

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

2022 Annual Report

Report Assembled by Kaylan Ruiz



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Minister's 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

OUR CHURCH BODY

If our church had a body with heart and hands, mind and heart, hands and feet, skeleton, and muscles, and even a reproductive system, you could imagine that the Annual Report to the Congregation would be the body's assessment of its own health.

It's as if you sat down for a quiet, intentional, curious minute to check-in with yourself from your nose to your toes. "Hey Self, how are you doing?" But in the case of an Annual Report by the members and staff of the congregation to the members of the congregation, it's more like: "Hey Congregation, how are we doing together?"

As we respond, it's important that we are honest with ourselves so we can find sore spots that need care, and so we can celebrate our strengths. It's important to look back to note accomplishments and missed goals. It's also important to look forward toward implementing our shared vision and achieving our dreams.

The minister's role in the church body spans widely across some organs and appendages, but not all. For instance, the brain (governing documents located on our website) belongs to the congregation, the skeleton (building) belongs to the Fixed Assets Advisory Committee, and the stomach that converts food into life (finances) belongs to the Board of Trustees.

In my report, I'll let you know how I think our Breath and Spirit, Heart, Feet, Reproductive System, Hands, and Muscles are doing in terms of health, happiness, and overall wellbeing.

BREATH AND SPIRIT: WORSHIP

This year will send 52 Sundays our way (the last on Dec. 25!), and we will offer worship on every single one of them.

Perhaps the most notable service this year was held on November 20, our big Thanksgiving Extravaganza which was almost completely snowed out. Will Botsford, Tim Renzoni, and Hy Carrel dug us out from the drifts. Chris Sierzchula and Taryn Goehrig provided music. Board member, Thea Hassan, even snowshoed in from her home on the East side. Seventeen hardy souls worshiped in a sweet circle. We held a Thanksgiving communion of almonds and had hot buttered raisin bread toast with coffee for fellowship time. Everyone helped set up, everyone participated, everyone helped clean up, and everyone was positively giddy about being together. Joy on Sunday morning.

I am deeply grateful to our Worship Associates: Charlene Montgomery, Fran Manly, Julie Taylor, Eve Holberg, Shaun Doyle, Cinara Marquis, and Bill Parke. Our Worship Associates bring life to our chancel every week (imagine if you had to listen to my voice drone on for a full hour!). They also host our guest preachers, and often preach on Sundays when I am not in the pulpit.

I am especially grateful to our Worship Associates for covering almost all the worship services when I took a short, two-month sabbatical in January and February, with only two months' notice.

Our worship would be anemic indeed if it weren't for our Music Ministry under the marvelous direction of Dr. Jessie Downs. I am grateful beyond measure to her, and to the rest of the music staff: Christ Sierzchula, Taryn Goehrig, Helen Lowry, Liam Allen, and Michael Harris. Jessie and I meet every week and we meet with the rest of the music staff for planning once each month. Together we strive to bring you worship services that are deeply coherent and multi-experiential. More on the Music Ministry later in this Annual Report.

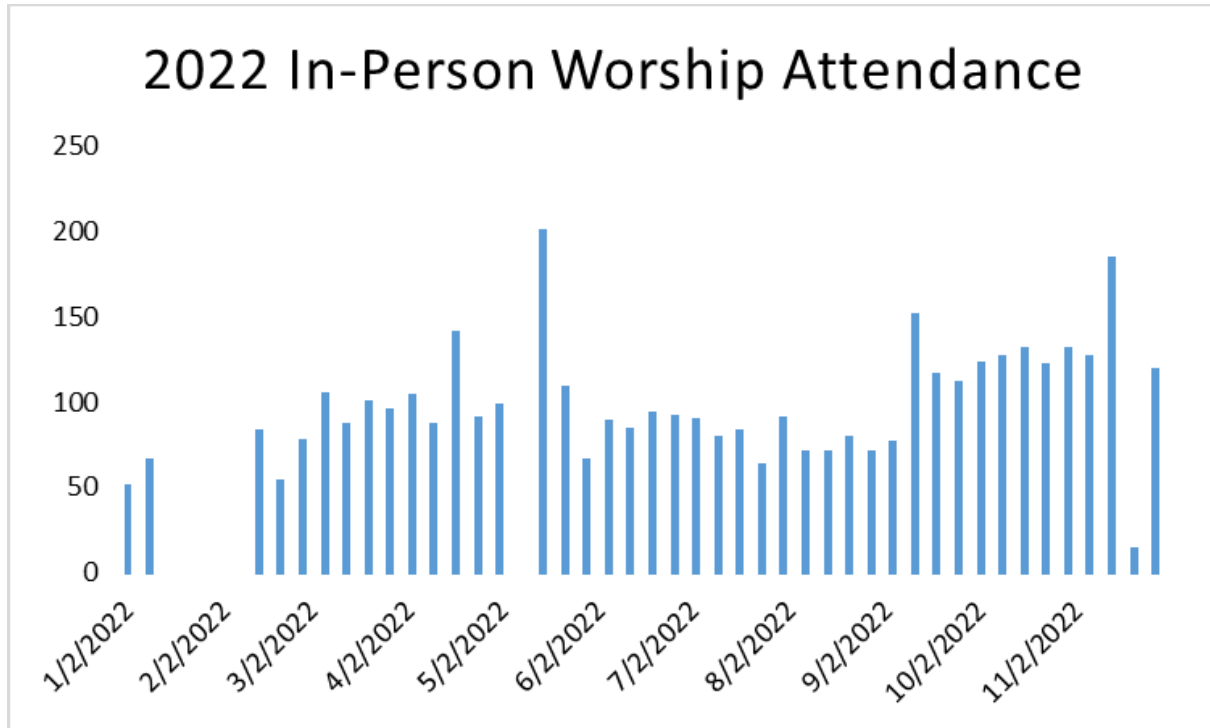
Our Tech Team are the unsung heroes of worship. When things are going perfectly (which they usually do), nobody ever even thinks about the people with their heads buried in the audio-visual cabinets and behind the electronic scenes. Only when gremlins squeak or rumble from the sound system, or the livestream fails, are we reminded that without John Petrocelli, Josh Dissek, Justin DeCleene, Martha Malkiewicz, and Karen Streech there would be no worship at all. These are also the folks who get our services online.

Our Senior Usher, Thaddeus Bieniek, celebrated his fortieth year in the role this year. Thaddeus makes sure that there are greeters to hand out Orders of Service, and ushers to pass the offering plates.

Thanks go to Sandra Bissontz who took up the mantle of Flower Goddess this year. Sandra coordinates the altar flower requests to honor our loved ones and beautify our sanctuary.

Just so you know, we have had an average of 90.9 folks sitting in the pews on Sunday mornings during 2022 and between 20 and 40 live streaming. The good news is that our numbers are going up! Lots of visitors are coming and sticking around.

Our most highly attended services have occurred on Music Sundays. The attendance mystery is the number of views our YouTube channel receives: 200-900 views per service! Someone is going to have to explain that to me.



And the breath and spirit of church isn't alive just on Sunday mornings. This year we offered a Veteran's Day Service (Nov 11) and a Blue Christmas Service (Dec 9). We had intended to also offer a Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience Service (Nov 20), but it was cancelled due to heavy snow.

In sum, our shared worship life is healthy and thriving. Lots of people involved at every level. Our new staff is performing wonderfully together. Vaccines have made it safe for people to return. The rebirth of our children and youth ministry has brought back parents and their kids. And our online presence has increased our ability to touch the lives and hearts at home and around the world.

HEART: PASTORAL CARE

The Pastoral Care heart of our church pumps with not four chambers, but five!

The Ordained Minister

You can always call or email me if you need a caring presence in your life. Our conversations are confidential. Sometimes it helps to sort through the messiness of our days with someone from outside your particular system. I am here for you. W:716-885-21-36, H: 425-894-2541, minister@buffalouu.org

I also officiate at rites of passage. This year I officiated at five memorial services, many of which included an interment ceremony in our memorial garden. I officiated at two child dedication ceremonies.

The Lay Pastoral Ministers

In 2022, our Lay Pastoral Ministers (LPMs) reached out to about 40 people going through stressful, life transitions – illness, birth of a baby, depression, aging etc. Some of these transitions are short-lived, while others are chronic.

The LPMs, John Marohn, Karen Jarvis, Lyn Mancuso, and Barbara Brown, (Bonnie Collins completed her term as LPM in June) are vital to our Pastoral Care Ministry because they work closely with the minister to make sure nobody in beloved community slips through the fingers of care. We meet monthly to coordinate our ministries.

If you would like to have a pastoral relationship with one of our Lay Pastoral Ministers, please let me know.

The Pastoral Care and Support Ministry Team

This loving group of people sends cards to those of us who could use a beautiful little reminder that we are not alone. They also send cards to our homebound members every spring and holiday season. Many thanks to Ginny Vaughan for shepherding this ministry. More on the Pastoral Care and Support Team later in this Annual Report.

The Good-For Lists

In our church we say that everyone is “Good For” something. You may be good for a vegetarian meal. You may be good for mowing lawns. You may be good for a drive to the doctor’s office or a grocery run. You may be good for a plate of lemon squares for a memorial service reception.

The way the Good-For Lists work is this: you decide ahead of time how you like helping people, then you write it down on the Good-For List. Then, when the need arises, you will be called upon to perform a caring task that you like to do. Think about it, what are you good for? A meal, household chores, transportation, or whatever?

I am very thankful for Sandra Van Every who coordinates the Good-For Lists. Sandra picked up the torch from Josette Cunningham who was the Good-For List Angel for many years. Thank you, Josette!

If you want to put your name on the Good-For List, please contact Sandra or me.

Grieving Group

Bonnie Collins facilitates our Grieving Group that meets once each month. More on this important ministry later in this Annual Report.

Bonus Care

Community building might be considered part of our pastoral care ministry – maybe the congregational blood flow. To this end, in September, I started the Tuesday morning Coffee Klatch, and on October 8 we held the Second Annual Great Pumpkin Hunt.

In sum, the heart of pastoral care in our church is beating with a strong and steady pulse. Five different ministries reach out to you and will be with you if you are suffering in sorrow or celebrating in joy. We are intentionally building community. You are not alone.

FEET: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our congregation is focused on our mission to gather, inspire ourselves and each other, and to transform ourselves and the world. Truly, when we get together our vision widens, and our strength is amplified. Together we use the transformative power of Love to overcome all hate, all fear, and all oppression.

Social Justice Ministry Team and Share the Plate

My gratitude goes out to Hy Carrel (chair), Steve Wixson, Karen Jarvis, Rachel Krajna, Athena McCrory, Christine Slocum, and Susan Wishart for their service on the Justice Ministry Team. These are the good folks who bring us the Share the Plate ministry and engage us in social action throughout the year. More on their activities later in the Annual Report.

Family Promise

Thanks go to Nancy Wilkins for being our liaison to Family Promise of Western New York. Family Promise is Buffalo's truly excellent transitional housing shelter for whole families. I serve on their Advisory Board. This year our congregation generously played Santa for two families supported by Family Promise. More on our partnership with Family Promise later in this Annual Report.

Home Again

I cannot laude enough Juli Van Woert, Tom Muka, and the 80 friends and members of our congregation who banded together to furnish an entire house for a family of eight new Buffalonians from Afghanistan through Journey's End Refugee Services. More on this project later in this Annual Report.

Social Justice Social Club

Emma Goldberg once famously quipped, "If I can't dance, I don't want to join your revolution." Apparently, Maria Testa feels the same way. Maria recently started the brand-new Social Justice Social Club – a ministry team that does justice while having fun!

Reproductive Freedom

I serve on the Advisory Board of New York State Concerned Clergy for Choice. Concerned Clergy for Choice is a multi-faith statewide network of religious leaders committed to standing with Planned Parenthood patients and health centers. Concerned Clergy for Choice members provide community education on theological perspectives and speak with the media and policy makers about the deep and longstanding religious support for access to basic health care which includes contraception, abortion, and comprehensive sex education. In my capacity, I coordinate local clergy activism. Jess Pond and I also invited Rabbi Dennis Ross to present an evening on advocacy in the post-Roe world.

VOICE-Buffalo

VOICE-Buffalo is Buffalo's faith-based community organizing network. We are a member organization. VOICE works to overcome the history of abuses in the criminal justice process and to ensure that law enforcement, adjudication, and criminal corrections are equitable for all. Their current campaigns focus on Bail Reform and the implementation of a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Erie County. They are partnered with the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition to create Peace Hubs and promote Restorative Practices. Their Executive Director, Rev. Denise Walden-Glenn, preached a memorable service from our pulpit on June 26.

In sum, we are showing up. We are living our mission and living into our vision. We are making a difference in our wider community.

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM: MEMBERSHIP

Membership development has been a challenge over the last year. At the time of this writing, we have 245 members in good standing. This year we lost some precious souls to death and drifting, and we gained six new members. We would be remiss to speak of membership without mentioning a few influencing factors:

- The pandemic took a toll on our numbers. Although none of our members passed away due to covid, many simply got out of the habit of coming to church and have not returned since we re-

opened our doors. Some even stopped making financial contributions to the life of our congregation which is a requirement for continued membership.

- A wave of people came back to church once vaccinations against covid became available.
- Jessie Downs and the magnetic attraction of our excellent music ministry draw people into our church, and
- Jess Pond has quadrupled the number of kids in our children and youth ministry. Where there are kids, there are parents.

I am happy to report that nine people have signed up for the December membership classes and two additional friends of the congregation expressed interest in becoming members. I will meet with the latter two for a customized orientation. I expect to have a New Member Signing Ceremony in early January 2023.

I am grateful to Eve Holberg who agreed to organize the newly revived Welcome and Connections Ministry Team. More on that ministry later in this Annual Report.

In sum, our membership numbers are down from years past, but they are increasing as we emerge from this pandemic. Our ministries are attractive to visitors and we are intentionally working to increase numbers.

HANDS: OUTREACH (AKA GETTING INTO TROUBLE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH)

Although we do not like to think of ourselves as overtly evangelical, I am always fond of sharing our good news, and we have tons of good news. We reach out to touch the hearts of others who may be in need of a beloved community like ours. No need to keep our lights under a bushel!

Our garden is practically a public park with the benefit of being ours to use as we wish, so I use it to reach out to the public.

- On June's Pride Sunday, our worship spilled out into the parade as we festooned our hedge with a massively long banner of diverse gender identity flags.
- Joe Poodry and I created a memorial for the ten people murdered at Tops Friendly Market on May 14. Ten Black Lives Matters flew along the garden walk, each with a nameplate for one of the slain.
- In November, I erected thirty-two transgender flags along the garden path, one for each identified transgender/non-binary person murdered this year. Please note, this was prior to the tragic shooting at the Q Night Club in Colorado Springs.
- In December, I affixed to our hedge a vinyl banner announcing our Christmas Eve services.

Thanks go to Gerry and Bridget Evans for getting word out on public radio. This dynamic mother and daughter duo lassoed me into their scheme to make our church a sponsor of WBFO. Expect to hear about your beloved congregation over the airwaves in January. Thank you to the many donors who made this project possible. If you are interested in contributing to future radio spots, please let me know.

During the year I have intentionally reached out to several local clergy members including Michelle Buhite (Amherst UU), Matt Lincoln (Trinity Episcopal), Todd Leach (Westminster Presbyterian), and Jeramiah Smith (Parkside Lutheran).

Most of my time is spent at my desk writing and responding to emails. Often, I am in Ministry Team, Advisory Committee, staff, or Board meetings. And sometimes I get out of the church and represent our church in the community. Here are a few occasions I managed to get out of the office (Please remember I was on sabbatical during the months of January and February).

May 22 – Accepted the Lunenfeld Beautification Grant at a gathering hosted by Gardens Buffalo Niagara. Big thank you to Bridget Evans for applying for the grant.

June 11 – Joined 13 other members of our congregation in the March for Our Lives on Jefferson Avenue to bear witness, to pay respects to the slain of May 14, and to protest current gun laws.

June 20-22 – Attended UU Minister's Association Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon

June 22-26 – Attended UUA General Assembly in Portland, Oregon

Sept 17-18 – Partnered with Westminster Presbyterian and Trinity Episcopal to bring Rev. Dr. David Galston to Buffalo for a multi-congregation discussion, lecture and sermon.

Nov 1 – Provided the Chalice Lighting Prayer for the second in a Climate Crisis Panel Series hosted by Fourth Universalist Society of NYC. The series is an educational collaboration focusing on Climate Change and how we can respond and act. The meeting was held via zoom.

Dec 1 – Attended a dinner hosted by the Turkish Muslim community of Buffalo and made a short presentation on gratitude.

In sum, although your minister is not exactly a community leader, I work to ensure that our congregation is known in the wider community for our values and our actions.

MUSCLES: STAFF

Although recent years have brought us significant and sometimes difficult staff transitions, I am delighted to report that we are now blessed with a happy team of professionals who enjoy working together and are invested in implementing the mission and vision of the church and serving our congregation.

This year we saw three departures and three hires to complete the transitions that began more than a year ago. Emilia Taylor-Sweet, our Temporary Office Manager, was succeeded by our new settled Office Manager, Kaylan Ruiz. Lisa Peterangelo, our Acting Religious Education Director, was succeeded by our settled Religious Education Director, Jess Pond. And Jessie Downs was promoted from Acting Music Director to settled Music Director.

All three of these position transitions were overseen with much care and thought. All decisions about job descriptions, search processes and job applicants were made with substantial congregational leadership. I want to thank Mary Coleman, Patty Macdonald, Doug Sherman, and Renee Geraci for serving on the Office Manager Search Team. I want to thank Tom Petrocelli, Phyllis Dissek, Scott Nuwer, Kathaleen Burke, and Andrea Fuhrman for serving on the Religious Education Search Team. And I would like to thank Julie Taylor, Phil Nicolai, Joel Cohen, and Beth White for serving on the Music Director Search Team.

Jonathan Vogtle also stepped down after years of wonderful service as our accompanist due to a move to Rochester. We were delighted to hire Chris Sierzchula as Jonathan's successor.

In sum, your staff is humming along beautifully together and working hard to serve you.

Submitted in faith and affection, Rev. Joan Montagnes

Director of Religious Education Annual Report to the Congregation

Staff: Jessica Pond, Director of Religious Education (August 2022)

It has been a wonderful first four months of the Religious Education year, and of my first year here. There are more than 50 children and youth participating in the RE program, attending classes on Sunday mornings and learning about stories from various cultures, UU values, teamwork and building community with each other. The Religious Education ministry is supported by an amazing team of about 15 volunteers who generously donate their time, effort, and considerable skills to teach and enrich the children and youth in our program during the regular Sunday classes and in special RE activities.



On October 29 the RE volunteers and I put together the Halloween Party & Potluck, which was a wonderful multi-generational gathering of about 45 children, youth, and adults. We did some Halloween crafts, played lots of games, ate and contributed delicious food, and got spooked by the Youth Group's Haunted Basement.

On November 5-6, I accompanied two of the members of our high school Youth Group to Syracuse for the first post-COVID Youth Con (Conference) in the UU denomination! Fifteen youth from five congregations in four cities – Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, and Cortland – came together to do workshops, play lots of games, put together a beautiful worship service, and most importantly, build community! It was heartwarming to see the group of teens come together and start forming the new relationships that they have missed out on the past few years. The Buffalo youth who attended are eager to bring back Youth Cons to Buffalo in 2023.



In December, the RE Ministry will be implementing a Religious Education Safety Policy to support our commitment to the emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental health of some of our most vulnerable members – the children and youth. This safety policy was first drafted by Lisa Peterangelo and a team of RE volunteers, to which I have added some revisions with input from additional volunteers.

We have also had a couple of wonderful new programs in Adult Education this year. Sharon Walker and Mary Lou Hill are leading the UUCB Banned Book Club, who read *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison in the fall and will be reading *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino in the new year. And Harvard and UB professor Yunus Kumek has been teaching an introductory class on

Sufism: Islamic Mysticism, which will be wrapping up at the beginning of December; we are planning a continuation of this class in the spring.

I have had a couple of great opportunities to learn more about what other UU congregations are doing, and about what is happening in our UU community-at-large. In October I attended the Liberal Religious Educators' Association (LREDA) Conference online and learned about how our fellow UU congregations are adopting the Eighth Principle and bringing anti-racism work into their congregations. And in November I attended the fall retreat for our region of LREDA, where I was able to meet and collaborate with religious educators from our neighboring congregations, including Amherst, Syracuse, Rochester, Canton, Saratoga Springs, and Schenectady.

There is so much I am looking forward to in December and in the new year! For December, I am excitedly planning the Holiday Potluck on December 16, where we can share more good food, a few fun crafts, and lots of community love and conversation. I hope to have many more fun gatherings in 2023, as well as bringing in some multi-generational social justice projects. I am also excited and interested to learn more about happenings in our larger denominational community, particularly the Article II Study Commission, which is doing the important work of reviewing and revising our UU Principles and Purposes, which haven't been revised since 1987. I'm also looking forward to attending the General Assembly in Pittsburgh in June, and I'm excited and hopeful that the close-to-home location of GA this year will bring a strong delegation from our congregation. Most importantly, I am excited and thankful to have the opportunity to go into 2023 with this congregational community, and to spend more time getting to know and learn with all of you.

Bright blessings,
Jess Pond

Music Director 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Meetings: The choir meets Thursdays from 7:30-9:45pm in the Alliance Room and Sanctuary and at least bi-weekly at 9/9:30am in the sanctuary before services.

Activities: As 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:

- 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 2022: This year as Music Director, I have...

- provided music for every Sunday service, featuring the choir at least bi-weekly. I have also worked towards featuring the choir in services more often whilst still maintaining the quality of choir performances.
 - worked with the other Music Staff and/or guest musicians to provide music when the choir has not performed. This has given the choir more time to prepare for their performances, highlighted the skillsets of our Staff and friends from the larger musical community and exposes the congregation to a greater variety of musical styles.
 - started and maintained the Casual Concert series; supported and publicized these events with the help of volunteers. This opened our doors to the larger community, supported local artists, and raised money for the Music Ministry.
 - raised over \$10,000 through the Music Sunday letter campaign
 - developed the "UUCB House Band" (HoUUse Band) through spring services with a special focus on performing pop music from a diversity of genres, culminating in a special Pride Sunday service
 - developed the skillsets of the Music Staff through personalized attention including 1-on-1 meetings and coachings and small group rehearsals throughout the year
-

- developed the skillsets of the choir volunteers through 1-on-1 meetings with nearly every member of the choir in the spring, with select follow-ups and meetings for new/returning members in the fall
- presented two ambitious Music(al) Sundays with the choir and guest musicians – "Sacred Sounds" featuring the music of Francis Poulenc in May and "Singing as Spiritual Practice" featuring the music of Robert Schumann, G.P. Telemann, and Jessie Downs in November
- performed with the UUCB Choir at the Memorial Services of Victor Rice (choir patron) and Ingeborg Barrus (former choir member)
- performed with the House Band and UUCB Choir at the Elmwood Arts Festival as a form of outreach to the larger community.
- worked towards another special service for Christmas Eve, as well as two special winter services featuring both the choir and soloists
- began working towards more greatly supporting the congregation in hymn singing through in-service explanations and demonstrations
- continued to work on the skill development of the choir in weekly rehearsals - especially in the areas of vocal technique, ear training, music learning, engaging in different challenges of our diverse repertoire, memorization, and exercising greater independence and confidence as individuals
- began to revisit and better incorporate the tenants of the Choir Covenant
- added several new and returning members to the choir and engaged new guest musicians for special services
- shared spiritual ideas with the choir through our musical practice, especially in creating and rehearsing a piece for them for our Fall Musical Sunday

Goals for 2023:

- Continue to grow choir participation
- Organize a cabaret-style church fundraiser with the Music Staff and volunteers
- Present a "Music Weekend" in May in collaboration with a guest ensemble - ideally *Opera Magnifico* joining the choir for performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*
- Present another special musical event in the fall
- Present 2-3 outreach events to the larger community
- Attract a larger audience to the Casual Concerts
- Continue to work towards greater congregational participation in hymn singing

Church Archives and Church Historian 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Bill Parke

Members: Bill Parke

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 2022:

- Researched and provided the name of the artist who prepared two pencil drawings of the sanctuary in 1943. These were mentioned in connection to a visit to the church by the Dowd family in September, 2022, which has the drawings. The artist is likely Kevin B. O'Callahan.
- Obtained two copies of the DVD Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time, a documentary to be used as the basis of an upcoming exhibit in the Parish Hall
- Began planning and preparation for an Auction Item at request of Juli Van Woert: an architecture and history tour of the church, with Tom Yots, to be held in Spring 2023
- Attended meeting of the WNY Archivists 11/30/2022 and discussed potential use of social media to promote institutional history/archives

Goals for 2023:

- Put in place a new exhibit in the Parish Hall, to replace the one dating prior to the Pandemic.
-

Auction Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Juli Van Woert and Andrea Burke-Harris

Members: Tom Muka, John Petrocelli, Justin DeCleene

Meetings: Frequent informal meetings. Zoom, email and phone communication as necessary.

Activities:

- The Fun and Fellowship Auction took place in June 2022. After many years of using an embellished and ultimately unmanageable ACCESS platform, the team researched other auction packages and selected 32Auctions as best fitting UUCB's needs. The auction transitioned to a hybrid on-line/ in-person format. Although this involved a considerable learning curve, at day's end all team members agreed that this format proved to be more efficient and effective. We were able to present an aesthetically pleasing catalogue with photos and graphics that enhanced the "shopping" experience for auction participants. The team was able to access timely information regarding bidding and purchases, and the "front page" provided an immediate status of nearness to our goal that was visible to all participants. On-line bidding was a new possibility, which many embraced while others were challenged by the unfamiliar technology. The number of in-person auction bidders was significantly reduced from previous years due to the number of congregants attending church virtually rather than in person.

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 2022:

- The single auction raised over \$11,000. By comparison, the three mini-auctions during 2021 raised \$5910. The last pre-pandemic auction, in which most bidding took place in person, raised over \$16,000. We're making a comeback.
- 30 donors offered 44 items for bid, with several items designed for more than a single winner. 75 individuals registered as bidders and over 235 winning bids were placed.
- As noted above, our efforts also helped to raise spirits and contribute to membership engagement as we emerged from the pandemic.

Goals for 2023:

- The team has analyzed the ways in which 32Auctions can be better adapted for the unique needs and culture of UUCB, with the intention of the 2023 auction experience being even more satisfying, efficient, and effective. We will continue a hybrid format, anticipating increased revenue as congregants become more adept at on-line bidding. An increased opportunity for in-person bidding will also improve the vitality and fundraising capability of the auction.

Board of Trustees 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Members: Bridget Evans, President; Shawn Sweet, Vice President; John Petrocelli, Treasurer; Michael Hill, Secretary; Bobby Withrow; Kate Bell Schwede; and Thea Hassan

Meetings: The Board meets at 7pm every 3rd Wednesday of the month. We also meet if there is a special need or issue that needs addressing.

Activities:

- Sent a letter to President Biden along with the Jewish Federation, urging the fast tracking of Ukrainian resettlement in the U.S.
- Participated in the Leadership Assembly led by the Governance Advisory Committee
- Conducted a Town Hall Meeting in the Sanctuary to discuss the state of the Church's finances
- Created and sent out a Congregation wide 'sustainability survey' on how to help the Church improve financially and grow our membership
- Gave Covid guidance to our members and committees
- Ran a '2nd Ask' fundraising campaign along with a 'Spring Fling' fundraising campaign to close the holes in our budget
- Appointed Thea Hassan to our Board to fill the unexpected absence that arose when Tracey Kassman resigned
- Worked closely with all of our Advisory Committees and with the Nominating Committee to fill vacancies
- Changed language in our Board Policy Book. Changed the word disruptive to destructive in section 4.3.3.1
- Worked with Finance Committee to develop the budget for 2023
- Wrote a monthly article in each newsletter describing what the Board was up to for that month
- Approved Emergency funds for repairs to our building as requested by the Fixed Assets Committee
- Participated in our Fall Congregational meeting
- Served as Visiting Stewards for our annual Stewardship campaign
- Approved funds to purchase a new dishwasher
- Worked with members to review and reapply for the Sacred Spaces Grant

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 served the Congregation with one voice after the seven of us considered and discussed and argued about what would best serve the health of our beloved Congregation. This consideration of what is best for our Congregation is always the guiding light to determine our path of action.
- We grew as a Board with help from the UUA and with help from each other. We maintained respect and deepened our relationships through frank discussions and kindness to each other.
- We deepened our commitment to the Church by exploring the burgeoning talents that serving on the Board brought forth from each of us. This included being more aware of the need to serve in our community and become an example of anti-racist principles.

Goals for 2023:

- To continue to fill open positions on all the Advisory Committees

- To adjust and readjust our budget and make any difficult decisions that comes with the changed financial landscape that we face in the coming year
- To continue to be the champion of our Church by reaching out to prospective new members, volunteering in whatever capacity we are able and holding our fellow members and friends with gratitude and love
- To work with volunteers and members to find new methods of funding through various grants and gifts
- To work harder on developing the Right Relations/Relational Covenant

Covenant Group Ministry 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

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

Facilitators: K. Burke, C. Montgomery, R. Clark, J. Heinl, R. Houk, M. Malkiewicz, J. Marohn, T. Muka, P. Nicolai, L. Parke, A. Sikes, N. Sheehan, c. Battaglia, J. Van Woert

Meetings: Planners and Facilitators meet monthly. Each Covenant group meets monthly at it's own date, time and location.

Purpose:

- 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

Activities:

- The Covenant Group Ministry, in it's 19th year, coordinated by a two-person steering committee, continued to outreach to both member and non-member congregants. With some groups meeting in person and others opting to continue virtual meetings, each Covenant group offered members the opportunity to remain connected to this church community.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Ten groups remain viable, with 17 facilitators and 61 other individuals who participated at some point during the year. Four facilitators were also members of another group. This is a total of 78 individuals active in the CGM at some point during 2022. Together we grieved the passing of two long-time facilitators.
- Initially all groups met virtually, maintaining robust involvement of their members. Members who moved away or were no longer able to travel to meetings, maintained involvement in their groups, thanks to the opportunity of a virtual format. Members continue to report that their groups serve as a lifeline when in-person gathering is limited. At year's end, 4 groups have returned to in-person meetings, one is functioning as a "hybrid" group and the remaining six continue to meet virtually.
- Monthly Facilitator meetings continued virtually. 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

Goals for 2023:

- To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of our Covenant Group Ministry program through presentation of a Sunday service, church-wide pot-luck, Orientations for prospective members, and open enrollment period to welcome new members
- 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 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Andrea Burke-Harris

Members(and ex-officio members): Jane Armbruster, Don Behr, Gerry Evans, Martha Malkiewicz, John Petrocelli – ex-officio member

Meetings: Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 on Zoom.

Activities:

- Reviews status of 2 accounts (UUCEF and Schwab accounts) which manage the investment of UUCB's endowment
- Updates information on bequests and memorial gifts given to UUCB and acknowledges donors to each
- Participates in quarterly conference call for UUCEF
- Reviews requests from the Board and Finance Advisory Committee for regular draws and any special draws from the Endowment Fund
- Hosts an informational event regarding planned giving and makes information available throughout the year
- Stewards Heritage Society members annually and recognizes them during Valentine season

Living Our Mission:

- The Endowment Committee is a responsible steward of UUCB's endowment and ensures that resources are available to fund activities and programs of the church to promote its mission as a Unitarian Universalist community. The majority of the church's endowment assets are invested in the UUCEF (Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund), which supports socially responsible investing and ensures management by firms that apply environmental, social, and governance criteria. By joining other UU churches, it allows UUCB to have more of an impact on corporate decisions and encourage companies to adopt policies consistent with UU values.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Framed poster acknowledging those members who have signed a Declaration of Intent was hung in Parish Hall
- Acknowledged receipt of three memorial gifts as of 11/11/22 totaling \$600, honoring Nancy Bukaty and Beryl Smith, with thank you cards; no bequests received in 2022 as of 11/11/22
- Acknowledged with thank you cards, three new members signing a Declaration of Intent to leave a bequest to UUCB, as of 11/15/22
- "Plan of Work" was developed, including annual schedule, policies and procedures
- Heritage Society plaque was updated with five new benefactor's names; additional Heritage Society plaque was purchased and both plaques were hung in sanctuary
- UUCB website regarding planned giving and making honorary and memorial gifts under the Support Our Mission tab, was updated, including online links to Declaration of Intent form and payment forms for gifts
- Held in-person information session on 11/6/22 regarding planned giving with 12 members in attendance

Goals for 2023:

- Continue communication and in-person meetings with members who have indicated interest in or may be candidates for signing a Declaration of Intent
- Acknowledge current signers of Declaration of Intent throughout the year, through cards and communications
- Update list of Heritage Society donors and engrave names for plaque
- Update list of Declaration of Intent signers and update poster
- Continue to bring awareness and importance of UUCB's endowment and planned giving to the long-term sustainability of UUCB through personal outreach and entries in the newsletter, order of service and e-blasts
- Research and make recommendation to board regarding Charles Schwab account

Family Promise Ministry Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Convenor: Nancy Wilkins

Meetings: Formal meetings were suspended during the cancellation of in person church activities during the peak of the Covid pandemic. Since churches are no longer providing overnight lodging and meals, regular meetings have not been required. Now, the committee and church are kept informed of FP needs, activities, and volunteer opportunities via the church weekly eblast.

Purpose:

- Family Promise (FP) is a 25 year old not for profit homeless shelter located at 75 Hickory Street, Buffalo, which offers assistance to homeless families not only locating permanent homes, but also in connecting to support services. They keep families together, one of only two area shelters which does not separate men and teen boys from women and dependent children. The FP agency doubled their shelter capacity from three to six families two years ago and changed their format from sharing the sheltering of families at churches to housing them at the center full time.

Activities:

- UUCB has been providing volunteer service and support for Family Promise through the Task Force since 2009. In 2021, at least 12 members of the congregation donated cash or supplies, with gifts ranging from under \$50 to over \$1000. Family Promise volunteers are fabulous and have donated more anonymously.

Living our Mission:

- The majority of Family Promise families are homeless as a result of family violence or eviction, both of which skyrocketed during the Covid pandemic, and are still playing out. Clients are predominantly minorities working in low wage jobs which don't supply enough income to make ends meet. Children make up 70 % of the residents. The shelter is located on the east side of Buffalo.
- Volunteering enables UUs to meet people unlike ourselves, to build mutual respect and understanding, and to help sustain the agency which has a staff of only six people. It is the most fulfilling volunteer work I have ever done. The experience transforms our image of the homeless, and enhances the agency's work, in concert with other contributing churches, high schools, colleges including the UB School of Medicine and Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, among others.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Despite the rapid increase in rent and diminished affordable housing, Family Promise served 45 families in 12 months, placing 30 in stable housing after an average stay in the shelter of 55 days. By October of 2022, 17 families had found affordable, stable, permanent homes. Our financial and volunteer support augments their small staff and helps sustain the agency.

Goals for 2022:

- More documentation of contribution by UUs, more group activity, like the giving tree to engage the full congregation, and resumption of in person meetings and information table at coffee hour, as needed.

Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair: Joel Cohen, Andrea Burke-Harris

Members: Justin DeCleene, John Petrocelli (ex-officio as UUCB Treasurer)

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

Activities:

- Analyze monthly financial reports prepared by staff
- Report to the board regarding the performance of the endowment fund
- Work with other advisory committees and staff to prepare a draft budget in August
- Present the board's recommended budget to the congregation at the fall congregational meeting
- Present the annual statement of financial affairs to the congregation at the January congregational meeting
- Respond to requests from the board for recommendations concerning financial matters that affect the church's programming and operations

Living Our Mission:

- The Financial Advisory Committee 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 play a role in fulfilling the church's mission. In drafting the annual budget, the FAC is responsive to requests that reflect the church's mission while also planning responsibly for ongoing financial stability.

Accomplishments for 2022:

- Advised the Board of Trustees on financial matters throughout the year
- Created a draft 2023 budget for the Board's review, including possible scenario options for developing the budget
- Presented the proposed 2023 budget to the congregation at the Congregational Meeting
- Held one informational session in-person before the October Congregational meeting to review the draft budget with church members before the budget vote
- Developed and reviewed 2022 budget projections throughout the year to allow time to make budget adjustments when needed
- Scheduled an audit of UUCB's 2021 financials by independent CPA, providing support to the Finance Administrator for compliance with financial reports
- Presented UUCB financial status at Town Meeting 3/12/22 regarding pledge numbers and amount

Goals for 2023:

- Continue to closely monitor the Church's financial performance and make recommendations to the board
- Develop a responsible 2024 draft budget for the Board's review
- Add at least one member to the Finance Advisory Committee
- Work with Music Director, Financial Administrator and Music Ministry Team to clarify music income/expense lines

Fixed Assets Advisory Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: David Quackenbush

Members: William Botsford, Judy Kieffer, Tom Muka, and Greg Harris

Meetings: Occasionally at Church with a lot of emails 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 2022:

- 2nd floor North wall broken wood window sent to JA Gulick for repair/replace
- Continued to receive pertinent information relating to the cause of and the repairs needed to stop the water infiltration in the church basement causing some rooms to be unusable
- Installed new Air Conditioning in three upstairs offices using ductless split Wynter double hose AC units and associated Lexon panels to accommodate the required air supply / return hoses
- Purchased a new Commercial Kitchen dishwasher
- Helped coordinate (with John Petrocelli) the repairs to building phone/ fire safety alarm
- Installed new middle railing at Parish Hall entrance from the Sanctuary
- Installed new safety railing in the Southwest End bell tower stairway and electronically scanned the Sanctuary South areas near stairwells to assist the new railing furnish and installation
- Replaced broken gutter at the basement stairwell (Northeast corner) roof that was damaged
- Did both summer shutdown and winter startup of the church steam boiler, as well as making sure the “heat is on” when sanctuary is being use
- All gutters were cleaned in November after the last leaf dropped into them
- Repaired damaged roof gable masonry at East side, work done by REKelley, Church Mutual Insurance Co reimbursed UUCB \$5000.00 for this emergency
- Received quote to replace the garage roof (\$22,000.00)
- Dimmer Controls set up for the new Sanctuary lighting (thanks again to John Petrocelli)
- Hand cleaned Sanctuary stained-glass windows in preparation for the Victor Rice memorial service, as well as cleaned the inside of all architectural lamps in Sanctuary
- Cleaned, painted, and repaired the outdoor info yard sign
- Twice reset the Smoke alarm roof hatch which “blew open” on particularly windy days
- Purchase a portable Daiken Air purifier for use during the early COVID timeframes (2021/2022)
- Organized a visit from LITE Lab company (11/21/22) to prepare and estimate for a new way to back light the upper Northern Stained-Glass window

Goals for 2023:

- Continue to receive pertinent video information relating to the cause of and the repairs needed to stop the water infiltration in the church basement causing some rooms to be unusable.
- Install a new Commercial Kitchen dishwasher
- Began to assist others in the congregation for possible projects and associated costs that may be covered by outsourced grants in 2023

Folk Dancing 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Martha Malkiewicz

Members: Attendance varies from 6 – 15 people

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 2022:

- We moved back indoors. At the beginning of 2022, we danced in masks with distancing. As the year progressed some of us removed our masks. Most recently some of who felt safe began to hold hands. We also respectfully honor different comfort levels on our dance floor- keeping windows open for air circulation, having space for people who need space to feel comfortable, but returning little by little to the typical styles of folk dance.

Goals for 2023:

- To continue to create an accepting, joyful community for people who like to move to folk music.

UUCB Gardening Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller

Members (and ex-officio members): Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller, Philip Nicolai, Dave Batt, Judy White, Athena McCrory, Patty MacDonald, Tim & Gretchen Ashton, and Renee Geraci

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 2022:

- We were awarded a grant from the Marvin Lunefield Beautification Foundation in the amount of \$650! The Gardening Committee planted some native and nonnative shrubs and perennials with these funds. Bulbs were planted in the fall for spring blooms. We try to make sure that there is something beautiful happening in all 4 seasons of the garden. We kept the hedge trimmed and the beds as weed free as could be managed. Tony worked with Rev. Joan to inter the ashes of a number of congregants into the Memorial Garden. Tony also worked on the compost pile, turning and shredding the yard waste to create beautiful rich compost for our garden. We planted and maintained the planters around the Church. We worked weekly to stay on top of the constant chores that happen in every garden.

Goals for 2023:

- We hope to continue to care for our existing plants and create beautiful compost and work toward maintaining a place of beauty that our congregants and neighbors can enjoy. We will also be sure to apply for another grant from the Marvin Lunefield Foundation.

Governance Advisory Committee Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Leslie Boldt (2017)

Members (and ex-officio members): Rachel Clark (2017), Ryan Knowles (2016-July 2022), Katherine Kubala (2016-May 2022), Kenneth Manly (Sept. 2022)

Purpose: The work of the Governance Advisory Committee includes:

- planning and implementing an orientation for new Board members
- making the Board's Policy Book's language more accurate and transparent regarding the division of responsibilities; how the Board governs itself; how the church is governed; the responsibilities of the Board; and those responsibilities the Board has delegated to the minister
- researching and drafting policies and/or amendments that are requested by the Board
- recommending amendments to policies that the Board has adopted
- suggesting new policies that the Board may wish to consider

Activities:

- organized an online Leadership Assembly for staff, Board members, and Advisory and Nominating Committee members
- established a checklist for amendments to Bylaws and Policy Book to ensure that policy suggestions reflect values
- researched and developed language for Bylaw amendment authorizing electronic voting
- presented rationale for this Bylaw amendment at October Congregational Meeting
- updated the use of gender pronouns in Policy Book to remove binary language

Living our Mission:

- be ever mindful of incorporating restorative practices and the work of anti-oppression, as reflected in our values checklist.
- explore the creation of a Board procedure manual
- continue and strengthen education to all facets of church lay leadership on policy-based governance

Accomplishments in 2022:

- organized an online Leadership Assembly for staff, Board members, and Advisory and Nominating Committee members
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Goals for 2023:

- be ever mindful of incorporating restorative practices and the work of anti-oppression, as reflected in our values checklist
 - explore the creation of a Board procedure manual
 - continue and strengthen education to all facets of church lay leadership on policy-based governance
-

Justice Ministry Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Hy Carrel

Members (and ex-officio members): Steve Wixson, Rachel Krajna, Karen Jarvis, Christine Slocum, Susan Wishart, Jessica Pond, Maria Testa, Hy Carrel and Rev. Joan Montagnes. Former members: Karen Peterson, Gina Klick, Athena McCrory

Meetings: The Justice Ministry Team met on the 2nd Thursday of every month from 6:30pm-8pm via Zoom. Since September, the Justice Ministry Team has been meeting in-person at the same times.

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 local 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 compassionate actions.

Accomplishments in 2022: In 2022, we raised money through our Share-the-Plate ministry and supported the following nonprofits financially and through activities:

- HOME Journey's End Refugee Services provides refugees with the resources and support they need to become successful, active and contributing members of the Western New York Community. As our December 2021 Share-the-Plate partner, UUCB made a donation in January 2022 of \$2145.93 plus collected gift cards.
- Buffalo Niagara LGBTQ History Project is a collective network of peers documenting LGBTQ history in the Buffalo-Niagara Region. Share-the-Plate donated \$391.56 and we hosted their banner in the Parish Hall.
- Niagara Organizing Alliance for Hope (NOAH) exists to amplify the voices of the unheard in circumstances of injustice, and to empower the people. Similar to VOICE Buffalo, but for Niagara County, Share-the-Plate donated \$510.32.
- Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a group of volunteers dedicated to building, assembling and delivering top-notch bunk beds to children and families in need. We partnered with our Women's Society and volunteers led by Paulette Notaro. Share-the-Plate donated \$1110.23.
- Restoration Society, Inc (RSI) is a peer-operated community agency that offers recovery-based mental health services in Western New York. RSI operates the Code Blue Shelters, housing programs, drop-in centers, and programs based on self-determination and self-direction. Share-the-Plate donated \$1115.24 to support the purchase of household items for people in RSI's rapid rehousing program, which lacks funding for such items.
- Save the Michaels of the World offers placement in substance use treatment programs and many supports for individuals and their families. Share-the-Plate donated \$626.11.

- Niagara Pride envisions an LGBTQ+ community in which individuals and families feel safe, secure, and affirmed where they live, work, worship, and play, especially in Niagara County and surrounding areas. We collected school supplies and Share-the-Plate donated \$576.00
- Jericho Road's VIVE Shelter houses refugee claimants waiting for appointments/interviews with the Canada Border Services Agency and asylum seekers wishing to apply for U.S. asylum. Share-the-Plate donated \$1184.34.
- The Tool Library is a lending library of tools for gardening and home projects. The church joined as an institutional member and Share-the-Plate donated \$780.65.
- Justice for Migrant Families provides support to individuals in the federal detention facility in Batavia, information and resources to families in the community, and advocacy both within and beyond the local community. Share-the-Plate donated \$1084.53 and congregants donated more dignity bags than could fit in a car trunk.
- Buffalo String Works provide rigorous music instruction and a creative home for refugee, immigrant, and historically marginalized youth in Buffalo. We partnered with our Music Ministry Team who invited youth to play during October. Share-the-Plate donated \$1312.29.
- Big Big Table Community Café is a pay-as-you-can restaurant focused on building community and where everybody is welcome. Several UUCB members joined for lunches and there were lots of donations of food and a label maker. Share-the-Plate donated \$636.57.
- Stitch Buffalo is a textile art center committed to empowering refugee and immigrant women through the sale of their handcrafted goods. We hosted a holiday bazaar on December 4th and solicited sewing machine donations. The Share-the-Plate donation will occur in January 2023.
- Journey's End Refugee Services. UUCB donated items we received on our Mitten Tree, including dozens of handmade mittens, hats, and scarves and warm socks.
- Family Promise of WNY is an emergency shelter for families and is receiving generous gifts for six members of two families, including some gift cards.

Goals for 2023:

- Having a share-the-plate partner and a linked activity every month
- Maintaining the team size of six or seven active members plus Rev. Joan.
- Developing greater engagement between the congregation and our share-the-plate partners

Music Ministry Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Phil Nicolai and Mary Richert

Members (and ex-officio members): Diane Bockrath, Will Botsford, Gerry Evans, Alan Atkinson, and Jessie Downs (ex officio)

Meetings: First Monday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Alliance Room

Activities:

- Support and help the music ministry
- Raised funds to support Music Sunday events
- Assumed fiduciary responsibility of music budget

Living our Mission:

- The Music Ministry Team Enhanced spirituality in Sunday services
- Promoted events for choir community building
- Encourage congregants to join choir

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Promoted and staffed Casual Concert series
- Completed success search for permanent Music Director
- Organized musical presence at Elmwood Arts

Goals for 2023:

- Organize a major fundraiser for church
- Expand our outreach efforts in community
- Recruit more singers

Nominating Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Doug Sherman, 2025

Members: Phyllis Dissek, 2022; Pete Sloan, 2023; Kathy Ryan, 2023; Beth White, 2021

Meetings: In person when all feel appropriate. Meetings are held in the sanctuary, after the service.

Living Our Mission:

- By expanding the scope of the committee to include identifying candidates for advisory committee, we can inspire members and friends to find spiritual growth through service to, and for, the wider community.

Activities/Accomplishments in 2022:

- Identified Thea Hassan as a candidate for the Board of Trustees as an interim member to fill the vacancy and complete the term of Tracy Kassman.
- Started a survey of the congregation's members and friends to match skills, passions, and interests to the needs of advisory committees.

Goals for 2023:

- We have begun to develop a process to identify candidates for advisory committees as well as the Board of Trustees, first by devising a survey to collect information from members and friends. Next will be to create a similar survey for the committees and ministry teams.
- Find a digital home for the information and make it accessible to members.
- Identify a second candidate for the Board of Trustees to be elected in the 2023 Winter Congregational Meetings. Thea Hassan has agreed to fill a full 3-year term.
- Fill the Nominating Committee to seven members with candidates presented to the congregation at the Fall Congregational Meeting in 2023.

Oversight Advisory Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Mary Louise Hill (12/19).

Members: Secretary: Mary Bisson (4/21), Mary Louise Hill (12/19); Mary Bisson (4/21); Donna Hagerty (3/22) Rev. Joan Montagnes, ex-officio

Meetings: Monthly, 2nd Tuesday of the month, online

Activities: Members of the Oversight Advisory Committee:

- Propose suggestions to the Board for monitoring its own behavior so it aligns with the Church's Mission.
- Support Trustees' efforts to refine their processes for reviewing their own performance.
- Interface between the Trustees and those Advisory Committees required to report annually to the Board by notifying each committee chair two months before their report is due for Board discussion and shepherding them through the process of producing that report.
- Review report drafts and make suggestions before the final report is submitted to the Board of Trustees.
- Attend Board meetings to observe discussion of submitted reports and to monitor Board processes.
- Facilitate among all Advisory Committees and Task Forces the comfortably productive habit of fulfilling our By-Laws, Board Policies, and the Church's Mission.

Living our Mission:

- The Oversight Advisory Committee reviews annual reports and other internal documents for non-inclusive or biased language. During COVID, Oversight provided support to those Committees who needed support with functioning in a purely digital environment.

Accomplishments for 2022:

- Oversight maintained its schedule, providing deadlines that assured each Advisory Committee presented a report detailing its annual accomplishments, needs, concerns, and proposals to the Board of Trustees.
- Oversight provided editorial and content advice for that report and presented it to the Board in a timely fashion. An Oversight member attended each Board session.
- The pandemic produced a lull in Advisory Committee activity. In 2022, Oversight has attempted to help both the Board and its Advisory Committees return to "normal" functions.
- Recognizing that Annual Reports to the Board are vital to institutional memory, Oversight began a campaign to make sure all Advisory Committees save their documents in the Church's Share Point Drive.

Goals for 2023:

- Oversight is pursuing creative ways to support efficient communications between the Advisory Committees and the Board.
- Oversight intends to continue promoting digital education that will both ensure important documents are archived in a church-managed digital storage site and allow the church to continue functioning in the event of another pandemic or public emergency.

Pastoral Care and Support 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Name of Chairperson: Ginny Vaughan

Members: Rev. Joan Montagnes, Bobbie Baker, Josette Cunningham, Jackie Knowles, Martha Malkiewicz, and Maryellen Mccone

Meetings: Second Thursday of the month, 10:00-11:30 in Joan's office or a classroom. We continued to meet virtually until November. In November, we met in Rev Joan's Office. Hopefully, we will meet at the church from now on.

Activities:

- Pastoral Care & Support nurtures and supports by sending cards to members/friends who are experiencing a joy, sorrow or concerns
- Pastoral Care & Supports maintains connections to our members who can no longer attend Sunday Service or Church activities for various reasons by sending cards to them twice a year.
- Pastoral Care and Support inspires each other in love by remembering deceased family members with a card on the anniversary of their death.
- Pastoral Care & Supports assists Rev. Joan in remembering the deceased members of the year through keeping a record of members who have died during the year.
- This November, we helped transform by connecting with VOICE Buffalo to send cards to families who lost a loved one and the three people who were injured on May 14.
- Monitor the Joys, Concerns & Sorrow tables for cards and candles

Living Our Mission:

- 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 2022:

- Sent Cards to members who were experiencing a joy or a sorrow (over 90 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 monthly cards to members who cannot physically attend church or participate in church's activities. PC&S are currently sending 14 cards a month
- Sent Anniversary Cards to Members who have lost a love one in the past three years
- In November 2022 wrote cards to family members who lost a loved one on May 14. Also wrote cards to the three people who were injured
- Assisted with the Memorial Day Service in May. Provide the names of members who died within the year
- Assisted with Blue Christmas
- Provide individual candles at the Joys & Sorrows table so people can remember a joy or a sorrow or concern at Sunday's service.

Goals for 2023:

- Continue to send cards to the above four groups
- Assist with Blue Christmas & Memorial Day Service
- To communicate with Rev. Joan and the Pastoral Team regarding members who are experiencing a joy or sorrow

Personnel Advisory Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Scott Nuwer-Hill

Members (and ex-officio members): : Mary Coleman, Kathy O'Hara & Julie Taylor

Meetings: Meetings were held on 5 occasions during 2022. An additional meeting is scheduled Wednesday, December 7 2022.

Living our Mission:

- The committee was formed in 2021 with the intention of bringing the church's Personnel Manual current as the last published update occurred in 2014. While we continue to bring that to a close, the team has assisted the church in reaching their mission by providing consultative support to leadership at the church. This support has been providing in the spirit of collaboration, equity, and fairness to all associated with the church.

Activities/Accomplishments in 2022:

- The Personnel committee participated in the interactive process between leadership and staff during 2022 including:
 - Providing consultative support during the annual appraisal process
 - Assisting in the editing and delivery of operational based staff development documentation and plans for desired activities ad hoc
 - Actively participated in the talent acquisition activities needed to attract and hire our settled Director of Religious Education

Goals for 2023:

- The committee intends to submit their draft of an updated Personnel Manual to the board and applicable committees in early 2023 for review and approval. Once approved, this manual will be published and acknowledged by all existing associates of the church.
- The committee intends to continue to provide "on-demand" support to church staff concerning employment matters including coaching, development and talent acquisition as needed.

Pulpit Flower Ministry 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Sandra Bissontz

Assistant Chairperson: Tim Ashton

Meetings: No formal meetings. Occasional meetings after church, or email messages.

Living our Mission:

- The pulpit flower ministry enables our congregants to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of the natural world and helps to bring the joy and wonder of living in harmony with the rhythms of nature to our worship services.

Activities:

- Make available to congregants the opportunity to order fresh bouquets of flowers to be displayed on the pulpit during Sunday services for a variety of intentions, whether mourning a loss, celebrating an event, showing appreciation, etc.
- Allowing congregants to enjoy their fresh flowers at home or enjoy the satisfaction of donating flowers to Veterans' Hospital.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Our ministry team facilitated participation each and every Sunday, except for those in July and August, in providing fresh flowers to enhance our visual experience and honor deceased loved ones. Also, flowers were a perfect tribute to acknowledge work done by members of our church.

Goals for 2023:

- We hope to continue giving our UU members the opportunity to express their love and appreciation on each designated Sunday in the coming year.
 - It is a privilege and an honor to serve in this ministry, and our team will strive to fulfill our mission to the best of our ability.
-

Stewardship Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Martha Malkiewicz

Members (and ex-officio members): Shaun Doyle, Bridget Evans, Thea Hassan and Visiting Stewards: Maria Testa, Peter Sloan, Bob Klick, Phil Nicolai, John Petrocelli, Michael Nuwer-Hill, Bobby Withrow, Gigi Helliwell, Jane Armbruster, Bonnie Collins, Molly Quackenbush, Dave Batt, Rachel Clark, Joel Cohen, Mary Richert, Alan Atkinson, Chuck Battaglia, Kate Bell-Schwede, Gerry Evans, Renee Geraci, Ron Houk, & Dave Kocak

Meetings: Stewardship began this year with several meetings with Barry Finkelstein, the UUA stewardship consultant. Barry came to Buffalo to lead the training for the visiting stewards and to present the Sunday service with Joan. (Sept. 24 and 25). Visiting Stewards began contacting the congregation after the October 2nd service.

Activities:

- Created Visiting Stewards reached out to 160 church friends and members. People (both the visitors and the visited) were surprisingly pleased with the interaction. Letters were sent to anyone not reached by their visiting steward, supporters who live out of town, and people who were on a list of possible pledgers. A total of 225 people were contacted.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Although Stewardship connected both the importance of continued nurturing of the church community and financial support for UUCB. As they did for 2022, a majority of congregation members raised their support again for 2023.

Goals for 2023:

- Although the campaign reached many people and many pledges were greater than the previous year, we did not raise the money needed to meet the budget. Our goal for next year is to run a campaign that will build on this year's one-on-one outreach, and to get closer to the amount of money UUCB needs to support its mission.

UUCB Strategy Advisory Committee 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Members (and ex-officio members): Martha Malkiewicz (January 2022) Tom Petrocelli (January 2022)

Meetings: Take place at a mutually agreed upon time for the two members

Activities: The overall purpose of the Strategy Advisory Committee is to recommend, at predictably regular intervals, priorities for the Board to consider in its strategic direction of the Church. This work includes:

- assisting the Board in its efforts to engage the Church's members in considering alternative choices for major programming;
- assisting the Board in its oversight responsibilities for implementing the priorities that are articulated in the Church's strategic plans; and
- enabling the Board's efforts to develop the Congregation's long-range strategic plans on a regular periodic basis.

Living our Mission:

- Our task is to recommend alternative ideas for new programming and promote forward direction that brings into focus anti-racist, anti-oppressive or multicultural ideas and actions.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- The Strategic Committee has not had much to do. UUCB is just beginning to return to a "normal" state. RE has resumed under new direction. Coffee hour has just returned. The Women's Society has finally been able to offer luncheons again. It is only recently that we have been able to think about creating new programming or making major changes that involve church members other than staff.
- We have discussed the need for immediate goals as well as long-term goals as the church recreates itself in light of the changes brought about by the Pandemic. As the church returns to full capacity, we remain available and offer advice to the Board when asked.

Goals for 2023:

- We look forward to more regular conversation with the Board about how they would like to see the church move into its future, We advocate holding onto what has worked and making room for new ideas. Now that congregants are able to get involved, we can offer ideas to the Board about ways to grow that is not dependent on over-worked staff.
- We will be looking for another member or two for this committee.
- We have confidence that as UUCB continues to recreate itself within the new parameters left by the changes wrought by the Pandemic, the Board and this committee will be in regular communication.

Technology Team 2022 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 2022:

- Upgraded and migrated the church's website to a new platform
 - The website was migrated to WordPress from Weebly
 - Website content was overhauled and redesigned to better fit the church's needs
- Expanded the Sanctuary live-streaming system
 - Added new second camera to our live-streaming system to allow us to capture parts of the Sanctuary during worship services that the main camera cannot capture
 - The new camera can be rotated remotely to capture different areas of the Sanctuary
- Upgraded main office computer
 - The main admin computer in the church office was 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
- Replaced Sanctuary audio system
 - The main audio board in the Sanctuary was replaced with a new digital mixer board
 - This replaced an older analog mixer that was failing
 - The new board allows finer and more customized control of the audio system than we had before

Goals for 2023:

- Upgrade church computers to Windows 11
 - All church-owned Windows computers from 2019 and later will be upgraded in-place to Windows 11 from Windows 10
 - This ensures that the church's systems are kept up to date
- Migrate the main on-premises file share to SharePoint
 - The main on-premises file share, also known as the O Drive, will be migrated to a new SharePoint site
 - This will help free up resources on the church's on-premises server

- Allows authorized individuals to access files from outside the church building as needed
 - The O Drive is currently only accessible while inside the church building
 - Makes it easier for staff to work from home
- Replace Finance Administrator computer
 - The Finance Administrator's office computer has reached the end of its useful life, and will be replaced as part of the church's regular computer replacement schedule
 - Computers are normally replaced every 5-6 years
 - Ensures that all staff computers are kept up to date and can run the latest software

Universal Access & Inclusion Ministry Team (UAIM) 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Ginny Vaughan

Members: Susan Mann-Dolce, Lynn Mancuso, Sophia Roberts, & Steve Wixson

Meetings: We continued to be on Zoom this year because we were meeting with people from other agencies.

Purpose:

- 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

Living the Mission:

- We gathered with other agencies to promote anti ableism.
- We inspired others to rethink their beliefs concerning disabled LGBTQ+ individuals.
- We demonstrated a commitment to the safety of the church community by having a middle rail installed on the stairs from the Parish Hall to the Sanctuary.
- We commit to UUCB that UAIM will still be a viable & strong Ministry Team.
- We are uplifting the inherent worth of every individual who comes through our doors.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- Invited In January, UAIM was informed that the UUA was disbanding the AIM (Accessible & Inclusion Ministry) because there was little interest from UU churches applying for participation or completing the requirements for certification. This means that UAIM does not have any annual requirements from the UUA. UAIM was certified twice by the UUA/AIM. This is quite an honor for our Church. The members of the UAIM are still committed to advocate for more inclusion of disabled people in our church and more accessible features.
- The UAIM members paid for the railing that was installed in the middle of the stairs leading from the Parish Hall to the Sanctuary
- Starting Last November UAIM & Center for Advocacy began discussing creating a workshop for the intersectionality of LBGTQ+ community and disabled people. Andrew Marcum, and Sam Mattle from the Center for Advocacy worked with UAIM for a full year. Later in the year, Jack Kavanaugh from GLYS, and Rick Banner from People Inc joined the committee The Workshop was November 12, at our church. We initially thought the workshop would be in May and then October. The planning took longer than we thought. The workshop consisted of four panelists who were LGBTQ+ and disabled. One person had cerebral palsy, one had a chronic health disorder and two were on the Autistic Spectrum or neurodiversity. Some of the discussion focused on:
 - How did you come to your identity related to sexuality, gender or disability?
 - How do your identities intersect in your life?
 - What are some of the barriers that you face when interfacing with LGBTQ+ events?
- The second part of the workshop was dividing in small groups and discussing what was learned from the four panelists. Some issues that were discussed:
 - Disabled people have a difficult time meeting LGBTQ+ people or going to LGBTQ+ events.
 - Disabled people have a hard time accessing transportation at night. Taxis & Uber will charge more if you have a mobility devise. Some Taxis & Ubers will refuse to take you.

- Quite spaces and in the afternoon are two factors that need to be consider when planning events for LGBTQ+ disabled to meet other LGBTQ+ people
- Disabled people just like other LBGQTQ+ people had a difficult time coming out to parents & friends.
- This discussion should be continued. Could UUCB provide the space?

Goals for 2023:

- An annual Sunday Service
- In the coming months, developing goals for the 2023 year

Welcome and Connections Ministry Team 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Eve Holberg, Doug Sherman

Members (and ex-officio members): Tim Ashton, Michael Shanahan, Ellen Gibson, Chuck Battaglia, Joel Cohen, Bonnie Collins and the congregation at large.

Activities:

- Greet and help members, visitors, and friends, upon arrival at both the Ferry Street and Garden entrances.
- Provide name tags, information, and facilitate communication for all who pass through our doors.

Living our Mission:

- We are welcoming community, and the mission of this team is to help members, friends, guests and visitors feel welcomed and inspired to be with us. The first impression is important, and we hope that by being open and purposefully outgoing we can put all who enter our doors at ease and help them feel relaxed and open to making this their spiritual home.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- We have begun to build a group of volunteers to staff the welcome table on a consistent basis.

Goals for 2023:

- Our Greet Continue to recruit members to the welcome and connections team
 - Have enough members to establish a rotation of volunteers who will seek out someone who is standing or sitting alone during coffee hour to welcome them
 - Welcome Center furniture, something to honor Beryl Smith, who had this idea: “We would like to have a welcome center which is more visitor-friendly, standing height for ease of sign-up for standing newcomers, with an additional table-height platform for those who are smaller/seated/prefer to sit. This would hopefully include a cabinet to hold the Sunday morning ‘welcome’ paperwork, name tags, pens, etc, and a bright and easy to see ‘Welcome to UUCB’ sign permanently, artistically, and professionally attached.”
-

Women's Society 2022 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Lucy Ashbrook Sloan

Members: Linda Cohen (Greeter), Renee Geraci (Luncheon Coordinator), Laurie Hogan (Past Luncheon Coordinator), Joanne Kocak (Secretary), Paulette Notaro (Membership), Kathleen Ryan (Treasurer & Publicity), Sandy Van Every (Appetizer Coordinator)

Meetings: Board Meetings are held in Margery Gardner Meeting Room (MGM Room). Meetings were held on March 7, June 13, August 1, September 12, October 17, November 14, and December 12.

Living Your Mission:

- The Women's Society of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo endeavors to engage excellent speakers on thought-provoking and interesting topics, along with a good lunch; enhance the church environment, events & celebrations; hold an annual book sale; offer memorial receptions; and contribute to deserving causes. Membership is open to all.

Accomplishments in 2022:

- We resumed regular speaker/ luncheon series after 2 1/2 -year COVID hiatus. They are 3rd Thursday of each month of church year during non-COVID years. October 20, 2022: Jackie Albarella: Artifact:Burchfield Themed Photographs
 - November 17, 2022: Maria Blair:Buffalo's Favorite Daughters
 - December 15, 2022: Michael Harris & Co.:The Stories Behind the Songs
- Helped finance new industrial dishwasher for church kitchen.
- Special Projects:
 - Sleep in Heavenly Peace collection of bed linens
 - Ramen noodles collection for Prisoners' Holiday gift bags
 - Collection of glasses & hearing aids
- Resumed Memorial Receptions: Not held while UUCB COVID guidelines were in effect; now available to UUCB members. Policies & fees have been revised.

Goals for 2023:

- To continue to return to our regular programs for Speaker/ Luncheon series, Field Trip & Shaw Festival
- To hold our annual book sale from April 27-May 7, 2023
- To fill all Women's Society board positions (Bylaws call for 7; need one more member)
- Book sale anticipated for April 29 – May 7, 2023
- Plan Spring 2023 field trip