

Our Vision - Our Future

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Annual Report 2025
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis

2025 Annual Report

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**2024-2025 Annual Meeting Agenda Sunday, May 18, 2025 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	Chuck Eby, President
Opening Words	Rev. Kim Mason
Reading of the Congregational Covenant	Larry Dusenbery
Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting	Sidney Watson, Church Secretary
President's Report & Remarks	Chuck Eby
Minister's Report	Rev. Kim Mason
Church Treasurer's & Finance Report and Budget Presentation	Kathy WilkeTreasurer Kathy Wire, Finance Cluster Coordinator
To consider and vote upon proposal for an additional withdrawal of up to 5% from the Church Endowment	
To consider and vote upon adding the proposed Vision statement to the Church by-laws: First Unitarian Church of St. Louis envisions a vital, spiritual congregation fostering an active and relevant presence in the community Chuck Eby	
Presentation of the Melanie & Anthony Fathman and William W. Ross Awards	Chuck Eby
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	Steve Wilke, Nominating and Leadership Development Committee
Remarks from New Board President	Kathy Wilke
Closing Words	Rev. Kim Mason
Adjournment	Chuck Eby

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
2023-2024 Annual Meeting
May 19, 2024
held in person and online via Zoom
Minutes**

The meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 11:35 am.

Steve welcomed the congregation. Lynn Hunt counted the in-person attendees and Moe Hurst counted those attending via Zoom. They confirmed that a quorum of at least 52 members was present.

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

Treasurer Kathy Wilke read the **Congregational Covenant**.

Secretary Sidney Watson directed members to the **Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting, which are** included in the Annual Report. She requested a motion to dispense with reading the minutes and approve them. Tom Finan moved, and Margaret Weck seconded. The motion passed.

President's Report and Remarks

Steve referred members to his full report, which is included in the Annual Report. His remarks drew upon this church year's theme of Engagement. He noted that we have 28 new members, with new members serving on many committees. We also have a Young Adults group again. Steven also noted that we recently added a new Sabbatical Committee to plan for Rev. Kim's upcoming sabbatical. Steve will serve on the committee and encouraged others to join him.

Minister's Report and Remarks

Rev. Kim Mason referred members to her full report included in the Annual Report and shared some highlights. She reminded us that she had been with us for five years, since the fall of 2019. Since she is taking a sabbatical in early 2025, she is now committed to serve as our minister through May 2026.

Rev. Kim noted that we have experienced much as a congregation, including COVID-19. However, one thing that has remained consistent is our increase in giving year over year.

She is excited about the Active Hope Project, and the number of people engaged with it "blows us away." More than 30 people attended the Active Hope Summit. We are committed and engaged in the life of the congregation and life of St. Louis.

She concluded by saying, "I am glad I have had the last five years and look forward to many more."

Church Treasurer's and Finance Report and Budget Presentation

Kathy Wire, Finance Report and Budget Presentation referred members to the proposed

2024-2025 church budget, a separate document provided to those present at the meeting, titled First Unitarian Church Budget (approved by Board 5/13/24).

The 2024-2025 budget was largely funded through the canvass. We received \$415,000 in pledges, which allowed us to provide a 2% staff increase. Most other increases are simply increases in the costs of goods and services, such as utilities, health insurance, etc.

Kathy notes that the Sabbatical Fund should be sufficient to fund the pastoral services we need during Rev. Kim's sabbatical. The budget shows two one-time sabbatical expenses totaling \$11,500 (shaded in blue on the handout).

Active Hope Project

Lisa Ross presented an overview of the Active Hope Project and led the congregation in a discussion before the congregation voted to select one community organization with which the church would partner.

The four organizations we are considering partnering with are Wellston Loop CDC, Tabernacle CDC, Gateway 180, and Beyond Housing. Lisa provided information about each organization via a detailed handout and a summary PowerPoint presentation. Lisa's presentation and written materials reviewed each organization's location, mission, housing, size, population served, community development focus, need, relationship with First U, volunteer opportunities, and website address.

Lisa noted that all four organizations are a good match for partnering with in terms of their fit with our mission and engagement opportunities. All the organizations are large enough to offer opportunities for our volunteers, but we would not be a burden. They are also small enough that we can get to know them and impact their work.

Carol Watson moved that MEMBERS OF FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH VOTE TO SELECT ONE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FROM AMONG WELLSTON LOOP, TABERNACLE CDC, GATEWAY 180, AND BEYOND HOUSING WITH WHICH TO PARTNER. Mike Lunter seconded.

We opened the floor for ten minutes of discussion. One member asked how this decision would be integrated into the life of the church. Specifically, will adopting an Active Hope Project partner impact designated collection or other relationships we have or might have with other organizations? Lisa responded that the intent of the Active Hope Project is not to displace existing projects. The congregation will decide how to implement the Active Hope Project and how this partnership will evolve.

Hearing no further discussion, we called for a vote. The vote proceeded as follows: Wellston Loop CDC—1; Tabernacle CDC—51; Gateway—7; and Beyond Housing—7. The motion passed with a clear majority in favor of Tabernacle CDC.

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

Policy Board Member Chris Kocher presented the **William W. Ross Award** to **Kathy Wire** for her institutional leadership over many years, including budget, finance and Policy Board President. Chris likened the award to a Life-Time of Achievement Award. Kathy accepted in person and gave her thanks.

Chris awarded Tom Finan the **Melanie & Anthony Fathman Award** for his work on facilities and many other things over the last year. Chris explained that the Fathman Award recognizes a member who has contributed their time and talents to the church through leadership and significant contributions during this church year. He likened it to a Most Valuable Player award. Tom accepted in person and shared his thanks.

Steve and Rev. Kim recognized **Officers, Trustees, and other Church Leaders from the past year**. Those present were asked to rise and be recognized.

Margaret Weck, chair of the **Nominating and Leadership Development Committee**, presented the following slate to the Congregation:

Board President
Board President – Chuck Eby (2025)
Vice President – Larry Dusenbery (2025)
Secretary – Sidney Watson (2025 re-election)
Treasurer – Kathy Wilke (2025 re-election after appointment in 2025)
Member – Betty Neil (2026)

Church Council
Council Chair – Sherry Bassi (2025 re-election)
Cluster Coordinator, Outreach and Social Action (2025 re-election to single year term)

Margaret noted that voting in favor of this slate adopts the recommendation of the current Policy Board that the present size of 7 rather than 9 is sufficient to perform the work of the Policy Board.

Kathy Wire moved TO APPROVE THE SLATE OF NOMINEES AS PRESENTED. Mike Lunter seconded. Call for discussion. Hearing none, the vote was taken. Motion passed.

Steve passed the gavel to the new Policy Board president Chuck Eby.

Remarks from the new Policy Board President Chuck Eby

Chuck thanked Steve for his service as Policy Board President. Chuck described the role of the church president as being a role model, including showing respect and care for each other and being able to forgive each other when we make mistakes. The President's responsibilities include listening to the congregation and following established policies.

Chuck's goal as Policy Board President this coming year is to implement the congregation's vision in adopting the Active Hope Project. The Active Hope Project is not a replacement but an expansion of our First U community engagement.

Chuck plans to partner with Rev. Kim, the Policy Board, and the Council.

Chuck concluded by thanking Steve for establishing the Sabbatical Committee and noting that this is the first time in 25 years that the congregation has had the "stability" of a long-term minister eligible for a sabbatical.

Article 2 Discussion and Vote

Rev. Kim referred people to a one-page handout and presented a PowerPoint summary.

Today, we discuss an October 2023 proposal to amend Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Principles and Purposes. This proposal results from a multi-year process of study and votes during the UUA General Assembly.

The October 2023 proposal will be presented to the June 2024 UUA General Assembly for an up-or-down vote. A two-thirds vote is required for it to pass. Several amendments to the October 2023 proposal will also be offered at GA. However, no other amendments are permitted to be considered.

First U will send delegates to GA who will participate in this vote. Today, we ask the congregation to vote in a straw poll to help inform our delegates to GA when they vote. We have not yet named our delegates. A call for delegates will be sent via e-newsletter and other means.

Rev. Kim and Steve used a PowerPoint to review the existing bylaw language and the October 2023 proposed amendment.

Kathy Wire moved to TAKE A STRAW POLL ACCEPTING THE OCTOBER 2023 PROPOSED CHANGES TO ARTICLE II PURPOSES AND COVENANT OF THE UUA BYLAWS. Tom Finan seconded.

The floor opened for ten minutes of discussion, and several members spoke. Some members spoke in favor of or against the proposal. Others suggested changing specific language in the October 2023 proposal. Still others had questions.

After no further discussion, the vote was called: For—50+, Against—10, Abstentions—none recorded. The motion passed.

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Roster

2024/2025

Church Officers

Chuck Eby	President
Larry Dusenbery	Vice President
Sidney Watson	Secretary
Kathy Wilke	Treasurer

Policy Board Members

Becca McBride	2025
Chris Kocher	2026
Betty Neill	2027

Church Council Roster

2024/2025

Church Council Members

Sherry Bassi	Council Chair (2025)
Grace Munie	Programming Cluster (2026)
Kathy Wire	Finance & Stewardship Cluster (2025)
Erin Milligan	Growth & Engagement Cluster (2027)
Tom Finan	Facilities Cluster (2026)
Lisa Ross	Outreach & Social Action Cluster (2025)

Minister's Report

Submitted by Rev. Kim Mason

Minister's Annual Report 2025

It feels a little weird to be writing an annual report a week and a half after returning from sabbatical. To write my report I have to recall all the things that happened four or more months ago. Please forgive me if I have forgotten to highlight or name something or someone.

When my sabbatical started we'd just finished the holiday season and it was still winter. The election was over but the new administration hadn't yet taken office. So much has changed. Today it is 2025, there is a different president in office, a new pope in Rome and the air is redolent with spring blooms. Yet so much remains the same. We are here at the corner of Waterman and Kingshghway, where we've been for more than a hundred years. We continue to show up for social witness on Saturdays and worship on Sundays. We gather as a faith community in the city of St. Louis just as we have done for almost 200 hundred years. We sing, we pray, we give, we receive, we learn and we grow together. In the recent NY Times series on religion in America, the number one thing that people are looking for is belonging. I am so very glad for each one of you that has found belonging in this community.

Nurturing Spirituality

Worship

We began the year with water communion on September 8th! As I planned my sabbatical to start on January 1st, I made sure to arrange my return such that I was able to participate in all four of our annual communion services. We also had several multigenerational services this year,

including Water Communion, Cornbread Communion, the Christmas Pageant, Easter, and RE Sunday. Avg attendance in the fall was 70 people in person and 23 people online.

Our Worship themes again came from Soul Matters subscription service. This year with RE programming also supported with Soul Matters curricula, we offered a whole family experience where adults and children explore similar themes.

Former organist Earl Naylor left us last spring and after a long summer of volunteer coordination, we hired Allen Hoffman. Allen came in mid-year right before several of our biggest services. He's done a lot of work to get up to speed and learn our hymns and service style.

In consultation with the Worship Committee, the board made the decision to hire the Rev. Sabrina Trupia to provide sabbatical coverage, including leading worship and providing pastoral care.

The Worship Committee did a tremendous job not only of working with Rev. Sabrina, but also covering the Sundays a month without ministerial coverage. Their creativity and can-do attitude brings joy to worship. Please be sure and thank Pam Geppert and the rest of the committee for all they did this spring.

Groups in the congregation also lead special holiday observances for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, the Winter Solstice, and Beltane.

Religious Education

Children & Youth RE: Danielle Kozemczak left right at the end of the program year in

spring of 2024, leaving us not only questions about post-pandemic RE but also how to staff the program. We decided to hire an interim consultant to walk us through these questions and others. Michele Grove has been working with us remotely since September, which included multiple onsite visits here in St Louis. The RE Committee has done a lot of hard work this year including curriculum decisions, Sunday morning coordination and visioning. Please give Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant and Caitlin Hill and special thank you for their leadership.

A full-time Director of Congregational Life position was created in the spring combining children and youth RE, adult RE and Membership responsibilities. We are currently in search and hope to have someone in place for the fall.

Adult RE: I lead a four part class called A Call to Connection based on a white paper from the Einhorn Collaborative. The class had a solid core of participants. In November I started a monthly Grief Circle, modeled in structure like a covenant group but designed specifically for those grieving the loss of a friend or family member.

Building Community

Pastoral Care

I officiated the memorial service for Alvin Vlietstra in August and the wedding for Sarah Vaughn in December. We've had a variety of losses and illnesses within the congregation and the need for resources and support related to Alzheimer's and dementia continues. We've also had several babies born to families in the congregation. I am looking forward to performing Baby Dedications soon!

The Pastoral Care team continues to do a wonderful job keeping in touch with folks and providing support when needed. Please thank Judi Crouch, Gene Ruben, and Karen Siegrist as well as the numerous volunteers who deliver food and visit members. The

tradition of pumpkin bread at Christmas time and flowers for Flower Communion continues. We have several members whose in-person participation in church is dependent on a ride. Please thank the drivers when you get a chance!

Membership / Fellowship

We have combined the New Member Luncheon and the Fellowship Dinner this year as a single event to celebrate participation in the church. New or old, long-time or short-time members, all are invited for a catered dinner on May 31st to celebrate belonging!

I am excited by the new Director of Congregational Life role. Additional support for the Membership Committee will help with their work of connecting and integrating members.

Administration & Governance

We spent much of this year in one form of staff transition or another - whether it was music, RE or sabbatical. Returning from my time away you continued to do deep and engaging work, which is a testament to your commitment to this congregation and to the future of our shared ministry.

The board spent a big chunk of time this year focused on a visioning process for the congregation. The hard work they did in the fall to understand how vision relates to our governance paid off when I left for sabbatical and you all completed the process and drafted a vision statement. With our Mission, Vision and Values articulated, we are in a position to do strategic planning - something the congregation hasn't engaged with in ten years. Michele Grove was a help here as well as she aided in the process at the Mid-Winter meeting.

I also need to lift up Lynn Hunt who took on additional responsibilities during my sabbatical, including staff supervision. She kept things running smoothly while I was away and was support for staff and lay leaders.

Stewardship

The Canvass co-chairs, Erin Milligan and Emily Jaycox did a great job this year. Unfortunately, the combination of an uncertain economy and the departure of several families that moved out of state had a negative impact on our annual Canvass. Additionally, we had an unexpected insurance increase and unplanned building expenses. Kathy Wire and Kathy Wilke will present more on how we hope to meet our budget needs next year, including the possibility of another draw down on our endowment.

Advancing Justice

Growth & Engagement

We eagerly began our relationship with Tabernacle Community Development Corporation over the summer and what we've come to learn is that they are learning and growing just as we are. We've had some opportunities to work with TCDC, while other planned projects didn't pan out. We are continuing our relationship with the expectation that they will continue to expand.

With several committees working on separate but related service and justice projects, a decision was made to bring the groups into a single committee in order to foster better communication between parties. The working relationships are still evolving in this group. Please take a moment to read the report from the Social Justice committee and see all the projects and partnerships that we're a part of - including a brand new Missouri UU Lobby Day at the state legislature that happened in May.

Welcoming Congregations has a core group of active participants and took the lead on collaborating with area congregations to walk in the Pride STL parade last June and host a booth at Tower Grove Pride in September.

Professional Development

I attended the annual meeting of the Prairie Group at Pere Marquette in November. The theme was Speculative Fiction. What, you ask? It basically turned into "How to Survive the Apocalypse." The sci-fi nerd in me loved it.

My sabbatical began on January 1st and ended April 30th. While on sabbatical I took Viola Spolin's Theater Games for Educators (Improv teacher training), I started a Certificate for Organizing and Social Transformation from Eden, and I began the course, Practicing Courage in a Time of Polarization, from the Center for Courage and Renewal. I also traveled, wrote, read and napped. A week and a half before my return I said out loud, "I feel ready to return."

Taking sabbatical after five years, it feels like this is the start of our next five years - as though the first five was laying the foundation for what we will build in the next five. As we begin this next chapter, I am excited to be working alongside you all.

In Love and Faith,
Kim

Sunday Services 2024/2025

September 1st - *Reflections on Labor*: Worship Committee
September 8th - *The Rhythm of the Rain: Water Communion*: Rev. Kim Mason
September 15th - *Powered by Love*: Rev. Kim Mason
September 22nd - *Life in the Balance*: Rev. Kim Mason
September 25th - *Wild Imagination*: Rev. Kim Mason
October 6th - *Breaking the Either/Or Binary*: Ro Kelly, Member of Eliot UU Chapel
October 13th - *Hello, I'm Anxiety*: Rev. Kim Mason
October 20th - *REflections: A Conversation on Religious Education*: Rev. Kim Mason &
Interim Director of Religious Education Michele Grove
October 27th - *Only a Fool Would say That!:* Pamela Geppert, Chair, Worship Committee
November 3rd - *The Colors of Grief*: Rev. Kim Mason
November 10th - *Wider CirclesSeeds of Healing*: Rev. Kim Mason
November 17th - *Shalom from Transylvania*: Robert Kokenyesi
November 24th - *Cornbread Communion: The Words That Come Before All Else*:
Rev. Kim Mason
December 1st - *What is This Thing Called Inspiration.:* Dwight Homer, Worship Committee
December 8th - *Three Josephs, Two Herods and a Zebra: a No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant*:
Rev. Kim Mason
December 15th - *Music Sunday*: Rev. Kim Mason & First Unitarian Choir performing
Vivalidi's *Gloria*
December 22nd - *Restful Presence*: Rev. Kim Mason
December 24th - *Christmas Eve*: Rev. Kim Mason
December 29th - *Fire Communion*: Rev. Kim Mason
January 5th - Cancelled due to weather
January 12th - *...and a good story to tell!:* Annette Peterson, Worship Committee
January 19th - *From the Vaults, the story of the radical Dr. King*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
January 26th - *Event Horizon*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
February 2nd - *Radical hospitality*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
February 9th - *Serving with Grace: Reexamining Volunteering for the Church through a
Spiritual Lens*: Steve Wilke, Worship Committee
February 16th - *The Bully Next Door*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
February 23rd - *The World That Does Not Yet Exist*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
March 2nd - *Trusting the Narrative*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
March 9th - *Razzmatazz Sunday: The Time it is A-Changing*: Pamela Geppert & Su Fazio,
Worship Committee
March 16th - *Trusting the Process*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
March 23rd - *Trusting the Miracle*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
March 30th - *Trusting Our Voices*: Nick Page, Guest Speaker & Musician
April 6th - *This Joy that I Have*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
April 13th - *Cultivating Joy*: Worship Committee
April 20th - *Easter Revelry!:* Rev. Sabrina Trupia
April 27th - *Make a Joyful Noise*: Rev. Sabrina Trupia
May 4th - *Flower Communion*: Rev. Kim Mason
May 11th - *Music Sunday*: Rev. Kim Mason & The First U Choir
May 18th - *Religious Education Sunday*: Rev. Kim Mason
May 25th - Dwight Homer, Worship Committee

Sabbatical Minister's Report

Submitted by Rev. Sabrina Trupia

Beloved Members and Friends,

So. Many. Thanks. To the Sabbatical Committee who has supported me this whole time, and who believed in me from the beginning. Also an equivalent amount of thanks to the Board, the Staff, the Worship Committee, Care and Concern for all you have done in support for these four months and for holding space for me recently through my time of loss. And, I would be remiss if I didn't thank the RE Committee and Michele Grove for your conversations about multigenerational services and for the awesome inspiration for a fun Easter service, so thank you! I see exciting things coming up in the future for the young ones and young at heart in this community.

It's strange to think that in only four months, I have preached at First U eleven times, including a sermon series in March on "the practice of trust", and the fun inter-gen Easter service as well as my last Sunday, the hymn sing; it's been a joy all throughout to share my reflections; you were always so responsive! Also this year it was my first time leading a Lenten service and I am so glad I did!

Outside of worship, I did my best to be available and pastor to you in the grief group, care and concern meetings as well as individual phone calls. In adult religious education I was encouraged by a conversation I had with the Committee on Ministry to try something different. This is how the broken whole bowl ritual came about, after some of you wanted to do something hopeful in the face of our current trying times. I admit this idea for an adult religious exploration was a bit experimental but thanks to your grace and willingness to experiment, if I get the opportunity to do this again it will be improved by having it done together.

First U, as you know we have history together; I mean, technically we have been in a conversation since 2020, and every time we continue our exchange, I feel like we both grow spiritually. This year we had conversations about worship, music, pastoral care and various forms of spiritual participation. Our conversations created mutual trust and so we both did things we did not think we could do. And for each and every one of you who has shown up, talked to me about your life, had a comment, a hug, a question, a card, or an email: you were all part of this conversation and of our shared ministry.

You know, UU ministers tend to talk a lot about transformative ministries, and before this sabbatical stint I thought it meant that ministers have the calling to transform people through their shared relationship. What I hadn't appreciated fully is that transformation is mutual. You have transformed me through your kindness and attention and willingness to share yourself.

It is always an honor and a privilege to serve you and I am grateful for the opportunity to meet you all, in so many different conversations. I can't wait to see how we are going to continue our dialogue in the future!

Brightest blessings,
Rev. Sabrina

Church President's Report

Submitted by Chuck Eby

The Policy Board's primary goal for the 2024-2025 church year has been **Creating a Vision Statement** for First Unitarian Church in St. Louis. With guidance and training from Reverend Kim Mason, Board members led multiple guided imagery visioning sessions with church members to gain insights into their hopes and expectations for our church in the next 5-10 years. The Board used this feedback to create draft Vision Statements that inspire us to "Reach a Better Place" through the actions proclaimed in our Mission statement. The Board invited members of the congregation to vote on three proposed Vision Statements via an online survey. The Vision Statement that received the majority of first place votes will be presented to the congregation at the May 18, 2025, annual meeting. The Board is requesting a vote to add the Vision Statement to our Church by-laws as we have done in recent years for our revised Mission Statement and Values.

Vision (the "Why") and **Mission** ("What we do") **Statements** serve dual purposes. They help to unify our members and provide guidance on important decisions and goals. They also announce to the wider community who we are and what we aspire to achieve. Most importantly, we should periodically review, and sometimes revise, our Vision and Mission Statements in response to changes within our congregation and the surrounding world.

Another goal for this church year has been launching the next phase of the **Active Hope Project** through collaborations with Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (TCDC). Last August, about 15 church members participated in neighborhood trash pickup and a tour of the Hub facility. Subsequent engagements included a second trash pickup and staffing of the food pantry. Two Social Justice Committee members spent March reviewing 88 Scholarship Search Initiative applications. While we have not yet identified a collaboration with TCDC that would involve a sustained commitment from First Unitarian volunteers, we now have strong connections with TCDC leaders. I look forward to additional community involvement initiatives from the Social Justice Committee in the coming year.

Another important topic at the Board/Council leadership retreat in August 2025 was the condition of our church buildings. Members of our Facilities Committee function like volunteer firefighters tackling one critical mechanical or environmental "fire" after another, and we thank them for all they do. In order for our buildings to serve the goals we derive from our vision and mission statements, we need to systematically assess their current condition and proactively address capital and maintenance needs. The Board and Facilities Committee are working together to obtain an external assessment of our buildings' condition. The next step will be a collaborative effort by Board and Council leaders to evaluate our buildings' functionality, aesthetics, and accessibility to serve our congregation and the surrounding community.

Reverend Kim Mason was on sabbatical from January 1 to April 30, 2025. These four months flew by for Reverend Kim and for our congregation. We endured ice and snow, enjoyed a Mid-Winter meeting, and hosted another successful Un-Fish Fry. Our inspiring Sunday worship services were led by our Sabbatical (and ongoing Community) Minister, Sabrina Trupia and lay members of our Worship Committee. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank Reverend Trupia and members of the Worship and Sabbatical Committees for your outstanding contributions to our spiritual journeys. I also want to recognize our choir members, Joel Knapp, and Allen Hoffman for the music that fills our ears and hearts. As a congregation we did more than survive the sabbatical. Together, we showed that we are an independent, urban UUA congregation in covenant with each other.

This has been a transitional year for religious education (RE). We have been so fortunate to have wonderful RE Committee leaders and teachers, whom we recognized during our May 18th service, and an outstanding RE consultant, Michelle Grove, who has mentored our volunteers and helped shape our vision for a new staff position: Director of Congregational Life. Our congregation is at an inflection point with membership quasi-stable at ~200 and a beloved minister returning from sabbatical with renewed energy and ideas. We clearly need a professional to lead both youth and adult religious education programs and to manage and organize other important events in our congregation and community. This is an investment that will enrich everyone's church life and attract new members who are searching for a spiritual home like ours in these troubling times.

In last year's President's Report, Steve Wilke said his "biggest goal as Board President was to make Church fun again". I believe he achieved that goal, that it has carried over to this year, and that we can keep the streak going. What I learned this year is that being Board President can be fun too! In fact, any leadership position in this church can be fun because of the people with whom we are in covenant and the vision and mission that we share.

Church Council Report

Submitted by Sherry Bassi

The Church Council has a Chair and 5 Cluster Coordinators who support the goals and activities of the various committees and groups that carry out the work of the church. The Council works with the Policy Board.

The Cluster Chairs this year are:

- Kathy Wire-Stewardship
- Grace Munie-Programming
- Lisa Ross- Community Outreach and Social Action
- Erin Milligan -Growth and Engagement
- Tom Finan-Facilities

Lynn Hunt, church administrator, and Policy Board VP Larry Dusenbury are also members of the Council.

This year the Church Council focused on reviewing the church website. We reviewed the content, ease of use, and aesthetics. Council recommendations were made to a web design contractor in February and a new website will be unveiled soon.

The Church Council welcomed Michelle Grove, Religious Education consultant, to several meetings to provide input on RE programming needs.

The Church Council supported several ongoing projects and programming changes. The remodeling of the former Fellowship Hall bookstore into a family play space should be completed in the summer of 2025. Discussion continued on the water-damage repairs in the church library. A new "Love at the Center" book club, exploring UU shared values is now meeting monthly by Zoom. Community Outreach and Social Action also recommended that the focus of the weekly social justice witnessing theme be broadened to a Human Rights focus and this change was affirmed unanimously by Church Council members.

The Church Council also reviewed and discussed implementation of the Policy Board recommendations for an ICE Policy to address the greater role if an ICE Agent were to request entry to the church building.

Nominations & Leadership Report

Submitted by Steve Wilke

The Nominations Committee (NC) is charged with nominating candidates to fill elected leadership positions of both the Policy Board and the Church Council. One of the promises made to our current President and Vice-President was they only would serve one year and the NC would find their replacements. In order to facilitate that promise the prior Board President (me) agreed to chair the Nominations Committee.

Before leaving on sabbatical, Rev. Mason put a call out to several members of the congregation to serve on the NC. Thankfully, Sue Ashwell and Amelia Ehmling volunteered and, along with Board Liaison Sidney Watson, our committee was formed.

The NC started its work in early February. Instead of presenting at the Mid-Winter Meeting, we instead combined it with a worship service to emphasize how serving in Leadership can be a spiritual practice. From that service we had several members volunteer to serve.

An issue we discussed during the service was the 20/80 problem in that most volunteer organizations have 20% of the members doing 80% of the work. In our church, it is more of a 10/90 problem. Unfortunately the remaining positions would need to come from that 10% pool. In order to convince them, it was going to take more than a worship service.

The NC started lists of names and then started many, many conversations. As you can imagine, many wanted to serve, but did not think it was the right time. Others thought they were not ready to serve in a Leadership role. Others had done leadership for a long time and wanted a break. All these reasons were understandable, but the NC continued to search for quality candidates.

I am happy to report we are presenting a full slate of candidates. We have 6 trustees on the Board and a full Council. This slate has both long term members and relatively new ones. It has some who have served in Leadership in the past, and some who agreed to take the leap this year. We attempted to find members from all parts of the church, including RE, Facilities and Social Action. Our hope is with the new members in leadership to better balance our 10/90 problem and have it much closer to 20/80, or even 30/70.

Past versions of the Nominations Committee also served as a leadership development committee. Due to the massive task before the NC this year, we elected to not serve that function this year. Ideally we will have less Leadership positions to fill next year and we may be able to serve both roles again. For now, our hope is with the new members serving in Leadership we have begun the process of creating a strong foundation for the Church going forward.

The slate of nominees recommended for election in 2025-2026 are:

Policy Board

- **Board President-** Kathy Wilke (2026)
- **Vice-President-** Chris Kocher (2026)
- **Secretary-** Sidney Watson (2026)
- **Treasurer-** Margaret Weck (2026)
- **Trustee-** Carl Bassi (2028)
- **Trustee-** Lisa Ross (2028)
- **Trustee-** Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (2028)
- **Trustee-** Chris Peterson (2028)
- **Trustee-** Mike Bray (2028)

Church Council

- **Council Chair-** Cathy Rauch (2026)
- **Cluster Coordinator, Outreach and Social Action-** Fran Hoffman (2028)
- **Cluster Coordinator, Stewardship Cluster-** Kathy Wire (2028)

NOTE- Trustees serve 3 years. Normally we prefer 2 Trustees rotating off the Board every two years. Since we have 5 trustees joining the Board this year, it would make sense for them to stagger their terms in some way. We will let them figure that out for themselves. That is a next year problem.

Nominations Committee

Steve Wilke

Sue Ashcroft

Amelia Ehmling

Sidney Watson (liaison from the Board)

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 31, 2025.

The first is a copy of the Budget v. Actuals for fiscal year 2024/2025. It is current as of March 31, 2025. It also shows the total Budget amounts for the Fiscal Year that ends June 30, 2025.

The second is the Statement of Financial Position Comparison as of March 31, 2025. This report lists the balances for the Reserve Funds for both 2024 and 2025 for comparison. As you can see, there isn't much of a difference.

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: FY 2024-25
July 2024 - March 2025

	Total		
	Actual	Budget	Total Budget
Income			
40000 Operating Pledges		0.00	0.00
40010 Current Year Pledges	371,336.10	349,000.00	415,000.00
40090 Prior Year Pledges	1,739.99	2,000.00	2,000.00
Total 40000 Operating Pledges	\$ 373,076.09	\$ 351,000.00	\$ 417,000.00
40200 Contributions & Collections		0.00	0.00
40210 Regular Plate Collection	7,432.98	4,450.00	6,000.00
40230 Other Contributions	6,653.18	8,030.00	10,000.00
40250 Designated Collections	13,553.22	11,360.00	15,000.00
Total 40200 Contributions & Collections	\$ 27,639.38	\$ 23,840.00	\$ 31,000.00
40300 Women's Alliance	2,000.00	0.00	2,000.00
40310 Women's Alliance Op Shop	0.00		
40400 Building Use Income	7,869.99	8,655.00	11,000.00
40405 Building Use - CRC	3,985.00	1,590.00	6,000.00
Total 40400 Building Use Income	\$ 11,854.99	\$ 10,245.00	\$ 17,000.00
40500 Investment Income-Endowment	37,602.24	42,300.28	56,400.28
40520 Investment Income-General	6,013.89	2,625.03	3,500.00
40700 Miscellaneous Income	2,250.33	1,300.00	1,750.00
40750 Unrestricted Gifts	6,280.43	4,500.00	5,000.00
40800 Fundraisers		0.00	0.00
40819 Miscellaneous Fundraisers	19.55	3,750.03	5,000.00
Total 40800 Fundraisers	\$ 19.55	\$ 3,750.03	\$ 5,000.00
40910 Interest Income		0.00	0.00
41500 Transfer from General Fund		0.00	30,000.00
41600 Transfer from Memorial Fund		0.00	0.00
41610 Transfer from Cap. Maint. Res.	26,000.00	0.00	0.00
41615 Transfer from Partner Church	2,720.00		
41617 Transfer from PR/Marketing	250.00		
41620 Transfer from RE Res.		1,700.00	1,700.00
41625 Transfer from Sabbatical		0.00	5,000.00
41630 Transfer from Soc. Resp. Res.	375.49	350.00	650.00
41650 Transfer from Trinity Hot Lunch	414.77	200.00	400.00
42000 Transfer from Endowment Fund		0.00	0.00
Total Income	\$ 496,497.16	\$ 441,810.34	\$ 576,400.28
Gross Profit	\$ 496,497.16	\$ 441,810.34	\$ 576,400.28
Expenses			
50000 Staffing		0.00	0.00
50100 Salaries and Wages		0.00	0.00

50120 Gross Wages--Salaries	116,453.98	146,810.97	195,748.00
50125 Gross Wages--Bonus	1,012.00	0.00	0.00
50130 Gross Wages--Hourly wages	31,365.16	36,787.50	49,050.00
50135 Gross Wages--Contract Labor	35,471.64	15,571.53	20,762.00
50190 Housing Allowance	27,810.00	13,903.47	18,538.00
Total 50100 Salaries and Wages	\$ 212,112.78	\$ 213,073.47	\$ 284,098.00
50200 Benefits		0.00	0.00
50210 Health Insurance	11,844.09	10,500.03	14,000.00
50220 Dental Insurance	432.00	567.00	756.00
50230 Retirement--401(a) Expense	9,844.74	16,857.00	22,476.00
50260 Life Insurance		510.75	681.00
50270 Payroll Taxes	6,330.10	9,325.53	12,434.00
Total 50200 Benefits	\$ 28,450.93	\$ 37,760.31	\$ 50,347.00
50300 Sabbatical Accrual		2,000.00	2,000.00
50500 Staff Expenses		0.00	0.00
50510 Administrator Staff Expense	468.28	700.00	1,000.00
50520 Religious Educator Staff Expense		3,000.00	4,000.00
50530 Music Director Staff Expense	84.76	250.00	250.00
Total 50500 Staff Expenses	\$ 553.04	\$ 3,950.00	\$ 5,250.00
50600 Minister's Expenses	4,516.60	6,374.97	8,500.00
Total 50000 Staffing	\$ 245,633.35	\$ 263,158.75	\$ 350,195.00
51000 Administrative		0.00	0.00
51050 Canvass	269.92	1,500.00	1,500.00
51100 Internal Communications	1,099.50	1,391.22	1,855.00
51200 Board Expenses	490.00	500.00	500.00
51400 Office Supplies	613.55	2,705.00	3,400.00
51500 Office Equipment & Repairs	2,094.70	1,874.97	2,500.00
51650 Payment Processing Fees	1,632.01	1,350.00	1,800.00
51700 Computer Expense	2,204.90	1,500.03	2,000.00
51800 Legal & Accounting	2,270.00	2,625.03	3,500.00
51900 Postage	174.00	850.00	1,000.00
91997 Leadership Dev & Nominating Comm		200.00	200.00
Total 51000 Administrative	\$ 10,848.58	\$ 14,496.25	\$ 18,255.00
52000 Building		0.00	0.00
52100 Building Maintenance	33,802.46	11,999.97	16,000.00
52125 Capital Improvements	30,331.25	0.00	0.00
52150 Housekeeping & Supplies	6,914.72	4,500.00	6,000.00
52200 Insurance	25,604.84	19,125.00	25,500.00
52250 Telephone	4,609.79	4,612.50	6,150.00
52300 Utilities	25,878.08	22,500.00	30,000.00
52350 Equipment & Repairs	19,955.08	18,749.97	25,000.00
52400 Contract Labor	20,355.39	23,249.97	31,000.00
52500 Landscaping	3,774.65	5,750.00	7,500.00
52550 Security	8,676.50	8,793.72	11,725.00

52600 Capital Maintenance Reserve		0.00	1,000.00
Total 52000 Building	\$ 179,902.76	\$ 119,281.13	\$ 159,875.00
53000 Worship		0.00	0.00
53100 Music		0.00	0.00
53110 Guest Musicians	2,150.00	700.00	1,000.00
53120 Music Supplies & Materials	97.00	0.00	100.00
53190 Miscellaneous	922.00	1,050.00	1,050.00
Total 53100 Music	\$ 3,169.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 2,150.00
53200 Worship Expenses	4,179.57	4,875.03	6,500.00
Total 53000 Worship	\$ 7,348.57	\$ 6,625.03	\$ 8,650.00
53500 Education		0.00	0.00
53510 Children and Youth RE	2,116.64	4,500.00	6,000.00
53520 Adult Religious Education	539.70	600.00	600.00
53530 ERDE	299.49	250.00	250.00
53600 John Learned Library	195.34	150.00	400.00
Total 53500 Education	\$ 3,151.17	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 7,250.00
54000 Membership		0.00	0.00
54100 Membership Expense	106.79	1,100.00	1,500.00
54200 Hospitality	470.94	749.97	1,000.00
54300 Feasts & Festivals	237.33	450.00	500.00
54303 Welcoming Congregation	530.39	350.00	550.00
54500 Public Relations		0.00	0.00
54600 Website	250.00	500.00	500.00
Total 54000 Membership	\$ 1,595.45	\$ 3,149.97	\$ 4,050.00
55000 Social Action & Outreach		0.00	0.00
55100 Social Responsibility Committee	1,237.96	100.00	100.00
55130 Sandwich-Making	9.00		
55150 SRC--Other		450.00	450.00
Total 55100 Social Responsibility Committee	\$ 1,246.96	\$ 550.00	\$ 550.00
55300 Designated Collections	10,767.89	11,360.00	15,000.00
55600 Minister's Discretionary Fund	20.00	350.00	450.00
55750 Care & Concern Ministry		50.00	400.00
Total 55000 Social Action & Outreach	\$ 12,034.85	\$ 12,310.00	\$ 16,400.00
56000 Denominational Support		0.00	0.00
56020 UUA	14,775.03	16,274.97	21,700.00
56050 Partner Church	3,203.09	450.00	450.00
56055 Covenant Groups		300.00	300.00
Total 56000 Denominational Support	\$ 17,978.12	\$ 17,024.97	\$ 22,450.00
Total Expenses	\$ 478,492.85	\$ 441,546.10	\$ 587,125.00
Net Operating Income	\$ 18,004.31	\$ 264.24	(\$10,724.72)
Net Income	\$ 18,004.31	\$ 264.24	(\$10,724.72)

Statement of Financial Position Comparison

First Unitarian Church

As of March 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL	
	AS OF MARCH 31, 2025	AS OF MARCH 31, 2024 (PY)
Assets		
Current Assets		
Bank Accounts		
10000 Cash-Busey Bank	104,534.56	92,328.93
10010 PayPal		
10200 Petty Cash		
Total for Bank Accounts	\$104,534.56	\$92,328.93
Accounts Receivable		
12000 Accounts Receivable		
Total for Accounts Receivable	0	0
Other Current Assets		
13000 Investments - Unrestricted	0	0
13100 General Fund	241,935.03	272,640.18
13105 Transfers - Unrestricted	-22,133.83	-45,268.90
Total for 13000 Investments - Unrestricted	\$219,801.20	\$227,371.28
13109 Investments - Restricted	0	0
13110 Endowment Fund	1,265,702.07	1,251,582.43
13200 Lewis-Wallis Intern Fund	541,454.31	515,006.68
13300 Clark Fund	212,421.02	202,045.19
13400 FCCF	192,614.67	187,560.85
13500 Dodson Fund - Prin	53,341.86	50,736.37
13520 Dodson Fund - Res	36,563.81	34,777.84
13600 Alliance Fund	54,000.00	
13900 Transfers - Restricted	22,133.83	45,268.90
Total for 13109 Investments - Restricted	\$2,378,231.57	\$2,286,978.26
14000 Treasury Notes		
16000 Employee Loan		
16200 Prepaid Expenses		
16800 Employee Cash Advance	5,850.00	5,850.00
Payroll Corrections		
Undeposited Funds		
Total for Other Current Assets	\$2,603,882.77	\$2,520,199.54
Total for Current Assets	\$2,708,417.33	\$2,612,528.47
Fixed Assets		
17200 Real Estate & Improvements	1,051,647.44	1,051,647.44
17300 New Chapel & Improvements	2,376,965.91	2,376,965.91
Total for Fixed Assets	\$3,428,613.35	\$3,428,613.35

Statement of Financial Position Comparison

First Unitarian Church

As of March 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL	
	AS OF MARCH 31, 2025	AS OF MARCH 31, 2024 (PY)
Other Assets		
Total for Assets	\$6,137,030.68	\$6,041,141.82
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable		
Credit Cards		
Other Current Liabilities		
20100 Payroll Liabilities	0	0
20200 Federal Liabilities Payable	2,999.24	-290.98
20300 State Withholding Payable	502.00	280.00
20400 City Withholding Payable	506.84	457.37
Total for 20100 Payroll Liabilities	\$4,008.08	\$446.39
20500 Benefits Liabilities	0	0
20510 Insurance Payable	0	0
20511 Health Insurance--Employer paid		
20512 Health Insurance--Employee paid		
20513 Life Insurance		
20514 Disability Ins--Employee paid		
20515 Dental Ins--Employee paid		
Total for 20510 Insurance Payable	0	0
20530 Retirement--401(a) Payable	-2,585.88	769.25
20540 Retirement--401(a) WH Payable		
20550 Retirement--SEP IRA Payable		
20580 Garnishment Payable		
Total for 20500 Benefits Liabilities	-\$2,585.88	\$769.25
21000 Other Liabilities	0	0
21010 Due to outside charities		
21090 Miscellaneous liabilities		
21092 A/C Repair Payable		
Total for 21000 Other Liabilities	0	0
Direct Deposit Payable		2,329.93
Payroll Clearing		
Payroll Tax Payable		
Total for Other Current Liabilities	\$1,422.20	\$3,545.57
Total for Current Liabilities	\$1,422.20	\$3,545.57

Statement of Financial Position Comparison

First Unitarian Church

As of March 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL	
	AS OF MARCH 31, 2025	AS OF MARCH 31, 2024 (PY)
Long-term Liabilities		
23000 Reserves	0	0
23100 Holt		
23200 Sabbatical	12,772.00	12,772.00
23300 Capital Maintenance	118,201.75	113,045.79
23310 Windows	30.00	30.00
23400 Partner Church	8,233.07	8,383.34
23500 Prepaid Pledges	41,249.21	34,604.06
23575 Prepaid Contributions		
23600 Intern Fund	238.46	238.46
23610 Ministerial Search	616.22	616.22
23630 Membership Coordinator Fund		
25011 Memorial Fund	13,246.42	14,137.31
25012 Special Gifts	1,712.92	1,712.92
25020 Social Responsibility	4,416.13	4,660.83
25050 Staff Recognition Fund	1,574.60	1,270.05
27000 Other Custodial Accounts	0	0
27005 Auction Items	105.16	105.16
27010 Office Equipment Reserve		
27020 Bookstore	2,104.85	2,104.85
27024 Boston Trip Reserve	-6,366.16	1,328.89
27030 Music Reserve	7,920.37	7,920.37
27040 Landscape Reserve		
27050 Renovation Reserve		
27060 RE Reserve	10,903.84	7,634.39
27065 Sandwich Making	4,590.68	4,590.68
27067 Trinity Hot Lunch	1,365.68	1,506.09
27070 Women's Alliance Op Shop	25.00	25.00
27080 Caring Ministry Reserve	523.82	2,218.02
27090 Keyboard Reserve		
27100 Healthy Congregation Reserve	2,526.48	2,526.48
27110 PR / Marketing	996.49	1,246.49
27120 Library	100.00	100.00
27130 Men's Wellness Ministry	434.00	434.00
Total for 27000 Other Custodial Accounts	\$25,230.21	\$31,740.42
Total for 23000 Reserves	\$227,520.99	\$223,211.40
Total for Long-term Liabilities	\$227,520.99	\$223,211.40
Total for Liabilities	\$228,943.19	\$226,756.97

Statement of Financial Position Comparison

First Unitarian Church

As of March 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL	
	AS OF MARCH 31, 2025	AS OF MARCH 31, 2024 (PY)
Equity		
39000 General Fund--Unrestricted	94,671.49	129,485.70
Net Income	28,704.91	14,576.44
30000 Opening Bal Equity		
33000 Building Fund	0	0
33100 Building	1,051,647.44	1,051,647.44
33500 Building Improvements	2,376,965.91	2,376,965.91
Total for 33000 Building Fund	\$3,428,613.35	\$3,428,613.35
35000 Fund Balances--Restricted	0	0
35110 Endowment Fund	1,265,702.07	1,251,582.43
35200 Lewis-Wallis Intern Fund	541,454.31	515,006.68
35300 Clark Fund	212,421.02	202,045.19
35400 First Church Community Fund	192,614.67	187,560.85
35500 Dodson Fund - Prin	53,341.86	50,736.37
35520 Dodson Fund - Res	36,563.81	34,777.84
35600 Alliance Fund	54,000.00	
Total for 35000 Fund Balances--Restricted	\$2,356,097.74	\$2,241,709.36
Total for Equity	\$5,908,087.49	\$5,814,384.85
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$6,137,030.68	\$6,041,141.82

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:

Memorial Fund

In Honor of Cathy Rauch
In Memory of Alvin Vlietstra
In Honor of Nadine Vlistra
In Memory of Jane and Bill Ross
In Memory of Renna Chesla
In Memory of Dori Miller

Caring Fund

In Memory of Kimberly Parks
Anonymous

General Fund

Anonymous

First Church Community Fund

Anonymous

Staff Fund

Anonymous

Partner Church Fund

Anonymous

Endowment

In Memory of Dori Miller

Capital Maintenance Reserve

Anonymous

Secretary's Report

Submitted by Sidney Watson

Sustaining Members **200**

(Includes 1 Out-of-Town Members)

Associate Members **17**

New Members **8**

Marilyn Murillo

Lisa Richter

Bob Mai

Chris Tighe

Joe Katrosh

Peter Crumpler

Jennifer Whitaker

Laura Schuster

Reinstated **0**

Resignations **11**

Alyssa Morrison

Steve Jacobson

Denise Jacobson

Rob Meister

Heidi Meister

Brian Koebbe

Molly Koebbe

Emily Colton

Mark Johnson

Dorothea Mostello

Viveca Lane

Dropped From Active Membership **5**

Carol Wray

Ricardo Wray

Ed Schwarz

Hanley Chiang

Aimee Keener

Deaths **2**

Jim Stoien

Alvin Vlietstra*

**Memorial Garden Internment*

Weddings **0**

Child Dedications **0**

Faith Development Report

Submitted by Michele Grove,

Interim Director of Religious Education

I came on board as an interim religious education consultant with the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis in September 2024. My letter of agreement is through June 2025 and completes the following tasks (summarized).

1. To develop and implement a process in collaboration with the minister, staff, religious education committee and board which discerns the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis' **unique religious education identity** and **future vision for children and youth religious education.**
2. To collaborate with all those mentioned in #1 (and others as needed) to discern a plan to live into this vision. What resources are needed?
3. During the discernment period, I will provide ongoing support, training and administration for the religious education coordinator, religious education committee, children and youth religious education leaders, and families as they implement a children and youth religious education program. The following will be included in this ongoing support (this list mirrors the list in the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis job description for an interim religious educator):
4. To provide ongoing communication to the minister, board, and religious education committee about the progress of the interim religious education work. I will also keep the congregation apprised of the transition work including invitations for the full congregation to be involved.

Since this report was written on April 20, 2025, there are several items still in process. However, it has been a successful year and I believe that we will meet these goals. A report to the board, minister and religious education committee will outline the resources needed.

Here is an outline of the work:

1. I worked with Caitlin Hill and Deborah Cavanaugh Grant who co-chair the children and youth religious education committee to discern the work needed to keep children and youth religious education running for the year. Classes had already begun and the curriculum chosen. There were teams of volunteer teachers in place to build classes each week. The one thing missing was a religious education coordinator who could be on site to support volunteers and perform the magic needed to make religious education classes happen each week. Because this professional position could not be filled, three things occurred:
 1. Andrea Berin was able to come in 2-3 hours a week to help set up classes for each Sunday. She came once a month on Sunday in November, February, March, and April to support multi-generational worship or lead family worship.
 2. Deborah and Caitlin shouldered a great deal of responsibility for ensuring that classes were ready each week.
 3. I took on organizing curriculum for the Preschool and Middle School classes each week and ensured communication occurred with families. Andrea Berin made sure they had supplies.
2. Throughout the year, I also worked with Caitlin, Deborah and the Religious Education, worship committee, and minister to be sure special events were well

resourced. These include but are not limited to: The October Halloween Party, Cornbread Communion, The December Pageant, Pancake Breakfast, Easter Multi-generational worship, Easter canned food scavenger hunt, Volunteer appreciation, Religious Education Sunday (Future event) and End of the year party (future event).

3. Since we did not have a religious education professional onsite to support the religious education program, we developed a Sunday Superintendent program. Each week, a Sunday Superintendent supported volunteers, greeted new families, and made sure that the program ran smoothly. Their leadership and presence made a difference, and I am grateful for their work.
4. I worked with Anna Drendel who serves as one of two professional childcare providers each Sunday. Anna's presence and leadership with our youngest children and their families is a gift. She brings an artistic eye to the nursery and the program. She is also a non-anxious presence that helps children get the most out of their time in the nursery. During the year, we worked on a program and developing a space that stimulates children ages 0-5. Thank you, Anna, for your presence and your work.
5. The 2nd Child Care position was not filled and Aerin Wilke stepped in when volunteers were not available. Thank you, Aerin for being present with our children and being a part of Anna Drendel's team.
6. Religious education volunteers bring a wealth of talent and passion to our children and youth (ages 3 to 18). We utilized the Soul Matters Theme-based curriculum and enjoyed the creative learning opportunities each week. These volunteers brought care and compassion to the classes along with talents that made each week a good experience. You will hear the specific names of these volunteers at May 18th's multi-generational Religious Education Sunday Service. I encourage you to write a note of appreciation to several and let them know how much we appreciate the gifts they give.
7. In addition to the volunteers who work on Sunday morning, Deborah Cavanaugh Grant worked on the gardens to create a space that is pleasant for all and educational for our children. Jane Hoekelman continued her organizational work with curriculum and religious education supplies. The system Jane created is an envy to any Unitarian Universalist Congregation in the nation! A part of my work was to resource these volunteers and their work when needed. They deserve a lot of credit for the hours they provide and the talent they bring.
8. The main emphasis of my work this year is in establishing an understanding of religious education's history, identity and future. I was onsite in October, January and March to meet with religious education families, volunteers, and others who have insight into the program. We learned a great deal about our religious education history and identity. At the writing of this report, we are still compiling a complete understanding of our religious education future. By the end of June, a futures report will be available.
9. During my October, January and March visits, we held family gatherings and volunteer training sessions. These opportunities to build community and learn how to do this important work were vital to understanding this congregation's identity and future. It also provided each of us with the opportunity to express opinions, listen intently and reflect on a hopeful future. I enjoyed these gatherings and am grateful to all of those who took the time to be a part.
10. It was a gift that the congregation was in the midst of a future visioning process this year. I enjoyed being a part of the discernment and observing capable and

talented board leadership guide the congregation through this process. The congregation's vision will serve as a foundation for the religious education vision.

11. Even though the futures report is not complete, it was important to begin the search for the next religious education professional. I began the discernment about this position with Rev. Kim Mason prior to her sabbatical. In January, the work continued with Lynn Hunt, the Board, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee and Religious Education Committee. A Full-Time Director of Congregational Life position was created to live into a future that expands the religious education and membership services this congregation provides. At the writing of this report, the position has been posted, and a search committee has formed.

I am deeply grateful to all of those who create magic for and with this congregation's religious education program. Despite some of our challenges, it is clear that the people committed to religious education and the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis are dedicated, passionate and talented. The magic shines through and your witness to those who enter your doors and the community beyond your doors is a beautiful thing! Specific gratitude goes to the following:

1. Caitlin Hill and Deborah Cavanaugh Grant for leading religious education with talent and good spirit! You all did so much, and we are forever grateful.
2. Grace Munie who served as our representative on the Program Council and supported us in connecting us when the work was larger than our own department.
3. Rev. Kim Mason, Rev. Sabrina Trupia and Lynn Hunt for their ongoing commitment to the children, youth and families of this congregation. Working with them has been a pleasure and I am glad to have witnessed the gifts they bring to this community.
4. The Worship committee in tandem with the congregation's ministers. This comprehensive team ensures that children, youth and families are included in worship which is where they learn that they are part of a larger community of love and action.
5. Chuck Eby and the Board members. I attended most board meetings and observed a group of dedicated and passionate leaders. Their support of religious education, the interim process, and the future of lifespan religious education is a gift that will benefit the future.
6. All the religious education volunteers and religious education committee (who are not listed here but will be named and honored on religious education Sunday on May 18th). These volunteers bring Unitarian Universalist education and community to our children and youth. This is a gift beyond compare.

I have enjoyed my time with the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis and believe that you bring gifts to your members, friends, and community. Your ongoing witness will continue to bring gifts. I am better for knowing you and look forward to seeing how your future unfolds. Thank you for all the love you share.

Music Reports

Choir Director's Report Submitted by Joel Knapp

This was an unusual year for the choir. We started without an organist/pianist. It's hard to describe how hard it is for the choir to rehearse without an accompanist. But the choir powered through, and it was a joy to find a new organist/pianist in Allen Hoffman.

Allen had been the organist for a church with no choir for 35 years. I'm sure it was a challenge for him to step out of his comfort level and come to First U St Louis. He had to adjust to new job duties.

One unexpected duty was when I broke my ankle in mid-November. I couldn't come to rehearsals and Allen stepped up to fill in during my absence. The choir was incredibly supportive by working extra hard. In addition to Allen and the choir, Chris Kocher helped fill in to prepare the choir for our major work in December.

The major work, Vivaldi's Gloria, was conducted by Michael Mishra, Director of Orchestral Studies at SIUE. It is a challenging work, especially with my absence at rehearsals, but the choir had worked diligently, and the performance sounded lovely. I add my thanks and congratulations to the choir.

Then came Rev. Kim's sabbatical. I think that typically there is a significant

adjustment when the minister goes on sabbatical. From the choir's and my perspective, the adjustments were very minor. Rev. Sabrina Trupia served as our temporary minister and they were delightful. The Worship Committee stepped up and did a superb job.

All of that is to say that in the face of many difficult challenges, the choir proved to be resilient. They are talented, fun, and a joy to conduct. I look forward to Wednesday rehearsals and singing on Sundays. And we all look forward to our gatherings at Melanie and Tony Fathman's. We are thankful for all they do for our choir family.

In May, we will present Haydn's Kleine Organ Messe (Little Organ Mass). After that, they will take a well-deserved summer sabbatical.

Our choir is open to all. Everyone is welcome to come to a Wednesday rehearsal and check us out. No obligation.

Organist Report

Allen Hoffman joined us as the organist/pianist in early October. He has played on most Sundays, including on the major Music Sundays. His skilled playing has been appreciated by all.

Administration and Programming

Submitted by Lynn Yarrington Hunt

I continue to work part-time as I transition to full retirement in a few years. This year, though, with the resignation of Danielle Kozemczak I increased hours to assume the Communications portfolio. Thanks to Danielle's help, I now know how to use the design tool Canva which is fun and creative. In this capacity I have also begun working on a new website design for the church (along with input from the Church Council). We had worked on getting our current website updated at the beginning of the church and are now looking at design.

In a given week, most of my additional 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.

In the fall we received an unexpected and healthy increase to our church building insurance. With Kathy Wire's guidance, we were able to reduce it somewhat. Part of this required the completion of an inventory of church personal property which I worked on with the help of other staff members and various volunteers.

I am working with a task force (Karen Siegrist, Anna Drendel, Caitlin Hill and Sheryll Coulter) to reconfigure the old bookstore alcove off of Fellowship Hall into a family friendly lounge area.

I regularly interact with our various rental groups and am pleased to say that we are developing a new long term relationship with the organization Welcome Neighbor. This organization helps refugees with re-settlement in St. Louis and offers job training with cooking lessons. They are excited to take up residence in their new

home. Special thanks to Sherry Bassi for pointing out this opportunity.

During Rev. Mason's sabbatical I lead monthly staff meetings which I found to be productive and fruitful. It was a pleasure to support the Sabbatical Ministry of Rev. Trupia and the Interim Religious Education work of Michele Grove.

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 as we move into these turbulent times for our nation. Our Unitarian Universalist religion is truly a beacon of light in ours and our regions future.

Policy Board Committees

Committee on Ministry

The COM has met on a quarterly basis this year. The group has assisted Rev. Kim with various administrative topics and supports her continued growth and personal development. We will continue to meet quarterly and as needed. During Rev. Kim's sabbatical, the COM with Sabbatical Minister Rev. Sabrina Trupia. This year's committee members were: Mike Lunter, Frances Hoffman, Michael Hamtil, and Sue Ashwell. Kathy Wilke serves as Board liaison to the COM.

Submitted by Sue Ashwell

Personnel Committee

Members: Jama Dodson (Chair), Erin Milligan, Paula Hanssen, Betsy Grimm-Howell (resigned), Betty Neill (Board Liaison)

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt
Due to members' term completion (Larry Dusenbery) and relocation (Betsy Grimm-Howell), new members Erin Milligan and Paula Hanssen were welcomed to the committee. In addition, Betty Neill was appointed new Policy Board liaison. Two major goals were identified for the year: 1) Continuation of the update and revision to the Personnel Policies and 2) Support for recruitment of staff vacancies. The following summarizes what was accomplished:

- **Personnel Policies** – The last major revision of the policies was done in 2011. Many sections were out of date or no longer in use. Consequently, the update was a significant undertaking. A rough draft was developed in September 2024. Over the year the draft was reviewed and perfected with a final draft completed and submitted to the

Policy Board in November 2024. The new policies were approved by the Policy Board in early 2025.

- **Support for Staff Recruitment** – Due to the resignations of our Organist/Music Director and RE/Communications Director, the Committee provided support to the staff in developing strategies for filling those vacancies. The Music and RE Committees were very involved in those efforts as well. After much discussion by all parties, a new position "Director of Congregational Life" was envisioned. The Personnel Committee was asked to prepare a job description for that position which was completed in March and approved by the Policy Board, allowing the RE Committee to begin the recruitment process in April.

I want to thank the Committee and Staff for the diligence and consideration they demonstrated in our work this year. Working together as a team was not only pleasurable, but made for much better results for the church.

Submitted by Jama Dodson, Committee Chair

Sabbatical Committee

Preparations for Reverend Mason's Sabbatical began in Spring when I was still Board President. A second promise I made to this year's Board was I would chair the Sabbatical Committee to make sure we had a plan for the four months Reverend Mason would be away. I began the process by reaching out to members of the Board, Worship Committee, and Care and

Concerns. With several volunteers from the various groups, we created the Sabbatical Committee (SC).

The first question was whether to hire a Sabbatical Minister, or to have a series of guest speakers fill the pulpit during Reverend Mason's absence. Reverend Mason made it known to us that Reverend Sabrina Trupia, who was declared our Community Minister in 2024, was available. We reached out to them and they were more than happy to serve. The only concern was a prior commitment they had to an Iowa congregation once a month. We checked with the Worship Committee who were happy to coordinate the monthly lay-led services with Reverend Sabrina's schedule. After one or two quick meetings, we determined Reverend Trupia was our best option and offered them the job.

In the fall, Reverend Mason assisted in making a colorful brochure explaining what a "Sabbatical" is, how long it would last, and who should be contacted in Reverend Mason's absence. As we approached the start date, everyone was well informed of the sabbatical and was ready when it began.

Reverend Trupia has been a revelation on the pulpit. They say what is on their mind, express a strong point of view, while still exhibiting great humor and humility in their worship services. The SC immediately got good, positive feedback from both the Worship Committee who worked with Reverend Trupia on the services, as well as the congregation who were enthralled by their reflections and sermons.

As many of you know, Reverend Trupia returned to Sicily in early April to be with their ill mother. Even though Easter was approaching, the SC told them they could stay in Sicily if they needed to grieve or attend to their mother's affairs. Despite their mother passing away, Reverend Trupia returned to plan it (with the help of the awesome Worship Committee!), and gave reflections in a fantastic Easter service.

Overall, the SC has been ecstatic on the work of Reverend Trupia and are excited to see what new trouble they can get into for the years ahead. Members of the committee were: Sue Fazio, Margaret Weck, Church Eby and Larry Dusenbery

Submitted by Steve Wilke, Chair

Finance & Stewardship Cluster Reports

Finance Committee

The 24-25 year was somewhat subdued, with the only major needs beyond the budget arising from projects to maintain the building. Plans are coming together for a fundraiser late in this fiscal year or early in the next to support ongoing capital projects as outlined by the facilities committee. With input from investment advisor, Jeff Cary, the committee maintained a favorable allocation of the church's invested funds.

Canvass Committee

Ahoy! Our 2025 Canvass Theme was "Our vision, Our Future." Our logo used a map and compass image, and we wore sailor hats to make our canvass announcements.

As of 4/26/2025, 127 households pledged \$405,170.00 to support First Unitarian in the fiscal year starting July 1, 2025. We received 3 new pledges. 54 pledges were new or increased pledges; 12 were decreased pledges; and 62 were the same amount as last year. A profound Thank You to everyone who pledged. Pledges at every amount are important for the health of the church.

Many people have asked if we met our goals. We set two goals. Goal 1- \$450,000. We selected that stretch goal after conferring with church leadership, who felt that this amount would allow us to expand the scope of the Religious Education director position to Director of Congregational Life. Despite our promise to do a sailor dance if we met this goal, we did not.

Goal 2: \$425,000 – to match last year's canvass result. We did not reach this goal either. However, while writing this report we noticed that last year \$15,000 in additional pledges were received between the writing of the annual canvass report and the final total. If you are reading this and have not yet

pledged - just think- You and some others could get us to Goal 2 – and increase the congregational support for the Director of Congregational Life position. 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. And don't forget that sailor dance!

First Unitarian currently has 176 households (members, associate members and contributing friends). 126 of those, plus the Women's Alliance, have pledged so far this year. 50 of those households did not return a pledge card. Participation level was lower this year – 71% compared to last year's 85% (a 10+ year record).

This year's canvass took place in a period of deep post-election social and financial uncertainty. Several longtime supporters of the church have moved out of the area for work or to be closer to family. Nonetheless, despite these losses in our church family, First Unitarian's members and friends did pledge over \$400,000 – only the third time this has happened since 2013.

During the 5-week Canvass, affirmations were given by Lisa Richter, Cathy Rauch, Michael Hamtil, and Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant. We served a soup lunch after church on kickoff Sunday. All who pledged received soaps in the shape of a compass, and a thank-you bookmark made by the children of the church. Throughout the Canvass season, we held drawings for new pledges and increased pledges. Winners received: a Chalice (with a candle that was handmade by Rev. Kim from spent candle wax from church chalice lightings); a lemon-topped cheesecake made by Sheryll Coulter, a hand knitted hat made by Cathy Rauch, and a loaf of homemade sourdough bread made by Tom Finan.

Looking ahead to future Canvasses, Erin Milligan, last year's co-chair, recruited someone to learn the ropes with her this

year. Subsequently that person relocated out of town. Emily Jaycox, a seasoned co-chair, agreed to work with Erin. Emily plans to serve next year and recruit a co-chair who is new to this role, returning to the leadership apprenticeship model proposed by Rev. Kim's and echoed by Steve Wilke. Rev. Sabrina Trupia and the worship team were very supportive about including the canvass in the services. The whole canvass would not have gone nearly as smoothly without Lynn Hunt's deep knowledge of every aspect of the church, and the entire staff's support of Canvass activities.

**Submitted by Erin Milligan and
Emily Jaycox, Canvass Co-Captains**

Facilities Cluster Reports

FACILITIES CLUSTER REPORT FOR CHURCH YEAR 2024-2025

In previous years the Facilities Cluster has stated, tongue-in-cheek, that its mission has been, "To keep the roof up and the grass down." And to a certain extent that was true: With limited funds our cluster saw its task as a steward with the task of maintaining the physical plant of the First Unitarian campus to the best of our ability.

In the past couple of years – and especially the 2024-2025 church year – our dedicated Facilities Cluster members have evolved into a proactive role, realizing that it falls on our group to help the church be ready for whatever comes next.

We have taken a proactive role because that is what we believe is called for. All around St. Louis, and indeed all around the nation, congregations are wrestling with aging physical plants and declining membership and/or relevance in their communities. The members and leadership of First Unitarian have elected to face the future head on, exploring a bold vision for our future. We

want our campus to be ready for whatever comes next.

A Time of Assessment

Many of you in the congregation are aware of ongoing issues that have been identified and addressed in the past year. (We will cover those later in this report). What you may not be aware of is that some of these issues have existed and been discussed for decades.

Members of our cluster, with the assistance of our liaison Administrator Lynn Hunt, have spent the past year as "historians" and "archeologists" – ferreting out old drawings, bringing in consultants and contractors for advice, even physically taking things apart. Thanks to Jane Hoekelman for researching 20 years of board minutes ferreting out obscure documents and tracking our activities. Thanks to Mike Bray for his engineering expertise and countless hours shepherding consultants and repairs..

And thanks to Clint Cruse for his counsel, guidance for the chairperson, and for always making sure our meetings are stocked with chocolate and Pinot Noir.

Some Things We've Learned

Drainage Systems: Recently someone submitted as a “Joy” for Sunday service celebration the fact that we’d had major spring rains without the floods of recent years. We have spent the last year tracing down these issues. Our drainage system is, in one sense, as old as our 1917 sanctuary. Sanitary and storm lines are one and the same in some places. A main artery bisects our campus, running from the northeast sanctuary (under the Hosmer) across the Memorial Garden, and to the street. We have run cameras through the lines and cleared a great deal of blockage using a “hydro jet” (high-pressure water cutting system). This included a massive tree root ball under the walk in the front entrance. This effort is far from complete. A “roof drain” on the RE Building is actually a stack vent that was installed incorrectly and not according to plan when the RE building was built. With the massive storms we have experienced this is part of why we had water shooting up from the floor drains in restrooms. Cleaning out the lines has bought us time, but we are exploring new plans to contain the increased water flows during storms, segregate them from sanitary lines, and divert them to the grounds and street.

Heating Systems: We have been addressing a variety of issues related to remedying past missteps and attempting to keep congregants, renters, and staff comfortable. A number of these issues have to do with equipment which was improperly installed and/or improperly maintained in the past. We have installed digital thermostats which are capable of being remotely monitored. We have begun evaluating remotely-monitored digital thermostats in critical areas to help insure comfort and to reduce wasted energy.

The heat pump system that was installed when the Hope Chapel was built and replaced when its copper was stolen in 2011 has burned through an inordinate number of expensive compressors. We had

theories as to why this was happening, but regardless, a recent week-long leak testing of the entire system has allowed us to address issues with the heat pump system for the time being.

The boiler system that feeds the radiators in the Sanctuary building was improperly installed due to the installation contractor going out of business and the commissioning contractor not checking the first contractor’s work thoroughly. This was subsequently missed over the years. When we were having issues with the boiler failing to fire up, Cluster member Mike Bray noticed that we were missing a backflow preventer, a critical piece of the system designed to stop boiler water from entering the building’s potable water system. So, we had a backflow preventer installed. The system is, overall, functioning well for the time being.

The lobby heat will need to be addressed, as the lobby heating “system” is a radiator suspended in the wooden chase that runs the height of the lobby atrium with a blower supposedly directing hot air through the lobby. We have attempted to repair the radiator to no avail. Space heaters for now until we arrive at a more permanent solution.

Roofs: After going through the process of soliciting multiple bids on the RE Building – all different based on the take of the bidding contractor, we contracted a roofing consultant to assess our roofing situation holistically. Based on his report, we contracted to have the West Sanctuary roof (low roof by the parking lot) replaced and new flashings installed. That contractor also did work on the soffit of the Hope Chapel.

We are waiting our turn for our slate contractor (there are very few) to

replace slates on the Sanctuary roof and install a new copper gutter on the South Sanctuary wall over the window wells. We also have some caulking to do on the joint between the Hope Chapel and the RE Building.

Plumbing: Sewer gas smell was a problem in the AV room for years, but the source was not clear. Plumbers connected a smoke-generating machine to the sewer line which led us to hidden damage from the installation of data networking cables. Once found, easily fixed. There is also an ongoing sewer gas issue in the lobby, particularly the upper level. If this is not resolved by fixing the RE bathroom vent stack and roof drain, the smoke test might be used again in the lobby and RE building, which might lead us to fun mitigations like knocking holes in walls to do repairs.

Library: The library had been leaking for two decades when this iteration of the Cluster inherited it. In fact, someone had drilled a hole through the South foundation wall of the sanctuary and run a dehumidifier line out through it. The library had mold and failing lead paint in it. We hired a remediation contractor who removed the mold and moldy furnishings. The Library Committee cleaned books and removed them temporarily.

The issues in the library, as nearly as we can determine, stem from earth that was sloped in a way as to direct water at the South wall foundation, window wells that have separated from the building and are not maintained regularly, and a failed copper gutter above said window wells which dates to 1917. We are addressing all of this with a French drain, replacement gutter, sloping the berm away from the building, and covering the window wells to keep out leaves and debris. The Library Committee agrees with us that only when we can be assured that the

library is going to remain dry should we proceed with plastering, painting, replacing shelving and furniture.

Grounds: We had two workdays and a lot of other volunteer hours that have kept the grounds in relatively good condition under the direction of Karen Siegrist. The Memorial Garden has been addressed due to proactive work of Stan Birge, who never saw a weed that he didn't pull.

There are many other issues that the Facilities Cluster is addressing from sidewalks to door locks, to retrofitting fluorescent fixtures with LEDs. But what is important now is the long-term game plan. Based on information that we shared with them on best practices for congregations regarding campus facility strategy, the Policy Board asked us to make a recommendation for a consultant to prepare a campus status assessment. After approaching five consultants and securing two proposals (one who had agreed to submit dropped out) we are convinced that the report needs to extend beyond the nuts-and-bolts that our Cluster has been able to dig out in the last couple of years.

Triaging issues on an aging campus with no map as to short- and long-term priorities for campus use would not be sound stewardship on our part. We suggest that the consultant that we recommend should dovetail his efforts with the Board's development of the long-term vision for the congregation from the get-go. We offer to help in every way we can with that process.

That begins with our commitment to conduct a working retreat of the Facilities Cluster. In that retreat we intend to – as much as possible – catalog our findings on campus condition, issues, documents and historic costs for the Board and consultant. We believe that the somewhat daunting path we have trod over the past year can assist in streamlining the process of visioning a future for our campus. **Submitted by, Tom Finan, Facilities Cluster Chair**

Landscaping Committee

Landscaping was overseen by Karen Siegrist, Lisa Cary and Stan Birge. Regular Gardening Days were held in the Fall and Spring. A major accomplishment this year was the restoration of the Memorial Garden due to the efforts of Stan Birge. It had been overgrown with mint for several years.

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-six 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.

The C and C Team assisted with one memorial reception, made and delivered holiday breads to thirty recipients in December and delivered colorful kalanchoe houseplants to 32 recipients on Flower Sunday. We continued our practices of sending cards, providing meals, delivering groceries, providing transportation, and making phone calls.

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

Submitted by Team Coordinators: Judith Crouch, Karen Siegrist, and Gene Rubin

Film Group

The First U Film Group is a church "affinity group" which is composed of three sub-groups of ten to fifteen members. These groups meet, usually monthly, at a

convenient time to discuss current or classic films. The films are viewed independently in theaters or via streaming and the discussions are held in members' homes and/or over ZOOM. The meetings usually include sharing food (appetizers, desserts, or potluck suppers) and occasionally are held at restaurants. If you are interested in starting a film group or joining one of the existing groups, please contact Judi Crouch, coordinator.

Submitted by Judi Crouch

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, hats, or shawls. The Maker's 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.

In 2025, we enjoyed a high level of member engagement. We have 15 people on our email list and the average attendance at meetings was around 8. We have had several new members join in the last year. Newcomers wanting to learn skills such as knitting or crocheting 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.

The highlight of the year was the “Wrapped in Love” scarf project. Maker’s Ministry and other church members created over 70 scarves and hats for community donation. On MLK Day, scarves were draped over the fence, at the Kingshighway /Waterman corner, with a “free scarves” sign. All the items were gone within a few days and the event was considered a great success. We hope to make the “Wrapped in Love” project an annual tradition.

In addition, during 2025, Makers Ministry provided 6 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 evolving 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

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee started the 2024-2025 church year with six people and ended the year with eleven! The committee currently consists of the following people, many of whom are themselves new members of First Unitarian Church: Tom Crouch, Peter Crumpler, Peggy Feinberg, Tom Finan, Jan Herzog, Joe Katrosh, Kevin Kellogg, Erin Milligan, Lisa Richter, Chris Tighe, and Gwenne Hickman.

During the 2024-2025 church year, the Membership Committee hosted a three-session Membership Class in both the fall and spring, as well as four Newcomer Chats in the fall and five in the spring. We also provided baked/bought items in Fellowship Hall to celebrate the end of the canvass on March 30. Finally, we have welcomed eight new members into our church:

Lisa Richter
Bob Mai
Marilyn Murillo
Chris Tighe
Joe Katrosh
Peter Crumpler
Jen Whitaker
Laura Schuster

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

The Membership Committee’s final duty of the year will be to plan and hold the annual Fellowship Dinner on Saturday, May 31. This year the Fellowship Dinner will also include the recognition of new members, which will make the evening even more of a church-wide event.

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 dues of \$30 a year, investment funds, donations, fundraising events, and proceeds of the Opportunity Shop (OP Shop). We currently have 32 members.

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.

The Alliance sponsors 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 in Fellowship Hall and Zoom). There is one business meeting per month, usually in

conjunction with an in-person lunch meeting.

On the second and fourth Tuesdays our in-person meetings have a program following the brown bag lunch. This year, programs have included speakers, field trips, group activities, and tours. We are planning a luncheon for area UU women's groups in May.

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. There were no applicants for the Alliance scholarship for the 2024-25 year.

The Alliance continues maintaining the Little Free Pantry. We stock the LFP every Sunday and during the week of each month that contains the 2nd Tuesday. We donate items, cash and time to maintain this worthwhile project. We have also contributed \$2,000 to the annual Canvass, \$400 to the Partner Church Scholarship Fund and \$400 to the First Church Community Fund.

This year, the Alliance closed all the external investment accounts held in the Alliance name. The money was moved to the church's pooled investment account, where it will be held as the Women's Alliance Fund. Control of the fund remains with the Women's Alliance.

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

Our meetings and programs are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Submitted by Sheryll Coulter, President

Young Adult Group

The Young Adult group was led by Sam Rezansoff. Programming will resume in the fall with Luke Steffan

Programming Cluster Reports

Adult Religious Education

Programs offered this year included:

A Call to Connection - Rev. Kim Mason
Class and Classism in UU - Fran Hoffman
and Annette Peterson

Membership Orientation - Gwenne
Hickman, Erin Milligan and Lisa Richter
Love at the Center Book Club - Sherry Bassi
and Erin Milligan

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 celebrates the various cycles of the
year (solstices, etc.) They collaborated with
STL Witches for a few of their celebrations.

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. I would like to take this
opportunity to thank everyone who donated
flowers this year.

I particularly want to thank Pamela Geppert
and Tom Finan for contributing flowers on
multiple occasions this year. Poinsettias
purchased by members and friends added to
decorations in the sanctuary during the
winter holidays. Special thanks also go to
Cathy Rauch for creating the beautiful
Thanksgiving cornucopia and Karen Albin
for creating two special chancel
arrangements.

There are almost always open Sundays to
donate flowers, so if you are interested,
please contact flowers@firstuustlouis.org.

**Submitted by Dottie Kinscherf,
coordinator**

John Learned Bookshop

This program was officially discontinued
this year by the Church Council. The space
is in the process of being reconfigured into a
family friendly lounge space.

John Learned Library

The Library Committee continued to be in
transition during the 2024-2025 church year.
Members primarily focused on preparing the
library space for work by the Facilities
Cluster to remediate ongoing moisture
issues exacerbated by a flood in July 2022.

Preparations involved going through all
cabinets and drawers, many of which had
not been examined in detail for over a
decade. All items in the library, including
books, had to be packed up and moved
before remediation work could begin. Some
furniture will need to be replaced as mold
has become an issue. We look forward to
opening a newly refurbished library
sometime during the 2025-2026 year. In the
meantime, 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. However, books are currently
unavailable for circulation.

The Committee would like to thank Jane
Hoekelman for her help in packing up books
in the library and the entire Facilities Cluster
for their work toward resolving moisture
issues that have plagued the library for many
years.

Committee members for 2024-2025
included Sarah Dashner, Dottie Kinscherf,
Joel Minor, Gene Rubin, and new members
Joe Katrosh and Chris Tighe. The committee
has also been the beneficiary of valuable
counsel from former chairperson, Terry
Yokota.

**Submitted by Dottie Kinscherf,
chairperson**

Love at the Center Book Club

Erin Milligan and Sherry Bassi began a new book club in March 2025. Each month's book pick will reflect one of the UU Love at the Center values- generosity, pluralism, interdependence, transformation, equity, and justice. Interest in the group has been high with 10 members attending the first meeting. Exploring the theme of generosity, the initial book selection was *The Serviceberry* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. In April, exploring the theme of pluralism, *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyaasi was read. Members will rotate selecting a book and serving as a discussant for the book. Meetings are held by Zoom monthly on Sunday evening at 7PM. Newcomers are welcome to join at any time.

Submitted by Sherry Bassi

Religious Education Committee

This year, as the Religious Education Committee, we strived to work on keeping the programs for the children at the church going and thriving with the help of Michele Townsend Grove, our Interim Religious Education Consultant. The committee consisted of these committee members:

- Caitlin Hill, co-chair
- Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, co-chair
- Sarah Vaughn
- Amie Ford
- Rebecca Bolen

We would meet once a month via Zoom to discuss and work on programs for the children. During these meetings, Michele would update us on the work she was doing for the program and discuss what Andrea Berin was doing for the classrooms while she was there 2-3 hours a week. We would also discuss plans for the curriculum in the classrooms and review the outcomes of past RE events, as well as plan future RE events.

Here is a list of the events we implemented this year:

- Fall RE Open House, where children, parents, and teachers got together to discuss the future of the classes and have fun making crafts and playing games.
- RE Teacher Retreat, where teachers from the classrooms gathered to discuss rules, regulations, and classroom goals for the year.
- Halloween Party, where the kids had fun playing Halloween games and making crafts.
- Cornbread Communion Preparation, in which parents and children got together to make the cornbread that the congregation would enjoy the next day.
- The December Pageant, where the children and the adults came together to perform a Christmas play.
- Pancake Breakfast, where the youth group and middle school students came together to make pancakes and raise money for the youth group.
- Easter Canned Good Hunt, where children hunted for canned goods to donate to the food shelter.

Events we will be doing in the next month before the Religious Education takes a break for the summer:

- Volunteer Appreciation, where we will take the time to thank all the excellent teachers and helpers who helped us throughout the year.
- Religious Education Sunday, where we discuss with the congregation what the children have learned throughout the year in their Religious Education classes.
- End-of-the-Year Party, where we will play games and have fun with the children to celebrate a successful year.

Many thanks to all the people who helped on the committee and in the classrooms, and especially to Michele, who kept everything running smoothly. We are excited about next year and what the future holds, both for the children's religious education and possible religious education for adults.

Submitted by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant and Caitlin Hill

Worship Committee

2025 Worship Committee Annual Report

Worship is a way to connect with others and create a shared emotional experience.

Worship is a way to explore how individual lives fit into a larger whole.

Worship is a way to nurture the spirit and search for truth.

Worship is a way to learn to live with more wisdom, compassion, and connection.

Worship is a way to mark important human milestones.

The Worship Committee page on the church website begins this way. You can see more at the link -

<https://www.firstuustlouis.org/worshipping/worship-committee>.

The Worship Committee consists of the minister and volunteers from First Unitarian Church of St. Louis. Committee members come from different backgrounds, adhere to different theological identities, share different talents and strengths; but, we are all united in our goal to bring meaningful worship experiences to our congregation each Sunday and at other special times during our congregational year. Our members do this through our support and collaboration with our minister, church staff and through interactions with our church community.

This year there was a good deal of movement in the worship committee membership. We started the year with a Worship Retreat on August 17th. All 10 members were in attendance - Tom Finan,

Pamela Geppert, Dwight Homer, Adam Lunter, Mike Lunter, Rev. Kim Mason, Annette Peterson plus new members, Sue Fazio, Scott Sinclair and Steve Wilke. By October we had two more new members, Roz Cook and Nita Penfold. Unfortunately we had to say goodbye to Scott Sinclair who moved to the Kansas City area. In January, Rev. Sabrina took over for Rev. Kim as our Sabbatical minister. Then, Good News - Adam Lunter had a great job opportunity that -Bad News - required Adam and Mike Lunter to move to Chicago. We are now 9 members strong.

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). Our lay-leaders have done a remarkable job bringing a variety of views and inspirations to worship using our Soul Matters themes for the church year. On committee Sundays, we collaborate with our church staff, Lynn Hunt and Augustine Underwood; music staff, Allen Hoffman and Joel Knapp; Michele Grove, Interim Director of RE; 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 busy! The big event/challenge this year has been the planned sabbatical of Rev. Kim Mason from January through the end of April. Gratitude to Steve Wilke and Sue Fazio who did double duty as members of the Worship Committee and the Sabbatical Committee. We are fortunate to have Rev. Sabrina Trupia as our Sabbatical Minister. Their sermons were a highlight of each well-planned, inspiring service during Rev. Kim's sabbatical. Rev. Sabrina will continue to work with First U as our Affiliated Community Minister.

The Worship Committee changed the monthly meeting to the second Thursday of each month. The change to Thursdays made it possible to schedule a full two hour meeting. This made it possible for Rev. Kim to start a new program - *Worship for Transformation* training by WorshipWeb's Rev. Erika Hewitt. This training for Worship Arts teams offers a deep dive into what makes worship transformative. We haven't been as consistent as we would like with this training but plan to continue into the coming year.

This year we wanted to emphasize the difference between our time of worship and church business. In order to have more time for worship, announcements are made 5-10 minutes before the start of the service. Announcements are also shown on the sanctuary screen, on the livestream before the service and in the church e-News.

Another focus this year has been on how we can provide a true multigenerational worship experience. The committee has worked with Michele Grove, Interim DRE, and our RE volunteers to enact a more inclusive and interactive experience for the children in the sanctuary on Sundays. The role of ritual and music in worship and the benefit of participating at all age levels will be further discussed.

We have been working to coordinate our Story/Time for All ages with our RE teachers. The intent is to keep the time short enough so that RE teachers have sufficient time with their students. Steve Wilke has been very active in finding stories and readers for the services. We are working to develop multigen services that keep both children and adults involved. One example, on Easter Sunday, the children stayed for the whole service and had a part to play in building an altar. Two children were also up on the 'stage' making music during the extended reading of the story.

In October, there was a Worship Workshop for Worship Committee Members and

Worship Assistants. The workshop started with a little food and fellowship in the Dodson room at 11:30AM. We moved into the Sanctuary and covered a number of topics including Announcements, practical advice for Worship Assistants, Safety information (Fire and Evacuation) Accessing Joys and Concerns, Worship Scripts, Setting the tone for worship.

There has been a lot of practical training this year and many of our members have become proficient at organizing services from the ground up. It's been amazing to see the amount of collaboration between the committee members - not to mention inspiration and talent. This worship team along with a group of talented worship assistants have been instrumental in providing many meaningful worship experiences throughout the year. Between sabbatical time, weather events, illness, family pressures, and the ups and downs of our committee membership, the worship team has met many challenges with skill and with love at the center.

Submitted by Pamela Geppert, Worship Committee Chair

Outreach & Social Action Cluster Reports

Social Justice Committee

Members-Margaret Weck, Fran Hoffman, Lisa Ross, Rosemary Lawton, Dean Burns, Sheryll Coulter, Lisa Richter, Susan Lammert, Donald Jeffries, Kimberly Perry, Kevin Kellogg, Christina Tigie, Kay Dusenbury, and Annette Peteson.

This year's accomplishments:

Combining The Toward Justice Committee and the Social Responsibility Committee in order to communicate and coordinate our activities.

We held a three-part class on classism led by Fran Hoffman and Annette Peterson.

Expansion of the Black Lives Matter to include all marginalized identities referred to as Human Rights Matter.

Hosted a Respect MO voters Town Hall .
Expanded our partnership with Tabernacle Community Development Corporation with members of First UU volunteering in the

First Church Community Fund

The First Church Community Fund (FCCF) is an endowment created in 1985 by one of our late members, Renni Shuter, to encourage our congregation's involvement in social action. Through annual microgrants, the Fund committee seeks to highlight and support good work done by community nonprofits serving the poor, unhoused and marginalized in our community. Fund guidelines prioritize grants to smaller nonprofits serving St. Louis City clients and those with limited sources of funding but eligibility extends to nonprofits in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Each July the FCCF committee issues a Request for Proposal for grants funded through endowment income; this year's grants had a maximum of \$750 each. Recipients were announced during the October 20th church service followed by a "Meet and Greet" with agency representatives in Fellowship Hall.

Recipients included:

Nonprofit

Grant Focus

All Nana's Kids Closet

Purchase of children's winter gloves

Food pantry and the Scholarship initiative as well as clean-up efforts in that neighborhood.

Designated collection recipients this year are: Tabernacle CDC, Welcome Neighbor, Trinity Hot Lunch, FCCF, Unicef, Partner Church, STL Food Bank, MCU, Gateway 180, Southside Childhood Center, UUSC, Little Free Pantry, Prison Performing Arts, All Among Us, Food Outreach, Gateway Housing First, Tabernacle CDC Scholarship Search Initiative,

Alliance Scholarship, St Martha's Hall, and Wellston Loop.

Submitted by Cathy Rauch, Chair

AmeriCorps STL	Facility improvements at its Soulard winter shelter to enhance services to the unhoused
Cornerstone Center for Early Learning	Short-term childcare scholarships for families in crisis
Crime Victim Center	Translation services for non-English speaking clients
Grace and Peace Fellowship	Gap funds for clients moving from its winter shelter to housing
Healing Action Network	Funds for client hotel stays and safe transportation
Immigrant Help English Learning Program (IHELP)	Educational materials for its adult and youth classes
Metro Trans Umbrella Group (MTUG)	Food pantry supplies
The Covering House	Clothing, personal care and toiletry items for youth clients in residential care
Unleashing Potential	Infant formula for families in the Strengthening Resilient Families program
Walker Scottish Rite Clinic for Childhood Learning Disorders	Updated testing, screening, and evaluation materials
Welcome Neighbor	Grocery gift cards for newly arrived immigrants

The FCCF committee engages in fund raising throughout the year to ensure visibility for the Fund and its long-term viability. It does this through the fall Designated Collection and Spring “Goodies for Good” bake sale and raffle. These efforts, along with donations, raised approximately \$2300 this church year. The FCCF committee appreciates our congregation’s ongoing generous support.

Submitted by Rosemary Lawton, Chair

The First Church Community Fund Committee:

Rosemary Lawton, Chair. Members: Cathy Brown, Lori Calcaterra, Jama Dodson, Kay Dusenbery, Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Julia Hart, Donald Jeffries, Sharon Klein, Wanda Manhanke, Pam Gempel, Margaret Weck and Laura Zacher

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, Gwenne Hickman, Robert Kokenyesi (Co-Chair), Mike Nolan, Kimberly Perry (Co-Chair), Nadine Vlietstra, Carol Watson, John Watson, and Laura Zacher.

The committee began the year with a potluck at the Zacher’s home September 14 at which we planned the Partner Church

Sunday service. Robert continues to produce a newsletter to bring together the UUA Transylvanian partnerships. It includes information about the Hungarian Unitarian Church and Transylvanian life. Members of the former UUPCC (UUA Partnership Committee) have been periodically meeting via ZOOM to exchange information. Robert will be traveling to Csókfalva to represent our congregation at the installation of Rev. Noemi Tamási as accredited minister. He will be bringing gifts from the church Makers Ministry for Rev. Tamási including a stole created by Cathy Rauch. The committee raised church-wide awareness to the partner church by setting up an informational table on three Sundays to see the historical timeline of the Hungarian Unitarian Church, location of Transylvania on a Europe map, slideshow from the 2024 pilgrimage, and history of Csokfalva and by asking the congregation to sign cards for our partner church minister on the occasion of her consecration as a minister, on the occasion of her marriage, and at Christmas.

Several successful fundraising events were held during the year, including the holiday bake sale Sunday December 15 and designated collections 11/17/24 (Partner Church Sunday) and 7/13/25. 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.

First Church Committee members Kimberly, Carol, Judi, Robert, and Mike conducted a service November 17 with the title "Shalom from Transylvania." Our Partner Church minister Rev. Tamási sent a video prayer. The sermon explored how expressions of love between the people of Csókfalva and our own congregation provide repair and restoration for all. The service began with playing a recording of the Csókfalva church bells. It included music of Hungarian Unitarian Bela Bartok played by First Church organist Allen Hoffman, the duet

"Székely Blessing" sung by Kimberly and Pamela Geppert and accompanied by Jeanette Myers, the story "The Missing Piece" (Silverstein), and Hungarian goodies after church.

Funds raised by the committee support student scholarships for Csókfalva church youth to attend a Unitarian High School (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 Rev. Tamási's meager salary and paying dues to the International UUA.

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

Submitted by Co-Chair Kimberly Perry

St. Louis Foundation for Children

St. Louis Unitarian 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 \$290,900 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, Steve Smidowicz, and Kathy Wilke. Rev Kim Mason is an ex officio member.

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

Welcoming Congregations

This group participated in Tower Grove Pride this past year.