



Annual Report

2025



Prepared by
Jen Cunningham

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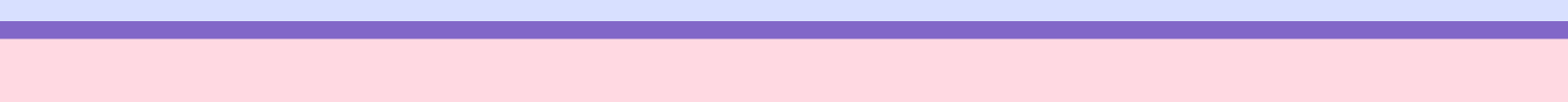


Our covenant

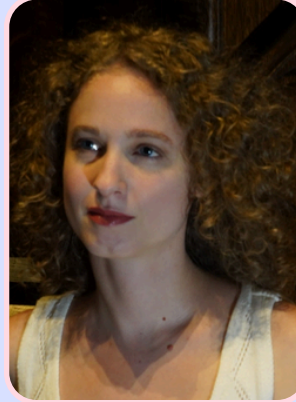
We, the members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo, beginning with ourselves as we are, covenant together in love to:

- Celebrate and find joy in our diversity,
- Honor our history and heritage while staying open to the future,
- Be generous with our time and our treasure,
- Strive for truth and justice within and beyond our congregation,
- Relate to all who come here with kindness, respect and compassion,
- Learn from one another, and
- Honor the sacred in all its expressions.

When we fail, we will acknowledge our shortcomings, make amends as we can, give and seek forgiveness, and move forward again in love and community.



• Our Staff



01. Rev. Bethany Russell-Lowe

02. Jess Pond

03. Jessie Downs

04. Jen Cunningham

05. Martha McCullough

06. Taryn Goehrig

07. Helen Lowry

08. Shaun Doyle

09. Michael Harris

10. Ian Liedke

11. Sara Kirkland

12. Julia Shipman

Governance



01. Christine Slocum, President
02. Susan Mann Dolce, Vice President
03. Paul Zannolli, Treasurer
04. Bill Parke, Secretary
05. Renee Geraci, Member at Large
06. Kenneth Mernitz, Member at Large
07. Brian Ronan, 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

It has been a true honor to serve as your minister for the past few months. My family and I will always be grateful for the warm welcome you have given us, living into your identity as the City of Good Neighbors. We are loving life in Buffalo, and we even started following the Bills! The fact that we now watch football, much less any sport, is a shock to our friends and family.

I began, as I hope to continue with you all. By meeting 1:1 (or sometimes 1:2) with members and friends of UUCB. I have met 75 of you so far! It was a joy to learn about your lives and your histories in this congregation. I also spoke with four of your former ministers whose reflections enriched my understanding of the congregation's history. All members who haven't yet had a chance to meet with me are invited to contact me to find a time to meet before the end of the church year in June.

In addition to learning about you, I also began to have a deeper understanding of UUCB's strengths and challenges. I see you as a spiritually mature congregation. You are more comfortable with Christian language and metaphor than many UU congregations. I also hear you being emotionally tuned-in and organizationally invested. The nuance and insightfulness you have about past challenges and conflicts, as well as prior ministries, were impressive. There is a broad commitment to the congregation and its future, and also a growing sense that the future might need to be different to weather the trends around congregational life in the 21st century. You have many excellent church leaders of different ages and experiences, and you have the capacity to continue this with some added attention to community building and leadership development.

At the same time, I feel and see some present challenges. We are grappling with how best to stay in covenant with each other. We still need tools to hold one another accountable (with love) for behaviors that fall beyond our covenant. We still need to work on going directly to people we are in conflict with and working through that conflict constructively. I will continue working closely with the Respectful Relations Team to address these issues in the coming year.

I also learned that both our Membership and our Pastoral Care ministries could use some attention and fortification. We have some good and solid leaders in both areas, and there is a collective desire for additional support and vision. Unitarian Universalist values call us to approach visitors and new members with a spirit of radical welcome, and also to extend compassion and care to our current members. These are two other areas I plan to focus some of my time on in the coming year.

(Continued on next page)



Minister's Report Continued

I am lucky to work with amazing staff here at UUCB! To strengthen our team and help us work together better, I initiated a meeting of the staff who work 20+ hours per week. We meet monthly to check-in about our personal lives and work together, and also share our gratitude for each other and for you all. We wrote a covenant this fall to provide a framework for how we will work together. We prioritize time for collective learning on our agenda each month. I also meet with the staff I supervise weekly or bi-weekly, depending on the staff person. I am working with the Board of Trustees to recruit a Personnel Committee who can support our staff and me by staying informed about and providing guidance on personnel policies, benefits, and compensation best practices, and more.

This fall, I have also had a lot of fun with the Worship Associates, Music Staff, and Music Ministry Team as we have navigated planning worship together. There is a broad strength of worship leadership across this congregation that I am grateful for.

And I would be remiss not to mention the Capital Campaign Team and Fixed Assets Advisory Committee, who have been working hard this fall to oversee and manage the capital projects funded through the Sacred Places grant. Bravo, folks!! And thank you to all who pledged and donated to the campaign. After the grant-funded projects are done, leaders will have a chance to imagine what else we want to do to improve our beautiful facilities. A strong foundation and building will serve our community well for years to come!

This winter and spring, as I continue to learn about UUCB, I plan to reach out to local UU and interfaith colleagues as well as secular leaders in justice spaces. The need for Unitarian Universalist values in Buffalo, New York, and the United States is so great! I am grateful to have such great partners for the work ahead at UUCB, and for our work out in the world!

In love and faith,

Rev. Bethany
Rev. Bethany



Director of Religious Education

Title: 2025 Director of Religious Education Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): Director of Religious Education, Jess Pond

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Members: Eileen Katz, Lucy Sloan, Phyllis Dissek, Andrea Fuhrman, Denise DePietro, Marisa Licata, David Herring, Simon Richard

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Meetings: Religious Education classes: Sunday mornings, 10:45-11:45

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Overview of committee's purpose:

Organize and lead religious education programming and events for all ages, children to adults.

Living our Mission:

Religious Education Ministry seeks to lead people of all ages to challenge themselves to deeper understanding, meaning, and purpose through a process of lifelong learning. The Religious Education Ministry Team works to actively welcome people of all ages, especially children and youth, and provide them a space for worship and faith development.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- January – May: Religious Education Classes for Children & Youth 2024-2025 – 23 children and youth average each Sunday
- January 26: OWL classes for grades 4-6 ended – 17 children graduated
- February – April: Spiritual Practices – 20 adults attended
- April 6: Youth Group Service – 4 youth participated
- May 6: New Member Dinner Class – 13 adults & 4 children attended
- August: Summer RE for All Ages – 20 children and youth attended
- September – December: Religious Education Classes for Children & Youth 2025-2026 – 27 children and youth average each Sunday
- October 18: Halloween Party & Potluck – 55 children & adults attended
- November 2: Teen OWL Orientation – 8 youth & families attended

We have had so many accomplishments in Religious Education. We are welcoming new families and more children and youth. We restarted OWL and had an amazing class for grades 4-6, with another one currently underway for grades 9-11. We led one very successful adult faith development class and welcomed many new members at new member classes.

Goals for 2026:

In 2026, we hope to lead more adult faith development classes and develop a regular schedule for adult classes. We have already been adding more wonderful opportunities for multigenerational worship and learning, and we are excited to do more.

Music Director

Title: 2025 Music Director Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Dr. Jessie Downs

Meetings: Choir meets Thursdays from 7:30–9:45pm in the Parish Hall, Alliance Room, and/or Sanctuary and at least bi-weekly at 9/9:30am before services in which they present music from 10:30–11:30am. Soloists and small group often meet for additional rehearsal time.

Overview of committee's purpose:

- 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 for the larger Buffalo community
- Raise funds for and manage the budget of the Music Ministry.
- Supervise the work of the 4 vocal soloists and 1 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.
- 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 for 2025:

- Outreach to new and returning choir members through monthly open choir rehearsals.
- Increased the size of the choir and offered additional ways for new members to engage through small groups and special events.
- Continued to refine rehearsal structures, including the use of chalice-lighting, body scan meditations, and covenant check-ins to create a consistently positive rehearsal environment.
- Increased the choir's consistency in various weaker areas of their performances – including rhythm and intonation (as noted in last year's goals).
- Provided a variety of music for weekly services, featuring the Choir, Chamber Choir, Soloists, HoUUse Band, and special guests.
- Organized two well-received Music Weekends – "Mother – celebrating the feminine divine " featuring new works by Alex McArthur, and "Requiem" by Camille Saint-Saens, featuring organ, trombone, and four vocal soloists.
- Presented another successful Cabaret, raising \$9,000.
- A vocal trio represented UUCB + Sotto Voce at the Elmwood Village Association Holiday Tree Lighting, the Chamber choir performed carols at WIVB for the third year in a row, a community carol-a-long was hosted in collaboration with Religious Education, and the tradition of musical Christmas Eve services was carried forward.
- A new keyboardist/ accompanist was hired and the position re-structured.

Goals for 2026:

- Maintain, if not continue to improve, choir participation, performance quality, and accessibility.
- Successfully execute Spring Music Weekend in collaboration with the Avanti! orchestra and plan other collaborative events for the 2026–27 season.
- Maintain the current positive energy of the ministry.
- Continue to find ways to work cooperatively with other ministries towards living our church's mission.

Church Admin

Title: 2025 Church Admin Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Jennifer Cunningham

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Overview of committee's purpose:

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My purpose is to create the operational, administrative, and relational foundation that allows the church's mission and ministries to function smoothly and sustainably. By stewarding the building, information, communications, and financial systems, I support belonging, participation, and faithful use of our shared resources. I also serve as a central point of coordination and care, helping people feel welcomed, informed, and supported.

Living our Mission:

As the Church Administrator, my role creates the structure and stability that enable worship, music, education, and ministries to thrive. By supporting staff, volunteers, and systems, I help ensure our community can live its values and stay focused on compassion, justice, and shared purpose.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Hired a new bookkeeper who has helped to clean our records and provide financial assistance to the various committees and staff.
- Migrated to a new database in November from ICON to Realm.
- Help coordinate efforts to get Next HR as a payroll and HR service up and running.
- Created a Microsoft Form to plug into the rental contract.
- Created a Bookings page for pulpit flowers and created a video on how to book.
- Created an online pledge form through Microsoft Forms that also uses Power Automate to inform the endowment committee of any potential bequests.
- Sadly, there we celebrated 14 memorials this year, including Kate & Marilyn Bell-Schwede, Doug Sherman, Sylvia Coles, Brian Hogle, Laura Glenn-Smith, Catherine Pietrzak, Jane Bergenn, Kathleen Ludwig, George Pfohl, Susan Scabrini Valas, Erica Jade, Norman Carlson, and Diane Bockrath.
- We celebrated 4 weddings.
- There were 13 rentals (5 of which were spiritually-oriented) and 11 long-term rentals
- All rentals brought in \$23,075.70

Goals for 2026:

In 2026, I plan to help launch QuickBooks Online to replace our desktop version, improve the flow of the website, facilitate the setup of Realm Ministry Groups, create more social media posts, coordinate with Elmwood Village Association for publicity, set new rental rates and work with a wedding coordinator for our weddings, Promote our space for weddings once there is an established reliable flow.

Fun & Fellowship Auction

Title: 2025 Fun & Fellowship Auction Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): Andrea Burke-Harris, Juli Van Woert

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Members: Tom Muka, John Petrocelli

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

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Overview of committee's purpose:

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 participants connect with each other and to the church.

Living our Mission:

The Auction took place in April 2025. The auction continued as a hybrid online/ in-person format. This format has proven to be efficient and effective, but we have also identified ways in which this platform needs adaptation specific for our interests. We are working on rectifying these issues. Positives include our ability to present a catalog with photos and graphics that enhanced the "shopping" experience. We have been able to access timely information regarding bidding and purchases, and the "front page" provided an immediate status of nearness to our goal. Online bidding was embraced by many, with fewer who were challenged by this technology. Increases were noted in the number of donors, auction items, number of registered bidders, in-person participants, and possible winning bids

Accomplishments for 2025:

- To date, the auction has raised nearly \$22,000, over 109% of our goal (2024 \$21,032 – over 150% of our goal, 2023 \$11,000, 2021 \$5,910).
- 60 donors offered 96 items for bid, with several items designed for more than a single winner. Of these donors, 16 were new.
- 97 individuals registered as bidders.
- Over 340 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 recover emerge from the pandemic.

Goals for 2026:

The team continues to consider the ways in which 32Auctions can be better adapted for the unique needs and culture of UUCB, with the intention of the 2026 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: 2025 Board of Trustees Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Chris Slocum

Members: Susan Mann Dolce (vice president), Paul Zanolli (Treasurer), Bill Parke (Secretary),
Ken Mernitz, Brian Ronan, Renee Geraci

Meetings: Third Wednesday of the Month at 7:00PM

Overview of committee's purpose:

We are doing our best to make choices that are aligned with Unitarian Universalist values, that advance UUCB's mission, and behave in accordance to our covenant.

Living our Mission:

We are doing our best to make choices that are aligned with Unitarian Universalist values, that advance UUCB's mission, and behave in accordance to our covenant.

Accomplishments for 2025:

As Unitarian Universalists, we are well aware that we do not do church alone. The accomplishments of the past year reflect collaboration with strong, committed advisory committees who similarly have been making choices and devoting their labor out of love for this church. This congregation called Rev. Bethany, thanks to the ministerial search committee. Our building is in significantly better condition than it was in 2024, courtesy of the Capital Campaign committee and Fixed Assets. As such, many of the Boards' most notable accomplishments were in the realm of process. The Board is currently piloting a different model of communication with its committees as the oversight committee sunsetted this year. We are using a liaison model, where each board member builds a relationship with a committee and serves as the main conduit of communication. Should this prove effective (and so far, so good!) we will modify our policy documents with the assistance of the Governance committee to reflect the procedure. The Board added two members mid-year – Brian Ronan to fill a vacancy left from the winter meeting, and Renee Geraci to fill the vacancy created by Kate Bell-Schwede's passing. Both will be up for formal vote in the winter meeting. The Board made Juneteenth a church holiday for the staff. The Board worked with the Finance Committee and staff to approve a new HR/bookkeeping platform for the church. As such, we are continuing to work with Rev. Bethany on ideas for improved effectiveness of the church's operations. The rest of the Board's accomplishments include fulfillment of the usual duties such as monitoring the financial health of the organization. In addition, the Board has worked with the Capital Campaign and Endowment to ensure a process for the repayment of the 2019 loans from the Endowment towards the Capital Campaign.

Goals for 2026:

The goal for 2026 is the same goal of other years: continuing to build on the excellent work of the previous years. The new board will be elected at the February 1, 2026 meeting and will discern its next steps. This will include steps to ensure financial sustainability moving forwards, through finding other ways we can leverage our assets to serve the community. In addition, the Board will be working closely with the wisdom and expertise of both Fixed Assets and the Capital Campaign to discern the next repair projects for the church with the remaining funds.

Capital Campaign

Title: 2025 Capital Campaign Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): Bridget Evans/Phil Nicolai, co-chairs

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Members: Jane Armbruster, Martha Malkiewicz, Molly Quackenbush, Ken Mernitz (board liaison)

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Meetings: Every 3 weeks or so Wednesdays at noon in the Alliance room

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Overview of committee's purpose:

To plan, activate, and oversee a Capital Campaign approved by the Board and congregation in January 2024 after receiving a \$250,000 matching grant from the prestigious National Fund for Sacred Places in October 2023. Funds are being used to address necessary safety, accessibility, repair, and upgrades to our church. Having reached the Campaign goal of \$1.5M, the Committee is ending active fund solicitation on 12/31/2025. It will continue to monitor pledge payments in 2026 and 2027 and support the Board and Fixed Assets Committee, as requested.

Living our Mission:

Through the projects that the Capital Campaign has made possible, the Committee sees its work as restoring and repairing our historic church home so it can continue to serve as a safe, accessible, and inspiring gathering place for all UUCB and community-wide activities for many years to come. The Committee's work has been carried out with love and respect in relationships with the Board, Fixed Assets Committee, other committees, the minister, the staff, and the entire UUCB membership.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- We applied for grants from the Wendt Foundation, M&T Bank Foundation, NY Landmarks Conservancy, and the Baird Foundation.
- Presented our progress at the Feb. Congregational meeting.
- Met with our Brittany Lane neighbors to include them in our process
- Received and met a private matching grant of \$9,000 for the restoration of the stained glass windows.
- Received generous memorial gifts made in loving memory of deceased UUCB members.
- Received our 1st half of the National Fund for Sacred Spaces grant totaling \$125,000.
- Hired a dedicated project manager from within our Congregation to oversee the numerous projects.
- Created and distributed an update report to the congregation.
- Continued to receive pledge payments from our generous congregation.
- Held a Town Hall to brainstorm for future projects.
- Completed numerous building projects and made progress on many others.

Goals for 2026:

- As stated above, the Committee will conclude fundraising on December 31, 2025.
- It will continue to monitor pledge payments in 2026 and 2027 and support the Board and Fixed Assets Committee, as requested.

Care for People Advisory Task Force

Title: 2025 Care for People Advisory Task Force Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Bill Parke

Members: Jess Pond, Jim Sheibley, Peter Sloan, Richard Leimbach, Stepahnie Adams, Steve Wixson,
Thaddeus Bienik, Ken Mernitz

Meetings: As needed

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Overview of committee's purpose:

Formed in April 2024, by a resolution of the Board of Trustees to provide monthly recommendations to the Board and implementable procedures addressing:

- safety preparation
- risk prevention
- reporting threats to safety (including immediate physical hazards, harassment, discrimination, disruptive behavior, and emergency response)
- investigating safety concerns
- properly documenting such concerns

with representation consistent with the commitment in Section 4.3.3 "Safe Congregation" of the Policy Book. The Task Force's tenure subsequently extended to year-end 2025.

Living our Mission:

The Task Force recognizes that our new Covenant inspires us to treat each other with compassion and respect. As part of that compassion and respect, we take action to maintain a safe environment at our church.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- In April 2025, the task force submitted six recommendations and a list of achievements to the Board of Trustees, representing work done since the task force was formed.
- In the first half of 2025, the task force researched good practices in church safety as well as the feasibility of on-site evaluations and training to be provided by or informed by other churches, local law enforcement, federal agencies, or for-profit consultants.
- In October 2025, the task force received a Board resolution to "work with the Congregation on implementing best practices of Sunday service safety planning."
- On November 15, 2025, representatives of the task force presented an in-house training program concept for consideration at the Worship Associates meeting focused on the following curriculum, with Worship Associates being the first public-facing committee/team in the church to receive the training in early 2026: (1) The Power of Hello, (2) De-Escalation, and (3) You Are the Help Until Help Arrives.

Goals for 2026:

- Finalize the in-house training curriculum
- Hold the training with Worship Associates, and expand it to other public-facing committees/teams/staff in the church.

Church Historian

Title: 2025 Church Historian Annual Report to the Congregation



Chair (s): Bill Parke



Overview of committee's purpose:



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 for 2025:

- Appeared in a December 2024 WGRZ-TV feature titled, "Unknown Stories of WNY: Buffalo's first publicly displayed Christmas Tree." Per the Buffalo History Museum, First Unitarian downtown had the first publicly-displayed Christmas Tree in Buffalo in the late 1840s.
- Installed an exhibit in the Parish Hall in January titled, "Postcards from Yesteryear Show Interesting Views of the Interior and Exterior of Our 695 Elmwood Ave. Building: Can You See the Differences Between Images from the Early 20th Century and Today?" Three postcards printed near the time the church was built over a century ago were included: one showing the interior, and two providing views of the exterior.
- Held a worship service with Rev. Cathy and then a live event on May 25th featuring the opening and display of the contents of the time capsule, which was originally placed in the Sanctuary wall on that day in 1975. Installed a follow-up exhibit in the Parish Hall in August titled, "The Story of the 1975 Placement and 2025 Opening of the Time Capsule."
- Recommended to the Board of Trustees, along with Thomas Yots, in November that any changes to the Sanctuary be done in a manner that recognizes the importance and historic nature of that space and in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Goals for 2026:

- Seek assistance from NYS to develop a strategic plan in preparation for our church centennial in Buffalo, to be held in 2031-2032.
- Put in place a new exhibit in the Parish Hall, to replace the one currently on display.

Covenant Group Ministry

Title: 2025 Covenant Group Ministry Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): J. Van Woert, C. Battaglia

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Members: K. Burke, R. Clark, J. Heini, R. Houk, M. Malkiewicz, J. Marohn, C. Montgomery, T. Muka, P. Nicolai, L. Parke, A. Sikes, N. Sheehan, S. Van Every

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Meetings: Each group meets monthly at it's own date, time and location

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Overview of committee's purpose:

- The Covenant Group Ministry, in its 22nd year, continued to reach out to both member and non-member congregants to enhance connection to this church community. The purpose includes: 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.

Living our Mission:

As stated in the description of committee's purpose above

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Eleven groups met monthly, with 14 facilitators and 69 other individuals who participated at some point during the year. This is a total of 83 individuals active in CGM at some point during 2025.
- quarterly facilitator meetings with an opportunity to report on the health and needs of each group, and to obtain peer support as needed.
- visibility as maintained through newsletter and eblast articles, and outreach by individual members.
- continued support of theme ministry, using Soul Matters materials.

Goals for 2026:

- To grow the Ministry as a welcoming and loving conduit for individuals to become more deeply involved in the tapestry of our congregation.
- To train more members to become facilitators, and to enable more groups to be established as needed.
- To be active participants in UUCB's aging population, step back from leadership positions.
- To strengthen the program service component, including outreach into the community.

Endowment Advisory Committee

Title: 2025 Endowment Advisory Committee Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Chuck Battaglia, Chairperson

Members: Don Behr, Joel Cohen, Gerry Evans, Kathy Kubala, John Yates, Paul Zanolli

Meetings: Committee meetings are held monthly on at 4 pm on the second Wednesday of each month. The meetings are virtual via zoom.



Overview of committee's purpose:

The overall purpose of the Endowment Advisory Committee is to take responsibility for advising the Board of Trustees concerning stewardship of the church's endowment fund. This work includes developing and managing a Legacy Giving program so that the church's endowment funds grow steadily in value, maintaining a list of donors and advising the Board of major gifts, recommending criteria for the long-term management of the church's endowment funds, assuming responsibility for fulfilling endowment-related mandates described throughout the policy book, and recommending endowment-related policies to the Board for its consideration.

Living our Mission:

The Endowment Committee advances the mission of UUCB by being a responsible steward of the UUCB endowment to ensure that its resources are available to provide a safe and accessible space for church services and activities, and to fund social justice activities for our church, our community and the world. By providing accessible information, inviting members to sign a Declaration of Intent form and actively stewarding the prospective donors, the Committee encourages any and everyone to make a sustaining endowment gift. The majority of the church endowment assets are invested in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF), which supports socially responsible investing and ensures management by firms that apply environmental, social and governance criteria. By joining other investors in this fund, it allows UUCB to have more impact on corporate behavior, to encourage companies to adopt policies consistent with UU values, and to support minority owned businesses.

Accomplishments for 2025:

NBT Bank and UUCEF signature forms updated; Chuck Battaglia attended the February Board of Trustees meeting to clarify the role of EAC; Poster in the Parish Hall acknowledging congregants who have signed a Declaration of Intent (DOI) was updated with Ronald Houk. Three new DOIs were filed in 2025; Heritage Society Plaque was updated with Don Shedd and Nancy Thomas; Valentine's Day cards were sent to current DOI members; On March 2nd, EAC held an information session on legacy giving options; Representatives from EAC attended the May UUCB Board of Trustees meeting and discussed the two outstanding loans from the endowment in 2019. EAC presented its recommendations for repayment of the loans. To date, the \$60K loan was repaid, including interest at 2%. The remaining \$60,000 no interest loan is to be repaid from the capital campaign as intended; On June 8th, EAC held a lunch for DOI signatories and to share about UUCEF and its socially responsible investment strategies; EAC members attended the financial summit with Rev. Bethany; EAC chair attended the Congregational meeting on October 5th and provided an overview of the endowment and its importance to the current and long-term financial health of UUCB; \$900 in memorial donations were received to date in memory of Kathleen Ludwig, Diane Bockrath, Kate Bell-Schwede and Marilyn Bell-Schwede and deposited in the UUCEF; An unrestricted bequest in the amount of \$41,013.12 was received from the estate of Leatrice Jordan.

Goals for 2026:

Continue to acknowledge and express appreciation to those who have committed to make a legacy gift to UUCB after their passing; raise the visibility of the importance the church's endowment fund to the financial health of the church. This includes updating the Heritage Society brochure and the UUCB webpages on legacy giving; arrange one on one meetings with members of the congregation who have expressed an interest in learning more about legacy giving or signing a Declaration of Intent; begin to work with Rev. Bethany on plans for a series of workshops and seminars regarding the legacy we wish to leave.

Family Promise

Title: 2025 Family Promise Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): Nancy Wilkins

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Meetings: In-person meetings have been suspended since 2020. Communication occurs via eblasts and announcements as needed.

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Overview of committee's purpose:

The Family Promise Ministry Team supports families experiencing homelessness by collecting and donating needed household items, food, and supplies for the Family Promise shelter. The team responds directly to Family Promise requests and assists families transitioning out of the shelter into permanent housing.

Living our Mission:

The ministry reflects UU values by honoring the worth and dignity of families experiencing homelessness through high-quality donations and compassionate support. Their work recognizes the interconnectedness of community life, partners with other local organizations, and contributes to the wider network of Family Promise programs. The team also participates in congregational giving through Share the Plate.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Continued responsive donation efforts based on requested items from Family Promise.
- Items donated by UUCB members included toddler clothing and swimsuits, craft supplies, Halloween costumes, a microwave oven, cleaning and kitchen supplies, towels, table lamps, and additional clothing.
- Ongoing support for shelter families and families transitioning to permanent housing.
- Volunteers implemented ideas and suggestions quickly due to flexible, non-meeting-based communication.
- Maintained high standards of respect—donating only new or like-new items, with most donors giving anonymously.

Goals for 2026:

Continue supporting Family Promise in its mission to serve approximately 25 families per year.

Finance Advisory Committee

Title: 2025 Finance Advisory Committee Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): John Petrocelli

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Members: Members: John Yates, Nate Muka, Bonnie Botsford

Ex-officio members: Paul Zanolli, Treasurer; Jen Cunningham, Church Administrator; Martha McCullough, Finance Administrator; Rev. Bethany Russell-Lowe, Minister

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Meetings: Second Thursday of each month at 4:00 pm on Zoom

Overview of committee's purpose:

- Analyze monthly financial reports prepared by staff, including budget lines, restricted funds, endowment accounts, and fundraising.
- Advise and assist the Board of Trustees on financial decisions.
- Report to the Board regarding the performance of the church's endowment fund.
- Develop an annual budget with the help of other advisory committees, ministerial teams, task forces, and staff.

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 2025:

- Advised the Board of Trustees on financial matters throughout the year.
- Created 2026 Budget for the Board's review and the congregation's approval.
- Held two budgetary informational sessions before the Fall Congregational Meeting to review the draft proposed budget.
- Presented the proposed 2026 budget at the Fall Congregational Meeting.
- Developed 2025 budget projections to give a more accurate picture of the church's bottom line.
- Monitored the church's financial performance and made recommendations to the board.
- Worked to improve our budgeting and accounting practices.

Goals for 2026:

- Continually monitor the church's financial performance and make recommendations to the Board.
- Develop a 2027 budget.
- Continually work to improve our budgeting and accounting practices.
- Verify financial transactions on a monthly basis.
- Develop a long-term financial investment strategy for UUCB's physical plant.

Fixed Assets Committee

Title: 2025 Fixed Assets Committee Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): David Quackenbush

Members: Michael Bergren, William Botsford, Tom Muka, John Petrocelli

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Meetings: Usually once/month but during recent grant related projects we are meeting weekly.

Overview of committee's purpose:

As custodians of the North West corner of West Ferry and Elmwood, perhaps our primary purpose is to protect/preserve/maintain all of our church property. To accomplish these tasks, we endeavor to:

- Identify facility issues needing 'fixes' and create detailed scopes of work (either within our committee or through outsourced resources).
- Review and approve work proposals received from suppliers/contractors.
- Oversee the work performed by the contractors/suppliers.
- Collate/retain project documentation in the SharePoint System.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Repaired/replaced certain stained-glass pieces inside the Sanctuary, including 'washing' lower-level windows.
- R. E. Kelly removed and replaced 95% of the old Lexan panels covering our stained-glass windows.
- Installed a new water infiltration system designed/installed by Frank's Basement Systems.
- Installed a new CO2 monitoring system in the basement Trane unit.
- Interior ductwork cleaning in both the Sanctuary and the church basement rooms.
- Masonry wall cleaning by R. E. Kelley crews - approximately 95% complete.

Goals for 2026:

Complete all current contracts started in 2024/2025. And if possible begin certain projects identified in the UUCB Capital Campaign Project Status Summary.

Food Ministry

Title: 2025 Food Ministry Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): Nate Muka

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Members: Juli VanWoert, Tom Muka, Mario Nunez, Teal Postula, Ron Houk, Richard Leimbach, Lauren Mitchell, Karen Peterson

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Meetings: Weekly in preparation for Sunday's coffee hour and as needed

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Overview of committee's purpose:

To feed our congregation while fostering it's growth

Living our Mission:

Create a respite from the outside stress of the world where people, new and old, can gather in the comfort of a shared meal.

Accomplishments for 2025:

Provided a unique culinary experience every Sunday for an average of 150ppl, never repeating the same dish twice to foster curiosity and subsequently grow our church community.

Goals for 2026:

To continue to offer visitors, newcomers, and our current congregation the opportunity to engage in the UUCB community. To expand membership and participation in our ministry to ensure it's continuation.

Gardening Committee

Title: 2025 Gardening Committee Annual Report to the Congregation



Chair (s): Bridget Evans, Anthony Keller – co-chairs



Members: Ken Mernitz, Nirva Kudyan, Ken Manly, Andrea Burke-Harris, Judy White, Renee Geraci, Alex Gugliuzza, and various other volunteers who drop in as they are available. Thank You ALL!



Meetings: Tuesdays at 10am weekly during the growing season



Overview of committee's purpose:

We try to make sure that there is something beautiful happening in all 4 seasons of the garden. We keep the hedge trimmed and the beds as weed-free as can be managed. We feed and maintain the compost pile, turning and shredding the yard waste to create beautiful, rich compost for our garden. We plant and maintain the planters around the church. We work weekly to stay on top of the constant chores that happen in every garden. We do all this because working in a garden is restorative and pleasant, and rewarding! This service is made more meaningful as we observe neighbors and church members enjoying the blooms, the scents, and the form of our church 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 also enjoyed by our neighbors and anyone who traverses the path created expressly to share its beauty. The Gardening Committee is also 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 for 2025:

- Again this year, we received a grant from the Marvin Lunenfeld Foundation (\$700).
- We removed overgrown hedges to allow access for our Capital Campaign projects for cleaning the limestone building and stained glass window repair.
- These capital projects did limit our access to various spaces in the gardens, but we found a way to work around them (mostly).
- We fenced in an oakleaf hydrangea that proved to be a favorite with the local bunnies.
- We planted more joe pyeweed, vervain, and meadow rue in our wild and sunniest bed on the east side of our building. We replaced some penstemon in the Elmwood bed and added some donated iris and euphorbia.

Goals for 2026:

We are hoping to replace our 20 year old sprinkler system next year and that will take some planning alongside the underground electrical work for the bollards going in along the pathway. We will continue to weed and prune and add new native plants. We will also apply once again for the Marvin Lunenfeld grant.

Governance

Title: 2025 Governance Annual Report to the Congregation

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Members: Liz Parke, Athena McCrory, Mary Bisson

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Meetings: First Saturday of the month

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Overview of committee's purpose:

The overall purpose of the Governance Advisory Committee is to enable the Board of Trustees to live up to the performance expectations that it has set for itself. This work includes:

- 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
- assisting with planning periodic Board retreats
- assuming responsibility for fulfilling governance-related mandates described throughout the Policy Book

Living our Mission:

We provide a framework for the board to focus on keeping the lights on (by attending to the finances and building so that the minister can focus on delivering the programs of the church.

Accomplishments for 2025:

Facilitated two well-received board orientations. First, in April, after the election of new board members. Again in October, when the new minister arrived, the open board seats had been filled. Responded to several requests from the board to clarify and reinforce existing policies. As part of this work, we helped the board understand the difference between policies and procedures. Addressed rental and space use by facilitating the development of procedures to protect the church from potential financial liability. Throughout, we considered the needs of the diverse population that is our congregation.

Goals for 2026:

Facilitate improving communication between the board and invested entities (minister, advisory committees, and congregation). Promote consistent and efficient congregational meetings so that the members can engage mindfully and joyfully. Reinforce the use of existing policies as a tool in guiding decision making. Work with the Board to update the Policy Book as needed.

Music Ministry Team

Title: 2025 Music Ministry Team Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Phil Nicolai

Members: Jessie Downs, Mary Richert, Leslie Boldt, Gerry Evans, Karen Peterson, Jeff Lowry, Will Botsford, Alan Atkinson, Don Behr

Meetings: First Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm

Overview of committee's purpose:

- We support and help the music ministry.
- we raise funds to support Music Sunday events.
- we work to expand the presence of the music ministry outside of our church.

Living our Mission:

- We enhance spirituality in Sunday services.
- We engage in community-building events for the choir.
- We encourage congregants to join the choir or participate in larger musical events.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- We were a part of the hiring process for a new accompanist.
- We expanded our outreach into the local musical community by commissioning Alex McArthur, a local singer, to compose new works for our Spring Music Sunday.
- We performed the Saint-Saens Requiem featuring our organ and trombone.
- We participated in our first joint meeting of the music staff and Rev. Bethany.
- We recruited several new choir members.
- We were invited for the third straight year to perform Christmas carols live on WIVB TV Channel 4.

Goals for 2026:

- We will enhance our support for the church's operating budget by organizing the Cabaret performance.
- We will continue to raise awareness of our potential to provide healing in our community through creative approaches to our Musical Weekends.
- We will expand our efforts to recruit new choir members.
- We will reimagine the Casual Concert series to increase participation of other church members and draw more non-members to events.
- We will explore possible ways choir members can work with other church ministries, e.g, supporting the food ministry by helping with after-service food in the parish hall, and increasing the coordination with RE, as we already have with community holiday caroling.

Oversight

Title: 2025 Oversight Annual Report to the Congregation

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Members: Mary Bisson, Mary Louise Hill, and Donna Hagerty

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Overview of committee’s purpose:

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In January 2025, the Oversight Advisory Committee recommended that the Board assume the task of overseeing its own advisory units, and the Board approved that recommendation. We suggested that one Board member take responsibility for overseeing each of its Advisory Committees and Task Forces. We presented our templates and the link to the Oversight Action Point chart, which is maintained on Google Docs, suggesting that the Board maintain our practice of keeping track of members and action points for each committee annually. We completed the 2024/2025 year’s cycle of collecting reports in June 2025.

Pastoral Care and Support

Title: 2025 Pastoral Care and Support Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Ginny Vaughan until 9/2025; Rev. Bethany-Currently

Members: Sany Bissontz, Ed Harris, Janie Kustreba, Sandy VanEvery, Elaine Zielin, Bobbie Baker on leave

Meetings: 4th Sunday of the month in the Marge Gardner Room at noon

Overview of committee's purpose:

PC&S main purpose is to connect with UUCB members/friends by acknowledging their joys, sorrows, and concerns by sending a card.

Living our Mission:

WE GATHER each month to review who could use a card. Individual members send cards on their assigned month to members or friends who are experiencing joy, concern, or sorrow. WE INSPIRE OURSELVES to acknowledge others in the UUCB congregation who may need a card stating we share in their joy, concern, or sorrow.

WE TRANSFORM by enhancing and nurturing a sense of community among our members and friends by sending cards when we realize:

- newly married, had a baby, and a dedication to the UUCB community
- graduated from high school or college
- received a new job or promotion, has an illness, or had surgery
- offer support when going through a rough patch or the death of a loved one
- welcoming new members
- Send 8 to 10 cards to members/friends who cannot attend service or other activities, bi/yearly cards (30 to 40) to members/friends who cannot attend church activities, in appreciation of RE volunteers, UUCB Staff
- provide individual candles at the Joy, Concern, and Sorrow tables so people can remember a person in their life.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- PC&S sent 85 bi-yearly cards.
- Sent about 8 cards a month to members who cannot attend Sunday Service or church activities.
- Sent sympathy cards to 7 families who lost a loved one during the year.
- Sent 91 cards during the year to members/friends who had experienced a joy, sorrow, or concern.
- Sent 22 cards to members on the anniversary month of their deceased loved one.
- Ordered a new batch of cards and bought stamps when needed.

Goals for 2026:

- To continue to meet monthly.
- To communicate with the minister and team who need a card.
- To send cards to members/friends who are experiencing a joy, sorrow, or concern.
- Send an acknowledgement of the death of a loved one after the first & second year.
- Send bi/yearly cards to members/friends who cannot attend church activities.
- Send monthly cards to members/friends who cannot participate in church activities.

Pulpit Flower Ministry

Title: 2025 Pulpit Flower Ministry Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Sandra Bissontz

Members: Tim Ashton

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Overview of committee's purpose:

Make arrangements to provide fresh flowers to be placed on the pulpit at the request of congregation members

Living our Mission:

We enhance the beauty of the Sunday services and provide a means to honor, celebrate or remember friends and loved ones.

Accomplishments for 2025:

For about the first half of 2025, we had a steady stream of requests for flowers. In the second half, almost no requests for fresh flowers were received.

Goals for 2026:

We would like to increase the number of people requesting flowers. We have not pinpointed the reason for the decrease.

Respectful Relations Team Task Force

Title: 2025 Respectful Relations Team [Task Force] Annual Report to the Congregation + +

Members: Liz Parke, Alex Richard, Simon Richard, Sharon Walker, Steve Wixson, Renee Geraci, Board Liaison + +

Meetings: 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 pm + +

Overview of committee's purpose:

The overall purpose of the Respectful Relations Team is to help the members and friends practice faithful communication and creative conflict based on the values of mutuality and consent. This work includes:

- tending to the covenant by articulating and modeling its practice
- providing training and other learning opportunities around the tensions needed for creativity in congregations
- modeling and coaching communication processes that promote mutuality and consent (i.e., discernment circles)
- modeling and coaching creative conflict
- creating brave spaces where members and friends can move from defensiveness toward resolution, in low-level conflict
- offering opportunities for deep listening and restorative processes, when conflict becomes more heated, and creating low-anxiety/high-learning experiences for the congregation around conflict and covenant
- [See policy 3.4.4.9 Respectful Relations Team for a complete description of our team]

Living our Mission:

Support of the mission is a part of what we do.

Accomplishments for 2025:

We held restorative circles in the early part of 2025 to assist in conflict resolution. The team has 3 new members and under the guidance of Rev. Bethany, we are returning to the basics of our own mission.

Goals for 2026:

All the members and Rev Bethany will be taking a course in Restorative Circles. All team members are taking the Right Relations Teams workshop offered by UUA-CER. Some for the first time and some of us as a review.

Social Justice

Title: 2025 Social Justice Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Maria Testa, Chair

Members: Hy Carrel, Andrea Burke-Harris, Ted Lightfoot, Jill Monacelli, Beth Kaufman, Jane Armbruster, Alex Richard, Simon Richard, Andrea Schillaci, Lynn Mancuso, Mary Igoe, Nirva Kudyan. Previous Members: Holly Massett, Rachel Krajna, Ex Officio: Jess Pond, Rev. Bethany Russell-Lowe

Meetings: UUCB Alliance Room, first Wednesday of the month at 6:30

Overview of committee's purpose:

The Social Justice Ministry team provides leadership on congregational social justice activities and the Share the Plate program, whereby half of the unrestricted plate collection is given to a local not-for-profit. The SJ team vets and selects Share organizations, which are often suggested by congregants, then contacts the organizations and arranges for a representative to speak at UUCB. In addition, the SJ Ministry team also coordinates activities that benefit community organizations and get congregation members involved and engaged in service and learning. We ask all Share the Plate organizations if there are other things we can do to help the organization, such as service projects or collecting items.

Living our Mission:

Social Justice Ministry involves GATHERING in service, INSPIRING ONE ANOTHER as we work together in this service to TRANSFORM the community for the better. Our ministry team coordinates monthly fundraising for community organizations (Share the Plate) as well as an array of participatory social justice activities.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Share the Plate raised over \$12,000 in the first 9 months of 2025 – equaling the total for all of 2024. Organizations for 2025 include: Fostering Greatness, The Foundry, Mobile Overdose Prevention, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Clean Air Coalition of WNY, Justice for Migrant Families (JFMF), Grassroots Gardens, Friends of Night People (FONP), Providence Farm Collective, Felician Community Services, Queen City Workers, and Neighborhood Legal Services.
- In 2025, our ministry team coordinated more social justice activities than ever before. With Food Ministry, we deliver approximately 20 quarts of frozen soup each month to JFMF to be delivered to migrants. We coordinated the furnishing of a home for a formerly homeless family (with Family Promise). Other activities included: collecting clothing for and serving a meal at FONP, collecting school supplies for International Institute, participating as a group in the Spring Waterkeepers clean-up, touring Providence Farm Collective, postcarding in support of detainees at Batavia, and providing Christmas gifts for children served by the Felician Community Services.
- We are proud of the increased activity and visibility of UUCB social justice, which has engaged and energized a substantial proportion of church members and displayed our UU values in the community. The core social justice team has roughly doubled in size since 2024.

Goals for 2026:

- Continue the Share the Plate program.
- Continue expanding the range and number of Social Justice activities and efforts that the congregation may participate in.
- Expand the number of participants in social justice activities.
- Communicate with the congregation about these activities and encourage ideas for Share the Plate recipients and additional activities.

Stewardship

Title: 2025 Stewardship Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Tom Petrocelli

Members: Martha Malkiewicz

Meetings: As needed

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Overview of committee's purpose:

Stewardship exists to promote and track pledging. The goal is to ask as many members of our congregation, as well as pledging friends, to provide a pledge of support for the church in the upcoming year. As the only committee that reaches out to every member of the congregation as well friends, we uncover pastoral needs and communicate what we find to Rev. Bethany for follow-up.

Living our Mission:

Stewardship enables the church to gather by providing financial resources that the church needs for staff and our building. In addition, we provide resources that allow us to transform the surrounding community by funding social justice and a space for the community to use for transformative activities.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- As of November 25, 2025, we have raised over \$388,000 in pledges but are on track for more.
- We have touched all pledging members and friends, and are also reaching out to those who have not pledged but donated. This will allow for better financial planning going forward.
- By the end of 2025, we will have contacted all members, friends, and suspended members, as well as reached out to unknown friends who interact with us through YouTube.

Goals for 2026:

- Review and update the form on our website used for pledging.
- Make the link to that form more conspicuous.
- Explore a lifetime member status for those who should remain part of our congregation, but for whom age and infirmity has made pledging or even contact about pledging difficult or stressful.
- Reframe pledging and Stewardship from a single yearly event into a rolling, ongoing process, i.e., normalize giving as just a part of congregational life.
- Encourage more monthly giving.

Technology Team

Title: 2025 Technology Team Annual Report to the Congregation

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Chair (s): John Petrocelli

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Members: Josh Dissek, Robert Parke, Paul Zanolli, Alex Richard

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Meetings: On an as-needed basis; Normally on Sundays after Worship Service at Sanctuary Audio/Visual Control Center

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Overview of committee's purpose:

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, and audio/visual systems. 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 for 2025:

- Replaced the main server.
- Purchased and deployed additional wireless microphone adaptors in the Sanctuary.
- Replaced the main uninterruptible power supply.
- Added a second network switch.
- Installed electronic door access control system as part of the Capital Campaign.





Goals for 2026:



- Upgrade/reorganize Sanctuary audio/visual control center consoles.
- Add a rear-facing camera in Sanctuary.
- Add speakers in the side wings of the Sanctuary.
- Install video conferencing system in Alliance Room.

Universal Access & Inclusion Ministry Team (UAIM)

Title: 2025 Universal Access & Inclusion Ministry Team Annual Report to the Congregation  

Chair (s): Ginny Vaughan  

Members: David Herring, Susan Mann-Dolce, Lynn Mancuso, Leo Mitchell, Sophia Roberts,  
Steve Wixson  

Meetings: Second Wednesday of the Month 6pm-8pm on Zoom.  

Overview of committee's purpose:

UAIM's purpose is to make our church more welcoming, inclusive and accessible. To inform the UUCB community about disabilities and the acceptive terminology.

Living our Mission:

Our mission is to provide a more welcoming church by making physical changes, opening the minds and hearts of the members, as well as other ministries, and working with community partners.

- 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 to become an integral part of UUCB activities.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Bought two comfortable chairs with arms for the Alliance Rooms and the Parish Hall
- Initiated a Saturday afternoon movie four times a year for UAIM and other Ministries.
- Provided a church service on Disability Justice.
- Participated in a Disability Pride Day at River Works.
- Worked with members of the Capital Campaign to ensure accessible projects (automatic doors, renovating the bathroom to be more accessible, etc.).
- Worked with several members regarding making the chancel accessible.

Goals for 2026:

- An annual Sunday service.
- Promote Saturday movies.
- Continue to participate in Disability Pride activities.
- Ensure accessible projects are completed.
- We gathered with other agencies to promote anti-ableism.
- We inspire church members/friends to be more welcoming to all people.
- We are uplifting the inherent worth of every individual who comes through our doors by advocatating for the church to become more accessible and Inclusive for all people.

Women's Society

Title: 2025 Women's Society Annual Report to the Congregation

Chair (s): Lucy Ashbrook Sloan, President

Members: Tim Ashton, Bonnie Botsford, Linda Cohen, Paulette Notaro, Kathy Ryan & Sandy Van Every

Meetings: Monday before the third Thursday of the month, except for July, 10 am – 12:30 pm, Luncheons with Speakers: Third Thursday of the month except for July & August, 11 am – 2 pm

Overview of committee's purpose:

To take care of the UU congregation by holding stimulating events that include a good lunch for seniors and other church members; providing memorial receptions/ hot beverage service as needed; hosting the annual Christmas Eve Reception; and enhancing the church environment through purchases and/ or volunteerism. We also contribute to the community by holding an annual book sale, collecting items for & donating money to local charitable organizations and participating in the Peaceprints Prison Project.

Living our Mission:

This year, the Women's Society lived our mission by holding events listed below; adding a sub-title & chalice to our name to improve understanding that not just women are welcome to attend Women's Society events; purchasing Easter lilies for Spring, Ingathering flowers for the first service of the church year and wreaths & poinsettias for the month of December 2025; contributing \$500 to the UUCB Capital Campaign; collecting food, eyeglasses, hearing aids & linen for local charitable organizations and Ramen noodles for the Peaceprints Prison Project; decorating & helping to fill bags for the Peaceprints Prison Project; and donating \$100 each to nine charitable organizations.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Continued with our speaker/ luncheon series, hosting the following presentations: Ted Bickford: Prominent Buffalonian Mabel Ganson Dodge; Julian Looney: Architectural Redesign in Buffalo; Stitch Buffalo: Building Community Through Craft; Rich Newberg: Buffalo TV News: Our Portal to History; Kevin Gaughan: Reinventing Cities; Nellie Brown, Living with Stress; and Zach Carr: Holidays and All that Jazz.
- Had an in-depth guided tour of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center
- Attended "Anything Goes" at Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.
- Held our Annual Book Sale from April 5-13, 2025, raising approximately \$2000.
- Provided three memorial receptions for church members.
- Collected items, decorated gift bags, and helped fill bags for Peaceprints Prison Project.
- Collected items for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Lions' Club, and local food pantries.
- Donated \$100 to each of 9 local charities.
- Contributed 13 Syracuse china pieces in the 1924 Multnomah pattern to the Auction Committee, raising \$700.
- Purchased slipcovers for worn-out armchairs for individuals with disabilities in Parish Hall, 3 ivory tablecloths for Women's Society receptions, cake for goodbye party for UUCB Interim Minister, and heavy-duty bins.

Goals for 2026:

- Continue with regular luncheons and Shaw Fest programs.
- Offer coffee & tea, with silver tea set & tableclothed tables, free of charge, following memorial services, upon request.
- Hold Annual Book Sale from May 2-10, 2026.
- Host & organize Christmas Eve reception.
- Purchase items for UUCB as needed, pending approval by the Women's Society board.
- Provide Sanctuary flowers for spring Ingathering & holiday wreaths for reredos panels in December.
- Collect items for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Lions' Club, and local food pantries.
- Collect items, decorate gift bags & help fill bags for Peaceprints Prison Project.
- Donate \$100 to each of 9 or more local charities & donate \$500 to UUCB Capital Campaign.
- Reorganize and declutter the MGM Room to enhance accessibility and update supplies as needed.

2025 Attendance

