

Weaving Our Future



Annual Report 2024
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
2024 Annual Report
Table of Contents

Agenda	2
May 21, 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes	3
2023/2024 Policy Board Roster	6
2023/2024 Church Council Roster	6
Minister’s Report	7
Church Policy Board President’s Report	10
Church Council Chair Report	12
Nominating and Leadership Development Report	13
Church Treasurer’s Report	14
Special Gifts and Bequests	21
Secretary’s Report	22
Faith Development Report	23
Music & Choir Directors’ Reports	28
Administration & Programming Report	29
Policy Board Committees	30
Finance and Stewardship Cluster Reports	31
Facilities Cluster Reports	33
Growth and Engagement Cluster Reports	34
Programming Cluster Reports	37
Outreach and Social Action Cluster Reports	40

**2023-2024 Annual Meeting Agenda Sunday, May 19, 2024 held in person and online via
Zoom (originated within the city limits of St. Louis, MO) of the
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, Mo
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, a corporation**

Call to Order and Welcome Steve Wilke, President

Opening Words Rev. Kim Mason

Reading of the Congregational Covenant Kathy Wilke

Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting Sidney Watson, Church Secretary

President's Report and Remarks Steve Wilke

Minister's Report Rev. Kim Mason

Church Treasurer's & Finance Report and Budget Presentation Kathy Wire

Active Hope Project update: Gateway 180; Wellston Loop CDC; Tabernacle, Beyond Housing

Lisa Ross

Presentation of the Melanie & Anthony Fathman and William W. Ross Awards Chris Kocher

Recognition of Officers, Trustees and other Leadership from past Church year

To consider and vote upon the proposed slate for the Policy Board and Church Council which Reduces the Size of the Board Margaret Weck,
Nominating and Leadership Development
Committee

Remarks from New Board President Chuck Eby

Article 2 Discussion and Vote Steve Wilke and Kim Mason

Closing Words Rev. Kim Mason

Adjournment Chuck Eby

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
2022-2023 Annual Meeting Minutes
21 May 2023**

held in person in the Sanctuary and online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at approximately 11:30 am.

Steve welcomed the congregation. Lynn Hunt counted 49 in-person attendees and 4 attending via Zoom. She confirmed that a quorum of at least 50 people was present.

Opening words were offered by **the Rev. Kim Mason**.

Vice President Erin Milligan read the **Congregational Covenant**.

Secretary Alison Lamothe directed members to the **Minutes of the 2021-2022 Annual Meeting** included in the Annual Report. She asked for a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes and that they be approved. Emily Jaycox suggested a correction. Erin Milligan motioned that the corrected minutes be approved. Sidney Watson seconded. MOTION PASSED.

President's Report and Remarks

Steve's report focuses on this church year's theme of Renewal and how it manifested itself in the return of beloved church events such as the Hanging of the Greens and RE Trivia Night; increased membership; and our recent decision to replace our roof and address other water-related issues in our building.

He also explains his decision to carry on as President for another year and announces the theme of Engagement for church year 2023-2024. He writes, "we need to have as many people to learn to do our church activities as possible...[O]ur hope is to have two leaders: one experienced person who has done it and knows the ropes, and someone who is eager to learn so they can perhaps lead the following year...[so] we can avoid burnout and allow everyone to actually enjoy our work rather than dread it."

He ended his remarks by challenging us to find a church activity we are not already involved in, learn about it, and help.

Minister's Report

Rev. Kim started her remarks with a definition of Renewal. At the meeting as in her report, she reminded us that she joined us four years ago, but this was her first whole year of in-person ministry. However, "[w]hile we ended the pandemic restrictions this year and the federal emergency has expired, we are still figuring out how we gather in community after being virtual for so long." On the other hand, the technological adjustments we made during the pandemic have made us more accessible and have helped us recruit new members, some of whom check us out by watching us online and then come visit us in person. On that note, Rev. Kim celebrated that 15 new members have joined us since January and two former members have been reinstated since that time. Another cause for celebration is that the UUA has awarded her Full Fellowship, the final stage in ministerial formation.

Church Council Chair's Report

Cathy Rauch referred meeting participants to her report and expressed appreciation for the seriousness with which members of the Council "and the various committees and groups that conduct the work of the church" fulfilled their roles.

Church Treasurer's & Finance Report and Budget Presentation

Treasurer Jeremy Colton includes three reports in our Annual Report: a reporting of The Statement of Activity for Fiscal Years ending in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022; the Budget vs. Actuals for Fiscal Year 2022/2023; and the Balance Sheet as of January 31, 2023. During the meeting he also distributed a copy of the final Budget for 2023-2024. His reports include his contact information, and he emphasized that he welcomes people's questions.

Finance Cluster Chair Kathy Wire presented a brief slide show highlighting some revenue increases and our expenses for the coming year, which are basically flat except for an approximately 2% wage increase for staff. Kathy also provided her contact information and welcomes people's questions.

To Consider Adding Congregational Values to the Bylaws

The Notice of the Annual Meeting sent to church members included the following explanation:

It is considered a valuable exercise for institutions to periodically examine and re-commit to a statement of the values of the institution. Having a common sense of shared values is vital for long-range planning, setting clear annual goals, and helping all levels of leadership make decisions among which of the multiple worthy possibilities will be pursued at a particular time. Shared values increase the capacity for trust within and between the levels of leadership and provide points of connection between newer and established members of the congregation. It was uncovered during the ministerial transition process that the congregation did not at that time have a clear sense of common values, and this was hampering the process of annual goal setting. At the MidWinter meeting in January 2023 the congregation engaged in an exercise to discern shared values. The intention is to add these agreed upon values to the By-laws to assist the congregation in moving forward with long-range planning, goal setting, and program evaluation.

Proposed addition:

ARTICLE 1

SECTION 4: Church Values

This Church values:

Community

Open Mindedness

Compassion

Knowledge

Adoption of this addition would make the existing Section 4, Section 5; the existing Section 5, Section 6 and the existing Section 6, Section 7

There was some discussion among members regarding whether we would have to prove that we had fulfilled these values; whether it was necessary or desirable to put them in writing; and whether the bylaws were the best place to articulate them.

Steve Wilke motioned that we add the values of Community, Open Mindedness, Compassion and Knowledge to Article 1, Section 4 of our bylaws. Norma Vogelweid seconded. The vote proceeded as follows: 3 ABSTAINED, 1 voted AGAINST, all remaining voted IN FAVOR. MOTION PASSED.

To Consider and Vote upon the Proposed Slate for the Policy Board and Church Council Which Reduces the Size of the Board.

In the Notice of the Annual Meeting sent to church members, we were advised:

The First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Bylaws (Article IV, section 2) indicates that the number of voting members of the Board (Elected Officers + Board Members) should be at least 9 individuals. With the two remaining Board members and the election of this slate there will be 8 voting members for the 2023-24 church year. There is a provision in the Bylaws in that same section that the number of voting members may vary from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 11. Any deviation from 9 requires “an action of the Congregation.” The acceptance of this slate will constitute that action of the Congregation that will for the 2023-24 church year temporarily decrease the number of voting members of the Board from 9 to 8. The target for board membership in future years will be expected to return to 9 voting members.

Margaret Weck of the **Nominations and Leadership Development Committee** presented the following slate to the congregation:

Policy Board

Board President – Steve Wilke (2024)
Vice President – Alison Lamothe (2024)
Secretary – Sidney Watson (2024)
Treasurer – Jeremy Colton (2024) re-election
Member – Chris Kocher (2026)

Church Council

Council Chair – Sherry Bassi (2024)
Cluster Coordinator, Facilities – Tom Finan (2026)
Cluster Coordinator, Programming – Grace Munie (2026)

(note: year indicates end of term)

Susan Lammert made a motion that we vote upon the Proposed Slate for the Policy Board and Church Council which reduces the size of the board. All present voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

Presentation of the Melanie & Anthony Fathman and William W. Ross Awards

Vice President Erin Milligan presented the **Melanie and Anthony Fathman Award** to **Clint Cruse**, outgoing **Facilities Cluster Coordinator**, for his tireless efforts to address our aging building’s maintenance needs, in particular the repairs to the roof and other water-related matters. He accepted the award on behalf of the entire Facilities Cluster and asked that those members who were present stand to be recognized.

Erin awarded the **William W. Ross Award** to **Tom and Judy Crouch** in absentia for a long list of contributions they have made to the church over the years, including trash pick-up along a stretch of adopted roadway; organizing church bike rides as auction items; participation in the Cares and Concerns Committee, and participation in the Worship Committee.

The Rev. Kim Mason offered **Closing Words**.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe, Policy Board Secretary

Roster 2023/2024

Church Officers

Steve Wilke	President
Erin Milligan	Vice President
Alison Lamothe	Secretary
Jeremy Colton	Treasurer (resigned)
Kathy Wilke	Interim Treasurer

Policy Board Members

Susan Lammert	2024
Becca McBride	2025
Chris Kocker	2026

Church Council Roster 2023/2024

Church Council Members

Sherry Bassi	Council Chair (2024)
Grace Munie	Programming Cluster (2026)
Kathy Wire	Finance & Stewardship Cluster (2025)
Kevin Kellog	Growth & Engagement Cluster (2025)
Tom Finan	Facilities Cluster (2026)
Lisa Ross	Outreach & Social Action Cluster (2024)

Minister's Report

Submitted by Rev. Kim Mason

We are six Sundays away from the end of the program year and just one Sunday away from the annual meeting. The next few weeks are full of congregational events, including the Fellowship Dinner, RE Sunday, the Annual Meeting, the Welcoming Congregations Coffee House, George Grimm Howell's Ordination and an STL area UUs picnic. Eat your wheaties cause we're in the end of year sprint!

If you've been at church you know I'm still in my back brace. I am improving - and I continue to work on not over doing it. Each new accomplishment gets me excited for something else and then I push too far. My next appointment is June 1st.

Nurturing Spirituality:

Worship

- April's theme was Interdependence, picking up again on the UUA Article II values.
- The Metro STL UUs joint service on April 11th was a technical adventure! We lost the first 15 minutes to tech challenges but were able to move forward after that. We hope to do it again in future - with more preparation
- Music Sunday on April 21st was the highest attendance of the year outside of Christmas Eve and the choir sang beautifully.
- April 28th was Affirmation Sunday and the Coming of Age youth did a wonderful job!
- May began the theme of Pluralism - once again about those Article II values.
- May 5th was Flower Communion and I used my sermon to define pluralism
- I meet with Danielle, Moe, Earl and Joel once a month to coordinate on worship

RE

- I finished the Article II discussion series on April 24th
- RE Sunday is May 19th

Building Community:

Pastoral Care & Fellowship

- I had calls, emails, texts or visits with 3 congregants in April/May.
- I am working with the family of Kimberley Parks to plan her memorial service for Friday, May 31st. We will host the reception here.
- I meet monthly with Care & Concerns
- The Fellowship Dinner is happening May 11th. We are celebrating many milestones - including a 60 year member!

Administration & Stewardship

- Canvas made it over \$409,000, which is more than last year. Following up with the last few outstanding pledges could get us over \$415,000 and closer to a balanced budget.
- Earl Naylor is leaving First Unitarian to take a position with Holy Communion Episcopal Church in University City. We will celebrate him during coffee hour on May 19th
- I meet weekly with Earl, Lynn and Danielle
- I meet weekly with Steve
- The staff meets twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays

Advancing Justice:

Social Action

- The Welcoming Congregation Committee held a Gender 101 discussion after service on Sunday, April 21st. About 27 people were in attendance and we collected several bags of donations for Metro Trans Umbrella Group

- The Active Hope Project will be presenting four possible groups for us to partner with. Voting will happen at the Annual Meeting
- 7 of us are attending a summit May 17 & 18 on reconciliation and reparations that is being convened by Wash U. Three other area churches are attending as well.

Professional Development & Collegial Connections

- I attended the May Leadership STL session on May 3rd & 4th
- The program concludes on May 23rd
- I continue to volunteer as a Clergy Counselor for an All-Options Pregnancy Counseling Hotline.
- We are hosting George Grimm-Howell's ordination on Saturday, June 8th here at the church followed by a reception.

Monthly Meetings

- Worship Committee
- Bi-State UU Ministers
- Board
- Care and Concern
- Exec Committee
- Toward Justice

Quarterly Meetings

- Finance Committee
- Mission Free Schools
- Committee on Ministry

Much love,
Kim

Sunday Services 2023/2024

September 10th - *Ingathering: We Got Here Together*: Rev. Kim Mason

September 17th - *Answering the Call of Love*: Rev. Kim Mason

September 24th - *Repair Work*: Rev. Kim Mason

October 1st - *Gradarius Firmus Victoria*: Rev. Kim Mason

October 8th - *Where do we come from? Where are we going?*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia

October 15th - *Pray Without Ceasing*: Rev. Kim Mason

October 22nd - *Perspectives on Heritage*: Pamela Geppert and Worship Committee

October 29th - *Life in Plastic (It's Fantastic)*: Rev. Kim Mason

November 5th - *Partner Church Sunday: Blessed Community*: Robert Kokenyesi

November 12th - *Wider Circles*: Rev. Kim Mason

November 19th - *Cornbred Communion: The Words That Come Before All Else*:

Rev. Kim Mason

November 26th - *Question Box*: Rev. Kim Mason

December 3rd - *Music Sunday*: Rev. Kim Mason, Earl Naylor, Music Director;

Joel Knapp, Choir Director

December 10th - *The Mystery of Miracles*: Rev. Kim Mason

December 17th - *Children's Christmas Pageant*: Rev. Kim Mason

December 24th - *Christmas Eve*: Rev. Kim Mason

December 31st - *Let the Mystery Be*: Pamela Geppert, Worship Committee

January 7th - *Fire of Life*: Rev. Kim Mason

January 14th - *Jazz Sunday and Rev. Martin Luther King Sunday*: Pamela Geppert

January 21st - *Make Channels for Streams of Love*: Rev. Kim Mason

January 28th - *Ethic of Love*: Rev. Kim Mason

February 4th - *Breath of Fire*: Rev. Kim Mason

February 11th - *Education for All*: Religious Education Committee

February 18th - *Conflagration*: Rev. Kim Mason

February 25th - *Football is Life*: Rev. Kim Mason

March 3rd - *Weaving Our Future*: Rev. Kim Mason

March 10th - *Caterpillar Goo, or The Transient and Permanent in Unitarian Universalism*:
Rev. Kim Mason

March 17th - *An Irishman, a Jew, and a Pagan Walked Into a Bar*: Tom Finan

March 24th - *Masks and Revelations*: Rev. Kim Mason

March 31st - *Transforming Love*: Rev. Kim Mason

April 7th - *#RachelCarson*: Sue Fazio, Member

April 14th - *Collaborative Service - Metro STL UUs - Welcome, Prayer, Reflection, Some
Music*

April 21st - *Music Sunday*: Rev. Kim Mason, Earl Naylor, Music Director;

Joel Knapp, Choir Director

April 28th - *Affirmation Sunday*: Danielle Kozemczak, Director of Religious Education

May 5th - *Companion Planting, or the Beauty of Pluralism*: Rev. Kim Mason

May 12th - *The Great and General Interests of Peace*: Rev. Kim Mason

May 19th - *Religious Education Sunday*: Danielle Kozemczak, Director of Religious Ed.

May 26th - *Decoration Day*: Rev. Kim Mason

June 2nd - *Rest*: Rev. Kim Mason

June 9th - *Mental Health*: Rev. Kim Mason

June 16th - Rev. Kim Mason

Church President's Report

Submitted by Steve Wilke

Our theme for the last year has been ENGAGEMENT. Having been called to serve a second term as Board President, I was aware that while our Church has historically had dedicated volunteers who do great work, I also knew from personal experience our volunteers were being spread too thin and sometimes burning out.

As Board President I was able to meet many of our new members. I could tell they were capable, and excited to help with various activities. In a few years, they should be able to take on more leadership positions. By focusing on ENGAGEMENT, our hope was most church activities could have a leader and a second person learning the ropes so they could take over the following year and have the process renew again.

In many ways our ENGAGEMENT focus has been successful. In the past two years we have 28 new members, many of which have joined important committees such as worship, the choir, and Nominations. We have a thriving Young Adult Group thanks to a recent new member.

The Board spent most of its early months discussing how to keep old and new members engaged, and how to not tire them out. Whether we were successful is still to be determined.

In October, the Board was asked by a member to support the UAW strike by putting up a sign. Since I have been on the Board, it has avoided taking political stands because of the fear of disagreeing or offending a few members. In making our decision, we went back to our UU Principles and assess if supporting workers was consistent with our UU Principles. The member made an impassioned plea and we were satisfied we were acting within our principles and allowed the sign.

The strike was resolved soon after, but the process opened a larger discussion: how

and when should the Church take stands on social issues? Does the whole church (every member) need to agree on an issue before the Church can take a position?

This issue surfaced again when several members wanted to allow workers who were advocating for an increase in minimum wage to sign ballot petitions. The Board decided we should allow this ballot petition in Fellowship Hall because of the UU's long standing support of both workers and democracy. If someone disagreed with what the Ballot Petition was advocating, they simply did not need to sign it.

Next, many members wanted petitions to include Abortion rights to be signed at the church. We again allowed it because supporting Women's health falls squarely within our UU Principles, and furthering democracy is also within our principles.

Left unsaid is what would have happened if there was a ballot petition not consistent with our UU principles. It is something we need to think about in the future.

Our next big focus was the Active Hope Project. The Board had several discussions about how to support without co-opting the project. In the end, we were heartened by the level of interest and enthusiasm. We are excited about this being up for a vote at the Annual Meeting.

In the last few months, the Board has been preparing for Reverend Mason's upcoming sabbatical. This involves how to cover her duties as a minister (worship, care and concerns, leadership of the church), as well as how to pay for it. Luckily we found additional for the Sabbatical fund and am now in the process of readying everything. I have nothing to announce yet, but trust that we will be running smoothly during Reverend Mason's sabbatical.

I have been on the Board now for five years and Board President for two. When I started on the Board we met in person and had no video cameras or tv's in the sanctuary. Our online presence was limited to a website that was already 10 years old. Reverend Mason often says congregations move at the speed of church, but it astounds me how much has changed.

While I am happy about how many new members we have gained (28!), I am also saddened by the number of resignations and exits. I had not anticipated this level of change, but given the circumstances it was pretty inevitable. We truly have been in constant flux, and I hope the next five years will be less chaotic than the last five.

My biggest goal as Board President was to make Church fun again. The Pandemic put everyone in such a funk, and my greatest joy is to see the church full and lively again.

It has been my absolute pleasure to serve as your Board President. It is even more of a pleasure to step down and give Chuck Eby the reins. I just hope he remembers the secret Presidential Handshake.

Church Council Report

Submitted by Sherry Bassi

The Church Council met monthly during the 2023-2024 church year. The following cluster chairs attended regularly- **Tom Finan** (Facilities Cluster) **Kevin Kellogg** (Growth & Engagement Cluster), **Grace Munie** (Programming Cluster), **Lisa Ross** (Outreach and Social Action Cluster), and **Kathy Wire** (Finance and Stewardship Cluster). Each cluster chair was asked to review the committees in their cluster for possible consolidation if existing committees had low membership or if consolidation might enhance communication and planning. In the Outreach and Social Responsibility Cluster, a recommendation was made to consolidate all the committees providing direct community service, implementation of this is still in process. In the Programming Cluster a recommendation was made to dissolve the church bookstore, the Music Committee (currently has no members) and to refer the responsibility of the archives committee to the Policy Board. The Church Council appreciated the involvement of **Margaret Weck** in evaluating the viability of the bookstore. In the coming church year, the Church Council will seek church members input for uses of the bookstore space. Supporting problem solving in the Facilities Cluster was another major theme in meetings this year. Although some major roofing repairs have been completed, the church continues to have frequent need of repairs due to the age of the building. In the foreseeable future major remodeling may be needed to maintain optimal functionality of the church building. The Church Council recommends further long-term planning on optimal uses of the church building as a framework for prioritizing remodeling projects. In the coming church year, the Church Council will work to define a process for long term

building use planning. Growth and Engagement and Finance Clusters chairs reported that committee roles within the cluster were functioning well, and no major changes were recommended.

Nominations & Leadership Report

Submitted by Margaret Weck

The Nominations and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC) is a committee appointed by the Policy Board and charged with nominating candidates to fill elected leadership positions and continuously improving and executing the process for developing leadership. The roles of: Policy Board Officers, Policy Board Members, Church Council Chair and Cluster Coordinators are all elected positions. NLDC members are appointed for three year terms and their nomination takes into consideration the member's depth of experience with the church and knowledge of the congregation. When possible the terms of committee membership are staggered to facilitate transition and provide for continuity of knowledge and experience. The NLDC Policies/Operating Procedures are available on the church website. The FY23-24 Nominating and Leadership Committee (NLDC) consisted of Roz Cook, T.J. Begush, and Margaret Weck. Sidney Watson served as Policy Board liaison and Lynn Hunt served as staff liaison. The committee accomplished the following during the church year:

- Margaret gave a presentation at the Mid-Winter Meeting (Feb. 25, 2024) to help the larger church community become better acquainted with (and more deeply understand) our governance structure which contains both elected and volunteer/committee opportunities. We solicited additional members of the committee at this meeting, since the committee had dwindled through attrition to Margaret and Sidney.
- The Committee generated lists of members to be possible candidates for each position, and designated committee member(s) to contact possible candidates and determine their willingness to serve. The process of finding individuals to step up into leadership positions seemed more daunting than usual this year.

While the congregation is seeing a growth in new members, the pool of people with experience in elected leadership seems to be dwindling as members take on important roles on various committees and projects. This points to a need for energy to be put into leadership development, as has been discussed for many years.

- On the advice of the current Policy Board, we will be maintaining a total board size of 7, four Officers and three Members in 2024-25. According to our bylaws the Policy Board may be any number between five and eleven members by action of the Congregation. Accepting this slate will constitute the official action of the Congregation necessary to have a board with fewer than 9 sitting members.

The slate of nominees recommended for election in FY 2024-2025 are:

Policy Board

- **Board President** – Chuck Eby (2025)
- **Vice President** – Larry Dusenbery (2025)
- **Secretary** – Sidney Watson (2025) re-election
- **Treasurer** – Kathy Wilke (2025)
- **Member** – Betty Neill (2026)

Church Council

- **Council Chair** – Sherry Bassi (2025) re-election
- **Cluster Coordinator, Growth and Engagement** – Erin Milligan (2027)
- **Cluster Coordinator, Outreach and Social Action** - Lisa Ross (2025) re-election for a single additional year
- *Note: Year following a candidate's name indicates the year their term will be completed.*

Respectfully submitted in my last year of a three-year term, Margaret Weck

Treasurer's Report

Submitted by Kathy Wilke

I have included 2 reports that demonstrate the present state of the financials for First Unitarian Church as of March 2024.

The first is a copy of the Budget vs. Actuals for Fiscal Year (FY 2023/2024) It is current as of March 31, 2024. It also shows the Budget amounts for the total Fiscal Year that ends June 30, 2024.

The second is the Balance Sheet as of March 31, 2024. This report lists the current balances for the Reserve funds. The report reflects the increase in the Endowment because of the current market conditions.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me with any questions you may have at kwilke@wilkewilke.net

Thank you very much for the opportunity to serve you all.

First Unitarian Church
Budget vs. Actuals: Budget_FY24_P&L - FY24 P&L
 July 2023 - March 2024

	Total		
	Actual	Budget as of March2024	Total Budget
Income			
40000 Operating Pledges			
40010 Current Year Pledges	314,649.47	336,000.00	401,000.00
40090 Prior Year Pledges	3,499.44	2,000.00	2,000.00
Total 40000 Operating Pledges	\$ 318,148.91	\$ 338,000.00	\$ 403,000.00
40200 Contributions & Collections			
40210 Regular Plate Collection	5,882.57	3,800.00	5,000.00
40230 Other Contributions	5,790.94	7,600.00	10,000.00
40250 Designated Collections	11,123.56	11,250.00	15,000.00
Total 40200 Contributions & Collections	\$ 22,797.07	\$ 22,650.00	\$ 30,000.00
40300 Women's Alliance	0.00	0.00	2,000.00
40400 Building Use Income	7,440.00	7,900.00	10,000.00
40405 Building Use - CRC	1,390.00	400.00	6,000.00
Total 40400 Building Use Income	\$ 8,830.00	\$ 8,300.00	\$ 16,000.00
40500 Investment Income-Endowment	29,881.85	38,419.47	51,226.00
40520 Investment Income-General	2,412.28	2,174.00	2,900.00
40700 Miscellaneous Income	7,336.07	1,750.00	1,750.00
40750 Unrestricted Gifts	7,200.00	0.00	5,000.00
40800 Fundraisers			
40810 Auction		0.00	0.00
40819 Miscellaneous Fundraisers	143.92	1,500.00	2,500.00
Total 40800 Fundraisers	\$ 143.92	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
40910 Interest Income	0.11		
41500 Transfer from General Fund		0.00	30,000.00
41610 Transfer from Cap. Maint. Res.	97,056.35		
41620 Transfer from RE Res.	1,777.00		
41630 Transfer from Soc. Resp. Res.	436.78		
41650 Transfer from Trinity Hot Lunch	242.02		
42000 Transfer from Endowment Fund	25,000.00		
Total Income	\$ 530,632.63	\$ 412,793.47	\$ 544,376.00
Gross Profit	\$ 530,632.63	\$ 412,793.47	\$ 544,376.00
Expenses			
50000 Staffing			
50100 Salaries and Wages			
50120 Gross Wages--Salaries	140,070.12	139,773.78	186,365.00
50125 Gross Wages--Bonus	605.00		
50130 Gross Wages--Hourly wages	26,594.69	32,895.00	43,860.00

60136 Gross Wages-Contract Labor	11,943.40	15,571.53	20,762.00
60190 Housing Allowance	17,271.81	13,363.65	17,818.16
Total 50100 Salaries and Wages	\$ 198,484.92	\$ 201,803.96	\$ 268,805.16
50200 Benefits			
60210 Health Insurance	9,576.33	7,679.97	10,239.90
60220 Dental Insurance	432.00	567.00	766.00
60230 Retirement--401(a) Expense	15,168.17	15,999.48	21,332.58
60260 Life Insurance		510.75	681.00
60270 Payroll Taxes	8,534.29	8,812.53	11,750.00
Total 50200 Benefits	\$ 33,710.79	\$ 33,569.73	\$ 44,759.48
50300 Sabbatical Accrual	2,000.00	1,000.00	2,000.00
50500 Staff Expenses			
50510 Administrator Staff Expense	465.00	749.97	1,000.00
50520 Religious Educator Staff Expense	220.00	2,999.97	4,000.00
50530 Music Director Staff Expense		250.00	250.00
Total 50500 Staff Expenses	\$ 685.00	\$ 3,999.94	\$ 5,250.00
50600 Minister's Expenses	4,805.96	6,063.03	8,084.00
Total 50000 Staffing	\$ 239,686.67	\$ 246,236.66	\$ 328,898.64
51000 Administrative			
51050 Canvass	22.77	1,200.00	1,200.00
51100 Internal Communications	1,266.20	1,250.00	1,855.00
51200 Board Expenses	598.93	600.00	500.00
51400 Office Supplies	1,541.06	2,549.97	3,400.00
51500 Office Equipment & Repairs	2,076.12	1,874.97	2,500.00
51650 Payment Processing Fees	1,545.46	1,350.00	1,800.00
51700 Computer Expense	1,497.49	1,350.00	1,800.00
51800 Legal & Accounting	2,605.00	2,475.00	3,300.00
51900 Postage	835.44	749.97	1,000.00
Total 51000 Administrative	\$ 11,988.47	\$ 13,299.91	\$ 17,355.00
52000 Building			
52100 Building Maintenance	13,770.63	11,250.00	15,000.00
52125 Capital Improvements	100,911.02		
52150 Housekeeping & Supplies	5,757.16	3,600.00	4,800.00
52200 Insurance	17,549.46	18,562.50	24,750.00
52250 Telephone	4,514.46	4,304.97	5,740.00
52300 Utilities	23,273.46	18,749.97	25,000.00
52350 Equipment & Repairs	28,621.58	15,000.03	20,000.00
52400 Contract Labor	22,787.85	23,200.00	31,000.00
52500 Landscaping	5,047.89	5,741.37	7,655.13
52550 Security	8,532.70	8,900.00	11,725.00
52600 Capital Maintenance Reserve		0.00	1,000.00
Total 52000 Building	\$ 230,766.21	\$ 109,308.84	\$ 146,870.13
53000 Worship			
53100 Music			

53110 Guest Musicians	1,550.00	300.00	1,000.00
53120 Music Supplies & Materials	22.50	100.00	100.00
53190 Miscellaneous	1,942.00	1,050.00	1,050.00
Total 53100 Music	\$ 3,514.50	\$ 1,450.00	\$ 2,150.00
53200 Worship Expenses	1,046.60	900.00	1,500.00
Total 53000 Worship	\$ 4,561.10	\$ 2,350.00	\$ 3,650.00
53500 Education			
53510 Children and Youth RE	2,893.54	4,500.00	6,000.00
53520 Adult Religious Education	532.14	500.00	500.00
53530 ERDE	197.82	100.00	100.00
53600 John Learned Library	150.00	400.00	400.00
Total 53500 Education	\$ 3,773.50	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 7,000.00
54000 Membership			
54100 Membership Expense	101.18	1,300.00	1,500.00
54200 Hospitality	454.95	1,100.00	1,250.00
54300 Feasts & Festivals	686.41	100.00	500.00
54303 Welcoming Congregation		200.00	200.00
54600 Website	535.98	400.00	500.00
Total 54000 Membership	\$ 1,778.52	\$ 3,100.00	\$ 3,950.00
55000 Social Action & Outreach			
55100 Social Responsibility Committee	1,157.89	100.00	100.00
55150 SRC--Other	650.00	400.00	450.00
Total 55100 Social Responsibility Committee	\$ 1,807.89	\$ 500.00	\$ 550.00
55300 Designated Collections	6,404.35	11,250.00	15,000.00
55600 Minister's Discretionary Fund	56.70	450.00	450.00
55750 Care & Concern Ministry	35.24	400.00	400.00
Total 55000 Social Action & Outreach	\$ 8,304.18	\$ 12,600.00	\$ 16,400.00
56000 Denominational Support			
56020 UUA	14,774.94	14,775.03	19,700.00
56055 Covenant Groups	497.50	300.00	300.00
Total 56000 Denominational Support	\$ 15,272.44	\$ 15,075.03	\$ 20,000.00
Total Expenses	\$ 616,131.09	\$ 407,470.44	\$ 543,923.77
Net Operating Income	\$ 14,501.44	\$ 5,323.03	\$ 452.23
Net Income	\$ 14,501.44	\$ 5,323.03	\$ 452.23

Monday, Apr 08, 2024 08:39:06 AM GMT-7 - Cash Basis

First Unitarian Church

Balance Sheet As of March 31, 2024

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
10000 Cash-Busey Bank	92,253.93
10010 PayPal	0.00
10200 Petty Cash	0.00
Total Bank Accounts	\$92,253.93
Accounts Receivable	
12000 Accounts Receivable	0.00
Total Accounts Receivable	\$0.00
Other Current Assets	
13000 Investments - Unrestricted	0.00
13100 General Fund	272,640.18
13105 Transfers - Unrestricted	-45,268.90
Total 13000 Investments - Unrestricted	227,371.28
13109 Investments - Restricted	
13110 Endowment Fund	1,251,582.43
13200 Lewis-Wallis Intern Fund	515,006.68
13300 Clark Fund	202,045.19
13400 FCCF	187,560.85
13500 Dodson Fund - Prin	50,736.37
13520 Dodson Fund - Res	34,777.84
13900 Transfers - Restricted	45,268.90
Total 13109 Investments - Restricted	2,286,978.26
14000 Treasury Notes	0.00
16000 Employee Loan	0.00
16200 Prepaid Expenses	0.00
16800 Employee Cash Advance	5,850.00
Payroll Corrections	0.00
Undeposited Funds	0.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$2,520,199.54
Total Current Assets	\$2,612,453.47
Fixed Assets	
17200 Real Estate & Improvements	1,051,647.44
17300 New Chapel & Improvements	2,376,965.91
Total Fixed Assets	\$3,428,613.35
TOTAL ASSETS	\$6,041,066.82
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
20100 Payroll Liabilities	0.00
20200 Federal Liabilities Payable	-290.98

	TOTAL
20300 State Withholding Payable	280.00
20400 City Withholding Payable	457.37
Total 20100 Payroll Liabilities	446.39
20500 Benefits Liabilities	
20510 Insurance Payable	
20511 Health Insurance--Employer paid	0.00
20512 Health Insurance--Employee paid	0.00
20513 Life Insurance	0.00
20514 Disability Ins--Employee paid	0.00
20515 Dental Ins--Employee paid	0.00
Total 20510 Insurance Payable	0.00
20530 Retirement--401(a) Payable	769.25
20540 Retirement--401(a) WH Payable	0.00
20550 Retirement--SEP IRA Payable	0.00
20580 Garnishment Payable	0.00
Total 20500 Benefits Liabilities	769.25
21000 Other Liabilities	
21010 Due to outside charities	0.00
21090 Miscellaneous Liabilities	0.00
21092 A/C Repair Payable	0.00
Total 21000 Other Liabilities	0.00
Direct Deposit Payable	2,329.93
Payroll Clearing	0.00
Payroll Tax Payable	0.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$3,545.57
Total Current Liabilities	\$3,545.57
Long-Term Liabilities	
23000 Reserves	
23100 Holt	0.00
23200 Sabbatical	12,772.00
23300 Capital Maintenance	113,045.79
23310 Windows	30.00
23400 Partner Church	8,383.34
23500 Prepaid Pledges	34,604.06
23575 Prepaid Contributions	0.00
23600 Intern Fund	238.46
23610 Ministerial Search	616.22
23630 Membership Coordinator Fund	0.00
25011 Memorial Fund	14,137.31
25012 Special Gifts	1,712.92
25020 Social Responsibility	4,660.83
25050 Staff Recognition Fund	1,270.05
27000 Other Custodial Accounts	
27005 Auction Items	105.16
27010 Office Equipment Reserve	0.00
27020 Bookstore	2,104.86
27024 Boston Trip Reserve	1,328.89
27030 Music Reserve	7,920.37
27040 Landscape Reserve	0.00
27050 Renovation Reserve	0.00

	TOTAL
27060 RE Reserve	7,634.39
27065 Sandwich Making	4,590.68
27067 Trinity Hot Lunch	1,506.09
27070 Women's Alliance Op Shop	25.00
27080 Caring Ministry Reserve	2,218.02
27090 Keyboard Reserve	0.00
27100 Healthy Congregation Reserve	2,526.48
27110 PR / Marketing	1,246.49
27120 Library	100.00
27130 Men's Wellness Ministry	434.00
Total 27000 Other Custodial Accounts	31,740.42
Total 23000 Reserves	223,211.40
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$223,211.40
Total Liabilities	\$226,756.97
Equity	
30000 Opening Bal Equity	0.00
33000 Building Fund	
33100 Building	1,051,647.44
33500 Building Improvements	2,376,965.91
Total 33000 Building Fund	3,428,613.35
35000 Fund Balances--Restricted	
35110 Endowment Fund	1,251,582.43
35200 Lewis-Walls Intern Fund	515,006.68
35300 Clark Fund	202,045.19
35400 First Church Community Fund	187,560.85
35500 Dodson Fund - Prin	50,736.37
35520 Dodson Fund - Res	34,777.84
Total 35000 Fund Balances--Restricted	2,241,709.36
39000 General Fund--Unrestricted	129,485.70
Net Income	14,501.44
Total Equity	\$5,814,309.85
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$6,041,066.82

Special Gifts and Bequests

Throughout the year the church receives contributions in memory of deceased members and friends or in honor of people and significant events. Unless otherwise noted, these funds are accumulated in the Memorial Fund. From time to time, by authorization from the Church Council & Board, special projects or acquisitions may be funded from this Fund. Bequests, when they are received, are added to the Endowment Fund of the church according to a policy adopted by the Board, unless they are specifically designated. Gifts received in this year include:

Capital Maintenance Reserve Fund

Anonymous

Caring Fund

Anonymous

Endowment

Bequest - Mary Broida Estate

First Church Community Fund

In Honor Renni Shuter and her daughter

Lynn Shuter

In Memory of Renni Shuter

In Memory of Charles Manley

Anonymous

Memorial Fund

In Memory of Mary Broida

In Memory of Bill & Jane Ross

In Memory of Julie Oyen-Keller

In Memory of Rob Harding

In Honor of Dori Miller

Partner Church Fund

Anonymous

Staff Recognition Fund

Anonymous

Secretary's Report

Submitted by Sydney Watson

Sustaining Members	209	Dropped From Active Membership	6
(Includes 1 Out-of-Town Members)		Josephine Butler	
Associate Members	17	Rebecca Langrall	
		Kelley Jones	
New Members	13	Jim Marks	
Mindy Allen		Jeff Bewley	
Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant		Victoria Bonvento	
Aime Ford			
Cheryl Hansen			
Hunter Hart			
Caitlin Hill		Deaths	2
Johari Hunt		Dori Miller*	
Robert Kokenyesi		Kimberley Parks	
Erica Perlow		<i>*Memorial Garden Internment</i>	
Annette Peterson			
Chris Peterson		Weddings	0
Nessi Rose			
Aerin Wilke		Child Dedications	0
Reinstated	0		
Resignations	4		
Roy Cole			
Jeremy Colton			
Todd O'Boyle			
Shannon O'Boyle			

Faith Development Report

Submitted by Danielle Kozemczak,

Director of Religious Education & Communications

Change is hard, and this past year exemplified this. The children/youth RE program had regrowth in certain areas, while perpetual issues continued.

The perpetual struggle between meeting current children, teens, and families needs while continuing program elements beloved by older members continues. Several traditions simply don't make sense anymore, but the pressure to perform them for the older generation is strong. Cornbread communion and the baking dinner is a perfect example of this issue. Traditionally, families of kindergarteners gathered to share a meal and bake cornbread on the Saturday evening before Cornbread Communion. This event has struggled for some time, and over the years morphed into all elementary families invited to all RE families invited to all members invited. In 2022 I scheduled an OWL workshop before the dinner and had a few teen families stay and bake. However, I realized this was not a helpful solution. For these traditions to continue families have to want to do them and get something out of them. In 2023 we only had two families show up and my family was one of them. The day of the service I (and the volunteers I can recruit) are tasked with setting up all the cornbread and cider while also coordinating the procession of the cornbread and cider into the sanctuary. We also have to cajole teens into serving the entire congregation. Plus I am tasked with the Story for All Ages and managing the younger children and their part in the service. It is a big lift for a part time DRE.

However, certain traditions continue to succeed and engage families including the Easter Egg Hunt and Halloween activities plus trick or treat with UNICEF. These events were well attended and both kids and parents voiced appreciation. Newer events such as the Trunk or Treat (which was not RE sponsored, but attracted and engaged families) and the Art Supply Drive for SECC were successful at gathering different generations.

Attendance was similar to last year. We saw several newer families join us and there were families that have participated less. In the 8-10th COA group we had a new youth join who did well in the program. There was positive community building in the COA program as well as the 1st-3rd group. I saw those groups bonding more this year than last. 4-7th struggled to bond and attendance declined sharply by the end of the year.

Engaging kids, tweens and teens is hard. These kids have had their own way of growing up - with technology everywhere they aren't engaging in the same way. Things that worked this year - Switching 1-3 to Spirit of Adventure curriculum. That group does better with more physical activities. Taking six teens to the Youth Con in Columbia, MO was pretty successful. Using the Amazing Grace curriculum for 4-7th was not a great fit.

Running Coming of Age was a heavy lift for a part time DRE. It is a program that requires more volunteers, more planning, more time, and more money than we have. It is expensive to go to Boston and fewer families means fewer volunteers. Fundraising is hard when you don't have volunteers. When the volunteers cannot step up the DRE ends up doing more work on fundraising than is sustainable. There are positives to the program, and I think most of the youth got something out of the program. It is a good way to engage different generations. However, we need to change our expectations of this program if we run it in the future.

Anna Drendel is a great employee and often takes initiative to do extra stuff. I feel very lucky to have her in the nursery. She does so much to make new families feel comfortable in our community.

The RE Committee was very involved in the teacher training at the beginning of the year. They were essential to the success of that event. Amazing volunteers this year- highlights. We had volunteers involved that do not have kids in the program and that was a win- this includes young adults like Rebecca Asbury and older adults like Stan Birge. However, recruiting regular volunteers is a struggle. I find that asking them for less time overall helps, but that means teaching teams are inconsistent.

It has been a struggle to integrate children and teens into worship service. Children and teens do not like service and getting them involved and engaged is difficult. Collaboration between RE and the Worship committee may help. Otherwise, the work being done by one committee is easily undone by the other. Certain traditions like Flower Communion, Cornbread Communion, and Trick or treat for Unicef require children to participate in service. However, these children are often not given time to practice or learn expectations. We rarely know which families will attend on any given Sunday. They are put in difficult (for kids) situations like waiting in the Dodson room for the cue. The church needs to ask why we do these services in a way that is not rewarding for the children. Is it fair to ask children to perform for the benefit of adults? This seems especially unfair when members complain about behavior.

Most families are attracted to busy, thriving programs that they can plug their kid into easily. As a congregation we are struggling to provide that. We have made some progress this year, but I expect this struggle will continue. Reframing the congregation's expectations and focusing on meeting current needs will be important in the future.

Group Programming-

23/24 Attendance

Name	9/17/2023	9/24/2023	10/1/2023	10/8/2023	10/15/2023
RE Volunteers	11	10	8	10	7
RE Participants	20	31	9	17	18

10/22/2023	10/29/2023	11/5/2023	11/12/2023	12/3/2023	12/10/2023
9	6	7	9	8	9
14	24	14	19	15	24

1/7/2024	1/21/2024	1/28/2024	2/4/2024	2/18/2024	2/25/2024
7	8	9	7	11	9
18	18	21	23	15	20

3/3/2024	3/10/2024	3/17/2024	4/7/2024	4/14/2024	4/21
7	7	10	6	12	6
20	19	19	19	18	19

*No RE Programming 11/19, 11/26, 12/17, 12/24, 12/31, 1/14, 2/11, 3/24, 3/31, 4/28

Total Average Attendance- 18

Nursery/PreK/K - Chalice Children

16 regular attendees

Sunday Average - 3-4 kids

Anna Drendel, our paid Nursery Worker, takes care of the 3 and under crowd. I currently have a group of volunteers that rotate teaching Pre-K, including Erica Perlow, Kay Dusenberry, Tara Perry, Sue Fazio, and Jan Herzog. Over the year they have done simplified versions of the Chalice Children curriculum.

1st - 3rd Spirit of Adventure

6 regular attendees

Sunday Average - 3 kids

This group started in the fall using the Moral Tales Curriculum. Moral Tales focuses on learning about ethical behavior through stories. These stories are often too long to engage the children we work with. We had to substitute picture books.

In the spring semester we switched to a different curriculum- Spirit of Adventure. This group is very physically active and they just weren't engaging with Moral Tales and it's rather long stories. The new curriculum includes more physical activities and was a better fit- but we had to edit the lesson plans quite a bit. This group really struggled with attendance last year, but we have had a few newcomers and the group

4/5/6/7 Amazing Grace

8 Regular Attendees

Sunday Average 4 kids

Participants in this group followed the Amazing Grace curriculum, which helps children understand right and wrong.

This group struggled with attendance. In the beginning of the year we had a 8-10 kids. By the end of the year we had 1-3 kids. I noticed participants not engaging in the curriculum. Despite attempts made to make the lesson plans more appealing, the middle schoolers reported they did not enjoy the class. In the future this group may do better as a fun/social group rather than a structured educational class. Using fun curriculums that incorporate more current issues or pop culture may help with engagement.

8/9/10 Coming of Age

8 Regular Attendees

Sunday Average 5-6

This group engaged in the Coming of Age process this year using the Becoming curriculum. This program supports youth as they explore, develop and articulate their personal values and faith identity. The program culminated with a Worship Service planned and executed by the participants. This group had eight regular attendees. They were taught by Kathy Wilke, Dan Wilke, Kevin Kellogg, and Rachel Webb. There were additional volunteers who served as

mentors. I struggled with recruiting and training mentors. The curriculum I chose did not have much content for the mentor program and the older curriculum did not have specific materials for training. Participants completed a variety of the sessions plus 4-5 Mentor Days. The mentors focused on credo writing while the sessions discussed topics relevant to beliefs, identity, values, etc.

In the end 7 out of 8 of the participants completed a credo project and presented during the Affirmation Service. The 8th participant has been given an extension and his deadline is 5/19. This group is planning to complete the Boston Trip in early June.

11/12 YG

2 Regular Attendees

1.5 Sunday Average

This group consisted of two 11th graders. They met with Sam Hunt off and on in Fellowship Hall. They used the Soul Matters packet to explore topics that go with the month's theme.

On 4/7/24 six youth attended a Youth Con in Columbia MO from our congregation. Youth have reported enjoying the con. The one thing they did not enjoy was the lack of an organized quiet space the second night. Also, sleeping on floors is not enjoyable.

Volunteers

Teacher recruitment for fall programming started during summer services. Danielle took a training course on teacher development that was helpful when planning the Teacher Training Retreat (9/16/2024). The RE Committee was very involved in planning and executing the training.

There was a general consensus that the responsibility of making lesson plans should shift to volunteers as much as possible. This was difficult to implement consistently throughout the year, and really depended on the volunteer teacher. I still did a lot of lesson planning, or checking in, or setting up meetings for volunteers to meet.

Worship

SFAA - I am responsible for the Story For All Ages at least twice a month. When others are reading the story, I often assist with slide making.

It has been a challenge to integrate children into services in a meaningful way. Children often do not enjoy services and really tap out 20-30 minutes into the service. The sanctuary does not have a specific place for children to sit or a place to store items that may help children regulate. I did create a space outside the sanctuary for "busy work" options. Creating a space at the front of the sanctuary with a rug, pillows, fidgets, etc. may help with behavior issues during story time.

Multi Gen Worship Services -

- Sunday 9/10 Water Communion
- 11/19 Cornbread Communion
 - This is a complicated service in terms of logistics and I have struggled with coordinating it the past two years.
 - Cornbread Baking Dinner poorly attended
- Sunday 12/17 Pageant Sunday
 - It was difficult to fill all the roles, because we have fewer participants. This year we cut the townspeople scene and the dancing angels. It may not be sustainable to run the pageant in the future
- Sunday 12/24 Christmas Eve Service

- Sunday 1/14 MLK Sunday
- Sunday 2/11 RE Service Project Kick-Off Worship Service
- Sunday 3/31 Easter Sunday
- Sunday 4/28 Affirmation Sunday
- Sunday 5/19 RE Sunday

Events -

Sunday 9/24 Pancake Breakfast

Chris Cakes raised their prices this year. We did have a great turnout for the breakfast, but we had more people than we estimated in our quote from Chris' Cakes (originally 75-80 for Approx. \$600). After we looked at our sales we confirmed that we sold well over 100 tickets. Chris' Cakes then raised our fee to a total of \$800. Overall we clear \$190 from the breakfast.

Baked Goods and Fair Trade Sale

We had several sales this year. The biggest issue I had is it is not easy for just anyone to take card payments. I did not have the capacity to keep these sales going and there was little initiative from parents to pitch in with organizing, etc.

UUA Bookfair

We barely made any money off the UUA bookfair and it was a considerable amount of work.

Trivia Night cancelled

Low response. We only had 4 tables booked as of the Monday before trivia. Planning did not go as smoothly this year. May look at a different fundraiser next year.

Service Projects

Sunday 11/5-Trinity Hot Lunch Service

11/5, 11/12 RE food drive

2/11 - SECC Art Supply Drive and 2/11

We had lots of donations on 2/11 and the worship service went well. The 1st-3rd graders were involved in service and I think the congregation enjoys seeing them in church. RE Committee members Caitlin Hill, Deborah Cavanaugh Grant, and Rebecca Bolen were very active in planning and executing the service.

RE Garden

I did some work with Seed STL this year to improve the garden area. A new bed was added in along the side of the playspace. We topped off the existing beds as well.

Play Area

Facilities installed the storage bin for the chess pieces, so they are more accessible.

Music Director's Report

Submitted by Earl Naylor

Music in our church is alive and well. As I write this we have just finished performing the Verdi *Stabat Mater*. I know of very few church choirs that could learn and perform such a difficult as well as choir did this morning. It is an honor and privilege to work with them.

When talking about the choir we must mention our choir director, Joel Knapp. Of all the musicians I know in the area, I can think of no one better suited to this congregation than Joel. He brings to us an extensive choral repertoire, fine musicianship, and a personality and temperament perfectly matched to the choir. We are lucky to have him.

Besides the special Sundays, we strive to provide an exciting variety of music that will enrich and inspire the church. Our goal is to wow the congregation and ourselves with the music we present, whether it is a rousing spiritual or a soft ballad. (I know a musician who likes to say, "even soft can be loud.") A thriving choir can attract people to our church. We look forward to the choir being a catalyst for renewed growth and enthusiasm in the whole church.

Choir members come to church six times a month. I don't know of another committee/group that meets more than that on a regular basis. That is over 100 hours a year, and that doesn't count travel time, or time spent on individual study. They deserve a pat on the back. Beyond that, many choir members also share their individual talents by serving as guest musicians and performing in small ensembles.

Expenses include tunings of the organ and piano, and guest musicians when the choir doesn't sing. Occasionally we purchase a new song. Every expense serves to further the worship experience of the congregation.

We continue to provide a wide diversity of quality music to enrich our services. Music is infused in our lives. We wake up to it and go to sleep to it. Oftentimes it is in our cars. I can't think of a single ritual, or rite of passage that doesn't involve music. Music involves the body, soul, and mind. I hope that more people will receive the benefit that comes from actively participating in music (i.e., joining the choir).

As I complete ten years as your organist and music director, I continue to feel blessed to work with such a welcoming and friendly congregation, an outstanding minister, and one of the best pipe organs in the city. Thank you.

Choir Director's Report

Submitted by Joel Knapp

Being the Choir Director of this church is humbling. I am dependent on a group of people who are talented, smart, caring, and busy with many things other than music. But they make a huge commitment when they sing in our choir. We meet every Wednesday. We have fun, and we also work hard to provide the congregation with beautiful and varied music. I couldn't be more proud of the work they do, and the product they consistently produce. When

you see a choir member give them a pat on the back and thank them for what they do.

We added at least one new singer in each section. I love new blood joining our ranks

Our major offering in December was Schubert's Mass in G Major. Accompanied by a string quartet of SIUE students.

Jazz Sunday was fantastic this year. Greg Hoeltzel took charge and organized beautiful and fun music

The rest of the Spring went well and culminated in our April major offering. We had a gifted string quintet, and guest conductor, Dr. Michael Mishra. We

performed Verdi's Stabat Mater. It was a challenge for us in terms of range, tempi changes and a Latin text we were familiar with.

A big hello, welcome, and thank you to Earl Naylor. He is talented, friendly, and easy-going. I look forward to making more music with him.

Administration and Programming

Submitted by Lynn Yarrington Hunt

I continue to work part-time as I transition to full retirement in a few years. There have been occasions when more hours were needed, but for the most part, it seems to be working well. I appreciate having the flexibility this schedule allows.

In a given week, most of my time is spent on bookkeeping tasks, membership updates, supporting programs like the annual pledge campaign, congregational meetings, Fellowship Dinner and seeing to usual and ongoing maintenance of the church building.

We are still having water issues with the building, but they are definitely not as severe as they had been. Determining the best approach for addressing the remaining issues has proven to be a complicated process.

I continue to appreciate the many efforts and support that so many give to our

congregation - both volunteers and paid staff. I am also heartened by the stability that Rev. Mason has brought to this church - especially after the difficult years of the pandemic.

As for next year I look forward to seeing our building projects completed, planning (inevitably) for more updates, working to improve our office functions, and supporting the many wonderful traditions and new areas of exploration that this congregation will surely venture towards.

Policy Board Committees

Committee on Ministry

The COM has met on a quarterly basis this past year. The group has assisted the Rev. Kim with various administrative topics and supports her continued growth and personal development. We will continue to meet quarterly and as needed. Members of the committee are: Susan Lammert, Joel Minor, Frances Hoffman, Sue Ashwell and Mike Lunter.

Submitted by Mike Lunter

Personnel Committee

The committee met a limited number of times this year as it has typically met to address specific issues, of which the major items were:

- **I-9 form compliance** – It was learned that employees of churches are not exempt from federal I-9 filing as originally thought. All employees were asked to complete the forms which will be filed in-house. The church is now in compliance with this requirement.
- **Annual Staff Gifts** – IRS has established rules limiting monetary gifts to employees. Monetary gifts must be counted as compensation. Guidance stated it is better to recognize staff by way of additional training/development opportunities or other non-monetary recognition. From now on, if any such gifts are given, they will be in compliance with IRS requirements.
- **Minister's Sabbatical** – The example of another church's sabbatical structure and process was provided to Rev. Kim as an example to aid her and the Policy Board in First UU church's sabbatical planning.

- **Personnel Policies** – It has been some time since the policies were officially updated. Some individual policies were recently changed and need to be integrated into the full policy document. Sections of the policies were divided and assigned to each member. However, due to illness and other issues, this work remains incomplete as of this writing. It will be a high priority for completion in the coming church year.

Members: Betsy Grimm-Howell, Larry Dusenbery, Jama Dodson, Becca McBride (Board Liaison)

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Submitted by Jama Dodson, chair

Finance & Stewardship Cluster Reports

Finance Committee

The 23-24 year was somewhat subdued, with no major needs beyond the budget. The committee contributed to the assessment of existing sources of funding for Rev. Kim's sabbatical and a possible intern placement. With input from investment advisor, Jeff Cary, the committee maintained a favorable allocation of the church's invested funds. Members of the Finance Committee are: Kathy Wire, Chair, Kathy Wilke, Treasurer, Sue Ashwell, Jama Dodson, Stan Birge and Mitch Herzog.

Submitted by Kathy Wire

Chalice Lighters

Inactive during this year.

Canvass Committee

Our 2024 Canvass Theme was "Weaving Our Future."

As of this writing, 147 households pledged \$410,175.00 (as of 5/2/2024) to support First Unitarian in the fiscal year starting July 1, 2024. We received an amazing 17 new pledges. 65 pledges were new or increased pledges; 21 were decreased pledges; and 36 were the same amount as last year. **Thank you to everyone who pledged, in whatever amount, to make that happen.**

Many people have asked if we met our goals. Since we are Unitarian Universalists, we have at least as many answers as Canvass Co-Chairs. The Canvass Committee set three goals.

Goal 1 - \$430,000. We selected that stretch goal because it would mean that 80% of our congregation budget would be funded by pledges - an ideal percentage. This would have exceeded any pledge amount raised during the last 10 years. We did not reach this goal.

Goal 2: \$400,000. *We have surpassed this goal!* We feel we can reach \$415,00 - If you are reading this and have not yet pledged, or feel moved to increase your pledge - just think - You could be the one to make that happen!

Goal 3: To raise what several years. **We are thrilled to say that in 2023, we significantly exceeded what was raised during our eight previous canvass seasons.**

Participation level was at least as important to us as dollars raised. Participation in the canvass was 85%, a significant increase over the 75% in the previous 10 years. And the best news of all, we received 17 brand new pledges this year! When more people take ownership to support the church financially, it's a healthier dynamic for the life of our community, and the church is less vulnerable to the loss of any one pledge.

We asked Karin Albin to create centerpieces that represented our Canvass theme of "Weaving Our Future." for our Canvass Kickoff dinner.

During the 5-week Canvass, affirmations were given by Esley Hamilton, Scott Sinclair, Kimberly Perry, and Chris and Annette Peterson. At the coffee hour on April 7 following the service, over 70 people enjoyed vanilla and chocolate cake with custard. Throughout the Canvass season, we held drawings for new pledges and increased pledges; a pottery chalice, a glass chalice, and two hand knitted hats courtesy of the Maker's Ministry. Also, all who pledged

received keychains with the church logo and mission.

In our Canvass updates, we noted that it's our **ongoing** financial support of the church – the staff, the programs, the gathering space, the tech to reach those who can't be here in person – that makes First Unitarian a vibrant, evolving community; a source of strength, support and growth through the stages of life.

Looking ahead to future Canvasses, Sarah Francois recruited Erin Milligan, who has never chaired Canvass before, to work as co-chair with Sarah, who co-chaired the Canvass with Emily Jaycox in 2023. Erin agreed to co-chair again next year with a new co-chair. We would like to acknowledge Rev. Kim's thoughtful approach to developing lay leadership, her development of the theme of transformation throughout the March services, and her willingness to speak with new members about financially supporting First Unitarian, as well as Lynn Hunt's deep knowledge of every aspect of the church, and the entire staff's support of Canvass activities.

Submitted by Sarah Francois and Erin Milligan

Overview:

The Facilities Cluster has been in a period of transition this year, focused on determining the purpose and direction of the First Unitarian campus going forward and setting in place the planning, policies, and procedures that will be needed to facilitate those objectives.

We have reviewed the minutes of meetings of our cluster going back two decades, noting a lot of hard work by a lot of good people. What is disconcerting is that the same issues come up again and again, seemingly without resolution. We feel that this is indicative of the need for an overall facilities plan and definition. We need to know what success looks like.

A piecemeal approach to maintenance and improvement of the campus without clearly defining the “Why?” – how the campus is to be used going forward, what its role will be in the community, etc. – will deplete the resources of the congregation while leaving us standing like the Dutch boy with his finger in the dike.

As we assessed the roofs, the drains and other water issues, the HVAC and plumbing, we undertook some small projects but also took time to assess our ways of operation, the direction we will need from the Policy Board and congregation.

Small projects that have been or are being addressed include such items as replacing the chancel lighting in the sanctuary, repainting the railings in the memorial garden, video-scoping, and cleaning some of the drains, and completely revamping the entry monument sign, and the front entry walk.

After a period of introspection that included help from Rev. Kim, we developed new capital expenditure request policies and procedures, and tightened and refined the processes for the way we conduct meetings.

Overwhelmed with the volume of varying proposals for roofs, walls, and foundations, we engaged a roofing consultant. That consultant suggested an approach of moderation, performing in essence a triage of the most critical water issues, while at the same time showing restraint as we look to the Church for direction on how the campus is to be utilized.

We applied for a grant under the National Fund for Sacred Places and have identified potential other sources for grant funding. This is one area in which the age – and the historical significance – of our buildings works in our favor.

We have addressed several maintenance emergencies in the past year, from blown heat pump compressors on Hope Chapel’s HVAC system to water incursions from clogged storm drains. In the process we have added to our knowledge of the First Unitarian campus buildings.

We have a dedicated committee who double as volunteer workers in Stan Birge, Mike Bray, Clint Cruse, John Cuntz, Jane Hoekelman, Lynn Hunt(staff), Karen Siegrist, and Luke Steffen. They have applied their time and talents to the physical work of painting, cleaning, changing light bulbs, assembling storage bins, and maintaining the gardens. They have also shared their insights during the tedious and sometimes contentious discussions over bids, contractors, and priorities. As chair, I’m extraordinarily grateful for their efforts.

Going forward, we ask guidance from the Policy Board and participation of the congregation in setting a direction and priorities for this historic campus.

Thank you for your support.

Submitted by Tom Finan, Chair

Landscaping Committee

Landscaping was overseen by Karen Siegrist and Lisa Cary. Regular Gardening Days were held in the Fall and Spring.

Growth and Engagement Cluster Report

Care and Concern

Our mission is to provide help to those of our congregation who are disabled, ill, bereaved, or experiencing a life crisis and in need of hands-on and emotional support from fellow members. We also recognize and celebrate life's joys such as births, anniversaries, graduations, and other personal achievements. Twenty-five Care and Concern Team volunteers work in collaboration with the minister. We consider our mission to be part of the church's covenant to be a caring community and to lend support to one another.

We assisted with four memorial services and made visits to those homebound and in care facilities. We continued our practices of sending cards, providing meals, delivering groceries, providing transportation, and making phone calls. The Young Adult Group baked bread for volunteers to take to homebound members of the congregation during the winter holidays. With flower communion being held later in June to celebrate the 100th anniversary of this special service, we choose to send cards instead of flowering plants to folks who have not been able to attend services or who have been bereaved.

The Team coordinators are deeply appreciative of the efforts of our resolute Care and Concern volunteer team and Rev. Kim.

Submitted by Team Coordinators: Judith Crouch, Karen Siegrist, and Larry Dusenbery

Film Group

It was a challenge keeping a film discussion group functioning during the COVID pandemic, but a group of about twenty members have continued to meet.....usually virtually. The usual setup is to view a film that is available on a streaming platform and then meet via ZOOM to discuss it.

Occasionally the film is also being shown in a local theater. The group has been able to meet monthly and enjoyed some in person get togethers during the summer months. If the pandemic continues to diminish, it is hoped that the group can once again meet monthly in person, either outdoors or indoors in groups of six to eight with a ZOOM link provided for anyone who is unable to attend in person. Getting together for live theater events like the MUNY is also on the group's "wish list."

The Film Discussion Group is open to everyone interested in viewing and discussing film and theater.

Submitted by Judi Crouch, coordinator

Makers Ministry

The Maker's Ministry provides service to the church by providing church members or friends of the church with hand-made comfort items such as small blankets, quilts, or shawls. The Makers Ministry also offers casual fellowship with group discussions focused on themes of sharing projects, creative ideas, joys, and concerns. We are currently meeting monthly for in-person meetings on the 4th Sunday of the month at 11:30AM.

The average attendance at meetings is around 6-8 church members, with 12 on the

email reminder. We have had several new members join in the last year. Newcomers wanting to learn skills such as knitting or crochet are always welcome. Attendance is very flexible, and members are encouraged to attend “whenever” and are always welcomed even if we have not seen them for a while. A holiday brunch at a member’s home was well attended and will likely become an annual tradition.

In the last year Makers Ministry provided 8 handmade shawls or small blankets to church members, several items for the Canvas Committee, and hats for the Little Free Pantry. Handmade cards are also sent regularly to church members. All the projects are self-funded by Maker’s Ministry members.

Our mission is continually involving to serve the church and wider community by sharing creativity and love through the gift of hand-made comfort items. New project ideas and new members are always welcome.

Submitted by Sherry Bassi, coordinator

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee has been composed of six or seven people during the 2023-2024 church year: Emily Colton, Peggy Feinberg, Tom Finan, Catherine Hunter, Kevin Kellogg, Erin Milligan, and Gwenne Hickman. Working together, we have introduced new people to First Unitarian Church through Newcomer Chats and New Member Orientation classes, both in the Fall and in the Spring, with the result that from last May through this year so far, we have welcomed sixteen new members into our church:

--Becky Asbury
--Amelia Ehmling
--Hunter Hart
--Rachel Webb
--Robert Kokenyesi
--Nesi Rose
--Chris and Annette Peterson
--Erica Perlow
--Amie Ford

--Johari Hunt
--Caitlin Hill
--Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant
--Cheryl Hansen
--Aerin Wilke
--Mindy Allen

Bios of most of our new members are posted in Fellowship Hall and have been published in the Friday enews.

The Membership Committee will have two final duties at the end of the church year: organizing and planning the Fellowship Dinner on May 11, and providing a luncheon in recognition of the new members on New Member Sunday, June 2.

We welcome anyone to join our committee--it's a great way to meet the new people in our congregation!

Submitted by Gwenne Hickman, Chair

Women’s Alliance

The Women’s Alliance of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis promotes support for our members and the church community through service, friendship and learning. Our funding comes from various sources including dues of \$30 a year, investment funds, donations and fundraising events.

Another source of income is the Opportunity Shop. The Alliance operates the OP Shop in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings and during some gatherings. Co-chairs are Judi Crouch and Pamela Gempel. This resale shop offers clothing, jewelry, toys, housewares and other items at very reasonable prices. The funds raised by the shop are used for scholarships and donations to charitable organizations.

During 2023-2024 the Alliance has continued to sponsor a Zoom Room every Tuesday where members and friends can

meet and spend time getting to know each other. The second and fourth Tuesdays of the month are Hybrid meetings (in person and Zoom). There is one business meeting per month.

On the second and fourth Tuesdays our standard meeting has a program following the brown bag lunch. This year we had a number of speakers covering a variety of topics and a number of field trips and tours.

Each year the Women's Alliance offers a scholarship to a woman 21 or older who is continuing or finishing her education, is a member of a Unitarian Universalist church or fellowship in our area, and is a registered student. The Women's Alliance scholarship for 2023/24 was awarded to a member of the UU congregation in Columbia, MO., Tracy Milarsky. Ms. Milarsky is completing a doctorate at the U. of Missouri. She plans to present her research results to Alliance members in May. This year's selectee received a \$3,000 award.

This past year the Alliance continued maintaining the Little Free Pantry on the first week of each month. Members have donated items, cash and time to maintain this worthwhile project. We have contributed \$2,000 to the annual Canvass, \$400 to the Partner Church Scholarship Fund and \$200 to the First Church Community Fund.

The 2023-2024 Executive Committee: President, Carole Watson; Vice-President, Pamela Geppert; Secretary, Kimberly Perry; Treasurer, Judi Crouch; Finance Chair, Sheryll Coulter; Program Co-Chairs, Sue Ashwell and Peggy Feinberg; Scholarship Chair, Lori Calcaterra; and Churchmanship Co-Chairs, Judy Till and Pamela Gempel.

This year we were saddened by the loss of a long time member, Dori Miller, and a new member Kim Parks. Women's Alliance

members can be found actively participating in every facet of First Unitarian Church of St. Louis. Our meetings and programs are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Submitted by Pamela Geppert, Vice President

Young Adult Group

The Young Adult Group (YAG) stayed strong during 2023 & continued having regular meetings every 3rd Sunday. Additionally, a covenant group was created for the YAG where they can connect with the provided materials from the church. In November 2023, we gathered for a Friendsgiving celebration & in December 2023, we baked bread for the Care and Concern committee to deliver to staff & homebound members. The YAG continued to connect on Discord throughout the year. The YAG works to attend monthly events & have participated in church events. Over the next year, we will continue to meet & connect outside of church. We continue to meet & invite new friends & church attendees when they come to service or reach out. For the remainder of the year, the YAG plans on supporting the church in volunteer opportunities, as well as host another YAG holiday dinner & bread baking event.

Events Participated

Bread Baking

Friendsgiving

Shakespeare in the Park

Events Upcoming

Tower Grove Farmers Market

Zoo Trip

Shakespeare in the Park

Submitted by Sam Rezanoff, facilitator

Programming Cluster Reports

Adult Religious Education

There were a number of Adult RE classes in the programming year. Offerings included: Love at the Center (concerning the UUA Article II proposed changes) with Rev. Mason, Hindsight & Humor with Rev. Mason, Gimme Shelter with members of Toward Justice, New Member Classes with members of the Membership Committee, Myers-Briggs Personality Types with Hunter Hart and Kimberly Perry, *Toxic Charity* book discussion with Lisa Ross and Rev. Mason, and discussion about the film *Origins* with Rev. Mason.

Submitted by Lynn Hunt

Archives

The mission of Archives is to preserve the records and history of the church including The Church of the Messiah and The Church of the Unity. The archives continued to be maintained by Melanie Fathman.

Clark Lecture

There was no lecture or committee this year.

Covenant Groups

Covenant Groups are small groups (up to 10 participants) who meet monthly to share and engage in deep listening on various issues of values, ethics and beliefs. This year the groups used materials from Soul Matters.

Covenant Groups adapted to the pandemic restrictions by meeting online via Zoom.

Most are meeting in person now and some multi-platform.

The facilitators were:

Jan Herzog, Karen Siegrist & Erin Milligan, Tom Crouch & Peggy Feinberg, and Sam Rezansoff

Covenant Groups continue to be one of the strongest ways for members and friends to get to know each other on a deeper level.

Plans are being made to further expand the program in the next programming year.

Submitted by Lynn Hunt, Staff Liaison

ERDE (Earth Reverent Dedicants Extraordinaire)

ERDE (Earth Reverent Dedicants Extraordinaire) had a very active year this year! We are finally back into the swing of things after Covid is long past. We hosted fall equinox, Samhain honoring the ancestors, a meditative small group winter solstice, a potluck Imbolc party, and Beltane with lots of dancing around the MayPole. We are seeing a growth of young adult members and are excited to host a summer solstice for the whole congregation. Our goals in the coming year are to offer a ritual for each Equinox and Solstice and as many of the cross quarters as we are able to. We have enjoyed supplementing our rituals with live music this year and hope we can continue to do so in the coming church year. We are a special interest group designed to supplement and complement traditional church services and all are welcome to help plan and participate in our rituals!

Submitted by Sue Herzberg

Flowers

Flower arrangements for Sunday services are provided through the generosity of members and friends of the church. Flowers contribute to the ambience of worship while giving donors opportunities to commemorate special people and occasions in their lives. There seemed to be less interest in donating flowers this year, and

there were many Sundays where we used artificial arrangements belonging to the church.

Poinsettias purchased by members and friends added to decorations in the sanctuary during the winter holidays. Finally, special thanks go to Cathy Rauch for creating the beautiful Thanksgiving cornucopia this year.
Submitted by Dottie Kinscherf, coordinator

John Learned Bookshop

After assessment under the auspices of the Church Council, it was decided to discontinue the Bookshop in the next programming year.

John Learned Library

The Library Committee is in transition this year. Moving forward, the Library Committee will be composed of Dottie Kinscherf, Sarah Dashner, Joel Minor, and Gene Rubin. Anyone interested in working with the committee should speak with one of these members. Committee work this year has focused on assessing the state of the collection and the physical space of the library. The library collection is available for browsing online at <https://www.firstuustlouis.org/learning/john-learned-library>. Books can be searched by title, author, publisher, subject area, and keyword. Members of the Library Committee in 2023-2024: Sarah Dashner, Dottie Kinscherf, Dori Miller, Joel Minor, and Terry Yokota. The committee mourns the passing of longtime members Dori Miller and Woody Sullivan, who were deeply committed to the mission of the library and showed tremendous insight in developing it as an excellent focused collection over many years.

Submitted by Terry Yokota, Chairperson

Music Committee

Inactive this year.

Religious Education

Committee

Religious Education Committee Members: Rebecca O’Laughlin and Caitlin Hill (co-chairs), Danielle Kozemczak (Director of Religious Education and Communications), Rebecca Bolen, Deborah Cavanaugh Grant, Amie Ford, and Sarah Vaughn.

This committee has met monthly to support religious education at First Unitarian Church of St. Louis. The committee would like to thank Danielle Kozemczak for her leadership and all RE teachers, volunteers and children/youth. Actions and activities that the RE Committee supported this year include:

RE Programming:

- Teacher Retreat: Members supported DRE in the facilitation of a training/orientation of all teachers/RE volunteers (September)
- Members of the Committee welcomed families upon arrival to church and helped them submit paperwork and go to correct classroom locations the first few weeks of the year (September)

Service Initiatives:

- Trinity Church: RE committee members and youth participated in a cooking and serving a hot lunch meal at Trinity (November)
- Little Free Pantry: RE committee members, RE family members and other congregants collected items to stock the pantry (November)
- Art supply drive: RE committee members, RE family members and other congregants donated art supplies for the Southside Early Childcare Center (February)

Church community events:

- Annual Pancake Breakfast (September)
- Halloween Party (October)
- Cornbread Communion (November)
- Pageant (December)

- Valentine’s Day Party (February)
- Unfish Fry (March)
- Affirmation Sunday (April)
- RE Sunday (May)

Fundraising:

- A group of RE youth and chaperones will be traveling to Boston this summer (2024). The RE committee supported several fundraising events initiated by the DRE and/or other church members, including:
- The annual Pancake Breakfast (September)
- The Unfish Fry (March)
- UU Book sales (November)
- Bake sales (several throughout the year)
- Free trade coffee and chocolate sales (several throughout the year)

Submitted by Rebecca O’Laughlin and Caitlin Hill (co-chairs)

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee meets on the last Wednesday of each month. The committee decided to meet earlier in the month to provide more time to prepare for the following month. Our first third Wednesday of the month meeting was on April 17, 2024. We hold our meetings both in-person and on Zoom.

The committee works with our minister in offering worship that supports our mission to be a welcoming congregation, inspiring lives of loving kindness and integrity by nurturing spirituality, building community, and advancing justice. This year our worship services have also focused on the proposed revisions to Article II of the UUA By-Laws.

This year our congregation is using the *Soul Matters Worship Resources*, a theme-based ministry program specifically for Unitarian Universalist congregations. This year’s materials have assisted us in connecting the monthly themes to the upcoming proposed revisions to Article II (Principles and Purposes) of the UUA By-Laws. The new principles and purposes have been a focus

for our congregational worship. This summer we will know if the UUA will be moving from a statement of our familiar Seven Principles to a statement of shared values with Love at the Center.

The committee members, along with Rev. Kim Mason, are Tom Finan, Pamela Geppert (Chair), Dwight Homer, Adam Lunter, Mike Lunter. At the March 2024 meeting we welcomed a new member, Annette Peterson, to the committee. We also have a wonderful church staff who provide their talent and creativity to our worship experiences.

This worship team along with a group of talented Worship Assistants have been instrumental in providing great worship experiences throughout the year. In March when Reverend Mason had an unfortunate accident, the team worked together to provide Reverend Kim with the support she needed without missing a Sunday. She has made a truly amazing recovery and continues to inspire us all.

The committee plans services for one out of four Sundays during the church year and approximately ten services during the summer (arranging for guest speakers, visiting ministers, or service leaders from our own congregation). This previous summer we had services representing ERDE, the Young Adults Group, The Women’s Alliance, the Choir, and Social Activism. On committee Sundays, we collaborate with Earl Naylor, Music Director and Organist; Joel Knapp, Choir Director; as well as Danielle Kozemczak, RE Director and Audio-Visual (A/V) professional, Michael “Moe” Hurst for integrated inspiration. Technology has changed many of our experiences and we look at our practices to make sure that our worship experiences are enhanced by our use of technology.

We have been building our worship team with experienced worship assistants and new worship assistants. We’ve held two worship assistant workshops. There is an on-going process for reviewing and updating our

materials and guides for those involved in providing our worship experiences. Recently two of our members have participated in a workshop for Lay Leaders at Eliot Chapel - *So You Think You Can Preach*.

In the 2024-2025 year Reverend Kim will be on a four month sabbatical. The committee has been actively working on our role during this time. Members of the committee met with the policy Board and the Board President has been working with us on our recommendations, ideas, and hopes for worship during this time. Our intent is always to promote meaningful worship experiences throughout the year. We are looking forward to meeting the challenges during the sabbatical time with effort, grace and good humor.

Submitted by Pamela Geppert, Chair

Social Responsibility Cluster Reports

Social Responsibility Committee

The Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) offers opportunities to put our UU faith into action in the wider community through education, dialogue, fundraising, and volunteer activities consistent with our UU principles. Issues of health, hunger, and housing are primary.

The SRC focused attention this year on the First Church Designated Collection program, ongoing food collection for the Trinity Food Ministry and preparation of a Hot Lunch for those in need served by Trinity. The SRC also coordinated an Afghani dinner for 32 attendees which

- Metropolitan Congregations United
- Food Outreach
- Prison Performing Arts
- The First Church Community Fund*
- The Partner Church*
- St. Louis Area Foodbank
- 100 Neediest Cases

benefitted immigrant cooks of the Welcome Neighbor St Louis nonprofit. The event also introduced attendees to WN's programming focused on helping immigrants re-settle in St. Louis. Finally, the SRC coordinated a May Zoom session on Lessons from Volunteering.

Through **First Church's Designated Collection Program** members nominate qualified nonprofits or church committees/projects as recipients of Sunday plate collections. Nonprofits must meet criteria that include serving needy families; focusing on children's educational access and success; or aiding the homeless, mentally ill or underserved.

2023-2024 Collection Recipients Included:

- Gateway 180
- Southside Early Childhood Center (SSEC)
- Gateway Music Outreach
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Dream Builders 4 Equity

- The First Church Little Pantry*
- The Women’s Alliance Scholarship Fund*
- Arch City Defenders
- St. Martha’s Hall
- St. Louis Arc
- All Among Us
- Sherwood Forest
- Beyond Housing
- The Partner Church*

*Denotes a First Church committee or project

From Homecoming Sunday through the end of February, Designated Collections totaled approximately \$12,140.93. Individual collections ranged from a low of \$400 to a high of \$1500; the latter amount was for the Christmas Eve collection which was split between SSEC and Gateway 180. The First Church Community Fund received the highest singular donation (\$1135) followed by the church’s Little Pantry (\$1032).

SRC Led Volunteer Activities:

- The SRC coordinated Trinity Hot Lunch held on July 23rd drew a team of 19 adult and youth volunteers who fed 80+ clients of Trinity Episcopal Church’s Food Ministry.
- Ongoing food collection (canned goods and pantry staples) for the Trinity Food Ministry
- First Church participation in Operation Food Search’s July Food Drive

Respectfully submitted, Rosemary Lawton, Chair - Committee members: Kay Dusenbery, Kimberly Perry, Donald Jeffries & Dean Burns

First Church Community Fund

Established in 1985, the First Church Community Fund (FCCF) supports First Church’s involvement in the community, social action programming, and members’ leadership in addressing community challenges.

Each July the FCCF committee issues a Request for Proposal to community nonprofits for micro-grants made possible by Fund income. For the 2023-24 church year, income of \$7800 enabled twelve grants. Grants were announced during the October 13th church service followed by a “Meet and Greet” in Fellowship Hall with representatives of the selected nonprofits.

Nonprofits Awarded Grants:

Nonprofit	Grant Focus
All Nana’s Kids Closet	Purchase of children’s winter gloves (300 pairs)
AmeriCorps STL	Facility improvements at its Soulard winter homeless shelter
Caring for Kids	Twin beds and bedding for kids moving out of foster care
City Garden Montessori	Emergency assistance (help with rent, utilities, food, transportation) for students and families
Crime Victim Center	Assistance to domestic abuse victims
Grace and Peace Fellowship	Security deposits and first month rent for clients moving from its homeless shelter into housing

Mental Health Collaborative of Casa de Salud	Outfitting of a therapy room for non-English speaking clients and trauma victims
Metro Trans Umbrella Group	Food supplies and help with name/gender marker change fees
The Just Food Truck	Food for weekly hot meal service in impoverished areas
Unleashing Potential	Infant formula for families in its Strengthening Resilient Families program
Welcome Neighbor	Grocery gift cards for newly arrived immigrants
Wellston Loop Community Development Corporation	Support for peer counselors to track outcomes of its chemical dependency referrals

Care is taken to ensure continued income from the FCCF endowment through fundraising throughout the year. This happens primarily through a Designated Collection in the Fall and Bake Sale in the Spring, which together raised approximately \$2000. The FCCF committee is appreciative of all Members and Friends who financially contribute to the FCCF whether through donations during fundraising events or donations in Memory or Honor of others.

Litter Pick Up

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis has continued participating in the St. Louis County Highway Department's "Adopt a Highway" project. We pick up trash four times a year along Forest Park Parkway between Big Bend Boulevard on the west and Skinker Boulevard on the east. This was a pretty challenging year due to the flood damage incurred in July, resulting in quite a large quantity of litter and some soil erosion in our target area. We did complete all of our scheduled pickups. Participation normally ranges from about 3 to 5 people.

Submitted by Tom Crouch, coordinator

Partner Church Committee

The Partner Church Committee organizes the church's participation in our church's partnership with our Partner Church in Csókfalva, Romania. Current committee members are: Claire Birge, Stan Birge (Treasurer), Judith Crouch, Tom Crouch, Peggy Feinberg, Betsy Grimm-Howell, Gwenne Hickman, Robert Kokenyesi, Mike Nolan, Kimberly Perry (Chair), Nadine Vlietstra, Carole Watson, John Watson, and Laura Zacher.

The committee began the year with a potluck at the Zacher's home November 17 at which we watched Robert's slides from his recent visit to Hungary and Romania including a visit to Csókfalva. Robert has begun a newsletter to bring together the St. Louis-area Transylvanian partnerships. Members of the former UUPCC (UUA Partnership Committee) have been periodically meeting via ZOOM to exchange information.

Several successful fundraising events were held during the year, including the holiday bake sale Sunday December 3 and designated collections 11/5/23 (Partner Church Sunday) and 7/14/24. The P.C. Committee is grateful to the church community for its support. The Committee is also grateful to have received a donation from the church's Women's Alliance, which helps fund student scholarships. The Committee receives no funds from the church budget.

First Church Committee members Kimberly, Carole, Judi, Laura, Robert, and Mike plus Danielle Kozemczak conducted a service November 5 on the theme "Blessed Community." Our Partner Church minister Rev. Noemi Tamási sent a video prayer and welcome. The sermon explored how the

people of Csókfalva have created a blessed community in their church and village through the gospel of love. The service began with playing a recording of the Csókfalva church bells, and included music of Hungarian Unitarian Bela Bartok played by First Church organist Earl Naylor, "Esto Les Digo" (Kinley Lange) sung by the choir, the duet "Székely Blessing" sung by Kimberly and Pamela Geppert and accompanied by Jeanette Myers, a story about Transylvanian Unitarian churches organized by Carole, and Hungarian goodies after church.

Funds raised by the committee support student scholarships for Csókfalva church youth to attend a Unitarian High School in a nearby town (Csókfalva has no high school), or college. Since the beginning of our partnership in 1991, our church has provided over fifty scholarships. Other ongoing expenses are providing a supplement to Noemi's meager salary and paying dues to the International UUA. The committee periodically exchanges messages with Rev. Tamási.

Goals for the future include: 1) continuing our ongoing financial support of P.C. village scholarships and ministerial salary supplement, 2) providing financial assistance for travel between First Church and Csókfalva, 3) continuing our contributions to P.C. building restoration projects, and 4) exploring opportunities to increase communication and travel between our congregations.

Submitted by Kimberly Perry, Chair

St. Louis Foundation for Children

The St. Louis Unitarian Foundation for Children is the name under which the Mission Free School Board now does

business. Since 1841, this board has been underwriting the living and learning of St. Louis' children. The Board members want the congregation to know of the distribution this year of over \$283,000 to 13 agencies in St. Louis supporting children in various ways. You may be interested in knowing more about agencies we support, or have suggestions about worthy organizations we might consider. If so, the trustees would welcome your interest. They are Sue Ashwell, Claire Birge, Jama Dodson, Chuck Eby, Melanie Fathman, Jane Hoekelman, Erin Milligan, and Steve Smidowicz. Rev Kim Mason is an ex officio member.

Submitted by Sue Ashwell, President,
Board of Trustees

*Submitted by Sue Ashwell, President,
Board of Trustees*

Toward Justice

The Black Lives Matter vigil continues every Saturday from 10 until 11 am from Spring until late fall on the Kingshighway side of the Church.

We carpooled to Wentzville to a UAW Plant to demonstrate with the strikers. A group led a webinar on the unhoused, "Gimme Shelter" for four sessions. We hosted two Sunday after church meetings led by MCU and Washington University, one on Vacancy and the other on air quality monitoring. Our Church had a monitor financed by a grant to WU. There will be a meeting at Washington University in May on the history of involvement in enslavement by several congregations, including ours, and Washington University. Several of our group met with Emily Jacox at the Missouri Historical Library to learn how to research this subject. This Spring some of us saw the movie Origins by Ava DuVernay and there was a discussion after church. In addition, committee member Kevin Kellogg proposed to the Policy Board that we publicly express support for the United Auto Workers strike which was done by displaying a sign in the front window of the church..

Submitted by Susan Lammert, chair

Welcoming Congregations

The Welcoming Congregations advocacy and community group for LGBTQ+ at First Unitarian Church in St. Louis was revived in late 2022 and continues to meet as a group once a month. 2023-2024 initiatives include:

- Participating with other community UU congregations at the Tower Grove Pride festival (September 2023)
- Hosting a well-attended Trans 101 Workshop led by educators from MTUG (Metro Trans Umbrella Group). Congregants donated food and toiletries for MTUG's community center (April 2024)
- A pride-themed coffee shop open mic event (June 1st - forthcoming)

The group continues to discuss ideas for additional plans and events. Possible activities include social events, marching in the St. Louis Pride Parade, participating in Tower Grove Pride Festival (2024), pursuing the Welcoming Congregation Renewal process, and engaging in legislative advocacy.

Submitted by Rebecca O'Laughlin

Active Hope Project Congregational Outreach and Community Engagement Update

About 1 1/2 yrs. ago we began a discernment process for developing our congregational social justice programming. We started with the Active Hope Project, a series of individual and small group discussions with congregants. We then gathered in late October 2023 for the first summit, at which we discussed the components of a social justice program, our congregational social justice identity over time, why we would want a *congregational* social justice program, and what assets we bring to that effort, as individuals and as a congregation. We then took the next few

months to investigate potential non-profit organizations in the community with whom we could partner, since we are a relatively small congregation.

Part II of the summit was held January 28. The goal of that gathering was to utilize tools for evaluating social justice organizations and projects, in combination with the knowledge we had gained about our congregational passions and assets, to decide on partnerships and projects for our 2024 congregational social justice program.

We briefly reviewed what we had learned so far from the Active Hope project and our first summit in October, as well as our decision to focus on housing issues. Then we looked at the activities we already participate in, and connections we have with community organizations.

Finally, we discussed ~ 5 potential organizations to partner with, through the lens of a matrix of fit and opportunity. "Fit" refers to alignment with our congregational resources and interests, and "opportunity" to the ways in which we might be able to contribute to making a difference. We also took into account lessons from our book discussion on Toxic Charity, such as including and empowering those who are most impacted by the issues we are trying to address, and also actually being of help and filling a need, rather than creating extra work for the organization.

We decided on 3 potential non-profits to partner with: Gateway 180 (<https://gateway180.org/>), Wellston Loop Community Development Corporation (<https://www.wellstonloopcdc.org/>), and Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (<https://tabdev.org/>). We agreed that we needed more information about the organizations and specific ways we might engage with them, in order to really discern which would be the best fit, and so we are now in the process of meeting with leaders and gathering information. Once that process is completed, we will provide the information to the congregation, and plan

for a congregational vote at our annual meeting May 19.

In the meantime, we are recently completed Gimme Shelter, an excellent series of videos, lectures and discussions on housing issues in St. Louis, organized by Toward Justice with assistance from Social Responsibility and Welcoming Congregations. We also continue our current programs such as collections for Trinity Food Pantry and Gateway 180, Trinity Hot lunch, designated collections, and Social Responsibility coffee hours.

In addition to deciding on specific projects for congregational engagement, we plan to develop some type of communication and networking hub so that the congregation and community can access up-to-date information about opportunities for engagement. We are also looking at the possibility of reorganizing the Outreach and Social Action cluster, in order to better promote communication and collaboration within the church and between the church and the surrounding community.

As always, we welcome participation from anyone and everyone!

Submitted by Lisa Ross