



**First Universalist Church
of Auburn, Maine,
Unitarian Universalist**



2023 – 2024
Annual Church Report



*Proposed UU **Flower of Shared Values***
for the Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations.
Delegates to the UUA General Assembly will vote on this in June 2024.

**FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF AUBURN
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

NOTICE OF ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024 AT 11:15 AM

To the members of the First Universalist Church of Auburn, Maine, Unitarian Universalist:

CALL TO MEETING

The Board of Directors requests your attendance at the Annual Congregational Meeting of the members of the First Universalist Church on Sunday, June 9, 2024, at 11:15 am in the Sanctuary. The meeting will directly follow the worship service, and will use the same Zoom link for those attending virtually.

AGENDA:

1. Opening Words
2. Quorum Check (20% of Membership)
3. Call to Order (Moderator); adopt 2024 Annual Meeting Agenda
4. Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes
5. Presentation of proposed 2024-2025 budget by Finance Committee and the Board of Directors
6. Vote on Budget
7. Vote on proposed Leadership Slate
8. Straw poll to advise voting delegates on final proposed revision to Article II at General Assembly
9. Presentation of Rose Window Award

Adjournment

Friends are welcome to attend to learn more about the functioning of our congregation. Voting is a privilege of membership.

**First Universalist Church of Auburn
Unitarian Universalist
2023 Annual Meeting
Minutes
June 4, 2023**

11:20 President's Welcome

Opening Words: Claire Hebert read "Blessings for the Beginning."

Quorum Check: Quorum requirement met: 32 members in the Sanctuary; 18 members on-line. (22 members required for quorum).

Call to Order: Ned Claxton, moderator, called the Meeting to order.

- Motion to adopt the agenda of the 2023 Annual Meeting made by Claire Hebert; second by Cindy Greathouse. Unanimously approved.

Budget Presentation: Ellen O'Brien, Treasurer, presented the 2023-2024 budget

- Ellen thanked the members of the Finance Committee.
- Ellen presented the big picture of the budget. Referred members to the attached financial statements for detailed information.
- Basic themes:
 - difficult to project income and expenses
 - 2022-23: Projected expenses were on target; projected income is down as pledges have not been paid in full.
 - Only increases in 2023-24 budget: funds to support incoming minister; funds to increase administrative support.
 - Looking at a budget shortfall for 2023-24: projected income of \$180,000; projected expenses of \$230,000.
 - Income from endowed funds is available (Ellen summarized the funds held by the Maine Community Foundation)
- Ellen urged that a budget be passed today with the opportunity to revisit the budget in October 2023. She stressed the importance of having a budget in place as part of the ministerial search process.

Questions:

- Alyson Spencer-Reed had 2 specific questions regarding the Workers Comp line and the Real Estate taxes line. Ellen replied that Finance is looking into both.
- Alyson Spencer-Reed and Rachel Spencer-Reed brought up concerns about the funding of the RE position:
 - Was there a conversation about continuing the reduced line for the RE position?
 - Is this a realistic amount to hire someone to revive and develop the RE program?
 - How many hours does this represent?
- Ellen explained that the RE Director position is for 5 hours per week.
- Toby Haber-Giasson clarified that the 2023-24 canvass fell short of its goal by \$20,000. The goal was \$128,000; actual pledges total \$107,000. She encouraged members to fulfill their 2022-23 pledge obligations and to consider increasing their 2023-24 pledge.

Motion to accept the 2023-24 budget as presented with the proviso that it be may be revisited in October 2023. made by John Spruill; second by Jane Pentheny.

Discussion of whether it should be termed a “draft” budget. John Spruill moved to amend his motion to add “draft.” Charles Nero seconded the motion.

Further discussion: Allison Spencer-Reed asked what it meant to approve a “draft budget.” Ellen O’Brien argued that the term “draft” confuses the issue. Pam Weeks argued to the importance of having a set budget as part of the ministerial search process. John Spruill withdrew his motion.

Vote on the motion on the floor to accept the 2023-24 budget as presented with the proviso that it may be revisited in October 2023: Yea: 53 (36 in person; 17 on-line); Nay: 1 (in person); Abstention: 1 (on-line).

Leadership Slate:

- Anne Perron thanked outgoing board members, Ed Bell and Betty Riggin, for their service.
- Ned Claxton presented the slate:
 - President: Anne Perron
 - Vice President: Linda Greathouse
 - Clerk: David Das
 - Member-at-large: Claire Hebert
 - Member-at-large: Jane Pentheny

Collector: Paula Mikkelsen
Treasurer: Ellen O'Brien
Financial Secretary: Greg Whitney
Endowment Committee: Ned Claxton, Greg Bianconi
Historian: Bill Eldridge
Moderator: Rick O'Brien; alternate – Ned Claxton

Comments:

- Anne Perron explained that a 5-member board met the requirement set by the Bylaws.
- Sharon Kinsman expressed concern that a 5-member board provided limited flexibility; she asked for clarification of Board terms.
- Anne Perron explained that there were few people interested in serving on the Board. She clarified the terms:
- the President, Vice President and Clerk were being elected to a second one-year term. The two members-at-large would be the second year of their two-year term.

Motion to accept the 2023-2024 Leadership Slate made by Cindy Greathouse; seconded by Mary Sylvester.

- Rachel Spencer-Reed clarified we would not be voting on the two members-at-large since they would be serving the second year of their two-year terms.
- Ellen O'Brien asked if the Board was open to adding new members; Anne Perron replied in the affirmative.

Ned Claxton called for a vote acclamation to approve the motion. Motion so approved.

Esther Tucker asked for volunteers to serve as Board members. John Spruill volunteered.

Motion by Ellen O'Brien to nominate John Spruill to the Board. Seconded by Rachel Spencer-Reed. Motion passed by acclamation.

Rose Window Award: On behalf of the Board, Betty Riggin presented the Rose Window Award to John Spruill. See appended: "How Cool is John Spruill?"

Minister Search Update: Anne Perron explained that we were one of 15 churches who did not receive an interim minister match. We are investigating other options. There were several questions about the process, specifically about the Contract Minister option. There will be a Town Hall on June 25

devoted to this issue. Mary Sylvester advised that we address the administrative support issue before the June 25 Town Hall.

President's Report: Anne Perron summarized the challenges of the past year; she expressed her appreciation for the commitment of all volunteers.

Mary Kay Weisenberger presented a card of thanks signed by congregants to Anne.

Closing Words: Anne Perron

12:58: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

David H. Das, Clerk

Rose Window Award Presentation (by Betty Lynne Riffin)

ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls
and to all our beloveds who within "they're" swirl
we see you, we hear you, we believe you,
we love you, and we are glad you are here

I am Betty Lynne, your board member these last two years, about to rotate off, and as my last official offering to our beloved community it is my honor, my privilege and my happy dance delight, to present the 2023 Rose Window Award.

We, the Board, received many fine nominations, well written, excellent points raised, fellow beloveds praised in gorgeous paragraphs. It was a joy to read the out pouring of love, respect, and the defining of what seems most evocative of the UU spirit. Then we had to pick one and that was hard. We felt the weight of being in seats of responsibility, full disclosure we talked about picking two and dismissed it immediately, **because** there **is one**, who consistently illustrates an

unwavering devotion to our church, there is one who walks that talk by showing up and making things happen for the greater good, especially this last year. One name consistently begged this question of us, how cool is John Spruill?

So, how cool **is** John Spruill?

John and Paula joined the church in 2014, same year I did so I was front row for the smart questions and comments John contributed to those conversations. Even as UU curious, he was presenting a UU spirit. What he brings to our beloved community can hardly be measured, definitely treasured and we are going to celebrate this beautiful man for a solid minute or two.

Most of us know him as a thoughtful, inspirational lay leader, speaking on many Sunday mornings as he brings warmth and light to dense and difficult topics. You may not know, if he is not here at the mic or singing in the choir, he is up there, a member of the audio/visual tech crew who each week, make our digital church service a reality. I am also on Team Worship Tech with John and others, and John shared with me his long time interest in technology. I asked around and learned about John bringing conversations to Reverend Jodi and others, about our service going online and he began recording them the Fall of 2019. How lucky were we, going into pandemic, to have John?

I cannot stress enough how stressful it must have been, the hours it took, how clever and collaborative Jodi, Pam, Phil and the tech team had to be to work out how to make worship tech happen and John was there every step of the way.

Who remembers John as MC of our Annual Music Sundays?

Who has been blessed to attend one of his Ferry Beach workshops, or one of his book studies? I would welcome a John led deep dive of 1619 every year, who's with me?

Who has been blessed to talk US history, or social justice over coffee with John? This man has knowledge, a wealth of experiences, and is generous in the sharing.

So, John moves in both Music and Worship Associates circles, he's on Team Worship Tech, also involved in many aspects of the Ferry Beach experience up front and behind the scenes. These are all vital infrastructures of our church life and John's hands, heart and head move in all these ways to serve our beloved church community. For the greater community, he is called to serve the plight of the unhoused, addressing this crisis by working to help build a

coalition of churches to support a community homeless shelter. He's quite a leader.

I asked a few of us who work most closely with John about their experience, this is what I heard regarding his volunteerism. John shows up, with good humor and a smile. When John joins a committee or activity, he steps up and brings his best self into a leadership role. Perhaps where John shines most is when he's leading us all by example to show up, be ready and willing, even if... maybe even especially if... there is challenge. John often makes his way up, and then back down, the scary staircase to the tech control room to help set up the audio visual when he on the schedule to be down here. He doesn't have to do those stairs that morning, he's that willing and that generous, and that's leadership I follow. John is showing us how great it is to work together, inspiring patience and persistence, with good humor and a smile.

So, it's my happy dance delight to present the 2023 Rose Window Award to John Spruill.

2024-2025 Proposed Leadership Slate

Continuing in office:

Board Member-at-Large: John Spruill (through June 2025) (in year 1 of 2 of first term)

Board of Directors:

President: David Das (through June 2025) (first term)

Vice President: Anne Perron (through June 2025) (first term)

Clerk: Linda Greathouse (through June 2025) (first term)

Member-at-Large: Ed Bell (through June 2026) (first term)

Claire Hebert (through June 2026) (second term)

Jane Pentheny (through June 2026) (second term)

Other Officers:

Treasurer: Ellen O'Brien

Collector: Paula Mikklesen

Financial Secretary:

Endowment Committee: Ned Claxton

Historian: Bill Eldridge

Moderator: Rick O'Brien
Ned Claxton (Alternate)

Minister's Report

2023/2024

It has been a good year. Not always an easy one, but a good one.

It would be dishonest to pretend that I didn't arrive with concerns; the congregation had just been through a "tumultuous year," complete with multiple examples of bad behavior, and the traumatic — for all involved — end of a long ministry. But you and your board had already decided to start the work of healing and restoration. Which is neither easy nor fast, when it's real healing. You're not done yet, but you're well along the way. There's a lot of building and rebuilding being done. And you did all this and also weathered a mass shooting in your community as well.

I want to honor and appreciate that you embraced my advice not to waste the crisis; you've accepted the need to make change, and to do so thoughtfully, with an eye on the long-term needs and good of the congregation. You chose good leaders who've served you well. And people have come together to do important work even when it's hard and frustrating and there are tensions.

I've been able to see that in working with various groups and committees; people have chosen to work together for the present and for the future of First Universalist instead of continuing to re-fight the past. But not to pretend that it didn't happen. In fact, some of this year's work has consciously set out to mine the experience of that past in order to build a future where such things shouldn't happen again, and when conflicts arise (as they always will among human beings who are sharing space, time, money, goals, and vision together) you'll have some good guardrails in place and be better equipped to navigate the disagreement less destructively. Getting there will be a significant achievement — many congregations fail to go deep or do serious work because doing so risks conflict, and they fear conflict will mean destruction. You now know that it's survivable, and you're actively learning, and building ways to make those moments safer. Don't downplay the importance of that for your future.

We kicked off the effort to develop a congregational covenant, and I am so impressed at how seriously that effort's been taken, how many people have already participated, and how carefully the Committee on Ministry is doing that work. I believe that the result will be — in a year or two — admirable and will both help guide you onward and will also provide the foundation for the development of an appropriate covenant for behavior and right relations.

In addition to all this I've worked to help structure things so that things are tidy for you and Rev. Sweetser in the coming year. Your staff all will have new, updated contracts; your budget process now better engages the vision work of the Board with the fiscal nuts and bolts work of the Finance Committee; you're engaged with the larger tradition's work and possibilities, and so much more.

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I'm delighted to have gotten to reconnect you with your Universalist heritage and to see and appreciate the way UU Universalism looks in the 21st century. It has been a joy and an honor to serve you this year. I look forward to seeing you thrive and bloom in the coming years.

In faith, Rev. Patrick McLaughlin

2023-2024 Board Annual Report

The work of the Board during the 2023-2024 Church Year has centered around the following themes: Minister; Communication; Church Policies; Employment Policy and Contracts; Rental Opportunities; District Activities; Support of Congregational Initiatives.

Minister:

In the past year, the Board conducted two successful ministerial searches. In Spring 2023, the Board quickly pivoted from the disappointment of not engaging an interim minister to the task of hiring a contract minister. We worked closely with our congregational representative at the New England Region of the UUA in this process. In early August, a candidate expressed interest in the position. We held a preliminary Zoom interview; followed by contract negotiations which proved to be time consuming as the contract landscape has changed markedly since the last time that First Universalist had hired a minister (many thanks to Ellen O'Brien, Treasurer, for all her efforts). By the end of the month, we had agreed upon a contract with Patrick and had started the onboarding process.

Patrick has prodded us to consider new directions and avenues. He has attempted to clarify for us the Board's role in Policy Based Governance with particular reference to: the Board's relationship with committees; the Board's role in creating a vision; in taking an active role in the creation of the annual budget; in taking ownership of the budget.

In March, the Board once again once launched a search for a contract minister with a one-two year tenure. Our application reflected the real progress that the congregation had made over the past year – we were no longer in crisis mode. The Board engaged in the search process with real optimism. In May, we agreed to a two-year contract with the Reverend Terry Sweetser. This Fall, the Board, working with Reverend Sweetser, looks forward to setting ambitious goals for the near and the long term.

Communication:

The Board entered the church year with the awareness that communication was an issue. The lines of communication between the Board and the congregation, between the Board and committees, between committees, and between the First Universalist Church and the community needed to be improved. Communication continues to be an issue, but several initiatives have been launched.

The Board adopted the recommendation of Reverend Paul Langston Daly and initiated the practice of holding regular Town Halls on specific themes. The Town Halls addressed: the ministerial search; the 159 Pleasant Street property; a revisit of the 2023-24 annual budget; a "What fires you up?" discussion; a discussion of the 2024-25 budget prior to the 2024 Annual Meeting. The Board provided the congregation with minutes of each Town Hall. The Town Halls proved to be very helpful to the Board in our decision making. In particular, the "What fires you up?" Town Hall

led the Board to identify Music and Religious Exploration as areas in which to invest time and money.

The Board revived regular meetings of the Council of Committees. This hopefully has allowed different committees to share information and to get a sense of broader church life. Communicating the results of Council of Committees discussions remains a challenge.

The Board has had extensive conversations about effective calendaring; internal vs. external messaging; effective use of Face Book and the web site. This too remains a work in process.

The Board continues to post agendas, meeting minutes, and other Board documents on the Board blog on the church website.

In November, the Board issued a public statement in the Sun Journal stating our concern with growing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Church Policies:

The Board has engaged in extensive policy review and creation. Much remains to be done including the standardization of policy format and having the bylaws and policies easily accessible on the website. Over the course of the year, the Board has addressed the following policies: security camera use; keycode and key distribution; general building safety policy and protocol; COVID; alcohol use at church events; emergency closure.

Employment Policy and Contracts:

Patrick, as CEO of the organization, has initiated a review of our employment policy (or lack thereof) and staff contracts with the goal of creating clear standards and expectations and ensuring that employment policy and contracts are in line with State of Maine law and UUA Fair Compensation guidelines. He brought his results to the Board, and they are reflected in the proposed 2024-25 church budget.

Rental Opportunities:

With the relaxation of COVID restrictions, rental opportunities have increased. The Board retooled the general rental policies and guidelines for traditional rental activities – AA; NA; weddings and receptions. The Board also invested time and energy in creating rental guidelines for more significant rentals such as the Drop-In Center and the Allied Field Church. These guidelines required consultation with our representatives at the UUA and at Church Mutual (our insurance carrier) and with legal counsel. The Board envisions creating a rental task force to address rental issues.

UUA Activities:

The Board participated in a District Retreat in October with other churches from Maine. Individual Board members have taken advantage of networking opportunities offered by the New England Region (NER) of the UUA. These activities along with the frequent contact with our NER representatives during the ministerial searches have resulted in a much closer relationship with our UUA colleagues and an awareness of the many resources that the UUA offers. Many thanks to Patrick for frequently reminding us that we are a part of the UUA.

Support of Congregational Initiatives:

The Board responded enthusiastically to:

- Charles Nero's establishment of an Adult Education Committee. We are grateful for Charles' hard work in creating a meaningful, engaging and popular series of events.
- Samantha McCune's interest in becoming the RE Coordinator. We hope that this will be a major step in the revival of Religious Exploration for children and youth.
- the Committee on Ministry's covenant creation initiative. The small group meetings have already been a meaningful step in members and friends becoming (re)acquainted with each other.

Conclusion:

Last year's Board Report stated that "the 2022/23 church year has been tumultuous for Auburn UU." This year, the Board can state the 2023-2024 church year has been constructive for Auburn UU. We look forward to even more successes in 2024-25. The future is brightening – it may be time to break out the shades.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Perron (President), Linda Greathouse (Vice President), David Das (Clerk), Claire Hebert (Member-at-Large), Jane Pentheny (Member-at-Large), John Spruill, Jr. (Member-at-Large)

First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist

Auburn, Maine

Committee Report to Congregation/Board of Directors

Our Mission Statement: Rooted in the Sacred and strengthened by our diversity, we equip ourselves to minister through the transformative power of Love.

Committee/Task Force name: Adult Religious Education

Committee members: Charles Nero and Baltasar Fra-Molinero

Communication to the Board/Members/Friends Since Last Update

Significant activities/achievements:

- The committee created two public-facing series. Treks and Sojourns is a speaker series in which UU members present about their travels. The presenter may focus solely on travels as a secular “Trek,” a spiritual “Sojourn,” or some combination of the two. UU Movies and Discussion is a screen series for the congregation that focuses on issues related to UU spirituality and values.

So far, Treks and Sojourns has had one presentation by Bill Frayer “Croatia: The Jewel of the Adriatic” (12/12/23).

UU Movies and Discussions has had four screenings. Two screenings were episodes of the television series *Ted Lasso* (10/8/23 and 10/22/23) followed by a robust conversation about the spiritual values of the episode. The committee shared a document that included links to online discussions about the spiritual values of *Ted Lasso*. Two screenings of documentaries were held to celebrate Black History Month: *Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice* (2/4/24) and *Backs Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story* (2/18/24).

Upcoming activities:

- The Treks and Sojourns Series will continue with three more events in May and June: Holly Cooney, Luke Lunt, and Bill Phillips and Beth Steucek.
- Two after church service events to discuss the proposed Article 2 at the General Assembly.
- The Committee is exploring an inward facing project to focus on digitizing documents and images related to the history of the church. This project is a collaboration with the Church Historian

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Expenditures:

- \$25 for used dvds of the documentary films.

Budget needs:

- Funds to get light blocking curtains for the vestry.

Other needs:

- Light blocking curtains for the Vestry

Submitted by: Charles I. Nero

Date: March 24, 2024

Community Relations - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose: To facilitate communication within the congregation, as well as the larger community, about church events and opportunities.

Chair: Toby Haber-Giasson

Ongoing Activities:

- E-blasts- Keep the congregation informed about our Sunday worship services and other church news via email.
- Maintain a current activity calendar in the sUUnDay e-blast and FB page
- Emphasis on brevity, timeliness and a limit of 1 message per day.
- Continued initiative to show message author and contact info
- Honor the many requests to be removed from the church email list.
- Coordinate email and FB page lists with current membership and friends lists
- Post events on the church website and the church Facebooks pages
- Issue press releases to local print, radio and tv & electronic media outlets

Notable Activities:

- Press release for Holly Cooney's Treks talk picked up by Google news
- submitted input on draft policy for Sunday closure notification.

Expenditures:

- None

Budget Needs:

- None at this time

Other Needs:

- Find a volunteer who would help create a newsletter.
- Remind **chairs to share info** for e-blasts, etc. as early as possible.
- Remote use of Event Checklist

Goals:

- To keep email lists updated for current members and friends.

Find a way to create issues of *The Open Door* newsletter, possibly through Mail Chimp.

Submitted by: Toby Haber-Giasson

Concerts for a Cause - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose – to raise support for the church and local nonprofits through ticket sales for music performances.

Chair: Toby Haber-Giasson and several fabulous volunteers

Communication:

- None so far this year

Activities/Achievements:

- Committee blurb was posted on website

Upcoming Activities:

- Offer input for new audio/video equipment for sanctuary.

Budget Needs:

- CFAC is a fundraising entity and has its own “seed” money.

Expenditures:

- Depending on the act, CFAC may need to pay a booking deposit for a performer or band.
- We can also improve sales by paying to boost the reach of social media.

Other Needs:

- Consideration of how CFAC can meet new building use guidelines without placing undue burden on volunteers
- Security concerns for live events need to be explicitly addressed
- CFAC has relied upon community support through the ticket sales and playbill ads; that support needs to be rebuilt by raising the church profile.

Submitted by: Toby Haber-Giasson

Council of Committees - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose: to promote coordination and cooperation amongst our committees.

Members: Board VP Linda Greathouse, committee and event chairs and key stakeholders.

Communication

- March 24 Council meeting- Since several chairs were new to leadership and to Council, this first Council meeting of the church year began with discussion about the purpose of Council and opportunities that Council meetings provide. Chairs presented reports on their activities. Board President Anne Perron shared updates about administrative matters and building rentals.
- April 21- First quarterly meeting of council. Attending chairs presented updates. Big crossover discussion about wifi/internet service, Zoom video and Sanctuary audio between B&G, Worship and Tech Team.

Activities/Achievements

- Got back to using our shared space, which became available for use by all church ministries as of last May
- Committee descriptions written last spring posted on website grouped by type
- Council hosted an Opportunity Fair at the Fall Ingathering in our vestry Sept 9
- Chairs contributed cakes for All Church Birthday on Jan 28
- Council met in March '24, 11 chairs present, April- 7 chairs present.
- Committees are asked to submit monthly reports on last day of the month, for consideration at monthly meeting of church Board of Directors
- Reports can be cumulative so that the May report can be published in the Annual Report.
- Committee reports from March and April meetings were added to a shared drive for easy access. Some folks unable to access.
- A Quarterly meeting schedule was set for the next 7 months: July 14/October 13/January 12 @11:30am.

Upcoming Activities: Quarterly meeting July 14

- It was noted there is funding available for certain committees through use of Request for Reimbursement" form, amounts noted below are in the 23/24 budge and will be updated for 24/25 church calendar year..
 - Coffee hour \$100

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- Membership	\$200
- Stewardship	\$100
- Ferry Beach Expenses	\$100
- Denominational Affairs	\$100
- Leadership Development	\$100
- Pastoral Ministry	\$100

Discussion of implications for committees:

- Room reservation and messaging procedures
- Importance of having a committee or group run events, use of Event Checklist
- Building use parameters adopted by the board last year
- Coordinating events through Council synergy
- Resolution of shared use of space, storage, security, etc.
- Clarification of “permission” by the board?

Submitted by: Toby Haber-Giasson, secretary to the Council

DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS REPORT 2024

Final vote this June to replace 7 UU Principle with Statement of Values

At the upcoming UUA General Assembly (G.A.) June 20-23, 2024, congregational delegates will vote on changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws that **would remove the current Principles, Sources, and Purposes, and replace them with a Flower of Values centered in Love**, and list **Inspirations** and **redefined Purposes**.

Rev. Patrick McLaughlin, our contract minister at Auburn UU, has engaged the congregation with sermons and discussions about these significant proposals that will help inform our delegates in decision-making.

For some religious denominations the equivalent of our UUA Article II would constitute church doctrine. UUs try to be clear that ours is a *non-creedal* faith, despite the fact that the 7 Principles have seemed to be a statement of belief. Therefore, also built into the UUA bylaws is a requirement that there be a regular revision process of Article II every 15 years. Some changes in the past were major, some were slight.

The current proposals are *major* and were written by a task force over several years to incorporate what was thought to be missing, to remove what was less important, and to communicate core UU values in today's world. Since the last major revisions, UUs have grown in our understanding of systemic oppressions, such as racism, ableism, and heteronormative beliefs. Thus we have this new proposal, depicted in brief form by a flower graphic.



Auburn UU voting delegates will be Anne Kinney and Claire Hebert, plus ministerial delegate Rev. Patrick McLaughlin. This particular proposal required a two-year voting process at General Assembly. Last year a majority of the delegates endorsed it, so it moves forward to a final vote this year. The 2024 vote requires 2/3 approval. First, several approved amendments will be considered, including adding two more Values: Reason and Peace.

The theme for this year's all-virtual G.A. is ***Love Unites, Stories Ignite*** to highlight the substance of human connections and our interdependent communities. Full registration costs \$400, and any interested UUs can register, although only delegates may vote. There will be dozens of on-demand workshops, inspirational worship services, lectures, affinity groups, social events, and music. Next year's G.A. will be multi-platform: both online and in-person in Baltimore, MD.

On a regional level our church Board and congregation continue to benefit from resources and guidance provided directly to us by the New England Region (NER) of the UUA.

Climate Justice Revival

As UUA President Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt completes her first year of a 6-year term, she invites all UUs to join in transformative conversations this September about Climate Justice. She is trained as an environmental ethicist and urges congregations to hold conversations, worship, and advocacy in our communities on Sept. 28th–29th with materials the UUA can provide.

UU the Vote

Living into the promise of a multi-racial democracy means working with others to build political power. The *UU the Vote* 2024 campaign is a bold initiative that supports and collaborates with local organizing groups as we mobilize communities to grow a powerful pro-democracy majority. *UU the Vote* engages people in voter registration, issue education, get-out-the-vote drives, voter protection, state leadership development, and more.



Anne Kinney, Denominational Affairs Representative

Finance Committee Budget Report

Message from the Board of Directors Regarding the Proposed 2024-25 Annual Budget

At the Annual Meeting on June 9, the congregation will vote on the 2024-2025 budget. The Board hopes that the following narrative will help members in their consideration of the budget. Reverend Patrick challenged the Board to take ownership of the budget, to create a budget that reflects the Board's vision for the future of the First Universalist Church. The Board's vision requires an investment in people; 56% of proposed expenditures is dedicated directly to personnel.

The budget reflects:

- The congregational desire as expressed at the January Town Hall to have strong Life-Span RE program.
 - o Sam McCune has started as the DRE and will work to create a vibrant program for children and youth. She will also coordinate with the Adult RE Committee.
- Board awareness that administrative systems need improvement.
 - o We have hired a part time administrator on a contract basis to help train our church administrator and to address some of our urgent administrative needs.
- Board belief that we must compensate staff according to UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines.
 - o Reverend Patrick had conversations with all staff and conducted a deep dive into UUA Fair Compensation guidelines.
 - o Continuing staff salaries reflect UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines with a 3.2% increase (projected Social Security COLA). New positions are not affected by COLA.

The Board is well aware that these three initiatives are expensive, and we did not create this budget lightly. Indeed, the 2024-2025 budget creates a potential gap of \$37,900 comparing projected income to projected expenses. This proposed budget continues a tradition of budgets with significant deficits. We propose to fill the gap this year by using funds from the General Fund and Memorial accounts. Deficit budgets are not tenable over the long haul. However, the Board believes that we are at a crossroads: shall we continue to muddle along in standard fashion and risk withering away? Or, shall we make a significant financial investment with the faith that it will serve as a spring board for future growth?

The Board takes heart from the increasing stability and growing activity of congregational life. Moreover, we should all be encouraged by the results of the Stewardship campaign: with slightly fewer pledging units than last year, the total pledge amount increased by nearly \$2,000,

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and the average pledge increased by \$250. However, while necessary, money is not sufficient. Our future depends upon all of us, staff and volunteers alike, working together to strengthen our beloved community.

In faith and hope,

Anne Perron, President Linda Greathouse, Vice President David Das, Clerk Jane Pentheny, Member-at-Large Claire Hebert, Member-at-Large John Spruill, Jr., Member-at-Large

First Universalist Church Operating Budget for CHECKING ACCOUNT ONLY 1389- INCOME		2023-2024 BUDGET Adjusted for vote on October 15, 2023	23-24 actuals as of 5/20-90%	24-25 Budget
Total Pledges		109084	92861	114320
Total other gifts		20000	21880	20000
Total Fundraising		9000	680	4000
Total rentals- building and apartment		12000	23330	51796
Endowment income, 0144 fund transfers and other		33200	1624	16440
Total Income		183284	152578	206556

First Universalist Church Operating Budget for CHECKING ACCOUNT ONLY 1389-EXPENSES		2023-2024 BUDGET Adjusted for vote on October 15, 2023	23-24 actuals as of 5/20-90%	24-25 budget
Total UUA Dues		6000	3000	6000
Total Minister Expense, Compensation, Benefits, Prof. Exp.		75000	68736	96511
Total music (includes organist and choir director)		25295	21755	26103
Total RE and Media (includes RE director and media/tech coordinator)		8620	3866	17844
Total administration (one office admin, one assistant to admin, one book keeper)		27418	23802	30729
Total building and grounds		47660	36054	40400
Total 159 expenses (apartment building)		17170	29432	19700
Total committees		1264	622	7200
Total expenses		208427	187267	244486.50
INCOME minus EST Expenses		-25143	-34689	-37930.5

**cover deficit with general fund in 0144 and MCF memorial fund available funds with goal of growing church membership through ministry, RE and church member good works?

Total Staff Costs				135942
Staff as percentage of Total				56%

Snapshots of Financial Secretary's Report

Linda Greathouse (lgr8house@gmail.c

	available for distribution			
Hackett Fund	16750.00	53,086.72	2,957.07 12/31/23 income/loss	56,043.79
Music Fund	3810.00	16,468.96	917.41 12/31/23 income/loss	17,386.37
Memorial Fund	19030.00	51,767.02	2,883.76 12/31/23 income/loss	54,650.78
Building Endowment	14640.00	348,558.15	15,841.52 12/31/23 income/loss	364,399.67
Heritage Fund	1770.00	36,272.73	2,020.70 12/31/23 income/loss	38,293.43
total MCF		506,153.58		530,774.04
Dirigo CD	from Nancy Hill Bequest, restricted	2,575.55	7.63 int thru 3/31/2022	2,583.18
Matures 5/28/2022				
Amundi Pioneer Fund	As of 12/31/23	15,026.47	Liquidated 3/2024	0.00
PSEG stock fund		17,191.20	Liquidated 3/2024	0.00

Financial Secretary's Report April 30, 2024

The Financial Secretary keeps the records of all funds of the church except for the Treasurer's checking account and the Pleasant St. Drop in Center account. The Financial Secretary is a member of the Finance Committee and Investment Committee. All funds coming into the church goes through the Treasurer. The Treasurer transfers any funds that are designated for a special purpose and reports these transfers to the Financial Secretary for record keeping.

Monies are invested in several different funds and at various institutions. These include a money market account at Mechanics Savings Bank (MSB), a CD at Dirigo Credit Union, the Amundi Pioneer Fund, some PSEG stock, and a large amount of funds invested at the Maine Community Foundation. The Maine Community Foundation funds earned approximately \$38,500 over the past year. In addition, approximately \$13,000 have been withdrawn from the Building Endowment Fund at the Maine Community Foundation to support the annual budget. The attached spreadsheet shows the balance in each fund as of March 31, 2024. The various funds include the following:

General Fund – Unrestricted funds invested in MSB money market account

Memorial Fund – Established in 1959 with the stipulation that interest only be used as a fitting memorial to those for whom the memorial gifts were given. In 1972, the Board voted "to place all funds received from legacies, gifts and inheritances in the Memorial Fund with appropriate name of giver and only the income thereafter be spent". Funds are invested in MSB money market account and Maine Community Foundation.

Stained Glass Window Fund – Restricted funds invested in MSB money market account.

Nancy Hill Fund – Established by a bequest from Nancy Hill in 1913. She designated one half of the funds be invested and the earnings only be used for charity. The other half of the funds are invested and the earnings only can be used for the maintenance of the church edifice. The part for charitable use was invested in shares in the Northeast District UUA on March 31, 1968. Funds are invested in MSB money market account at Dirigo CD. Some funds were expended this year to replenish the Minister's Discretionary Fund.

Organ/Piano Maintenance Fund – Established in 2003 from an anonymous donor. Restricted funds invested in MSB money market account.

Music Fund – Established in 1980 with an initial donation from Clyde and Thelma Thorpe. Funds are used to enhance the music program. Funds invested in MSB money market account and Maine Community Foundation.

Social Justice Fund – Established in 2016. Restricted funds invested in MSB money market account.

UU Theater Fund – Restricted funds invested in MSB money market account.

CFAC Fund – Unrestricted funds invested in MSB money market account. These funds are available to the general fund.

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Emery Youth Scholarship Fund – Marion Bunney Emery Fund established for youth to attend Ferry Beach Youth Camp. Funds invested in MSB money market account.

Ferry Beach Fund – Restricted funds invested in MSB money market account.

Bob Thorpe Building Fund – Established for building maintenance and emergencies. Funds invested in MSB money market.

Bill Prescott Fund – Restricted funds used for capital maintenance items. Funds invested in MSB money market account.

159 (Pleasant Street) Apartment Rental Fund – Security deposit being held on the apartment rent. Funds invested in MSB money market account.

Prepaid Pledges – This is a new fund set up to track pledge funds received in advance of the beginning of the new fiscal year. These funds will be recognized as income when the new fiscal year begins. Funds invested in MSB money market account.

Hackett Fund – Fund established when the church sold the parsonage on Park Avenue. John Hackett donated the funds to build the parsonage. When the parsonage was sold, the congregation voted to invest the money and make it available for future ministers to borrow at a low rate of interest to purchase a home. Funds are invested at Maine Community Foundation.

Building Fund – Established as a result of funds from several donors. Income can be used to support the church building. Funds invested at Maine Community Foundation.

Heritage Fund – A new fund established this year with funds remaining from the Arlene Siekowski and several other bequests. The funds had previously been invested in a CD at Mechanics Savings Bank. The Investment Committee voted to transfer the maturing CDs to the Maine Community Foundation in an attempt to increase the income on the funds.

Amundi Pioneer Fund – Several smaller funds were combined to form this fund. Income can be used in the operation of the church. Funds are invested at Amundi Asset Management.

PSEG Stock Fund – Funds invested in PSEG stock. Income can be used to support annual budget.

The Amundi Pioneer Fund and PSEG Stock Fund were both liquidated during the and added to the General Fund in the MSB Money Market account.

Respectfully submitted,
Greg Whitney, Financial Secretary

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Financial Secretary Balance Sheet as of 4/30/24

0144 Account	notes	03/31/2024 Balance	Apr 2024 trans	Apr Notes	Apr interest	04/30/2024 Balance
Mechanics Savings Bank Accounts					15.62	
Church operating account						
Ministers Discretionary						
Ministers Professional Expenses						
Special accounts 0144	Bank balance	76,381.80				74,497.42
0144 accounts detail						
1.5001	General Fund, unrestricted	38,724.80	-9,000.00 health insurance		7.92	29,732.72
1.5002	Memorial	2,442.21			0.50	2,442.71
1.5003	Stained Glass Restoration Fund	2,012.27			0.41	2,012.68
1.5004	Nancy Hill	248.86			0.05	248.91
1.5005	Organ/Piano Maint	8,534.54			1.75	8,536.29
1.5006	Music Fund	2,625.54			0.54	2,626.08
1.5007	Social Justice	573.65			0.12	573.77
1.5008	UU Theater	1,989.20			0.41	1,989.61
1.5009	CFAC (avail to general fund)	613.42			0.13	613.55
1.5010	Emery Youth Scholarship	4,933.36			1.01	4,934.37
1.5011	Ferry Beach Retreat Fund	1,684.25			0.34	1,684.59
1.5012	Building Fund	0.00			0.00	0.00
1.5013	Bob Thorpe building fund	3,894.00	7,100.00 sewer repairs		0.78	10,994.78
1.5014	Bill Prescott Bequest	7,037.80			1.44	7,039.24
1.5015	Gordon Harris Bequest	0.00			0.00	0.00
	Treasurer's Reserve	0.00			0.00	0.00
	used to track the PPP loan	0.00			0.00	0.00
1.5016	159 Apartment rental - security deposit/repairs	1,065.87			0.22	1,066.09
1.5017	Prepaid pledges	2.03			0.00	2.03
1.5018	Vestry Chairs & Tables	0.00			0.00	0.00
1.5019	Drop in Center	0.00			0.00	0.00
					0.00	
	TOTAL	76,381.80			15.62	74,497.42
	Variance	0.00				0.00
Small and Thorpe CD	Matures around 11/7/2021	0.00				
General CD	Matures around 12/20/2021	0.00				
	available for distribution					
Hackett Fund	16750.00.	56,043.79	2,013.88 03/31/24 income/loss			58,057.67
Music Fund	3810.00	17,386.37	624.68 03/31/24 income/loss			18,011.05
Memorial Fund	19030.00	54,650.78	1,963.86 03/31/24 income/loss			56,614.64
Building Endowment	10980.00	364,399.67	9,394.26 03/31/24 income/loss			373,793.93
Heritage Fund	1770.00	38,293.43	1,376.34 03/31/24 income/loss			39,669.77
total MCF		530,774.04				546,147.06
Dirigo CD	from Nancy Hill Bequest, restricted	2,575.55	7.63 int thru 3/31/2022			2,583.18
Matures 5/28/2022						
Amundi Pioneer Fund	As of 12/31/23	15,026.47		Liquidated 3/2024		0.00
PSEG stock fund		17,191.20		Liquidated 3/2024		0.00
Church Building - Insurance amount						
159 Pleasant Street	?					



**First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist
Auburn, Maine
Committee Report to Congregation/Board of Directors**

Our Mission Statement: Rooted in the Sacred and strengthened by our diversity, we equip ourselves to minister through the transformative power of Love.

Committee/Task Force name: Hospitality

Committee members: Luke Lunt, Diane Chasse, Joanne Charpentier, Esther Tucker, Vicki Thibeault, Ron Spofford, Skip Gans

Communication to the Board/Members/Friends Since Last Update

Significant activities/achievements:

- Several game nights
- Coffee hour after church every Sunday
- Contra dances
- Gift basket making fund-raiser
- All Church Birthday Celebration

Expenditures:

Estimate a couple hundred dollars

Budget needs:

Estimate \$400, but whatever is possible, I just view it as part of my stewardship

Submitted by: Luke Lunt



First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist
Committee Report to Congregation/Board of Directors

Our Mission Statement: Rooted in the Sacred and strengthened by our diversity, we equip ourselves to minister through the transformative power of Love.

Committee/Task Force name: Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is charged with maintaining, nurturing, and growing the church membership. This goal is addressed by attracting and welcoming newcomers and maintaining informational material for visitors and guests. The Membership Committee provides hospitality and a sense of belonging to all members and guests.

Committee members:

Merry Carver, Angela Foss, Anne Kinney, Luke Lunt, Shelley Reno, Ginny Starbird, Esther Tucker, Vicki Thibeault, and Paula Spruill

Significant activities/achievements:

- planned and facilitated a Spring Orientation Class on May 19, 2024, which we renamed **New to Auburn UU**
- planned New Member Recognition for June 2, 2024 (Five new members were recognized)

Upcoming activities:

- continue monthly meetings
- review and clarify our membership process
- plan **New to Auburn UU** session for Fall 2024

Expenditures:

- \$100 spent for the following: UUA pamphlets, printing supplies for membership certificates & envelopes, welcome cards & envelopes, and other office supplies

Budget needs:

- We are requesting \$200 for the upcoming year to cover the cost of materials needed for two **New to Auburn UU** sessions.

Other needs:

- small pew rack holders to store joys and sorrows papers, pens, and visitor cards

Submitted by: Paula Spruill

Date: May 29, 2024

Music Associates
2023-2024 Annual Report

Date submitted: June 3, 2024

Purpose

To support the music program as an integrated part of the worship life of the church. This group explores the deep potential of music to enhance worship, encourages broad participation in the choir, and works closely with the choir director, organist, and minister to expand our music ministry.

Activities

The choir was active throughout the year:

- Contributing to regular Sunday services and the Christmas Eve service.
- Music and folders for Christmas Eve were prepared in advance, which helped streamline choir rehearsal time.
- The Choir sang at the memorial service for longtime choir member (and onetime choir director!) Barbara Hinckley.
- The Choir and Music Associates arranged flowers for the service as well.
- Work (in conjunction with the Building and Grounds Committee) to clean and organize the music room/choir director's office has been slow but some progress has been made.

Goals

There are a number of projects to address in the upcoming year:

- Sort out Choir membership/email list from the Music Associates membership/email list.
- Determine a regular meeting schedule and encourage committee participation.
- Standardize and document processes for when the choir director and/or organist are off.
- Reinstigate the annual Music Service (which did not happen in 2022-2023 or 2023-2024).
- Continue cleanup of the music room/choir director office.
- Scan/digitize the music library.
- Catalog the music library.

Recognition

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As ever, there aren't words enough to recognize the contributions of both our choir director, Pam Weeks, and organist, Phil House. They are the backbones of not just the music program, but of our church community.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Foss

Music Associates Chair

andifnotnow@gmail.com

207-253-9980

Open Mic - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose – to offer a free forum for the church and the wider community to celebrate the spirituality of music and spoken word. Open Mic also has served as a way to bring the community through our doors, and raise awareness of the church, often attracting new members.

Members - Co-hosts Toby Haber & Mike Giasson, and Brian Bickford.

Communication- monthly e-blasts and Facebook posts

Activities/Achievements

- Committee blurb was posted on website
- Open Mic met monthly on Zoom all year, as they have since 2020.
- Toby and Mike hosted Deck Jam live in July
- In March, Open Mic marked its 18-year anniversary on Zoom.
- Co-promote with Allen Avenue's Open Mic
- Take Open Mic LIVE on Facebook, with help from Cynthia

Upcoming Activities

- In May, Open Mic co-hosts Toby & Mike, along with Allen Avenue's John Howard, emceed the Talent Show at the Ferry Beach Retreat
- Offer input for new audio/video equipment for sanctuary and vestry.
- Summer Deck Jam will be held June 29
- Consider options for the future of Open Mic including a new night or a new format.
- New location/format: we might try the sanctuary. Will need storage upstairs.

Expenditures- OM has no expenditures for its Zoom iteration.

If we go back to live format, we will need to replace some of our equipment.

- Goodwill donations were used to pay for some gear.
- Open Mic paid the church \$250/year to offset the cost of heating the space.

Budget Needs- OM has some funds to spend, but would need assistance for improvements in hard-wired equipment

Other Needs:

- Security concerns for live events need to be explicitly addressed
- Consideration of how UUT can meet new building use guidelines without placing undue burden on volunteers
- Storage: OM requested a locker or closet for storing large equipment in 2022. We have had to put items elsewhere.

Submitted by: Toby Haber-Giasson

Pastoral Ministry Annual Report 2023-2024 Church Year

Pastoral Ministry has been a ministry of the church for approximately 19 years. (* A reminder that we are a "ministry", not a committee.)

Areas of Responsibility:

Pastoral Ministry is made up of the minister and a trained lay team. Our goal is to provide confidential support to congregants in transition, crisis, or experiencing grief or illness. We are a ministry of presence and acceptance, and provide spiritual companionship in times of joy or sorrow.

We keep a consistent schedule of a once a month meeting, and if there is a need we are able to quickly respond to that need. We have continued to meet via zoom, or to schedule an in-person meeting if needed. Our regular schedule is to meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month. In a crisis we will schedule emergency meetings as necessary.

What we do well:

We are present! Fortunately there have been no Pastoral crisis this past year, but we are available in the event that becomes reality.

In times of no minister support we are able to function independently.

Goals:

Our goal is to meet the needs of the members of the congregation on an on-going basis as specific needs arise, or to put together a rapid response team in a crisis.

Budget/Support:

Just as the pandemic arrived, Pastoral Ministry had been awarded financial support for postage, card stock, printer ink, etc. Enter the pandemic, that didn't happen, and we never received the financial support.

Basically, our Pastoral Ministry has provided all financial needs since our inception 19 years ago. Mary Kay and Claire send a \$20.00 check every month, and once or twice a year Sharon Kinsman donates a check to cover such items as postage, which is the largest cost. I purchase the remaining items, ie, envelopes, copy paper and card stock.

Goals remain the same:

Goal is to meet people where they are, to provide comfort in times of sorrow, celebrate with them in their joy, provide meals when needed, make visits to nursing facilities, hospitals, or to those who are home bound.

Cards sent this fiscal year:

Thinking of you/Sympathy- 97

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Congratulations - 8

Get well-2

Patty Weidler (Patty sends card to congregants from the congregation):

Sympathy - 7

Thinking of you - 5

Get Well - 2

Congrats- 3

Honorable mention:

Esther Tucker for consistently letting me know about issues in the lives of members of our church, a huge thank you for staying on top of events taking place in the lives of our members, and for making those phone calls or sending emails to Pastoral Ministry.

Patty Weidler for her beautiful home-made cards.

Ron Spoffard for his continued support to those in the community.

Pastoral Ministry Contact Information:

Mary Kay Weisenberger and Claire Hebert

64 Clubhouse Lane, Auburn, ME 04210

Mary Kay: 240-1974

Claire: 240-6318

Sharon Kinsman

24 Morris Ave., Lewiston, ME 04240

Sharon: 440-3347

Ann Edwards

670 North Rd., Leeds, ME 04263

Ann: 458-9679

Diane Chasse

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125 Pride Rd., Auburn, ME 04210

Diane: 274-1751

Ginny Starbird

273 Lisbon Rd., Apt. 2, Lisbon ME 04250

Ginny: Cell-330-0136 Home: 407-4093

Respectfully submitted:

Virginia Starbird

Pastoral Ministry

Stewardship - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose – to raise support for the church and local nonprofits through ticket sales for music performances.

Chair: Toby Haber-Giasson with Greg Bianconi, Ellen O’Brien and Paula Mikkelsen.

Communication- Clear, consistent messaging, with resources provided and follow-up.

Activities/Achievements

- Planned Stewardship campaign with committee, set goal of \$110-120,000
- Provide resources materials and narrative for pledging
- Coordinate with membership and collector on who is active and paying pledge
 - Stewardship Sunday kickoff- plan with Rev. Patrick
 - Testimonials by three members of our Board: David Das, John Spruill, Jr., Claire Hebert
 - Weekly Stew Updates via email
 - Close of Canvass tally
 - Take care to express gratitude to those pledging
 - Canvass clean-up” via calls, visits and email.
 - **Pledges total \$113,800** as of 5/27

Upcoming Activities – Contact new members about pledging.

Expenditures- none.

Submitted by: Toby Haber-Giasson



**First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist
Auburn, Maine**

Committee Report to Congregation/Board of Directors

Our Mission Statement: Rooted in the Sacred and strengthened by our diversity, we equip ourselves to minister through the transformative power of Love.

Committee/Task Force name: Tech Booth Volunteers

Committee members: Cindy Greathouse, John Spruill, Carlos Fra Nero, Toby Haber-Giasson

Works with staff members Rev. Patrick McLaughlin, Cynthia Grimm, Pam Weeks, Phil House

Communication to the Board/Members/Friends Since Last Update

Significant activities/achievements:

- Created rotation schedule that allows for flexibility for getting coverage for those who are absent

Upcoming activities:

- Coverage for summer; recruit and train additional volunteers

Expenditures:

\$0

Budget needs:

- Upgraded computer in the “crow’s nest”
- iPad (currently Pam Weeks’ personal iPad is used for broadcasting service information in the sanctuary)

Other needs:

- Volunteer replacement for Carlos when he goes to college in the fall

Submitted by: Cindy Greathouse

IN TOUCH WITH OUR *ROOTS & WINGS* AT 2024 TRI-CHURCH FERRY BEACH RETREAT!



Some 80 Tri-Church members from Auburn UU, Allen Avenue UU and Norway UU celebrated our annual oceanfront retreat weekend together May 3rd, 4th, and 5th at the UU Ferry Beach Camp and Conference Center in Saco. We enjoyed ideal weather as we reunited with friends and nourished growing connections with others.

We fed bodies and spirits with rocking chair and porch chats, campfire conversations, beach walks, music jams, and delicious s'mores around the large fire pit in the Grove. Most of us took advantage of the optional workshops and activities: lots of games, early morning nature and photo-walk, jewelry-making, hat-making, card-making, a

TED Talk about Truths Learned in Life, group photo, a delightful Variety Show, and a moving Worship Service....all provided by our very own church members.

Our first-ever fundraising raffle during the retreat netted us \$400 towards scholarships for next year. Many happy winners left with beautifully handcrafted items, jewelry, clothing, a book, and more.



Much of our joy together comes from life stories we share in informal groups, our delight in having 'down time' with one another in such a beautiful setting, free-flowing laughter, and the support, strength, and community that emerges among us.

The Retreat Committee offers deep appreciation to our workshop and activity leaders: Kathy Neddeau, Connie Cross, Betsy Jo Whitcomb, Jan Vachon, Carol Matthews, John Howard, Toby Haber, Mike Giasson, Dee Farr, Rick Kimball, Bill Frayer, Patricia Ellen, Caitlin Sullivan, and all the spontaneous volunteers who keep our retreat 'village' humming along seamlessly.

Our volunteer Retreat Committee signs a contract with Ferry Beach each year, creates Tri-Church publicity, works year-round with Ferry Beach staffers to arrange meals, dorms, meeting spaces, and equipment, plans programming and prints needed materials, provides retreat snacks, oversees the scholarship fund, and arranges for our church insurance providers to cover us with several million dollars worth of coverage during our weekend. Each year we pay a \$125 group membership fee, and send a \$500 (refundable) damage deposit to Ferry Beach. Committee members from all three churches meet monthly in person.



It's the committee's goal to make the retreat available to as many people as possible by allowing choices in length of stay and by providing scholarships. Participants may attend one or two nights, or commute as day participants on Saturday, choosing which meals they'd like to take. Costs are set by Ferry Beach, but we maintain our own scholarship fund to help folks in need of financial assistance.

Another goal is to have **you** join us at the Retreat next year, and bring **your** spirit to the sea! Although we haven't yet cemented our 2025 retreat date with Ferry Beach it's usually the first weekend in May, which would be May 2nd-4th, 2025.

Anne Kinney for the *Tri-Church Ferry Beach Retreat Committee*

Auburn UU: Ron Spofford, Jan Vachon & Holly Cooney & Anne Kinney; **Norway UU:** Dorothy Raymond;
A2U2: Connie Cross, Carol Hayden, Betsy Jo Whitcomb, Kathy Neddeau, Patricia Ellen & Caitlin Sullivan

UU THEATER - Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose: to speak our UU values from the stage, bring the community through our doors, and raise awareness and money for the church.

Chair: Toby Haber-Giasson, Dawn Sullivan.

Communication- reached out to Dawn about painting new window fillers on stage back wall.

Activities/Achievements

- Committee blurb was posted on website

Upcoming Activities: no shows at this time.

- Replace the curtain that was removed – see “Other Needs.”
- Paint the back wall and ceiling of the stage area, in place of the black curtain.
- Window fillers- inventory our window filler backdrops and develop a strategy for a neutral set.

Expenditures:

- UUT needs to buy scripts and/or pay performance rights fees.
- We could possibly improve sales by paying to boost the reach of social media.

Budget Needs:

- UUT is a fundraising entity and keeps its own “seed” money. However, we will definitely need to raise additional money to clean and restore the black curtain.

Other Needs:

- Security concerns for live events need to be explicitly addressed
- Consideration of how UUT can meet new building use guidelines without placing undue burden on volunteers
- UUT has relied upon community support through ticket sales and playbill ads; that support needs to be rebuilt by raising the church profile.
- Playbill- Need volunteer(s) to sell playbill ads, collect money or produce the book.
- Behind the scenes- Need volunteers to set/strike chairs, sell tickets and refreshments.
- Black cyclorama curtain was removed without input from UUT. In order to be restored, it must be professionally cleaned and re-treated with fireproofing material. The only company in the region that does this is in New Jersey. To get an actual estimate, it must be taken out and measured, but it will cost in the thousands.

-submitted by Toby Haber-Giasson

First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist Auburn, Maine

Committee Report to Congregation/Board of Directors

Our Mission Statement: Rooted in the Sacred and strengthened by our diversity, we equip ourselves to minister through the transformative power of Love.

Committee/Task Force name: Worship Associates

Committee members: John T Spruill Jr, Chair, Ned Clayton, Luke Lunt, Dianne Chasse, Ginny Starbird, Baltasar Fra-Molinero and Ed Bell. David Das will join us in September.

Communication to the Board/Members/Friends Since Last Update

Significant activities/achievements:

Throughout the past year, we were able to fill all openings when the pastor wasn't available. We added the Affirmation of Faith back to the Sunday service, added different faiths to the Sunday service, and most recently, made available a generic Order of Service available for use during the service congregation.

Upcoming activities:

- The Flower Service will be on June 9th.

Expenditures:

- Approximately \$6000 on pastoral coverage not included in any budget. \$75 for supplies.

Budget needs:

- \$4800 for pastoral coverage \$50 for supplies: Total \$4850.

Other needs:

- More worship committee members.

Submitted by: John T Spruill Jr

Date: 5/29/24