



Annual Report

2023

Prepared By
Jen Cunningham

Table Of Content

1. [Profile of UUCB](#)
2. [Staff](#)
3. [Governance](#)
4. [Vision & Mission](#)
5. [Minister's Report](#)
6. [The Role of an Interim Minister](#)
7. [Director of Religious Education](#)
8. [Music Director](#)
9. [Church Archives and Church Historian](#)
10. [Auction Team](#)
11. [Board of Trustees](#)
12. [Covenant Group Ministry](#)
13. [Endowment Advisory Committee](#)
14. [Family Promise Ministry](#)
15. [Finance Advisory Committee \(FAC\)](#)
16. [Fixed Assets Advisory Committee](#)
17. [Folk Dancing](#)
18. [UUCB Gardening Committee](#)
19. [Governance Advisory Committee](#)
20. [Music Ministry Team](#)
21. [Nominating Committee](#)
22. [Oversight Advisory Committee](#)
23. [Pastoral Care and Support](#)
24. [Pulpit Flower Ministry](#)
25. [Resource Enhancement Task Force](#)
26. [Social Justice Ministry Team](#)
27. [Stewardship Team](#)
28. [Strategic Planning Board Advisory Committee](#)
29. [Technology Team](#)
30. [Universal Accessibility & Inclusion Ministry Team \(UAIM\)](#)
31. [Welcome and Connections Ministry Team](#)
32. [Women's Society](#)
33. [2023 Attendance](#)
34. [Committees in Need of Help](#)

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Profile Of UUCB

Unitarian Universalists come from many diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and people of any denomination, race, sexual orientation and age are welcome. We don't adhere to one single creed or doctrine, but we have agreed to uphold and promote certain principles in how we want to be with one another, and in the wider world. Our principles challenge us to be responsible, compassionate people who put our faith into action.

While we draw motivation from the world's great faith traditions, we also look to many other sources for knowledge, guidance and inspiration. We believe religious wisdom and spiritual insights are an ongoing process and we encourage open and responsible development of our individual spirituality and conscience.

We come together to share our passions and resources in order that we may build a better life for ourselves, our community and our world.

Through worship, programs, classes, social events and outreach we cultivate our values and put our faith into action in our social justice work.

Our Principles and Sources

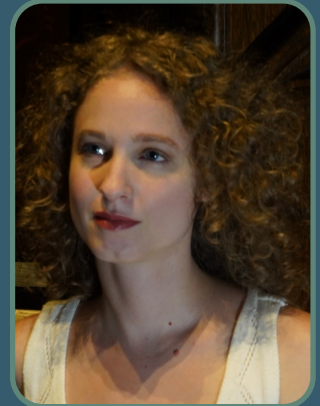
Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a "living tradition" of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

Principles:

- 1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- 2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- 3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- 4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- 5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- 6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- 7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- Proposed 8th Principle: Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.



Our Staff



01. Rev Cathy Harrington

02. Jess Pond

03. Jessie Downs

04. Donna Sentz

05. Jen Cunningham

06. Taryn Goehrig

07. Helen Lowry

08. Shaun Doyle

09. Michael Harris

10. Chris Sierzchula

11. Sara Kirkland

Governance



01. Bobby Withrow, President
02. Bridget Evans, Vice President
03. Thea Hassan, Treasurer
04. Michael Hill, Secretary
05. Shaun Sweet, Member at Large
06. Kate Bell-Schwede, Member at Large
07. Christine Slocum, Member at Large

Vision & Mission

Vision

We will gather in loving community, creating a shared vision of compassion and dignity for all, to radically transform the world in which we live.



Mission

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo is a compassionate, thoughtful, and diverse religious community that nurtures and challenges itself to 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.

WE GATHER:

Provide a safe space to support and enhance a spiritually fulfilled congregation by offering creative, powerful, and diverse worship services. Celebrate our multi-generational congregation with learning, leadership, laughter, and love by celebrating fully as a congregation. Demonstrate a commitment to repair and renovate our spaces to provide a safe, accessible, nurturing and sustainable physical space and grounds for our congregation and visitors. Promote the power of community and respect for intersectional approaches to faith so that all feel welcome to be our better selves.

WE INSPIRE:

Use the power of our music to enrich the spiritual, communal, and individual experience of all who attend our services. Grow our opportunities for leadership with training; inspire, attract and retain a wider range of prospective members. Promote the visibility of our lifespan faith formation programs through youth and adult religious education exchanges. Become known as a community hub to support the cultural richness of Western New York to attract and retain a wider range of prospective members.

WE TRANSFORM:

Strengthen our connections to other congregations in a safe space to foster a bold change in our lives and lay the foundation for action. Create a congregation of faith, love, and trust that shows up, supports, and encourages families and across all communities in a spiritual setting. Use the history of our church to approach community and social justice action together as an ENTIRE congregation to focus our energy on health of our church, our community, and our world. Provide responsive ministries to care for our own community as well as our surrounding communities in need.



Minister's Report

Dear Ones,

At the time of writing this report, I have been your interim minister for 4 full months, so this Annual Report is really a four-month review. The transition process begins with a good ending, and I would say you did a great job saying goodbye and thank you to Rev. Joan for her faithful years of service. It is hard to let go, and it can seem cruel to have to separate from her when you know she is living nearby, but this, too, is essential to a healthy transition process.

My tenure as your interim minister began on August 1st which was the same day my moving company showed up (2 ½ weeks late) with furniture, boxes, and books. I was given a warm welcome and a tour of the church by the Search Committee when I arrived in Buffalo on July 14th. Your outstanding Worship Associates team planned worship through August so that I could unpack and get settled into my new apartment and find my way around Buffalo. This isn't always the case, and I can't thank them enough.

Though I didn't have worship responsibilities right away, I hit the ground running. My first meeting at UUCB was with the Building Enhancement Committee and many other committee meetings followed. Your lovely church administrator, Kaylan, gave notice on my 3rd day, and I met with Veronica Hogel's family to plan her Memorial Service on my 5th day. I loved getting to know her and her beautiful family. The service was held on August 10th. I attended every worship service in August to get the lay of the land, and to begin to build relationships which is one of the first tasks of an interim.

My first worship service was on September 4th, and I have been in the pulpit a total of ten times. Working with Dr. Jessie Downs, the staff soloists, and your wonderful choir has been one of the greatest joys of my career as a minister. It feels to me that the music ministry of UUCB is more than an enhancement as it is in most churches, but it is your calling and a gift. I realize there is some concern that the past will repeat itself, but with a clear awareness of those past dysfunctions and clear expectations, a covenantal relationship woven together with a mission-centered collaboration and mutual respect, UUCB's potential to positively impact its members and the wider community is immeasurable. It is already happening.

I am putting together a Transition Team to assist me in the interim process and hope to present the team to you for a consecration ceremony at the January congregational meeting. The role of the Transition Team is to function as a mini-laboratory for the transitions the community of faith will undergo. It explores the culture and dynamics of the community of faith, with its strengths and struggles. As the team analyzes what holds the community of faith back from its potential, those very issues may become apparent in its own discussions.

By intentionally building a cooperative climate, the team learns to change old patterns and try new things. Then it can help the governing body, committees, and community of faith to do the same. The success of the team will lie in its ability to recognize issues that are impeding the community of faith's life, deal with them in its own functioning, and then lead the community of faith to recognize and address those patterns of behavior and take appropriate actions to change.

With the help of the Right Relations Team, I've held three Covenantal Conversations to facilitate the process of writing an all-church covenant. The goal was to have a covenant ready for a vote in January, but the participation was not as wide as I had hoped. A covenant is most effective when it is a product of the collective, not a few. We will continue to hold Covenantal Conversations in January to give everyone an opportunity to be heard. This is your church covenant, and your input matters.

Minister's Report Continued

The UUCB staff are a talented and collaborative team, and I am feeling grateful. Church attendance has been increasing, and the family ministry appears to be growing. The process for becoming a member of UUCB has been a bit cumbersome in the past, so the board and I are working to be more welcoming to newcomers to our UU faith.

A handful of us painted the kitchen over the Thanksgiving holiday, and while it still needs lots of TLC, it is much “happier” and more accessible to future rentals, a much-needed income for UUCB’s fiscal health.

At the congregational meeting, members overwhelmingly voted to pass a deficit budget to increase administrative support to full-time, and we are lucky to have found someone as qualified, dedicated, and talented to work in that position as Jen Cunningham. But the demands and strains of the job require more than the present 25 hours per week. I am witnessing the same frustration in Jen that I saw in Kaylan. This critical position is a full-time job, and the ministry of the church will benefit from this investment.

So, after six months of being in your beloved presence, I would like to share some of my “healthy and honest assessments.” First, I encourage you to support the budget for the coming year and beyond. This is a critical time and an exciting time for UUCB, and your support will make all the difference as you move into the future and begin your search for your next settled minister.

Your stunningly beautiful historic church building is in desperate need of major repair as well as some basic aesthetic TLC. It looks tired and unloved, and as your interim minister, it is my job to speak the truth. There are many of you who are faithfully tending to the garden and other areas of the church, but what is also desperately needed is a hospitality team to help with coffee hour and clean-up on Sunday morning. Also needed are volunteers to do some creative enhancement and some sweat equity kind of beautification. If you can think of UUCB as your spiritual home away from home, you will be as dedicated to its well-being and care as you are to your own home. Investing in UUCB is investing is also an investment in your children's and your grandchildren’s futures. The world desperately needs our life-giving, life-saving free faith, and it is in our hands.

It didn’t take long for me to recognize the magnitude of your gifts and strengths, and I am optimistic that your future growth is ensured if we work together. There have been times in our Unitarian Universalist history when our forbearers have been called to work and sacrifice for justice and the greater good. I believe we have an opportunity and a responsibility to ready ourselves for an even greater threat to our democracy and basic human rights in our nation and around the world. UUCB is positioned to be a powerful force for good in Buffalo and beyond if you are willing to answer that call. Looking at your history, I can safely say it is in your DNA. It is an honor to be walking with you on this journey.

In faith and love,



Cathy

The Role of an Interim Minister



The interim minister assists the congregation in moving beyond its last ministry and equipping itself for a new, different ministry. This preparation involves helping the congregation look at practices that may or may not be serving them well, assisting through the emotional process of transition, setting sights forward, and connecting the congregation to needed resources.

Heritage:

Reviewing how the Congregation has been shaped and formed; encouraging and hearing the stories about the Congregation's past, as the foundation upon which the present rests; and embracing the rich variety that makes up the Congregation.

Leadership:

Reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership; providing opportunity for individuals and the Congregational organization to examine the types of leadership needed for new leaders to emerge, and for seasoned leaders to recommit or to refocus their gifts.

Mission:

Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction; clarifying the faith community's identity and core values; working to develop, update, and revitalize mission and vision statements; and reviewing strategic and tactical plans including stewardship and the financial health of the congregation.

Connections:

Discovering and revitalizing all the association, interfaith, and community relationships a congregation builds outside of itself; and re-assessing old links and considering new ones.

Future:

Developing congregational and pastoral profiles that position the congregation for its next ministry, including a healthy and honest assessment of the other focus points so that the congregation can turn its energy toward proactive decision-making for the future.

Director of Religious Education



Title: Director of Religious Education 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Facilitator: Jessica Pond

Meetings: Religious Education classes meet on Sunday mornings, 10:45-11:45, from mid-September to late May. RE classes are supported by a team of eleven volunteers, and the average attendance in RE classes this year has been 25 children and youth.

Activities:

- January:
 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day Program: Fifteen children and youth gathered on Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend to learn about the Children's Crusade and share their dreams for the future in a collaborative mural project.
- February:
 - Spread the Love Baking Party: Fifteen children and parents came together to bake cookies for the families at the Gerald Place community center.
 - Finding Our Center Classes: Rev. Joan Montagnes and I held classes to teach and familiarize our congregation about the upcoming changes to Article II of the UUA bylaws, including the Principles and Sources. These classes were held in February and March.
- April:
 - Seeds of Change: Eight children gathered to learn about Wangari Maathai, the first African woman, and environmentalist, to win a Nobel Peace Prize, and then planted some seeds of their own.
 - Youth Service
- May:
 - RE Sunday: The end of the Religious Education academic year was celebrated with a worship service dedicated to the volunteer teachers, and each class had the opportunity to share what they learned during the year. The service was followed by a special Fellowship Hour with the Anderson's Ice Cream Truck.
- July:
 - Camp Element: A total of sixteen children and youth joined a special four-week program to celebrate the elements and maintain community during the summer.
- September:
 - RE Orientation Workshop: In September, preparations for the new Religious Education academic year begin with a gathering of volunteer teachers to talk about the previous year, hopes and goals for the upcoming year, and important safety procedures.
 - Welcome Back Potluck
 - Autumnal Equinox Service
- October:
 - Banned Book Club: The Banned Book Club kicked off with a bang this year, with a collaboration with the Burning Books bookstore for Banned Book Month. The BBC has seen a lot of growth this year.
 - Indigenous Peoples' Day Program: Seventeen children and youth gathered on Indigenous Peoples' Day weekend to learn about the Haudenosaunee Creation Story.
 - Super Sundays: Super Sundays returned in October and will continue on the second Sunday of each month.
 - Pub Theology: Pub Theology is a casual discussion group that meets at different, often "pub"-like, locations each month to talk about religion, politics, culture, and more. Four people attended the first discussion, and new folks have been joining each month since.
 - Halloween Potluck: More than 50 children, youth, and adults came together for the Halloween Potluck and to be spooked by the Youth Group's Haunted Basement.
- December:
 - Newcomer Classes
 - Holiday Potluck
 - Winter Solstice Service

Living our Mission:

The Religious Education ministry provides the foundation for UUCB's educational gatherings, especially for children and youth. Each curriculum for Sunday morning RE classes is selected to encourage children and youth to develop into compassionate, thoughtful individuals who inspire each other in love and mutual respect.

Goals for 2024:

My goals for 2024 are to have more multigenerational opportunities for community and education and to hold more specific classes for adult faith formation and development.

Music Director



Title: Music Director 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Director: Dr. Jessie Downs

Meetings: The choir meets Thursdays from 7:30-9:45pm in the Parish Hall and Sanctuary and at least bi-weekly at 9/9:30am before services; my work averages 20 hours/ week

Activities:

- Develop choir members' healthy and effective use of their voices.
- Develop the choir's overall musicianship and cooperative music-making.
- Rehearse and present a variety of music for weekly Sunday services, as well as special events throughout the year.
- Share the church's ministry of music through musical events that welcome in the larger Buffalo community.
- Organize monthly Casual Concerts.
- Raise funds for and manage the budget of the Music Ministry.
- Supervise the work of the 4 vocal soloists and the staff pianist.
- Tend to the joys and concerns of choir members and church members otherwise engaged with the Music Ministry.

Living our Mission:

- Music supports the communication of spiritual messages in Sunday services.
- The choir provides a supportive and engaging environment for members to gather and grow in their spiritual journeys through music-making.
- The Music Ministry's outreach events share the spiritual power of music with the larger Buffalo community.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Supervised the continued growth of the church's musical leaders, namely Taryn Goehrig, Helen Lowry, and Christopher Sierzchula.
- Completed successful search for Tenor Soloist.
- Welcomed several new and returning members to the choir and strengthened the choir as a whole.
- Provided a variety of music for weekly services, featuring the Choir, Chamber Choir, Soloists, HoUUuse Band, and special guests.
- Successfully carried out two major outreach events for the inaugural MUUSIC Weekends, with over 400 people in attendance each weekend.
- Raised over \$15,000 to support the expanded Music Weekends.
- Successfully produced a Cabaret for an audience of around 120 that raised over \$5,000 for the church's operating budget.
- Reprised the Cabaret for the general public as a part of the Elmwood Arts Festival.
- Raised \$2,500 for the Ukrainian American Freedom Foundation through the 11/17 Prayers for Peace concert and raised general awareness of the war in Ukraine and how people can continue to help.
- Supported local artists and enriched the church's community offerings through the growth of the monthly Casual Concert series, usually with 50 or more people in attendance per event, up from around 20-30 last year.
- In December, the choir and I were featured on Channel 4 News (offering the choir and the church greater publicity), hosted a community carol-a-long, and supported the "Blue Christmas" and "Candlelight Christmas Eve" services, as we have other special services throughout the year.

Goals for 2024:

- Expand fundraising for the church's operating budget by adding a second Cabaret.
- Organize another music-rich Spring Music Sunday/ Weekend.
- Organize another collaborative Fall Music Weekend around a social justice theme.
- Continue to help our Tenor Soloist grow into his new position.
- Continue to grow choir participation.
- Clarify expectations/procedures for fundraising and budgeting.

Church Archives and Church Historian



Title: 2023 Annual Report of the Church Historian

Chairperson(s): Bill Parke

Members (and tour guides): Bill Parke. (Tour guides in 2023 included Judy Kieffer, Paulette Notaro, Maria Testa, and Tom Yots.)

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 the 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 2023:

- Hosted theological student Ron Arnen for a multi-day research visit related to his prospective book on Rev. Richard W. Boynton.
- Installed a new exhibit in Parish Hall on the 1988 visit to UUCB by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
- Held tours during Elmwood Village Arts Fest and Buffalo Garden Walk, welcoming a total of 183 visitors for tours of the sanctuary.
- Partnered with Tom Yots and Andrea Harris to give a paid tour of the church as part of Auction fundraising, raising over \$200.
- Purchased and utilized four new garden signs to promote tours; the signs were designed and made by local company Utzig Signs.
- Gave a presentation to the Women's Society titled "Contributions of Unitarian Universalist Women as Only a Man Can Tell It!" at their October luncheon.
- Provided a church history/timeline to support the Sacred Sites grant application and interim minister search.
- Advocated for pew renumbering.
- Attended the May meeting of the WNY Archivists and toured the new Benjamin and Dr. Edgar R. Cofeld Judaic Museum at Temple Beth Zion.
- Provided research support for the Heritage Month display in Parish Hall by Peter Sloan.

Goals for 2024:

Hold summer/auction tours; Put in place a new exhibit in the Parish Hall, to replace the one currently on display; Help prepare an article on circuit-riding preachers in WNY for WNY Heritage Magazine in collaboration with WNY Archivists.

Auction Team



Title: Auction Team: 2023 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 March 2023. This was our second year using 32Auctions. The auction continued as a hybrid online/ in-person format. Team members agree that this format has proven to be efficient and effective, but we have also identified ways in which this platform needs adaptation specific to our interests. Team members are working on rectifying these gaps and quirks. Positives include our ability to present an aesthetically pleasing catalog with photos and graphics that enhance 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 embraced by many, while others were challenged by the unfamiliar technology. Significant increases were noted in the number of donors, auction items, number of individuals registered as bidders, in-person participants, and possible winning bids.

Living our Mission:

The auction contributes to membership engagement/enjoyment, church vitality, and fundraising. 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 emerge from the pandemic and maintain their connection to each other and to the church.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- The auction has raised over \$12,400, not including income from two additional events being offered this Fall. (2023 - \$11,000; 2021 - \$5,910). We are making a comeback from our COVID-related losses.
- 42 (30) donors offered 70 (44) items for bid, with several items designed for more than a single winner.
- 90 (75) individuals registered as bidders.
- Over 300 (235) winning bids have been placed so far.
- As noted above, our efforts also helped to raise spirits and contribute to membership engagement as we continued to cautiously emerge from pandemic isolation.

Goals for 2024:

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 2024 auction experience being even more satisfying, efficient, and effective. We will continue a hybrid format, anticipating increased revenue as congregants become more adept at online bidding. An increased opportunity for in-person bidding will also improve the vitality and fundraising capability of the auction.

Board of Trustees



Title: UUCB Board of Trustees 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

President: Bobby Withrow

Members: Bridget Evans, VP; Thea Hassan, Treasurer; Michael Hill, Secretary; Shawn Sweet; Kate Bell-Schwede; Chris Slocum

Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7 PM

Activities:

- Oversaw the governance of the church.
- Worked with the Minister and other staff members, as necessary, to implement the Mission and the Vision of the church.
- Led the creation of an Interim Minister Search Committee to find a replacement after the Reverend Joan Montagnes retired.
- Appointed Chris Slocum to fill a vacancy.
- Changed wording in the Policy Book to remove gendered language.
- Worked with the Advisory Committees to fill vacancies and affirm new members to those committees.
- Worked with the Finance Advisory Committee to create the budget for 2024.
- Approved a draft Safety Policy written by DRE Jess Pond.
- Approved the Personnel Manual drafted by the Personnel Advisory Committee.
- Created a new task force (Revenue Enhancement Task Force) to find ways to supplement our income in new and innovative ways.
- Supported the work of church members in successfully applying for the National Fund for Sacred Places \$250,000 Grant.
- Discussed ways to increase participation in church governance.

Living Our Mission:

- Though we are seven members, we spoke as one voice after deliberations, arguments, and discussions around a myriad of issues affecting our congregation.
- We kept in mind our efforts to use ARAOMC competencies and guiding principles when making decisions.
- We made sure that we stayed in covenant with each other by looking at the process we followed during all meetings.

Goals for 2024:

- To bring in more people to serve the Mission and the Vision of the Church.

Covenant Group Ministry



Title: Annual Report of the Covenant Group Ministry - 2023

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

Purpose of the Program:

- 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, related to UUCB's monthly themes.
- To commit 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 its 20th year, continued to outreach to both member and non-member congregants to enhance connection to this church community.

Accomplishments in 2023:

1. Twelve groups met regularly, with 15 facilitators and 74 other individuals who participated at some point during the year. Two facilitators were also members of another group. This is a total of 89 individuals active in the CGM at some point during 2023.
2. In celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Covenant Group Ministry, members and facilitators created the March 26th worship service, coordinating with a Worship Associate (who is also a facilitator), and the directors of RE and Music. That evening, 45 current and prospective CG members gathered in the Parish Hall for a potluck dinner followed by the opportunity to experience a mini-Covenant group.
3. In May, 19 new group members were welcomed, including 13 individuals who became founding members of two new in-person groups.
4. Monthly Facilitator meetings continued, with an opportunity to report on the health and needs of each group and to obtain peer supervision.
5. Visibility was maintained through participation in Intro to UU path-to-membership classes, monthly newsletter and e-blast articles, and outreach by individual members.
6. Continued support of theme ministry, using Soul Matters materials.

Goals for 2024:

- To grow the Ministry as a welcoming and loving conduit for individuals to become more deeply involved in the tapestry of our congregation.
- 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



Title: Endowment Advisory Committee 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Andrea Burke-Harris

Members: Jane Armbruster, Don Behr, Gerry Evans, Thea Hassan – ex-officio member

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

Activities:

- Reviews the 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 calls 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 throughout the year, recognizing their commitment to supporting UUCB through a legacy gift.

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 encourages companies to adopt policies consistent with UU values.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Updated poster which is prominently hung in the Parish Hall, to include names of those members who have signed a Declaration of Intent form within the past year.
- Acknowledged with thank you cards, five members who have signed a Declaration of Intent form to leave a bequest to UUCB, as of 11/15/23.
- Hosted one session to acknowledge the forethought and commitment of those members who have already signed a declaration of intent form.
- Continued stewardship of those members who have signed a Declaration of Intent form by visiting in person and by sending cards.
- Attended a UUA Legacy Giving Webinar via Zoom and shared information with the committee regarding suggested strategies.
- Submitted recommendation to the Board regarding the Endowment Advisory Committee's view to oppose the Business Proposal to immediately divest from fossil fuels and address reparations as it was written, at GA 2023.
- Researched other investment options for the Schwab account to align more with our UU values. Held a meeting with additional congregants to assist in making this decision. The committee will make a final recommendation to the Board at the December Board meeting.

Goals for 2024:

- Schedule informational presentations and individual meetings with congregants regarding planned giving, and the importance of the Endowment Fund, and provide information on ways to contribute.
- Acknowledge current signers of the Declaration of Intent throughout the year in a variety of ways.
- Update the list of Heritage Society donors and engrave names for plaque.
- Update the list of Declaration of Intent signers and update the names on the poster.
- Continue to bring awareness and importance of UUCB's endowment and planned giving to the long-term sustainability of UUCB through entries in the newsletter, order of service, and e-blasts.

Family Promise Ministry



Title: 2023 Family Promise Ministry Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Nancy Wilkins

Meetings: No formal meetings are held, but the congregation is informed of the particular needs of the Family Promise homeless shelter and their special events via weekly announcements in the congregation-wide e-blast. UUCB members participate in the FP annual open Board Meeting, and summer picnic for shelter residents and volunteers, and assist by donating food, furniture, household, and baby care. The retired minister, Rev. Joan Montagnes, serves on the Advisory Board of Family Promise of WNY.

Activities and Accomplishments in 2023:

The congregation at large and other committees are collaborating with the FP Chair or taking their own initiatives to benefit the FP ministry, described by the former Minister as the most important social justice activity at UUCB.

- The Share the Plate Committee named Family Promise as the December 2023 recipient of the Share the Plate donations.
- The Social Justice Committee adopted a family Promise shelter family of eight for Christmas, and in one day the congregation had fulfilled all their wishes.
- A narrative describing the UUCB ministry to Family Promise was submitted to the National Fund for Sacred Spaces, to demonstrate involvement in the wider community. The church was selected from 371 letters of intent for a \$250,000 matching grant award toward repairs to our 117-year-old building.

Living Our Mission:

Family Promise is a small shelter for homeless families that can welcome up to six families. It is one of only two shelters in WNY that does not separate men and teen boys from the rest of the family. There is a 95% success rate of not only helping find permanent homes, usually within seven weeks, but also providing a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment, where new coping skills and confidence are built. The majority of the families are homeless due to domestic violence, or eviction resulting from escalating rents, low wages, inflation, and underemployment. Twenty-five families found permanent homes in 2023.

Volunteering and contributing to Family Promise conforms to the mission of this church, by connecting the congregation to a more diverse community, inspiring mutual respect and understanding, and working for social justice.

Goals for 2024:

Continue to inform the congregation of the growing homeless population in Buffalo, and its causes, and to continue volunteering and contributing to Family Promise. To have more specific actions the congregation can engage in to help.

Finance Advisory Committee (FAC)



Title: Finance Advisory Committee 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair: Joel Cohen

Members: John Petrocelli, Justin DeCleene.

Ex-Officio: Thea Hassan, Treasurer; Cathy Harrington, Minister;

Donna Sentz, Finance Administrator

Meetings: Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at 4:00 pm on Zoom.

Activities:

- Analyze monthly financial reports prepared by staff, including the monitoring of all budget lines for spending progress.
- Report to the board regarding the performance of the endowment fund.
- Work with other advisory committees, ministerial teams, task forces, and staff to prepare a draft budget in August.
- Present the board's recommended budget to the congregation at the fall congregational meeting.
- Assist the Treasurer in preparing the annual statement of financial affairs to the congregation for the January congregational meeting.
- Respond to requests from the board for recommendations concerning financial matters that affect the church's programming and operations.
- Initiated an Employee Retention Credit claim with the IRS through an engagement with Andrew Ziolo, CPA.

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 in 2023:

- Advised the Board of Trustees on financial matters throughout the year.
- Created a draft 2024 budget for the Board's review, including possible scenario options for developing the budget.
- Presented the proposed 2024 budget to the congregation at the Congregational Meeting.
- Held two informational sessions in person before the October Congregational meeting to review the draft budget with church members before the budget vote.
- Developed and reviewed 2023 budget projections throughout the year to allow time to make budget adjustments when needed.

Goals for 2024:

- Continue to closely monitor the Church's financial performance and make recommendations to the board.
- Develop a responsible 2025 draft budget for the Board's review. Account for the Settle Minister Search expense.
- Add at least one member and appoint a new chair to replace Joel Cohen, who will be leaving the Finance Advisory Committee at the end of his term in January.
- Work with the Music Director, Financial Administrator, and Music Ministry Team to clarify music income/expense lines.
- Develop better methods of accounting for grant income.

Fixed Assets Advisory Committee



Title: Fixed Assets Advisory Committee 2022-2023 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees of UUCB

Chairperson: David Quackenbush

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

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

Statement of Goals/Purpose :

The overall purpose of the Fixed Assets Advisory Committee is to oversee and work to keep all aspects of the Church buildings, garage, and property in good shape, working properly, and making improvements as required.

Accomplishments

- The 2nd-floor wood framed window that swung out and fell to the parking lot was fixed by JA Gulick and reinstalled by Will Botsford and DQ this summer.
- Video camera footage of most of the church's underground draining pipelines on the Northern section of the building. The video was done by RE Kelley.
- The Sanctuary pew renumbering project was completed prior to the Church tours starting in August 2023. This project was made necessary when we realigned pews to accommodate a new handicap-accessible seating pattern when the relocated pews had uneven nonconsecutive numbers.
- Fixed Assets played an integral part in our creating the successful grant application for the National Fund for Sacred Places.
- Grove Roofing and RE Kelley masonry continued progressing with repairing areas that were evaluated as potential sources of water infiltration.
- Church office AC systems that 'broke down' in July were fixed in August 2023 (both 1st floor office and Minister's Rooms).
- Ongoing progress in replacing 'light bulbs' throughout the facility.
- A freezer (used) has been acquired and is currently located in the basement mechanical equipment room, as well as 2nd refrigerator in the kitchen.

Unrealized Goals

- As of October 2023, Fixed Assets efforts associated with the Grant application to the NY Landmark Conservancy Sacred Sites (\$ 150,000.00) still awaits a final grantor decision.
- Scheduling and securing a hydro blasting contractor to water jet the draining lines that were videotaped earlier this year.
- Professionally cleaned interior Garden Entrance South facing masonry walls that were stained from water drainage.
- Repair and/or fix the existing outdoor yard lighting system.
- Replace the kitchen exhaust fan.
- Improve bathrooms in the basement.

Goals for 2024:

- Video scan of UUCB's interior /exterior to assist with future insurance documentation.
- Continue addressing the 'unrealized goals'.
- Coordinate connecting to UUCB's 'Share Point System'.
- Coordinate church organ required repairs.

Concerns, Needs, or Requests

Budget permitting, our UUCB facility needs the church's internal/external maintenance attention on a regularly scheduled basis.

Folk Dancing



Title: 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation Folk Dancing

Chairperson: Martha Malkiewicz

Members: We currently have 15 members. 2 or 3 come from UUCB, 2 or 3 come from UUCA, the rest are from the outside community. Most come every week.

Meetings: Every Monday morning. 9:30-12:00 September- June

Activities:

We dance. I teach and lead dances of different levels.

Living our Mission:

- We dance with joy. Different levels, skills, and abilities are welcomed. There is a lot of laughter each Monday morning.
- Sometimes I am able to share information about different cultures.
- Each week I send an email with a quotation that has something to do with dance. The email often includes a paragraph promoting acceptance, and tolerance.

Accomplishments in 2023:

Our biggest accomplishment is that we have returned to dancing without mandatory masking. Of course, there are still masks available for anyone who wishes to wear one.

Goal for 2024:

To continue to create a space where everyone feels safe and welcome. Perhaps we will be able to hold hands once again.

UUCB Gardening Committee



Title: Gardening Committee “2023 Annual Report to the Congregation”

Chairperson(s): Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller

Members (and ex-officio members): Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller, Charlie Kaars, Judy White, Philip Nicolai, Athena McCrory, Andrea Burke-Harris, Susan Milde, Alex Gugliuzza, Thea Hassan, Renee Gerace, Simon Richard, Karen Peterson and Ron Houk.

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.
- Maintaining the Henry David Thoreau Memorial Composter with top-quality compost for use in the church garden and for sale to church members.
- Adding names of those whose ashes were interred to the plaque in the church and arranging inscriptions on pavers in the Memorial Pathway.

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.

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 2023:

For the 3rd year in a row, we were awarded a grant from the Marvin Lunefield Beautification Foundation. This year for the amount of \$800! The amount we are granted has risen each consecutive year. This year, the Gardening Committee (but mostly Athena McCrory,) worked together to plan, construct and plant a ‘Keyhole Garden’ on our South Lawn. This style of garden is self-fertilizing and easy to tend to due to its raised height.

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 can be managed. Tony Has brought along a few new congregants to serve as helpers in the memorial garden. Tony also brought in new people to work 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 happened in every garden.

Goals for 2024:

We have been Commissioned by Brent Steele, a friend of our Church, to install a bench in the shade for enjoying the garden. We hope to encourage more regular volunteering by frequent outreach. We hope to keep adding native plants and shaping the garden toward being a super pollinator-friendly haven in the Elmwood Village. We will once again apply for the Lunefield grant.

Governance Advisory Committee



Title: Governance Advisory Committee 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Kenneth Manly (9/22)

Members: Elizabeth Parke (6/23), Stephanie Cole Adams (9/23), Rev. Cathy Harrington (ex-officio)

Meetings: First Saturday of the month, 10am-noon, in the Marge Gardner room

Activities:

- Enabling the Board to update the Church's Mission Statement and the Board's Statement of desired Outcomes.
- Recommending amendments to policies that the Board has adopted and suggesting new policies that the Board may wish to consider.
- Revising governance-related documents at the Board's request.
- Assisting with planning and implementing orientation for new Board members.
- Enabling the Trustees to review their own covenant annually.
- Assuming responsibility for fulfilling governance-related mandates described throughout this Policy Book.

Living our Mission:

The Governance Advisory Committee supports the Church Mission indirectly, as the roots of an apple tree support the fruit. Policies developed by this committee ensure that the Church and the Congregation are kept safe and that the resources of the Church are used wisely, allowing the Congregation to continue to gather, inspire, and transform.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Organized a Leadership Assembly for staff, Board members, and Advisory and Nominating Committee members.
- Created a new diagram of responsibility and accountability for the Leadership Assembly.
- Distributed revised Policy Book with gender-free language and more accurate revision dates.
- Revised Policy Book 4.2.1 Global Delegation to reflect current practice.
- Recruited Elizabeth Parke and Stephanie Cole Adams as committee members.

Goals for 2024:

- Plan and host the 2024 Leadership Assembly.
- Fix the issues we have found in the Bylaws and Policy Book, as prioritized by the Board of Trustees.

Music Ministry Team



Title: Music Ministry Team 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Phil Nicolai & Mary Richert

Members: Diane Bockrath, Will Botsford, Gerry Evans, Alan Atkinson, Don Behr, Jessie Downs (ex officio)

Meetings: First Wednesday of the month at 7:30 in the Library

Activities:

- Support and help the music ministry.
- Raised funds to support Music Sunday events.
- Expanded the presence of music ministry outside of our church.

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

- Enhanced spirituality in Sunday services.
- Promoted events for choir community building.
- Encourage congregants to join the choir.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Promoted and staffed Casual Concert series.
- Completed search for permanent tenor soloist/section leader.
- Successfully carried out two major outreach events as part of our UU Music Weekends.
- Sponsored a Cabaret to raise money for the church.

Goals for 2024: A list of intended goals for the coming year

- Expand fundraising for the church by adding a second performance of the cabaret.
- Brainstorm ways to help raise matching funds for capital improvement grants.
- Consider using the model created in Prayers for Peace to reach out to other communities as part of our social justice mission.

Nominating Committee



Title: Nominating Committee Annual Report

Chairs: Doug Sherman (Jan-Sept; resigned); Beth White (Sept-Dec)

Members: Peter Sloan; Phyllis Dissek; Kathy Ryan; Rachel Clark; John Petrocelli

Meetings: Meetings were held Oct. 15, Nov. 12

Purpose:

1. to identify 3-4 board candidates for a slate to be elected at the Jan. 2024 congregational meeting.
2. to assist the Board in identifying congregation members to serve on advisory committees.

Accomplishments:

We are still in the process of identifying candidates to replace Bridget Evans (term expiring), Michael Hill (term expiring), and Bobby Withrow (resigning) on the Board. Bill Parke has confirmed his intent to run and we are working our way down a ranked list to find two more candidates. Depending on how the congregation votes on the bylaws change on December 3rd, we may also need to find another candidate to replace Christine Slocum (who does have two years of membership).

We were happy to have Rachel and John join our committee after being elected at the fall congregational meeting.

Goals for 2024:

A digital membership survey was created in the spring of 2023 that we announced to members but have not really publicized enough to the congregation. During the stewardship campaign, a short paper survey was included with pledge cards as a first step toward that effort. We plan to circle back to building a robust membership database in 2024 as a tool for better matching member skillsets to committee and Board vacancies.

Oversight Advisory Committee



Title: Oversight AC 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Mary Bisson. Secretary: Mary Lou Hill

Members: (and ex-officio members): Mary Bisson, Mary Lou Hill, Donna Hagerty

Meetings: Meet monthly via Zoom, second Tuesday

Activities:

- 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.
- Maintain a record of future plans from the committee and commitments made by the board to aid the committee, to facilitate follow-up to board discussions.
- Living our Mission: How does your ministry implement our mission?
- Facilitate among all Advisory Committees and Task Forces the comfortably productive habit of fulfilling our By-Laws, Board Policies, and the Church's 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 2023: A list of what your ministry accomplished during the year.

- Oversight maintained its schedule, providing deadlines that assured each Advisory Committee, with one exception, presented a report detailing its annual accomplishments, needs, concerns, and proposals to the Board of Trustees.
- Oversight provided editorial and content advice for those reports and presented it to the Board in a timely fashion. An Oversight member attended each Board session but one.
- Initiated a log of plans for each committee to track whether goals were achieved and commitments honored.

Goals for 2024: A list of intended goals for the coming year

- Continue our monitoring and helping of Advisory Committees and Task Forces communicate with the Board.
- Support the board in improving the effectiveness of committees that are struggling.
- Welcome a new member who is interested in learning about the governance functions of the church.

Pastoral Care and Support



Title: Pastoral Care & Support Ministry Team Annual Report to the Congregation 2023

Name of Chairperson: Ginny Vaughan

List of Team Members: Rev Cathy Harrington, Bobbie Baker, Josette Cunningham, Jackie Knowles, Martha Malkiewicz, Maryellen McCone

Meetings: The team meets every second Thursday of the month from 10:30-12noon in the Marge Gardner Room

Activities:

- Support Rev. Cathy with remembering members/friends who may be experiencing Joy, Concern, or Sorrow.
- Send cards to members' friends who are experiencing Joy, Concern, or Sorrow.
- Send cards to members who have lost a loved one in the last three years.
- Send cards to members/friends twice a year to remind them they are thought of and are never alone.
- Provide individual candles for members to light a candle for remembrance of a loved one.

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 2023:

- Sent over 75 cards to members/friends who were experiencing a JOY (Marriage, New Baby, Graduation, Birthday, Wedding Anniversary, etc.) CONCERN (illness, surgery, loneliness, etc.), SORROW (loss of a job, loss of a loved one).
- Sent 15 Anniversary Cards to members who had lost a loved one in the last 3 years.
- Sent Cards to graduating High School Seniors who attend UUCB.
- Sent 16 cards each month to remind members they are thought of by UUCB. People who cannot attend service or activities.
- Twice a year (Winter and Spring) sent over 40 cards to members who no longer can participate in church activities due to age, illness, or have moved away). The purpose of the card is to say 'You are thought of' and 'You are not alone'.
- Sent 13 cards to people who were injured or died in the May 14 Massacre last year.
- Replenish individual candles and a couple of large candles for the Joy, Concern, and Sorrow tables.

Goals for 2024:

- Continue to send cards to the above groups.
- To send cards to members who have lost a loved one in the past three years.
- To continue to communicate with Rev. Cathy and the Pastoral Team regarding Members/friends who are experiencing joy, sorrow, or concern.
- Continue to buy stamps for cards.
- Replenish the cards the team sends.

Pulpit Flower Ministry



Title: Pulpit Flower Ministry 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson: Sandra Bissontz

Assistant Chairperson: Tim Ashton

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

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. This year, we have encouraged the recycling of the plastic pots used to hold the flowers. The florist suggested reusing these pots to cut down on plastic consumption. Some people have complied, about 1/3 of the donors. Hopefully, we can encourage more people to return the pots in the future.

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.

Accomplishments in 2023:

This year our ministry team facilitated participation on most Sundays, 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 2024:

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.

Resource Enhancement Task Force



Title: Resource Enhancement Task Force 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Molly Quackenbush, Secretary

Members: Jane Armbruster, Joel Cohen, Bridget Evans, Rev. Cathy Harrington, Martha Malkiewicz, Greg Rabb, David Quackenbush

Retired: Rev. Joan Montagnes

Advisory: Thea Hassan, Tom Muka, Bobby Withrow, Tom Yots

Meetings were held once or twice monthly at UUCB.

Activities:

The overall purpose of the Resource Enhancement Task Force is to report directly to the Board on matters of researching, applying for, and securing funding support from sources outside the church such as foundations, government, and other entities for the purpose of supporting UUCB's mission and goals. This work includes:

- informing the board on a regular basis concerning its activities and progress.
- supporting UUCB program, committee, and task force initiatives.
- supporting the efforts of a Capital Campaign Committee 2023-2025.

Living our Mission:

The task force supports efforts to advance UUCB's mission of compassion and dignity for all by assisting ministry teams and committees in meeting their goals.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Several grants have been applied for or received.
- Received - A NYS Convention of Universalists Grant of \$400 for several UUCB members to attend the Right Relations Congregational Team Training Project.
- Received - The Martin Lunenfeld Beautification Grant of approx. \$800 for a UUCB 2023 garden project.
- Received - NYS Arts Grant of \$5,000 supporting Ukraine-themed Concert(s) in November 2023 planned by Jessie Downs in conjunction with UB's music program.
- Received - National Fund for Sacred Places Grant of \$250,000 for building preservation and improvements.
- Applied For - NY Landmark Conservancy Sacred Sites Grant of \$50,000 for stained-glass window repair; response due spring 2024.
- Began planning for a capital campaign needed to meet the required match for one or more of the outstanding grant requests and preserve our historic church.

Goals for 2024:

- The main focus will be supporting UUCB's capital campaign effort while also assisting with smaller grants.

Social Justice Ministry Team



Title: Social Justice 2023 Annual Report

Chair: Maria Testa

Current Members: Hy Carrel (chair until August), Rachel Krajna, Susan Milde, Sue Dempsey, Ted Lightfoot, Andrew Tennenbaum

Ex Officio: Jess Pond, Cathy Harrington

Previous members in 2023: Christine Slocum, Steve Wixson, Karen Jarvis, Susan Wishart, Joan Montagnes

Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month, 6 PM, at UUCB

Activities:

The Social Justice Ministry team provides leadership on congregational social justice activities. A major function is the selection and implementation of Share-the-Plate recipients for each month. Each month, half of the unrestricted plate collection is given to a local not-for-profit whose mission aligns with ours. Ideas for these recipients typically come from the congregation and are then vetted by the ministry team. Selected organizations are contacted by a member of the team and asked if they can provide a staff member to speak at UUCB, usually on the first Sunday of the month. We also ask if there are other things we can do to help the organization, for example, postcarding, collection of items, or a service project (e.g., serving dinner at Friends of Night People).

The Social Justice Ministry team contributes to the mission of the church by:

- Allowing us to gather in service, increasing engagement and fellowship among the congregation. Most members of the SJ team, and many participants in SJ events, are new or new-ish members, suggesting that SJ serves as a good entry point for UUCB.
- Inspiring each other to work toward social justice in our community. It is always more fun to work with others.
- Joining with other progressive organizations whose mission aligns with ours. Share-the-Plate and related activities help UUCB to make important connections in the community, both for individuals and for the church as a whole.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Share the Plate efforts raised approximately \$1000 each month for the following organizations: Clean Air Coalition, Friends of Night People, Family Promise, GLYS, Mona's House, Fantastic Friends, Peace House, Providence Farm Collective, Bornhava, Native American Community Services, International Institute, and Michigan Avenue Heritage Corridor.
- In addition to raising money for worthy organizations, the SJ Ministry team also coordinates activities that benefit the organization while also getting congregation members engaged with each other in service and learning. These activities, open to participation by all church members and friends, included serving dinner at Friends of Night People (twice) and collecting trash as part of the Earth Day Waterkeeper clean-up. SJM organized UU marching in the Pride Parade with the Justice Bloc and also provided a respite station with water and chairs for People, Inc.
- We also led postcarding drives to support legislation supporting home healthcare workers and to thank a church in a rural area for taking a pro-refugee stance. For these events, SJ Ministry team staffed a table after service with postcards and suggested wording.
- The Ministry team also led drives to collect items for several of our partner organizations: toiletries for International Institute, preschool supplies for Bornhava, and winter gear (Mitten Tree) for Journeys End. We also adopted a family through Family Promise, providing over 60 Christmas gifts for a family of 9.
- Finally, the SJ Ministry team organized educational tours of the Michigan Avenue Heritage Corridor and Providence Farm, with fees from these tours providing additional support to these organizations. In November, we sponsored a Witness to Injustice training provided by Native American facilitators that was attended by 40 people, with half from outside the congregation.
- Given all the opportunities to contribute to UUCB social justice efforts through Share the Plate donations, collection drives, educational activities, service projects, and postcarding, it is estimated that a large proportion of church members and engaged in Social Justice activities. We are proud of our expansion in 2023, which has provided more opportunities to be involved.

Goals for 2024: A list of intended goals for the coming year:

- Continue the Share the Plate program.
- Expand the number of participants in Social Justice, both active members of the team as well as the number of members and friends who participate in Social Justice-led activities.
- Regular reports to the congregation about our activities, which include encouragement to generate ideas for Share the Plate recipients and activities and to join in SJ activities.
- Expand the range of Social Justice activities and efforts.

Stewardship Team



Title: Stewardship Team 2023 Annual Report

Chairperson: Martha Malkiewicz

Members: Bill Parke and Steve Wixson, Alisse Sikes

Meetings: We met as needed.

Activities:

- The 2023 Campaign, Roots Hold Us Close, Wings Set Us Free, opened with a wine and cheese gathering for the large donors hosted by Bridget Evans at her home. Twenty-five people attended. Rev. Cathy and Martha Malkiewicz made presentations.
- Alisse Sikes created the visuals for the campaign - a Tree in the sanctuary with birds denoting the number of donations and a Tree in the Parish Hall that grew in height to match the pledges received.

Living our Mission :

Stewardship involves asking people for financial support but also involves having conversations with individuals to learn how they relate to the church and how the church is reaching them. The Welcoming Friends made one-on-one contact with over 180 church members.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- This year we used Welcoming Friends. 35 church members reached out to the list of donors and invited to meet with them at the church.
- The list of donors received from Donna Sentz included the names of 219 people who had given to UUCB in the past three years. This list included the names of 30 people who are no longer associated with UUCB. (Death, illness, moved, no longer attending UUCB).
- Names of 20 new people who are not yet members but are currently involved with UUCB (Social Justice team, RE) were added to the list and contacted by letter.
- Our biggest accomplishment was contacting many members of the congregation and finding out how they were doing. Letters were sent to everyone who did not receive or respond to individual contact. We are currently \$18,000.00 behind where we were last year at this time but we still have several regular donors who have not sent in their pledge cards.
- Stewardship created an envelope for each church member that included the brochure, a pledge card, and a brief survey from the Nominating Committee. The hope is that the survey responses would help the Nominating Committee identify where people might like to serve UUCB.

Goal for 2024:

- Stewardship needs to continue to encourage people to fill out a pledge card and turn it in. Many people make regular donations but do not pledge. Donations are great but do not help us know how to budget for the upcoming year.
- Identify possible new donors early in the process of reaching out.
- Stewardship needs to remember that it is not the only activity that occurs in October and November. There might be ways to work with the choir performances and other events that occur at UUCB to enhance one another.

Strategic Planning Board Advisory Committee



Title: Strategic Planning Board Advisory Committee 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairperson(s): Martha Malkiewicz

Members (and ex-officio members): Martha Malkiewicz, Tom Petrocelli, Christine Slocum

Meetings: Ad Hoc at the moment

Activities

In 2023 we met with the Board of Trustees for two purposes. First, to report on our strategic ideas for UUCB. At the time we suggested that previous grand strategic plans consumed a lot of effort within UUCB and rarely, if ever, produced demonstrable results.

Given that UUCB was still (and is still) recovering from the effects of the pandemic, broad and sweeping changes in strategic direction were viewed as more disruptive than helpful. We made a series of recommendations about worship based on informal conversations with congregants. We did not know, at that time, that Rev. Montagnes was going to leave. We have since discussed this with Rev. Cathy and she was amenable to exploring these options.

The second reason for meeting was to gain guidance from the Board on which areas of UUCB they would like us to focus on since, as we said before, there is little value in grand sweeping changes to our strategic plan.

It is hard to predict what activities may emerge during the interim period. We have, however, identified a good starting point. The Policy Book Strategic Plan (Section 2.1) has not been revised since 2011. First revising and then reimagining the plan as detailed in the policy book is a natural starting point for jumpstarting strategic planning. We would first look at which elements have succeeded and which have not, revising the less successful parts of the plan. After that, we can look at the overall plan, especially as it dovetails with work done during the interim period.

Living our Mission

One of the core purposes of any strategic planning effort is to further the mission of the organization. UUCB is no different. One reason to revise the plan as stated in the Policy Manual is to ensure that it is in alignment with our current mission and goals.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Provided initial guidance to the Board on the scope of strategic planning.
- Added a new member.
- Developed a reasonable process for our next set of activities.

Technology Team



Title: Technology Team 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair: 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 of 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 2023:

- Migrated main on-premises file share to SharePoint
 - The main on-premises file share, also known as the O Drive, was migrated to a new SharePoint site. This helps free up resources on the church's on-premises server. It also allows the file share to be accessed from outside the building, which is not supported by on-premises file shares. For instance, if any staff are working from home, they can now access the entire share.
- Upgraded Finance Administrator's computer
 - Donna Sentz's computer 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.
- Upgraded church computers to Windows 11
 - All church-owned Windows computers from 2019 and later have been upgraded in-place to Windows 11 from Windows 10.

Goals for 2024:

- Replace the main server.
 - The church's primary on-premises server was installed in 2016 and is now due for replacement. This server hosts the church's single-sign-on system, DHCP, and local DNS.
- Implement electronic signatures.
 - It's common nowadays to support electronic forms and signatures. This will allow the church to replace its paper forms with electronic ones. This will include reimbursement forms, rental agreements, and other forms used by the office.
- Improve the church's internet service.
 - The church currently has cable internet service through Spectrum Internet. Our current service has proved to be insufficient for our needs, especially now that all worship services are live-streamed. The Technology Team will look into alternatives that will better serve the church's needs.

Universal Accessibility & Inclusion Ministry Team (UAIM)



Title: Universal Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry Team 2022-2023 Annual Report

Chairperson: Ginny Vaughan

List of Team Members: Susan Mann-Dolce, Lynn Mancuso, Sophia Roberts, Steve Wixson, Courtney Dero-Center for Advocacy, Morgan Fenn Center for Advocacy

Meeting Place: We continued to be on Zoom

Statement of Purpose and Function:

- 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 church community by considering various ways to enhance awareness of various individuals (groups) with differences.
- We commit to UUCB that UAIM will still be a viable and strong Ministry Team.
- We are uplifting the inherent worth of every individual who comes through our doors by advocating for the church to become more accessible for disabled people.

Accomplishments 2022-2023:

- Planned and had a Games Day for GLBTQ-disabled Folks and HLBTQ. The purpose of this Game Day was to promote interactions between GLBTQ folks and disabled GLBTQ folks. GLYS was also a sponsor of Game Day. Many youths from GLYS participated.
- Bought three comfortable chairs with arms for the Alliance Rooms and the Parish Hall.
- Added two members from a community agency (Center for Advocacy) to our ministry team.

What Are Your Plans for 2024:

- An annual Sunday Service.
- Conduct a workshop on Neurodiversity.
- Recruit several more people for our team.

Welcome and Connections Ministry Team



Title: Welcome and Connections Ministry Team 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

Chairpersons: Eve Holberg, Doug Sherman

Members (and ex-officio members): Tim Ashton, Chuck Battaglia, Joel Cohen, Bonnie Collins, Bridget Evans, Ellen Gibson, Karen Jarvis, Martha Malkiewicz, Michael Shanahan, Alisse Sikes, and the congregation at large.

Activities:

- Greet visitors, members, and friends upon arrival at both the West Ferry Street and Garden entrances.
- Provide nametags, and information, and facilitate communication, ie., signing up for UUCB emails, for all interested.

Living our Mission:

We are a welcoming community. Our team's mission is to greet all visitors, members, and guests, and contribute to a sense of ease at entering what can feel like an intimidating space. Knowing that first impressions are important, we hope to encourage a desire to make UUCB a spiritual home.

Accomplishments 2023:

- A moveable Welcome Center standing desk has been arranged, and we appreciate the assistance of Gatekeeper Sarah Kirkland and Office Manager Jen Cunningham in facilitating placement and necessary supplies.
- Our Team members have been consistent in signing up and showing up on Sunday mornings.

Goals for 2024:

- Recruit new Chairpersons.
- Encourage Team members and any other interested congregants to sign up to “staff” the Welcome Table.
- Establish a rotation of volunteers willing to seek out those guests/visitors standing or sitting alone, especially at coffee hour and other fellowship occasions.

Women's Society



Title: UUCB Women's Society 2023 Annual Report to the Congregation

President: Lucy Ashbrook Sloan

Members and ex-officio members: Tim Ashton, Bonnie Botsford, Linda Cohen, Renee Geraci, Paulette Notaro, Kathleen Ryan, Maria Testa, and Sandy Van Every

Board Meetings: Held in Margery Gardner Meeting Room scheduled for the Monday at 10 am before each luncheon, unless there is a holiday, or as needed: January 16, February 13, March 13, April 17, May 15, June 12, August 1, September 5, October 16, November 13, December 11.

Activities:

- Luncheon/Speaker Series and Field Trips
 - Andrew Galarneau: Channeling Stanley Tucci: adventures in Dining Out
 - Ann Marie Linnabery: Western New York Connections to the Titanic
 - Mark Goldman: Love and Life in Early 21st Century Buffalo
 - Book Sale: April 29 – May 7, 2023
 - Sal Martoche & Lee Coppola: Hide in Plain Sight: The Real Story
 - Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Gypsy
 - Vote on the slate, Sally Cunningham: Exploring New Paths: Gardening, Books and Travel
 - Bill Parke: The Contributions of UU Women, as Only a Man Can Tell It!
 - Mary Ann Voorhees: The Sattler's Diary
 - Shaun Doyle, tenor; Nicolas Emmanuel, piano: Sing Along with Our Friend Shaun!
- Special Projects:
 - Sleep in Heavenly Peace: collect linens, construct and deliver beds.
 - Sister Klimczak Peace Prints Holiday Prison Project.
 - Food Pantry: Contributes non-perishable food to FeedMore WNY.
 - Lion's Club: Glasses and hearing aids collected.
- Memorial Receptions resumed after COVID; co-chairs: N. Wilkins, L. Sloan
 - Marjorie Mix, 4/22/23; Veronica Hogle, 8/10/23
- Purchases for the church: Ingathering flowers, 100-cup coffee urn, holiday wreaths and poinsettias for sanctuary, advertising for UUCB on WBFO, and kitchen cart and bus tubs.
- Charitable Contributions: 10 local organizations; \$100 each.
- Membership: Open to all. Currently have about 55 members.

Living our Mission: The Women's Society of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo endeavors to:

- Engage excellent speakers on thought-provoking and interesting topics and provide a good lunch.
- Enhance the church environment, events, and celebrations.
- Hold an annual book sale.
- Offer memorial receptions to church members.
- contribute to deserving causes.

Accomplishments in 2023:

- Presented regular speaker/ luncheon series.
- Went to Gypsy at the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- Held the Annual Book Sale for the first time since 2019.
- Bought Ingathering and Holiday decorations for the sanctuary.
- Purchased needed items for the kitchen.

Goals for 2024:

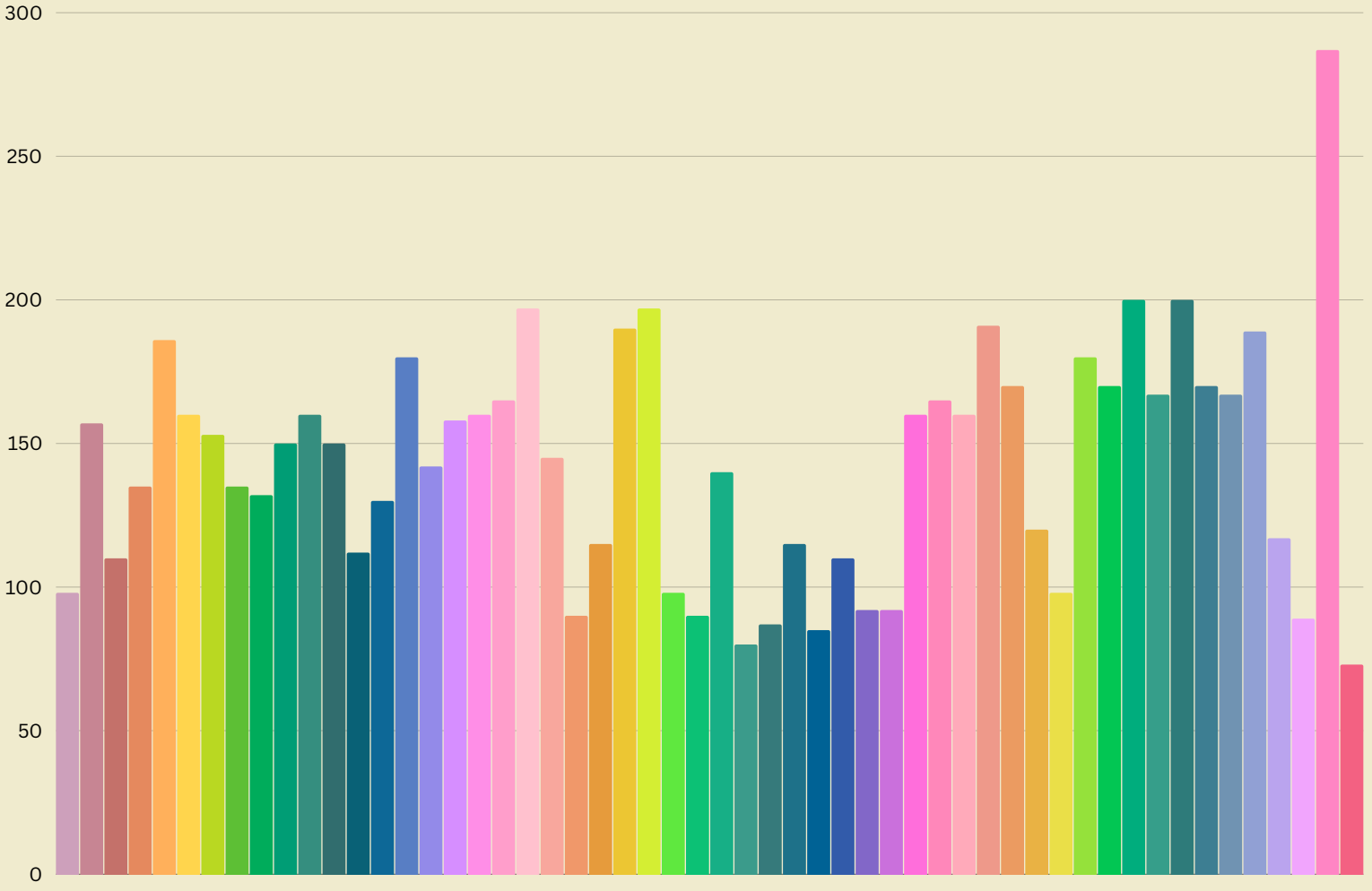
- Continue with regular programs: Speaker/ Luncheon Series, Field Trip, and Shaw Festival.
- Continue to offer Memorial Receptions to UUCB members.
- Hold Annual Book Sale from April 25 - May 5, 2024, incorporating changes identified after the last book sale regarding pricing and staffing.
- Decorate the walls of the Marjorie Gardner Meeting Room.
- Reorganize Women's Society items to increase efficiency in providing programs.
- Purchase items for the church as needed, pending approval by the Women's Society Board.

2023

Attendance



- 1/1/2023 1/8/2023 1/15/2023 1/22/2023 1/29/2023 2/5/2023 2/12/2023 2/19/2023 2/26/2023
- 3/5/2023 3/12/2023 3/19/2023 3/26/2023 4/2/2023 4/9/2023 4/16/2023 4/23/2023 4/30/2023
- 5/7/2023 5/14/2023 5/21/2023 5/28/2023 6/4/2023 6/11/2023 6/18/2023 6/25/2023 7/2/2023
- 7/9/2023 7/16/2023 7/23/2023 7/30/2023 8/6/2023 8/13/2023 8/20/2023 8/27/2023 9/3/2023
- 9/10/2023 9/17/2023 9/24/2023 10/1/2023 10/8/2023 10/15/2023 10/22/2023 10/29/2023
- 11/5/2023 11/12/2023 11/19/2023 11/26/2023 12/3/2023 12/10/2023 12/17/2023 12/24/2023 AM
- 12/24/2023 PM 12/31/2023



Committees in Need of Help



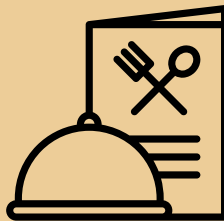
Personnel Committee

Help make governing policies for staff



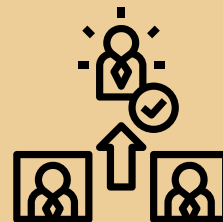
Welcome Team

Help us welcome new members on Sundays



Hospitality Committee

Be part of the clean-up crew on Sundays after service



Board Candidates

Become a leader of our congregation

[Click to sign up](#)