups and organizations that share our principles and goals for social justice. We have continued to partner with Sharon Interfaith Action (SIA), Sustainable Sharon Coalition (SSC), Brockton Interfaith Action (BIC), UUMass Action, UU Urban Ministry (UUM), the Louise D. Brown Peace Institute – Mother's Day Walk for Peace, and numerous other programs.

The Anti-Racism Working Group has focused on racial justice and our BLM banner, prison reform, white supremacy, and currently the work of the UUA to evolve our guiding documents, and especially working towards becoming a Beloved Community through the UUA's focus on the proposed 8th Principle, which we adopted at our Annual Meeting last June: *"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."*

New this year, in collaboration with the Committee on Ministry, the SJC is currently undergoing an assessment and evaluation of our work, guided by input gathered from the entire congregation. A summary of findings and suggestions has been assembled, which the SJC is in the process of reflecting on in hopes of creating a more vibrant, inclusive and efficient force for social justice at the UCS. Stay tuned!

Ongoing Social Justice Projects and Programs

MainSpring House lunch making each month: 75 or more lunches continue to be made and delivered to MSH in Brockton, which never faltered throughout the Covid period, as we successfully maintained this link to our neighbors in need;

Food Pantry donations: we have continued to deliver donations of food to the Sharon/Stoughton food pantry, utilizing an outdoor Drop Box for safety; but the Covid inspired donation of Shopping for Justice grocery cards continues to help neighbors at 6 local food pantries with over \$61,000 in donations since spring of 2020, which is an amazing outpouring of support;

A monthly Fair Trade Marketplace, now in abeyance, allowed for favorite chocolates, coffee, Shopping for Justice cards and other items and donations to be collected via a pre-ordered, drive-through delivery plan, keeping various fundraising efforts vibrant;

Gifts for Kids annual holiday support for families in need during the holiday season;

'Do It Now' activism: we coordinated occasional collective efforts to push for local, state and national changes via legislative causes & environmentally urgent campaigns via letter and email action requests;

Vigils on the Corner: in response to the turbulence of this past year, several occasions moved our community to gather in support of racial justice, BLM related events, the war in Ukraine, prison reform, election concerns, and more;

Pride Celebration: we maintain our annual Rainbow Sunday service and celebration and Pride related gatherings, on-line or in person as circumstances allowed.

Worship Services and Brown Envelope Recipients

This year the SJC worked with Rev. Jolie Olivetti and the Worship Committee to plan numerous Justice themed worship services (some of which included after-service discussions and information sessions where congregants could respond to the service topic), including Racial Justice (BLM Banner, Anti-Racism, & Prison Reform), an Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Celebration, an Earth Day Celebration, the annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace, and our Rainbow Celebration in June. We also coordinated our Brown Envelope collections related to service themes and critical needs, and to support existing relationships with other justice organizations. We are grateful to report that thru mid-May 2023 we have raised over \$24,745 for organizations and causes, including special fundraising related to the Covid-19 Crisis, as outlined below.

Brown Envelope recipients:

(Continued on page 34)

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Summer '22	Minister's Discretionary Fund (plus an additional \$1000 from SJC)	\$908
September '22	Partner Church in Romania	\$1382
October '22	'UU the Vote' election education program	\$1014
November '22	Youth on Fire	\$903
December '22	UU Urban Ministry	\$1189
(Gifts for Kids holiday program, not B.E. funded this year, but substantial direct UCS support)		
Christmas Eve '22	(single service) Father Bills & MainSpring House	\$400
January '23	World Central Kitchen – Ukraine relief	\$1712
February '23	6 Local Food Pantries (in Sharon and other towns)	\$1787
March '23	UTEC (founded as United Teen Equality Center)	\$1049
April '23	Neponset River Watershed Association & Sustainable Sharon Coalition	\$1,294
May '23	Louise D. Brown Peace Institute (\$2,156 and growing)	t.b.d.
June '23	Transgender Emergency Fund – MA	t.b.d.

Shopping for Justice, Fair Trade Sales and other Donations:

Fundraising for social justice occurs via our sale of grocery cards and Fair Trade products, along with donations for specific projects. This year, thru mid-May, our Shopping for Justice program, which funds our MainSpring House lunch making program and other causes, raised over \$2,800 (profits + other donations) on sales of over \$45,000 of grocery cards to the congregation (plus sales of an additional \$27,400 of cards to the UU Foxboro church, profits from which have gone to support their own programs). Fair Trade profits of over \$1,485, based on sales of more than \$5,500 (including cash donations), were used for various social justice projects as voted by the SJC at monthly meetings. Additional ongoing donations for Covid relief directed to 6 local food pantries have raised over \$61,000 since its inception at the beginning of the Covid crisis (\$9,350 in the current church year).

Committee Membership

It is a challenge to accurately list the members of the SJC, since the diffuse nature of the work, the multiple entry points of participation, and the very nature of the broad range of social justice programs and initiatives that are woven into the fabric of the life of the church do not lend themselves to simple list making. Suffice it to say, the online Church Directory is a clear indication of who participates in the work of Social Justice at the UCS, because working together, we accomplish so much more than we can do on our own. Thank you one and all for your participation and support.

Gare Reid, chair

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Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee continued to communicate the concept of Stewardship to the UCS community. We took a break from monthly stewardship meetings and focused on the pledge campaign that started in March 2023.

This year's theme was "Growing Together Again." Emails and letters were sent and included a pledge form, a brochure, and the UUA Giving Guide. The guide helps members and friends determine their pledge amount based on their income and commitment to the church. This information was also available on the Church website. Most members and friends made their pledges via the online pledge form embedded on the Church website.

Four members (Ker Quinn, Jon Slavin, Margaret Berges, and Lauren Grasso) offered their testimonials during the canvass. Their enthusiasm for our community was powerful and appreciated.

During the pledge campaign, the Committee hosted two small-group Zoom cottage meetings and three in-person meetings to answer questions and discuss Stewardship. A special thank you to Colleen Tuck who hosted a small group at her home.

Committee members reached out to members and friends via email and telephone that did not submit their pledge during the month of March. These efforts always make a substantial difference.

At the end of March, the Stewardship Committee thanked the congregation with a cake served during the coffee hour.

Due to inflation and necessary staff salary increases, the Church's projected expenses are significantly higher for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. In May, the Board requested that pledging members consider increasing their pledge by 10% to meet a projected budget deficit for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Some members met this challenge and increased their pledges. Their generosity will help close the deficit gap.

This year's pledge campaign raised \$310,625 from 76 pledging units. Pledges ranged from \$200 to \$28,000. The average pledge is \$4,087. Many members increased their pledge, others stayed the same. Every year, people retire, relocate, and have financial challenges. This year was no different. We had seven new members and friends make pledges, adding significantly to our totals.

From a stewardship perspective, the UCS community weathered the pandemic. Below is our four-year pledging history:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Pledge Income</u>	<u># of Pledging Units</u>
2023-2024	\$310,675	76
2022-2023	\$300,544	78
2021-2022	\$303,164	88
2020-2021	\$281,298	94

We are certainly a generous and committed community.

The Stewardship Committee is pleased with Breeze, the Church's database software. It is easy for members and friends to track their pledge and contribution information via Breeze.

Our Church Administrator, De'En Tarkpor continues to take excellent care of the Stewardship Committee. Thanks, De'En!

Thanks to all members and friends of the Unitarian Church of Sharon for your stewardship of our community and for your generosity.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Peter Raskin – Chair

Fred Bramhall, Ker Quinn, Colleen Tuck, Susan Olsen-Drisko, Kathy Farrell

Christina Raskin, Board Liaison

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Worship

The UU Church of Sharon Worship Committee is committed to providing meaningful worship experiences for our members and visitors. The worship committee exists to offer input on worship-related matters, participate in worship services, coordinate guest ministers, recruit and oversee lay-led services. (The committee has voted *not* to hold Summer Services for 2023.)

New elements in the worship service were incorporated this year i.e. "Spirit of Life " sang weekly, standardized chalice lightings, as well as assigning Worship Coordinator to assist Greeter as second person to count offertory.

Special Note: With several years in the planning, it was a proud moment this past year to have recorded Mel at the Piano, in recognition of his thirty-five years here at UCS with an honorarium plaque. Fifty (50) Cd's were sold at cost to the congregation with \$150 being offered as a Musical Scholarship to a student pursuing their passion of music over the summer.

Mission Statement

In collaboration with the minister, the director of Religious Education, committees and musicians, our role is to ensure worship that inspires, informs and unites the congregation and reflects the congregation's mission and covenant.

1. Providing feedback to the professional staff and acting as a sounding board for the congregation on matters of our worship life.
2. Accepting responsibility for and evaluating the presentation of lay-led services.
3. Examining the form and content of services — at a detail/process level — to determine what works well and what could be improved upon.
4. Opening and sustaining dialogue with the congregation on matters of worship.
5. Taking risks and experimenting with new elements in the worship service and soliciting feedback.

Membership

Chair: Two-year commitment, however, may renew for a second term. Chairs will be members of the committee who have already served for one (1) year.

Worship Coordinator: When a member joins the committee, they will agree to a one-year commitment and attend six (6) out of ten (11) meetings, preview "agenda" and be encouraged to add items for discussions and/or comments if unable to attend. Reading "minutes" provides a means by which to stay informed if absent.

Members may serve multiple terms; requests to continue or retire from the committee are requested by the end of May to allow time for recruiting new members. New committee members are welcomed during the August Retreat. Membership of the committee ideally will consist of ten (10) members and one (1) Senior Youth.

Worship Associate: Individuals who are interested in supporting the committee but are unable to commit to the timelines above are welcomed to serve in the role of "Worship Coordinator" working closely with the Worship Chair in preparation of a Sunday's Service. Recently, we have specifically targeted the Senior Youth for next year's sign-ups.

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Responsibilities:

Work with professional staff to ensure success of Sunday services..
Meet as a committee on the third Sunday of each month, prepare and share agenda, record and post minutes on Google Docs.
Attend Committee Chair Meetings held monthly to share our work and learn about others.
Be open to learning about new practices in worship.
Evaluate current practices.
Recruit guest ministers, and lay speakers.
Determine theme and provide for Summer Services and recruit lay speakers. (ten (10) total). *No Services this summer.*
Welcome congregant participation on the pulpit.
Set a worship calendar for who will serve on the pulpit each Sunday.
Serve as steward for UU principles and UU church of Sharon values, during worship service.
Order and maintain supplies associated with worship (chalice oil, microphones and batteries, candles, matches, paper collars, flowers etc.
Set and maintain a worship budget.
Support auxiliary positions under our budget (Music Director, Choir Director, and Children's Choir and report to the Minister.
Maintain Piano maintenance in the sanctuary.
Work with the Minister to prepare sanctuary for Sunday Service (building opening, lights on, microphones on and tested, water for speakers, oil for chalice, candle and matches for lighting).
Recruit and ensure greeters are comfortable with responsibilities and have support if needed. (Interface With Hospitality.) Also includes Flowers.
Purchase poinsettias and large wreaths for Christmas, and flowers for Easter. Coordinate with Building and Grounds hanging of wreaths/and or decorations.
Oversee and recruit members to decorate Sanctuary (Christmas, Easter).
Coordinate delivery of potted plants with the Caring Committee after holiday services.
Coordinate with Choir Director and provide materials needed for "Winter Solstice". Coordinate with B&G for rearranging pews.
Coordinate with the Five Point Clusters for hosting and attending.

Committee Members

Jean Fox, Chair
Beth Hoke, Brad Larson, Meg Dussault, Peter Raskin, Barbara Nelkin-Rose, Valerie Vigoda, Ellen Bordmen, Tom D'Avanzo

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Slate of Officers as Proposed by the Nominating Committee

Board of Trustees – Two Year Terms

President	Valerie White	7/01/22 to 6/30/24
Vice President	Chris Raskin	7/01/22 to 6/30/24
Clerk	Courtney Hopkins*	7/01/23 to 6/30/25
Treasurer	David Nichamoff	7/01/22 to 6/30/24
Trustee	Rebecca Kinraide	7/01/22 to 6/30/24
Trustee	Jon Slavin*	7/01/23 to 6/30/25
Trustee	Kim Miller*	7/01/23 to 6/30/25

Nominating Committee – Three Year Terms

Chair	Elizabeth Maranzano**	7/01/23 to 6/30/25
Member	Elaine Price**	7/01/23 to 6/30/24
Member	Meg Dussault*	7/01/23 to 6/30/26

Endowment Committee – Three Year Terms

Chair	Open	
Member	David Schoenfeld*	7/01/23 to 6/30/26
Member	Open	
Ex Officio	Chris Raskin***	7/01/22 to 6/30/25
Ex Officio	Open	

* Serving a new term

**Serving out another's term

*** Serving one more year