**The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo**

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

Report Assembled by Emilia Taylor-Sweet



 *Ferry Door*, Julie Taylor, 2021

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# Minister’s 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

Beloveds, I am deeply honored and humbled to share in your ministry. This has been a challenging year. The pandemic continued to grind us down spiritually and emotionally. Staff transitions led to conflict. We lost many of our loved ones to death. Our doors were closed for half the year, and questions about safely re-opening after lock-down proved more difficult than the choice to shut the doors in the first place.

And yet, our congregation is robust and resilient. We are weathering the stresses and strains with a rare amount of joy and good will; and we continue to live into our mission.

Our mission states that we are a compassionate, thoughtful and diverse religious community that nurtures and challenges itself into deeper understanding, meaning and purpose.

* We gather through worship, music, education, intersectional ministries, and service.
* We inspire each other in love and mutual respect to further our individual and collective spiritual journey.
* We transform through our combined talents, and in coalition with other progressive organizations, in service to anti-racist anti-oppressive movements.

In the following reports you will find all the astonishing ways our congregation has embodied our mission in 2021 and is working toward our vision of tomorrow. Our Ministry Teams, Task Forces, Advisory Committees, and the Board of Trustees have pulled together to keep our church actively growing and thriving in spite of all the challenges 2021 has offered. I am filled with gratitude for everyone’s devotion to our congregation and to our wider community.

**Worship**

I am indebted to our whole Worship Team. Many congregations saw volunteerism drop off during lockdown. Not so at our church. Not only do we have a magnificent team of stalwart Worship Associates (Julie Taylor, Charlene Montgomery, Fran Manly, Tracey Kassman, Eve Holberg, Bobby Withrow, and Shaun Doyle), we also have an amazing Tech Team (John Petrocelli, Josh Dissek, Justin DeCleene, and Martha Malkiewicz), and the incredible Karen Streech who not only edits our newsletter, but also provides all the visuals for our online services.

We bring our church mission to life through worship. Speakers, readings, stories, the territorial acknowledgement, the pastoral prayer, and music work to *gather, inspire, and transform*. We challenge ourselves and each other into deeper meaning and purpose. We strive to motivate you toward social justice, create opportunities for compassion, and provide partnerships with anti-racist and other anti-oppressive organizations through our Share the Plate ministry (Share the Plate is a Justice Ministry Team Activity, more on their activities later in this Annual Report).

My thanks go to everyone who attended worship online. Your dedication encouraged everyone on the Worship Team to reach for a higher star and to provide you with Sunday services worth your precious time. We hope you found them nourishing to heart, mind and soul. I am aware that each of you have very full lives and this year has been difficult. Every Sunday when I welcomed you as you tuned in, my spirit rose. You offered hope in a dismal time.

Thanks to the Tech Team we will always have an online presence, even post-covid (should there be such a time). Two years ago, if you wanted your UUCB fix you had to physically get into the church. Now, our members and friends, be they house-bound, travelling, living anywhere around the world, or just wanting to stay home in their jammies, can attend our worship services. We have indeed joined the 21st century.

Our Sunday attendance diminished some with the onset of the pandemic. While we were shut down completely, we had an average of 117 viewing screens per week which translates to about 150 individual participants. Now that we offer a dual platform worship experience, once you add the viewing screens to the number of people in the pews, we are nearly back up to pre-pandemic numbers. And the feel of our congregation during worship is becoming more lively and joyous every week.

In addition to Sunday morning worship, we also offered short Vesper services at 7pm every Friday night from April 2- June 9. I want to thank all the volunteer musicians who participated: Martha Malkiewicz, Kevin Doyle, Paul Zanolli, Athena McCrory, Fran Manly, Leslie Nickerson, Joel Cohen, Pat Chiodo, Fred DeVantier, Dave Myrow, Bruce Pfeffer, and Phil Nicolai.

Pastoral Care

Ours is most a compassionate gathering. Our Pastoral Care Ministry is broad and deep. Here are four of its formal levels:

1. *Lay Pastoral Ministers*: Bobbie Baker, Lynn Mancuso, Bonnie Collins, Karen Jarvis, and John Marohn serve as your Lay Pastoral Ministers. They provide a ministry of caring presence for about 40 of our members every month. Our LPMs meet with me monthly and are trained regularly to sharpen their skills in caregiving. Sad to say, Bobbie Baker, after many years has stepped down from service. She offered excellent insights in our team ministry and much love in all her congregational connections.
2. *Pastoral Care and Support Ministry Team*: Ginny Vaughan chairs this team which writes cards and staffs the Joys and Sorrows tables in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. More details on this Team’s activities and plans can be found later in this Annual Report.
3. *The “Good For” List*: In our church we believe that everyone is “good for” something. You may be good for making a meal, or doing household chores, or offering a ride to church. The Good For Lists are lists of volunteers who have declared that they are good for a specific type of caring service. Josette Cunningham is our Good For List Coordinating Angel who matches the needs of our members to the people on the Good For Lists. If you want to volunteer for a specific caring service, please contact Josette. If you are ever in need of a little extra TLC, please let me know and I will make arrangements with Josette.
4. *Minister*: And then there is me. I am available 24/7 for your pastoral needs. If the need is not an emergency, I prefer to limit my availability to Tuesday – Sunday between the hours of 10am and 8pm. Just call, text or email and I will respond as soon as possible.

Staff

We experienced many staff transitions this year. Jessie Downs succeeded Daniel Bassin as Music Director; Lisa Peterangelo succeeded Sarah Martin as Director of Religious Education; Emilia Taylor-Sweet succeeded Ashley Mountcastle as Office Manager; Liam Allen succeeded Matthew Spaulding as tenor soloist, and Taryn Goehrig succeeded Jessie Downs as soprano soloist. The Gatekeeper position, served by Sara Kirkland, was reduced from full- to half-time. Morgan Silver, our beloved Childcare Coordinator in the nursery has just announced her resignation after many years of impeccable service. She has not yet named a departure date.

Each of the many transitions occurred for a combination of reasons: failure to follow performance improvement plans, lack of funding, lack of work, resignations, exhaustion from providing online church, requirements for in-person work, and promotions.

The pandemic exacerbated underlying communication difficulties within the staff. Furthermore, every staff member (except Ashley Mountcastle) was hired for a specific job while we were meeting in person. During the pandemic every staff member had to massively shift skills to create online church. In a time when everyone in the congregation was feeling zoomed-out, all our programs, especially Religious Education, Worship, and Music, were hard hit. All our employees provided excellent ministry, through sometimes the strain showed.

Our employee turnover rates are part of a larger picture. The employee turnover rate in the nation has skyrocketed since the onset of the pandemic. However, our UUCB miracle is that, unlike employers in the wider community, we were able to fill all our vacant positions quickly. This speaks to our mission, to our community, and to our reputation as a church in Buffalo.

Our staff continues to be in transition. Lisa Peterangelo and Jessie Downs are “Acting” Religious Education Director and Music Director respectively. That means they are eligible to apply for the settled position should they wish to do so. Emilia Taylor-Sweet is the Temporary Office Manager, as such she is not eligible for the settle position.

The Search Teams for a settled Music Director (Phil Nicolai, Beth White, Joel Cohen, Julie Taylor), Director of Religious Education (Andrea Fuhrman, Tom Petrocelli, Scott Nuwer, Beth Ruthenberg, Kathaleen Burke), and Office Manager (Mary Coleman, Doug Sherman, Renee Geraci) are on the job. Feel free to contact them about any questions. Lisa Peterangelo oversees the search for a new Child Care Coordinator. Thank you all for your participation in the ongoing ministry of our church.

Imagine a world in which every employee is thanked for just doing their job. Even if they aren’t doing their job perfectly. Still, imagine if every employee was deeply and heartily thanked for their accomplishments even though “they are just doing what they were hired to do.” Don’t you think that would shift our culture from one of fault-finding and peevishness to gratitude and creative excitement?

In that spirit, I want to thank from the bottom of my heart, especially during these very difficult days, our Administrator for Finance, Donna Sentz; our Acting Religious Education Director, Lisa Peterangelo; our Office Manager, Emilia Taylor-Sweet; our Gatekeeper, Sara Kirkland; our Accompanist, Jonathan Vogtle; our Soloists, Taryn Goehrig, Helen Lowry, Liam Allen, and Michael Harris; and our Childcare Coordinator, Morgan Silver. You are all tremendous!

I also want to deeply thank all the staff who, after serving our church with heart and soul, are no longer in our employ; Daniel Bassin, Sarah Martin, Ashley Mountcastle, and Matthew Spaulding. You set a high bar and helped our church become what it is today.

As chief of staff, my promise to you, the congregation, is that I will continue to encourage, coordinate and nurture the staff to be the best resources they can be in service of our church’s mission.

Conclusion

Between the pandemic and staff transitions, this has been one of the most challenging years I have experience in ministry. However, despite everything, the leadership, all the volunteers, and the staff have found ways to continue living the mission of our church through it all. In fact, I would assert that because the mission of this church is so strong, we were able to not only weather the storm, but also grow within it.

We began to understand covenant and restorative practice in a new way. We instituted regular Town Hall meetings. We moved from in-person only, to online only, to a dual-platform ministry. We re-imagined what it means to be church-in-the-time-of-covid with a daily zoom Lunch Bunch group, Secret Easter Bunny Parties, Community Poetry projects, Crane Peace Projects, The Great Pumpkin Hunt, and weekly outdoor Vesper services.

This has been a challenging time, no doubt; and our church has met the challenge with true Buffalo grit and with creative, generous, heartfelt, faith-filled, energy. I am so proud to be your minister. I love you.

Yours in faith and affection, Rev. Joan Montagnes

# Religious Education Ministry 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Religious Education Ministry 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Staff:** Lisa Peterangelo, M.Div., Acting Director of Religious Education

**Advisement:** Fran Manly, Kathaleen Burke, Andrea Brock, Dick and Hope Kraus

**Volunteers:** Andrea Brock, Phyllis Dissek, Kate Silver, Leslie Nickerson, Athena McCrory, Steve Dominguez, Katy Sloan, Tom Petrocelli, Bridget Marquis, Jack Kavanaugh, Beth Rutherford, and Morgan Silver (staff).

**Recently added as of 12/05/21:** Martha Malkiewicz, Douglas Sherman, Beth White

**Meetings:** Only one in-person meeting held on September 7th.

**Activities:** Position began July 29,2021

* Worked towards repairing the condition of the DRE office. (ongoing)
* Recruited an RE volunteer (Kate Silver) to repair the condition of the RE Resource Room. (ongoing)
* Researched past protocols, registrations, attendance sheets, curriculums, families, and volunteers for a better understanding of the program.
* Communicated with parents and volunteers, past and present for needed information.
* Recruited new teaching volunteers.
* Took registration for students for the 2021-2022 school year.
* Wrote weekly, and monthly E-Blast, newsletter, RE newsletter, and Board of Trustee Reports.
* Recruiting for Religious Education Advisory Ministry team.
* Planned and hosted the Sept 7th gathering for RE Volunteers.
* Planned for an Oct 3rd start to programming via zoom.
* Participated in a Spiritual retreat with Rev. Joan and staff from the Amherst Church.
* Attended Monthly meetings with the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA).
* Attended a UUA training for new DRE’s.
* Planned Halloween event for children (Oct 31st).
* Planned and facilitated December intergenerational project (Peace Cranes).
* Planning for Coming-of-Age class to begin in January.
* Recruited for additional teaching volunteers for COA.
* Started planning meetings for COA.
* Hosted a Dungeons and Dragons Training for RE Volunteers
* Recruited for a D&D Ministry team to be created.
* Created holiday treat bags for distribution on December 19th.
* Began collaboration with the church writing group to create an intergenerational writing project entitled, “Café Odyssey”. Invitations were sent out for the February meeting.
* Participated in the Christmas Eve services.
* Sent letters to RE families and volunteers to prepare for our “RE- Reboot”.
* Continue to navigate both cultural and Covid Issues.

**Living our Mission:** How does your ministry implement our mission?

*This was a unique year for several reasons. Between the effects of Covid on our program and the aftermath of cultural upheavals, the goal was to find a new baseline for community and heal wounds. The goals were simple but not easy; to instill mutual respect and continue a spiritual journey together.*

* Acting DRE reached out to many people to build a new foundation for community.
* Acting DRE became a listening presence for those who needed to be heard.
* Individual talents were discovered and utilized to offer programming and projects.
* The RE Ministry team collaborated for the Halloween event which brought people together for the first time in many months.

Accomplishments in 2021:

* We were able to recruit a basic Religious Education Volunteer team.
* We were able to create a New Advisory team.
* Our Youth Group was able to meet in person.
* We brought people together during our Halloween event and our December Crane project.

**Goals for 2022:**

* We are hopeful that we will be able to bring Religious Education back to in-person programming.
* We are planning on training new volunteers for two age levels of OWL to be taught in the Fall of ’22.

# Music Director 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Music Director 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Meetings:** choir has most recently met Thursdays from 7:30-9:30pm in the Alliance Room and Sanctuary

**Activities:**

As Acting Director of the UUCB Choir, I aim to:

* develop each individual choir member's vocal technique through weekly vocal exercises and technical instruction.
* develop the choir's overall fluency with a variety of performance skills.
* rehearse a variety of music with the ensemble that both excites and challenges the members and offers a diversity of perspectives - both musical and spiritual.
* present this music at least bi-weekly within services to enrich the worship experience for both choir members and congregants.
* prepare and present special musical events for the church and/ or broader community.
* serve as a listening ear and/ or guide for participants' and audiences' joys and concerns regarding the musical aspect of the spiritual life of the church.

**Living our Mission:***How does your ministry implement our mission?*

* The choir provides a supportive environment for individuals to gather and make music together, to grow in their individual musical-spiritual journeys and to experience what it means to be a part of a greater whole.
* The practice of developing both individual voices and a group sound acts as an instructive physical-psychological activity that offers a window into more general efforts at both self-growth and communal cooperation.
* Through performing a variety of music, we learn from the wisdom of a diversity of individuals and traditions. We also bring together musicians of a variety of backgrounds and skill levels in cooperation as one body. Through both practices, we gain a greater appreciation of life's diversity.

**Accomplishments in 2021**:

*As director, so far, I have...*

* helped the choir and congregation work through the departure of Daniel Bassin and helped keep the choir active, in spite of the challenges both of this transition and meeting together during the pandemic.
* helped clarify and implement COVID safety practices for singing together in-person.
* worked with the tech team to improve in-house and broadcasted musical sound.
* hired new soprano and tenor section leaders and overseen the work of these and the other three returning musical staff members.
* provided music for every service since the end of September, with the choir performing bi-weekly, and organizing the soloists and/or other guests to provide music when the choir has not performed.
* provided caroling for the Elmwood Village Association Christmas opening at Bidwell and Elmwood.
* presented a special "Mini Music Sunday" with guest instrumentalists and a full service of music for the Candlelight Christmas Eve event, featuring three pieces performed acapella, one in Russian.
* helped choir members to develop new skills such as embodying music through movement, coordinating ceremonial movements, singing with greater independence when interpreting aleatoric compositions, shaping musical affect and narrative, and strengthening their knowledge and abilities in vocal technique.
* engaged choir members in ways beyond the usual choral practices and performances through premiering a member's composition, featuring volunteers in small group and solo contexts, connecting the group with a living composer, and sharing spiritual ideas through our musical practice.

**Goals for 2022:** *A list of intended goals for the coming year*

* Maintain, if not grow, choir participation.
* Update the choir covenant.
* Spend more individual time with both staff and volunteers to help them grow in their vocal practices.
* Continue working on and performing a variety of music with the choir and help the choir to grow in their stylistic flexibility.
* Share basic lessons in music theory to help strengthen the group's musicianship skills.
* Perform another full service of music (like Christmas Eve) but with greater strength and fluidity, a kind of "Music Sunday," either acapella, with instruments, or both.
* Start and maintain a monthly recital series to celebrate an even broader range of the community's musical gifts.

# 2021 Church Archives and Church Historian Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** 2021 Church Archives and Church Historian Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Bill Parke

**Members (and ex-officio members):** Same

**Meetings:** As needed

**Activities:** Support the church in ways that involve church history, maintain church archives, and raise awareness and appreciation of our church history within the church and broader community

**Living our Mission:** Our history is one of our greatest church strengths. This ministry contributes to helping others experience “deeper understanding, meaning and purpose.” Simply put, it inspires others.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Provided archival documents to Dana Saylor who purchased a house on land linked to the former Parkside Unitarian Church.
* Responded to an inquiry from Dana Blum-Buccieri, who was interested in another building designed by the church’s architect, Edward A. Kent
* Furnished documents to Rev. Joan for the “Intro to UU class”
* Researched the church’s appearance in a new, nationally distributed biographical documentary on Kurt Vonnegut, titled, “Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time” (https://vonnegutdocumentary.com). Indeed, our church appears half-a-dozen times in the documentary, including at the very beginning and very end.

**Goals for 2022:** Put in place a new exhibit in the Parish Hall, to replace the one dating prior to the Pandemic.

# Auction Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Auction Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairpersons:** Juli Van Woert and Maria Testa

**Members:** Tom Muka, John Petrocelli, Andrea Burke-Harris

**Meetings:** No regular meetings. Email and phone communication as necessary.

**Activities:**

* The team continued the “Fun and Fellowship” auction, with modifications reflecting the limitations of the pandemic. Three mini auctions were successfully organized and run during the pandemic, two in the summer of 2020 and one in the spring of 2021. Another mini auction is currently being developed, with bidding set to begin in late January 2022. In addition, as part of the auction activities, we offered copies of one of Peter Sloan’s prints at $25 each.
* One of the auction team’s tasks is to solicit donations from church members, working with donors to best craft, offer, and describe the offerings, and then entering them into the auction database from which the catalog is created. This aspect of the auction was conducted with few changes from pre-pandemic days. Although we lacked an in-person presence in the parish hall, long-time donors responded to email solicitations and publicity in weekly emails and monthly newsletters. Given the pandemic, we had fewer offerings overall and a larger proportion of offerings were for items (e.g., homemade food and crafts) as opposed to in-person events. However, there were several in-person events including dinners, music recitals, and outdoor hikes.
* Other auction tasks include collecting the bids, determining and notifying the winners, and then collecting and recording payments. These tasks were much more difficult and cumbersome because all bids had to be gathered via email, entered by hand, and winners notified individually by email. Our prior experience with early auction bidding (which involved emailed bids) helped somewhat and the process generally worked adequately and without error. Nonetheless, this experience and the likely continuation of remote auctions for some time has led us to move to an online platform for future auctions.

**Living our Mission:** The auction contributes to membership engagement/enjoyment, church vitality, and fundraising. Our ability to gather this year was greatly diminished by the pandemic but the auction facilitated more interaction and engagement among members, in-person and virtual, than we would have had otherwise. We believe that the ability to participate in dinners, concerts, and nature walks and to enjoy homemade baked goods, honey, and crafts helped our members weather the pandemic and maintain their connection to the church. Although participation is obviously lower, it is encouraging that many members are still eager to donate to the auction and to bid generously.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* The three mini auctions raised $1680, $2085, and $2145, respectively for the church. By way of comparison, the last pre-pandemic auction, in which most bidding took place in person raised over $16,000. In addition, 25 of Peter Sloan’s prints were sold in 2020 for a total of $500 and 12 in 2021 for a total of $300.
* As noted above, we believe that our efforts also helped to raise spirits and contribute to membership engagement during this difficult pandemic time.
* Goals for 2022: The team plans to continue offering auctions, beginning with a planned late January catalog. We are transitioning to an online auction platform, 32Auctions, which will greatly streamline our ability to conduct online auctions. Returning to in-person auctions, when that is warranted, is a goal since this will improve the vitality and fundraising capability of the auction.

# Board of Trustees 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Board of Trustees 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Members:** President Martha Malkiewicz, Vice President Tracey Kassman, Treasurer John Petrocelli, Secretary Kathleen McGriff Powers, Bridget Evans, Michael Hill, Lynn Mancuso

**Meetings:** In the Alliance Room on the third Wednesday of every month at 7 pm.

**Activities:**

* Responded to the challenges created by staffing conflicts. The Board held and continues to hold all parties in care and love.
* Signed the Parole Bills letter put forward by Donna Robinson. The letter expressed support for two NYS parole bills—Fair & Timely Parole, S.1415/A.4231 and Elder Parole, S.15/A.3475.
* Encouraged all committees, task forces and ministries to use SharePoint in order to keep information available. A cloud-based service hosted by Microsoft, SharePoint is a secure place to store, organize, share, and access information from any device.
* Responded to financial concerns facing the Congregation.
* Participated in the Leadership Assembly led by the Governance Advisory Committee the Recruitment Workshop led by Joan Montagnes, the Challenging Conversations Webinar, the Jubilee Anti-Racism webinar.
* Clarified Robert’s Rules (with Eve Holberg and Tom Petrocelli) and added the information to the back of the agenda for ease of motions, discussions and voting at Congregational Meetings.
* Researched the Fair Labor Standards Act to make sure UUCB is following Federal laws for its employees.
* Task forces, Committees Continued to work with the Gathering in Person task force to safely bring people back to our building.
* Filled the Personnel Advisory Committee and charged them with updating UUCB’s Personnel Directory
* Worked with the Nominating Committee to create a new plan for creating a listing of people’s skills and committee openings/needs.
* Approved new members for Advisory Committees (Except for Strategy, all are sufficiently staffed)
* Worked with Governance to improve wording and examine more inclusive changes in the Policy Manual.
* Responded to the need for better communication paths both to and from the Board.
* Led two Town Halls.
* Called in Rev. Paul Langston Daley to aid in the creation of Restorative Response Listening Circles.
* Had an article in each monthly newsletter. (news out from the Board to the congregation)
* Set up the Board email. board@buffalouu.org (news into the Board from the congregation)
* Responded to Financial Requests.
* Approved the purchase of moveable Air Purifier for use.
* Approved repairs on East Gable Stone and Copper Flashing (masonry and roofing)
* Accepted donations to the Endowment Fund.
* Set up the Garden Restricted Fund with grant money.
* Applied for a grant from Partners for Sacred Places. (We did not get the grant this time but have been encouraged to reapply.)

**Living Our Mission:**

* We served the congregation with one voice which was created by (cajoled, hammered and drawn out of) 7 different voices. We were truly challenged into deeper understanding of our vision of shared compassion and dignity for all.
* By working through the challenges this year presented, we developed a deeper reverence for our (the Board’s) position as it relates to the health and wholeness of our congregation.
* With this new reverence for our position and new doors of communication open to all, we look forward to continuing our mission of growing deeper in compassion, diversity, and purpose.

**Goals for 2022:**

* To continue to fill open positions on the Advisory Committees.
* To work with the Financial Committee and the congregation to continue to balance our operating costs and budget.
* To continue overseeing the health and growth of the congregation.
* To continue exploring better methods of communication - both in terms of getting information to members and hearing ideas and observations from members.
* To continuing work on the Right Relations/Relational Covenant

# Covenant Group Ministry 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Covenant Group Ministry 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Steering Committee (Planners):** C. Battaglia, B. Smith, J. Van Woert

**Facilitators:** K. Burke, S. Chelnov, R. Clark, K. Coady, C. Condon, J. Heinl, R. Houk, T. Kassmann, M. Malkiewicz, K. Manly, J. Marohn, A. Mountcastle, A. Muka, T. Muka, P. Nicolai, L. Parke, A. Sikes

**Meetings:** Planners and Facilitators meet monthly. Each Covenant group meets monthly at its own date, time and location.

**Activities:**

The Covenant Group Ministry, in its 18th year, coordinated by a three-person steering committee, continued to outreach to both member and non-member congregants. While we were physically apart, a Covenant group offered members the opportunity to remain connected to this church community and to share about the impact of this challenging year on their spirit and all other aspects of their lives.

**Living Our Mission:**

* To strengthen the culture of the church to listen to, respect and trust each other, guided by the Covenant agreements created in each small group.
* To provide an opportunity to explore life issues in a spiritual context
* To strengthen a spiritual connection to the larger church community, with a commitment to join with others in service to the church
* To assist the minister in identifying individuals who may benefit from pastoral care

**Accomplishments**:

* All twelve groups were viable, with 19 facilitators and 67 other individuals who participated at some point during the year. Four facilitators were also members of another group. This is a total of 86 individuals active in the CGM at some point during 2021.
* Initially all groups met virtually, maintaining robust involvement of their members. The opportunity to practice safe distancing while deepening personal reflection and connection to others was an unexpected gift of this Covid year. Three members moved away but maintained involvement in their groups, thanks to the opportunity of a virtual format. Many reported that their group served as a lifeline during restrictions on in-person gatherings. At year’s end, 4 groups have returned to in-person meetings, one is functioning as a “hybrid” group and the remainder continue to meet virtually.
* Monthly Facilitator meetings continued (total 8), with at least one facilitator from each group participating. In addition to reporting on the health and needs of each group, the meetings offered facilitators support through peer supervision.
* Visibility was maintained through participation in Intro to UU path-to-membership classes, monthly newsletter and e-blast articles, and outreach by individual members.
* Continued support of theme ministry, using Soul Matters materials.

**Covenant Group Ministry Goals for 2022:**

* To grow the Ministry as a welcoming and loving conduit for individuals to become more deeply involved in the tapestry of our congregation, with a focus on attracting younger participants as members and facilitators.
* To be active participants in UUCB’s endeavor to “grow” leaders who can move into leadership roles as our aging population steps back from leadership positions.
* To strengthen the program service component, including outreach into the community

# Endowment Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Endowment Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Diane Bockrath

**Members:** Jane Armbruster, Donald Behr, Andrea Burke-Harris, Gerry Evans, John Petrocelli, Treasurer of the Board, and Sally Metzger.

**Meetings:** 2nd Wednesday of the Month

**Activities:**

* The Endowment Advisory Committee advises the Board of Trustees as to stewardship of the Endowment Fund regarding performance, management, raising, administering, and disbursing funds, as well as the amount of any annual or special draws.
* The value of the fund as of 11/30/2021 was $1,513,207.00. This reflects deposits of $16,330.00 from bequests and memorials (plus income earned and appreciation in the value of assets held in the accounts). There were regular and special withdrawals, as approved by the congregation in the amount of $52,976.00.

**Living our Mission:**

* Despite another year that brought its share of challenges, the committee is successfully growing a sustainable Endowment Fund that serves to ensure the perpetuity of UUCB.

**Accomplishments:**

* Continued the process of raising the congregation’s level of consciousness about the importance of planned giving to the long-term sustainability of UUCB through personal outreach and regular entries in the UUCB Newsletter. This year three members declared their intent to leave a bequest to UUCB.
* Responded with thanks to families of current bequest donations and to individuals and couples who signed the Declaration of Intent to include UUCB in their estate planning. Established the acknowledgment protocol for the minister, the Board, and the committee.
* Completed a recognition piece honoring Declaration of Intent signers. The framed piece will be hung in the Parish Hall in early 2022.

# Family Promise Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Family Promise Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Nancy Wilkins

**Meetings**

* In person meetings were suspended in 2020, during the Covid shutdown, and suspension of the indoor use of the church. The primary function of meetings was preparing to host up to five homeless families, four weeks a year. This model ended in 2020, when the Family Promise headquarters reopened with doubled capacity to house families. Churches would no longer provide rotating lodging and meals. Communication continues via eblast and announcements to recruit donated furnishings for families who are about to graduate from the Family Promise homeless shelter, and food for the shelter families. Volunteers’ ideas, suggestions and experiences are implemented immediately.

**Activities:**

* Family Promise volunteers are fabulous. In July 2021, shortly after the church had reopened for face to face services, we “adopted” a Family Promise family: the congregation would provide the necessities to set up a bathroom and kitchen. The response in one week was overwhelming. Over an estimated $300 in clothes, supplies, baby care items, board games, groceries, prepared meals and kitchen utensils were donated by the Team and the congregation this year.
* In August, an appeal for school supplies brought backpacks, markers, and more. Furnishings which had been donated to provide lodging for our FP guests were offered to Family Promise, including vanity lamps, baby baths, air mattresses, and inflator. The bedding will be accepted by Home Again, which is gathering household items for refugees.
* Most FP families are homeless due to domestic violence and arrive with only what they can stuff into a garbage bag. Children make up 70% of the shelter population. One little boy, size 3T, needed clothes. Miki Kim donated two huge bags of boys’ clothes, size 3T, plus two sacks of women’s clothes. Maria Testa donated small kitchen appliances, bath towels and dishes.
* All donated items are new, or in like new condition, showing the respect our denomination has for those who are without housing. Most donors are anonymous; no one has asked for a receipt. The spirit of giving reflects UUs commitment to honoring the holy in every person, the interconnectedness of life, and the importance of being part of a larger community, working in concert with other organizations and religious groups to benefit the whole. FP was a Share the Plate recipient.

**Goals for 2021:**

* The UUCB Family Promise Ministry will continue to support the Family Promise shelter and strive to resume Team meetings. Family Promise served 25 families in 12 months, placing 95% of them in permanent homes, and providing not only shelter, but hope, support in rebuilding their lives, connections to helping agencies, and follow up after a family has moved out. It is one of only two shelters which keeps families intact, not separating adult males from the rest of their family. The pandemic led to more evictions and more homelessness. As soon as one family moves out, another is welcomed into FP.
* Family Promise is linked to a national organization, connecting churches and other faith-based organizations across the US. It was founded 30 years ago, in New Jersey, came to Buffalo 25 years ago, and to UUCB in 2009. It is the most rewarding volunteer activity I have ever had.

# Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chair:** Molly Quackenbush

**Members:** Andrea Burke-Harris, Joel Cohen, John Petrocelli (ex-officio as UUCB Treasurer)

**Meetings:** Monthly on the second Thursday of the month, on Zoom at 4:00 pm

**Activities:**

* FAC’s overall function is to keep the Board updated on the status of UUCB’s finances and support and advise the Board on financial issues in accordance with UUCB’s policies.
* Review monthly financial tracking documents prepared by the church’s finance administrator including: the budget, restricted and reserved funds, endowment, and fundraising
* Create a draft annual budget for the Board’s review in August
* Present the Board’s recommended budget to the Congregation, first in information sessions and then for membership approval at the fall congregational meeting
* Present the annual statement of church finances to the congregation at the end of the church’s fiscal year

**Living Our Mission:**

* FAC strives to improve the transparency of the church’s finances through presentations and reports so the Board, committees, ministries, and members can understand how finances can and do play a role in fulfilling the church’s mission. In drafting the annual budget, FAC is responsive to requests that reflect the church’s mission while also planning responsibly for ongoing financial stability.

**Accomplishments for 2021:**

* Updated report formats to improve clarity
* Located and/or updated Restricted & Reserved Fund Charters and set up a Finance file on Share Point for the Charters
* Assisted with the final 2020 Payroll Protection Program report to the federal government which ultimately led to loan forgiveness
* Researched both health and liability insurance program options and presented findings to the Board
* Successfully completed all annual responsibilities

**Goals for 2022:**

* Continue the ongoing work of the committee
* Successfully complete an audit of the 2021 fiscal year with a professional CPA
* Add two new members to FAC

# Fixed Assets Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Fixed Assets Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** David Quackenbush

**Members:** William Botsford, Judy Kieffer, Tom Muka

**Meetings:** Occasionally at Church with a lot of email in between.

**Activities:**

* Oversee and work to keep all aspects of the Church buildings, garage, and property in good shape, working properly, and make improvements.

**Living Our Mission:**

* Keep the Landmark Church Buildings and grounds attractive and working well for members, new prospects, weddings, memorial services, and rentals.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Masonry Damage Repair: Pieces of limestone and slate fell to the ground from the roof gable at the large stained-glass window on the eastside of the Sanctuary. Copper flashing was also damaged. We contracted with R.E. Kelley Inc. to re-set stonework, replace old mortar and sealant, and repair copper flashing. Damaged slates have yet to be replaced.
* Railings: at the W Ferry entrance with badly chipped paint were refinished.
* Air Conditioning: Reviewed how to air condition 3 second floor offices with casement windows a problem and with as little degradation to the exterior as possible.
* Air Filtration: Research and purchase of a machine used in the Parish Hall and Alliance Room when the Choir practices which can be moved and used in either space.
* New Stair Railing: D Quackenbush had one made and installed in the Bell Tower, from the Sanctuary to the 2nd floor room behind the Organ (where music is now being stored).
* Heating/AC: T Muka and W Botsford monitored the heating system every day while it was running, added treatment chemicals and recorded their findings. They also prepared the Boiler for summer shutdown in May and re-started it in October. Trane Unit ventilation and dehumidification were monitored and operated to prevent mold in basement classrooms.

**Goals for 2022:**

* New railing installed in the middle of the stairway between the Sanctuary and Parish Hall.
* Inspect drain piping under parking lot to determine cause of north-side basement flooding.
* Determine scope of work to address flooding and water damage in basement classrooms.
* Air Condition 3 second floor offices
* New Garage roof, including replacement of rotten wooden roof supports and decking.
* West Ferry Doors: complete hardware repairs, rehang and align doors to work better.
* Enclose exterior A/C possibly with fencing and have the gutter above it repaired and rehung.

# Folk Dancing

**Title:** Folk Dancing

**Chairperson:** Martha Malkiewicz

**Members:** Attendance varies from 6 - 15

**Meetings:** Monday morning 9:30-11:30

**Activities:** Folk dancing 9:30-10:15 are walking dances. 10:15-11:00 variety of dances 11:00-11:30 more advanced dances

**Living Our Mission:** We are open to the community and welcoming of all levels of dancers.

**Accomplishments in 2021:** We survived! We danced outside every week until the fall of 2021. We now dance indoors in masks and with proper air circulation.

**Goals for 2022:** To continue to create an accepting, joyful community for people who like to move to folk music.

# Gathering In-Person Task Force 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Gathering In-Person Task Force 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Tracey Kassman

**Members:** Liz Parke, Beth White, Justin DeCleene, Maria Testa, Phil Nicolai, Val Andersen; ex-officio members Rev. Joan Montagnes, Lisa Peterangelo, Ashley Mountcastle

**Meetings:** Monthly, with a break from July 2021 to November 3, 2021

**Activities:**

* Review of COVID-19 trends in WNY
* Reviewing UUA guidelines and information regarding safety of gathering in-person
* Analyzing data from survey created and distributed in 2020
* Reporting to Board and congregation through interim reports and Town Hall meeting

**Living our Mission:**

* The task force keenly felt the tension between being open to all seekers and maximizing safety of UUCB Family and Friends. We rejected the idea that only vaccinated persons should be allowed at in-person services. We recommended to the board that dual platform services must be meaningful and robust for those who attend church and those who participate online.
* The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo is a compassionate, thoughtful and diverse religious community that nurtures and challenges itself into deeper understanding, meaning and purpose.
* We gather through worship, music, education, intersectional ministries, and service.
* We inspire each other in love and mutual respect to further our individual and collective spiritual journey.
* We transform through our combined talents, and in coalition with other progressive organizations, in service to anti-racist anti-oppressive movements.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* By diligently reviewing data and thoughtfully discussing our shared UU values we made recommendations to the board to return to in-person service in July 2021. We continue to monitor relevant information and concerns of congregants. We invited members of the choir to share their ideas and experience with us. We discussed ideas for moving forward with RE. We recommended protocols for groups wanting to use the kitchen at UUCB. We answered inquiries from the Women’s Society.

**Goals for 2022:** We hope to continue to advise the board on issues relating to health and justice, our next meeting will be January 26, 2022.

# UUCB Gardening Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** UUCB Gardening Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairpersons:** Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller

**Members (and ex-officio members):** Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller, Philip Nicolai, Dave Batt,

**Meetings:** UUCB Gardens at irregular times and dates, depending on the weather

**Activities:**

* Weeding the garden
* Planting bulbs, perennials, shrubs and trees
* Observing the watering systems and meeting with the company for repairs as needed
* Keeping the paths free from overgrowth and passable
* Trimming the hedge several times per year
* Planting and lifting the Dahlia bulbs in the spring and fall
* Planting and maintaining the planter on Elmwood
* Working with the Minister and interring congregants’ ashes in the Memorial Garden

**Living our Mission:**

* The Gardening Committee coaxes year-round beauty from our extensively planted perennial garden. This garden is planted and maintained not only for our congregation, but it is enjoyed by our neighbors and anyone who traverses the path created expressly to share its beauty.
* The Gardening Committee also is committed to using ecologically friendly methods of weed control (hand pulling) and composting our yard waste and planting natives as much as we can. We show respect for the health of our community and our planet.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* The Gardening Committee planted some native shrubs and naturalizing bulbs. We kept the hedge trimmed and the beds as weed free as could be managed. We worked with Joan to inter the ashes of a congregant into the Memorial Garden. In August we worked with the Board to create a Garden Restricted Fund, to fund larger projects and plantings in the garden. We met with Aqua-Systems to repair faulty lines in the watering system. We worked weekly to stay on top of the constant chores that happen in every garden.

**Goals for 2022:**

* We hope to continue to plant natives and create beautiful compost and work toward maintaining a place of beauty that our congregants and neighbors can enjoy.

# The Home Again Project 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** The Home Again Project 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** J. Van Woert

**Members:** Participation is open to all UUCB members and non-members, families and friends

**Meetings:** Open Zoom meetings as needed

**Purpose:**

* As the UUCB community, we have the opportunity to work with Journeys End to make an apartment a warm, welcoming home for a newly arriving refugee family. Families arrive with few to no resources for establishing households during their first few months of resettlement. As a committed group of volunteers, a barren apartment is being transformed into a cozy home, bringing a sense of security to a family that has so little to start their new lives in Buffalo. In times like these, when the need is so great, we cannot do everything, but we can do something.

**Living Our Mission:**

* Participating in Home Again is a great way to build community, put our values into practice, learn about Buffalo's newest residents, and benefit both the arriving family and our community.

**Activities:**

* The first church-wide informational and planning Zoom meeting was held on September 30th, with 26 church members participating.
* Since that time, 42 individuals have demonstrated some level of involvement
* The congregation is kept informed of the status of the HA Ministry through weekly e-blasts, announcements, monthly newsletter articles and e-mails updating the roster of volunteers.
* Three two-hour drop-off timeslots have been established at the church, with 8 volunteers participating in the ongoing collection, sorting and labelling of items donated by a wide variety of church members and friends.
* Storage sites have been established for larger donations and furniture, and volunteers with vehicles for transport have been solicited
* A volunteer roster is being compiled for cleaning, moving and set up on Moving Day.
* A church-wide donation project involving creation of “mitten” gift card holders is ongoing, in concert with collection of donated gift cards and RE’s mitten tree (and winterwear) project.
* Journeys End was designated as the December Share-the-Plate recipient, with the JERS Outreach Director participating in the Sunday service on 12/5, updating the congregation on the status of arriving refugees and the invaluable contribution of our Home Again Ministry.

**Goals for 2022:**

* Complete the preparation of an apartment for a family of refugees
* Consider the preparation of a second apartment, possibly in partnership with another UU congregation.
* To explore other ways in which UUCB members can assist arriving refugees in their resettlement

# Justice Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Justice Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Hy Carrel

**Members (and ex-officio members):** Steve Wixson, Karen Peterson, Karen Jarvis, Athena McCrory, Hy Carrel and Rev. Joan Montagnes. Inactive members: Melissa Stadler and Donna Robinson. Former members: Denise DePietro (amazing committee chair through July 2021 and member through August 2021).

**Meetings:** The Justice Ministry Team met on the 2nd Thursday of every month from 6:30pm-8pm via Zoom. The Justice Ministry Team canceled the August meeting and met on the 1st Thursday in November.

**Activities:** The Justice Ministry Team (formerly known as SASE) works to

* engage the congregation with local progressive organizations and social actions.
* support nonprofit organizations with which the congregation has a relationship (or desires a relationship) through the share-the-plate partnership.
* build relationships into opportunities for education, volunteering and activism by members of the congregation.

**Living our Mission:**

* The Justice Ministry Team prioritizes organizations that are actively anti-racist and anti-oppressive. The Justice Ministry Team brings compelling speakers through our share-the-plate partners. The speakers activate the congregation to support their cause through donations and activities. The speakers and activities coordinate to transform the words of our mission into specific compassion actions.

**Accomplishments in 2021:** In 2021, we supported

* HOME and gathered 7 big bags of socks for Friends of the Night People
* BFNC, collected Personal Care Items Drive, and sent postcards to advocate for prioritized COVID vaccine access in Erie County for people who are incarcerated
* UUA and UUSC Disaster Relief Fund and led a discussion group of a chapter of the common read, Crazy Like Us by Ethan Watters
* Re-Tree WNY and gave away saplings
* Literacy Buffalo Niagara
* Locust Street Art and an art activity
* Pride Center of WNY
* Journey's End and Collecting backpacks and school supplies
* Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition
* Kenmore Alliance's Shelterless Ministry and collected Joy Items
* Our Mommie Village and collected items for new mothers (diapers)
* Journey's End (again!) and Mitten Tree
* Challenging Conversations 2021 in April, where we provided a centering exercise, tech support, and financial support to this powerful workshop
* Collected several dozen signatures throughout April, May and June in support of Buffalo’s Police Accountability Ballot Initiative

**Goals for 2022:**

* Having a partner and a linked activity every month
* Building the team size to six or seven active members plus Rev. Joan.
* Developing greater engagement between the congregation and share-the-plate partners
* Hosting a training of Witness to Injustice - in-person or virtual participatory education
* Hosting a panel discussion on Health Disparities

# Music Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Music Ministry Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairpersons:** Phil Nicolai, Mary Richert

**Members (and ex-officio members):** Phil Nicolai, Mary Richert, Diane Bockrath (secretary), Leo Mitchell, Will Botsford, Jennifer Latham, Liz Clark, Joel Cohen, Alan Atkinson, Jessie Downs (ex officio)

**Meetings:** First Monday of the month at 7 pm in the Alliance Room

**Activities:**

* Provided logistical support to music director to enable weekly choir rehearsals on Thursday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 and bimonthly singing at services
* Continued to plan how choir will function during and after the pandemic
* Brainstormed how the music program can assist the church in fundraising activities

**Living our Mission:**

* The Music Ministry Team supports the music staff in maintaining a strong choir presence to enhance the worship experience in our Sunday services.
* The Music Ministry Team provides financial assistance directly to the general fund by holding fundraisers like our Valentine’s Dinner and soliciting direct financial support from friends and members to provide additional musical offerings like our Music Sunday programs
* The Music Ministry Team provides material support to musical offerings outside of the Sunday services by working with musical artists who perform in our sanctuary or sing with our choir either in our sanctuary or in other venues.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Retained a strong choir core through Covid isolation with Zoom rehearsals and prepared music for services by individually recording tracks which were mixed by the staff
* Provided logistical support for Jessie Downs’ opera, The Second Sight
* Organized meetings with staff and minister and agreed to reconvene after the painful departure of our director, Daniel Bassin
* Organized a session for choir members to talk about their concerns in a safe and respectful atmosphere
* Facilitated the successful transition to the new acting music director, Jessie Downs
* Welcomed the hiring of new tenor and soprano section leaders
* Supported the return to in person choir rehearsals and participation in church services with masks and additional air filtration
* Adopted a COVID covenant to encourage and assure the safety of everyone. Everyone agreed to be fully vaccinated, including getting the booster in a timely manner
* Initiated caroling at the Elmwood Village Association Christmas opening at Bidwell and Elmwood

**Goals for 2022:**

* Recruit new choir members and reconnect with former members
* Update choir covenant
* Update Music Ministry Team covenant

# Nominating Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Nominating Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chaipersons:** Beth White (Dec. 2021) and John Marohn (Dec. 2022)

**Members:** Peter Sloan (Dec. 2023); Phyllis Dissek (Dec. 2022); Kathy Ryan (Dec. 2023)

**Meetings:** Zoom meetings were held on Nov. 7, 16, 30

**Activities:**

* Three great candidates were identified for the slate of new trustees who will start terms in 2022: Bobby Withrop, Shawn Sweet, and Kate Bell-Schwede. We believe all will bring great experience, energy and commitment to the Board of Trustees.
* Doug Sherman has agreed to join our committee in 2022 (pending board approval). Beth will stay on for another three-year term but is hopeful another member will step in as co-chair. As of yet, we have not identified another new committee member. We will if we can, or we may be down one member for the upcoming year.

**Living Our Mission:**

* to identify three board candidates for the Jan. 2022 congregational meeting
* to identify new committee members to replace Ashley Mountcastle and Teal Postula, who did not engage with our committee this year

**Goals for 2022:**

* In spring 2021, we had productive discussions with Board President Martha Malkewicz about having the Nominating Committee assist with recruitment for UUCB committees generally (not just the BoT). The plan is to develop a database of church member skillsets to help identify good candidates. Given the church’s challenges in 2021, we did not launch this new effort. Doug Sherman has expressed interest in helping to get this moving.

# Oversight Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Oversight Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Mary Louise Hill

**Members:** Secretary: Mary Bisson, Ryan Knowles, Donna Hagerty, incoming. Rev. Joan Montagnes, ex-officio

**Members who left:** Marjorie Girth, August 2020; Ken Manly, December 2021

**Meetings:** Monthly, 2nd Monday of the month, online

**Activities:**

* We continued to provide leading questions to advisory committees to elicit more thoughtful and creative annual reports. We have offered to meet with committee members to discuss preparation of their report, but in most recent cases they have not needed that help. This year, most Advisory Committee reports have needed little or no revision after the first draft. Finally, the Board accepted our proposal to practice Covenant-Based Evaluations of their meeting processes.

**Living our Mission:**

* The Oversight Advisory Committee is dedicated to transforming the written policies of our By-Laws and Board Policy Book into a comfortably effective habit. We develop, implement, and regularly review accountability systems for use by the Board of Trustees. The Board uses these to evaluate its own performance, including the performance of its Advisory Committees and Task Forces.

**Goals for 2021:**

* Recruitment of candidates for the Board and its Advisory Committees and Task Forces is a serious ongoing problem. We will continue to advocate for a recruitment process dedicated to Advisory Committees and Task Forces.

# Pastoral Care and Support 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Pastoral Care and Support 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Name of Chairperson:** Ginny Vaughan

**Members:** Bobbie Baker**,** Josette Cunningham**,** Cat Degenfelder**,** Barbara Kloberdanz**,** Jackie Knowles**,** Martha Malkiewicz**,** Don Shedd**,** Steve Wixson

**Activities:**

* To enhance the sense of community within the congregation
* Facilitate a sense of belonging and connectedness
* Foster a sense of caring for each other

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Sent Cards to members who were experiencing a joy or a sorrow (over 80 Cards)
* Sent Cards to members who are not able to attend church, or have lost a loved one during the year, or are experiencing a hardship-twice a year December & June- 40-45 cards each time
* Sent Anniversary Cards to Members who have lost a love one in the past three years
* Sent six cards to RE Seniors who graduated from high school
* Staff the Joys and Concerns Table
* Assisted with Blue Christmas

**Goals for 2022**

* Continue to send cards to the above four groups
* To send cards to members who have lost a loved one in the past three years
* Continue to staff the Joys & Concerns Table
* To communicate with Rev. Joan and the Pastoral Team regarding members who are experiencing a joy or sorrow

# Personnel Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Personnel Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Scott Nuwer-Hill

**Members (and ex-officio members):** Julie Taylor, Kathleen O’Hara, Mary Coleman

**Meetings:** Committee formed in March of 2021 and due to the pandemic, meetings occurred primarily via Zoom with two meetings occurring at the church.

**Activities:**

* The overall purpose of the Personnel Advisory Committee is to develop and recommend to the Board policies to promote a healthy, professional, and legal working relationship between the church and its paid and volunteer staff. This work includes:
* Seeking the advice of outside legal counsel to review any proposed changes to the Personnel Manual and remaining abreast of upcoming changes in in employment law. This includes:
* Reviewing and recommending changes to the church’s Personnel Manual for paid staff.
* Keeping the board abreast of the effective date of changes to relevant employment laws and how these changes may impact employment policies, including the Personnel Manual.
* Providing advice concerning major changes to staff positions in accordance with section 4.1.2 of the Board Policy Book.
* Ensuring the Personnel Manual is consistent with compensation standards, in accordance with section 4.4.2.2 of the Board Policy Book.
* Making policy recommendations concerning church volunteers at the request of the board and with advice from outside legal counsel.

**Living our Mission:**

* This committee advances the church’s mission by creating a policy manual that enables the church to hire and maintain suitable employees. What-is-more, committee members bring their varied experiences to the personnel matters of the church throughout the year.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* The committee supported church leadership related to interpersonal issues/concerns and assisted in the development of associated action plans and resulting activities. This committee was present during post-mortem town-hall sessions demonstrating alignment between church leadership and the Personnel committee related to difficult employment related decisions and strategies. Furthermore, members of the committee attended a seminar focused on employment manuals for churches in the third quarter of 2021 which will further assist us in the updating of our own documents.

**Goals for 2022:**

* The committee will bring the Personnel manual current and support ad hoc requests from staff/board regarding the breadth of personnel related concerns.

# Stewardship Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Stewardship Team2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairpersons:** Charlene Montgomery and Kathaleen Burke

**Members (and ex-officio members**): Rev Joan Montagnes, Donna Sentz, Dave Batt, Pete Sloan, Bob Klick

**Meetings:** Initial Meeting took place in September with just Kathaleen and Charlene to do the initial planning. Then a meeting was held in October with Rev. Joan to finalize Celebration Sunday and content of letters.

**Activities:**

* Created initial calendar with tentative dates and deadlines
* Held Celebration Sunday with a Halloween theme – gave out treat bags to all attending
* Mailed out letters with pledge cards
* Made phone calls to those who had not pledged
* Sent emails to those who couldn’t be reached
* Sent Thank you cards to those who pledged
* Sent second letter to visitors
* Sent third letter to those who still had not pledged

**Living our Mission:**

* The Stewardship Team dealt with people on sensitive issues – stewardship – giving of their money and time. Talking to UUCB members about ministries and what their money supports was an important part of the phone calls and letters. Speaking to people with compassion and care was important, as was listening to their concerns.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Although the goal for stewardship has not been met, we continue to reach out to people soliciting pledges for the coming 2022 year.
* Every person on our list was contacted.
* Celebration Sunday was a great success.

**Goals for 2022:**

* This year was a real learning experience for our team. Continuation of some covid restrictions affected how people “attended” church. Comfort levels among the elderly was low – therefore reaching out to them was important. But we learned that we need to
* Start planning earlier on next year’s stewardship campaign --- August instead of September.
* Planning Celebration Sunday also needs to take place sooner so that items for the gift bags can be ordered in a timely manner.
* Writing of all the letters needs to take place all at once so there is consistency
* Involving more people in phone calling and writing thank you cards would be helpful.
* Encourage people to increase their pledges.
* Keep the goal of $400,000 for stewardship
* Give people a positive sense of ownership of ministries they support
* Deal with people we call with gentleness and compassion
* Encourage people to ask questions so they feel good about giving.

# UUCB Strategy Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** UUCB Strategy Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Kathleen McGriff Powers – my term as a member ended this year. I am merely a lovely place holder for this committee

**Members (and ex-officio members):** No other members

**Meetings:** There have been no meetings this year

**Activities:**

* There have been no activities this year
* For the following points I will attach last year’s report. The mission, accomplishments, and goals will remain the same.

**Living our Mission:**

* The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo is a compassionate, thoughtful and diverse religious community that nurtures and challenges itself into deeper understanding, meaning and purpose.
* We gather through worship, music, education, intersectional ministries, and service.
* We inspire each other in love and mutual respect to further our individual and collective spiritual journey.
* We transform through our combined talents, and in coalition with other progressive organizations, in service to anti-racist anti-oppressive movements.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

**Goals for 2022:**

# Technology Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Technology Team 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** John Petrocelli

**Committee members:** Josh Dissek, Justin DeCleene, Paul Zanolli, Martha Malkiewicz, Karen Streech

**Meetings:** On an as-needed basis

**Activities:**

* The Technology Team manages the church’s technology infrastructure, and advises the church staff, ministry teams, board of trustees, advisory committees, and other church groups on any technology needs. We manage physical infrastructure such as the church’s network infrastructure, server, computers, phones, audio systems, and live-streaming system. We also manage the various software infrastructure such as the church’s website, email system, software licensing, and electronic file storage.

**Living our Mission:**

* The Technology Team supports the church community by providing technology services that enable us to gather, inspire, and transform. We make sure that all the church’s tech infrastructure is in working order so that it can be utilized during worship, by the various groups that help keep the church running, and by the staff so that they can do their jobs.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Installed new live streaming system in the Sanctuary
* Allows all worship services to be live streamed over the internet so that people can attend church remotely as needed
* All live streams are archived on YouTube for later viewing as desired
* Linked directly into the Sanctuary microphones to improve sound quality
* Upgraded church’s wireless network to new system
* Replaced all wireless access points throughout the building and installed a new management controller
* Allows for future expansion to other parts of the building as well as future improvements to make the Wi-Fi more user-friendly
* Provides advanced monitoring and diagnostics
* Worked with the Fixed Assets Advisory Committee to repair and restore Sanctuary lighting controller
* The Autani lighting controller in the Sanctuary that provides dimming capabilities was offline for almost 2 years after a hardware breakdown. It has since been repaired, reinstalled, and is now fully operational once again.
* Expanded SharePoint cloud storage to all board advisory committees and ministry teams
* Allows groups to store their files in a shared cloud-based space

**Goals for 2022:**

* Upgrade and migrate church’s website to new platform
* the church’s website currently runs on a platform that no longer fully meets the church’s needs
* the website will be migrated to WordPress
* WordPress is much more flexible than our current system
* Website content will be updated to better fit the church’s needs
* Train groups on how to use SharePoint
* Although all church groups now have access to SharePoint, not all fully utilize it
* Build new logon portal for the guest Wi-Fi
* Provides self-service method of registering for Wi-Fi access
* Expand the Sanctuary live-streaming system
* Add at least one additional camera so that we can capture other parts of the Sanctuary during worship services
* Currently, we only have one camera which captures only the chancel and the floor immediately in front of it
* Upgrade main office computer
* the main admin computer in the church office will be replaced as part of our normal computer replacement schedule
* Computers are normally replaced every 5-6 years to ensure the staff have up-to-date computers in working condition so that they can effectively do their jobs

# Universal Access & Inclusion Ministry Team (UAIM) 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Universal Access & Inclusion Ministry Team (UAIM) 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Ginny Vaughan

**Members:** Lynn Mancuso, Sue Mann Dolce, Sophia Roberts, Beryl Smith, Steve Wixson

**Meetings:** Currently, we are meeting virtually. It’s more convenient for members who are working. We meet the second Wednesday of the month from 5:30 to 7. When we met at the Church, we used the Parrish Hall because no one else was in the building.

**Activities:**

* Conduct a Sunday Service once a year on a disability topic.
* Advocate for the Church building and grounds to be more accessible for people with disabilities
* Ensure that the members/friends welcome and include or involve disable people in all Church’s activities
* Conduct workshops for members/friends on a disability topic which include disable people taking a leadership role.
* Continue to abide by the requirements of UUA/AIM program which certifies UUCB as a Congregation who welcomes disabled people and continues to strive for an accessible & inclusive church. Need to recertify every three years
* Work with other UUCB teams to ensure their activities are inclusive and accessible
* Work with the Fixed Assets Team to make the church more accessible.

**Living the Mission:**

* To make the UUCB Congregation welcoming and accessible to those with disabilities
* To foster an inclusive environment for members/friends of UUCB with disabilities
* To encourage and support people with disabilities becoming an integral part of UUCB activities.

**Accomplishments in 2021:**

* Invited Rev Barbara Myers to preach at a Sunday Service regarding how to welcome & include people with mental health issues
* An UAIM member led a book discussion on Barbara Myers’ book, Held
* Karl Shallowhorn, an advocate for people with mental health issues talked during a Sunday Service. The service was planned and led by members of UAIM.
* Initiated and worked with Rev. Joan and other UUCB Teams to develop a Relational Covenant for members/friends of UUCB
* Update the accessible webpage on the UUCB webpage

**Goals for 2022:**

* Plan a Sunday service
* Have a middle rail installed on the stairs between the Sanctuary and the Parish Hall.
* Conduct a workshop with Center for Advocacy concerning a current disability issue.

# Women’s Society 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Title:** Women’s Society 2021 Annual Report to the Congregation

**Chairperson:** Lucy Sloan

**Members:** Kathy Ryan, Joanne Kocak, Paulette Notaro, Josette Cunningham, Elaine Zielin, Kathleen Burke, Laurie Hogan, Joyce Bol, Ellen Gibson

**Activities:**

* In “normal times”, the Women's Society of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo strives to provide interesting, stimulating & affordable monthly programs for its members, general church community & neighborhood community. Funds received through luncheons, annual membership fees, yearly book sales and memorial receptions are used to purchase items and services which enhance church celebrations or facilities, such as seasonal decorations for the sanctuary, new carpets and furniture. In addition, the Society contributes to several charitable organizations each year. Membership is open to all.
* During these “COVID times”, all of our events have been cancelled. Nevertheless, we did request dues in order to continue purchasing items and donating to charities. Approximately 35 members joined. We had planned a Christmas, 2021 vocal music program, with masks & social distancing required, but it was cancelled due to the church’s COVID guideline limiting singing to the second half of a one-hour event.
* An informal poll of Women’s Society members’ regarding their willingness to meet in a private room in a restaurant was taken from December 10th - 12th, with all agreeing that it was feasible. Shortly after this poll, however, COVID infection rates increased significantly, and remain high in Erie County.
* The Women’s Society provided one memorial reception in 2021, conforming to COVID guidelines by purchasing prepackaged beverages and food. Since members were not permitted to provide home-made food items, expenses for the reception greatly exceeded the $200 paid by the family, and preparations required many hours of phone calls, comparative shopping and assembling “goodie bags”. Because of the added costs and labor, we declined to offer further receptions. One later memorial reception was managed by a church committee not associated with the Women’s Society, and other memorial services were held without on-site receptions.
* Wreaths & poinsettias for Christmas in the sanctuary were purchased as usual. The Women’s Society continued its membership in the Buffalo Federation of Women’s Clubs (BFWC), hoping to be able to share ideas, network, attend their programs, and advertise our programs once again.
* Nine charities received donations from the Women’s Society this year. These were: Jericho Road Community Center, Planned Parenthood of WNY, Cornerstone Manor, Gay and Lesbian Youth Services, Haven House, Voice Buffalo, WNY Peace Center, WNY Women’s Foundation, International Institute—Human Trafficking
* The collection of food for Feed More WNY and items for prisoners have been suspended due to pandemic precautions. Books are not being collected, as we have more than enough books for the Book Sale, whenever it is held. Eyeglasses and hearing aids are still being collected at church. We are looking into a program that builds beds & provides bed linens for children who need them, Sleep in Heavenly Peace.
* Reservations have been made for Damn Yankees at the Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake for Thursday, May 19, 2022, but attendance will depend on the infection rate and Canadian restrictions for crossing the border (negative COVID test, registering with ArriveCan and providing vaccination card & passport) which may discourage WS members from attending the show.
* Five members of the Women’s Society Board from before the pandemic remain in place until the Women’s Society can meet in person to create and approve a slate. Two individuals have stepped down but agreed to be consulted as needed.

**Goals for 2022:**

* Our plan for 2022 is to wait until the COVID precautions are lifted and the church is available for programs. When our lives return to “normal”, the Women’s Society will continue to engage excellent speakers on thought-provoking and interesting topics, along with a good lunch; enhance the church environment & events; hold an annual book sale; offer memorial receptions; and contribute to deserving causes.