

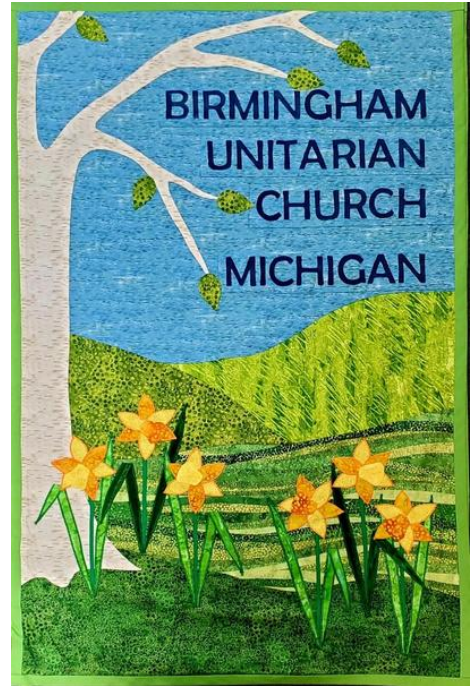
BUC

Birmingham Unitarian Church

A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Annual Report

2023-2024



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Minister's Report

Rev. Eric Posa, Targeted Minister

With the departure of your settled minister, Rev. Mandy Beal, in mid-October 2023, BUC entered a time of transition which will continue into the near future. The first stage of that transition was a period of time with no minister. For most of autumn and the first half of winter, the BUC Board assumed all executive functions, and all programmatic functions shifted to staff and ministry teams. Many lay leaders deserve commendation for stepping up to take on more than they normally would've had to.

Also during this time, the board reached out to the UUA's Transitions Office for assistance in locating a short-term minister to serve the congregation until an interim minister could begin in August 2024. The Board chose to maintain executive functions during this period, rather than the minister, who would be charged to focus on worship and pastoral care. About the same time, I became available. Things moved relatively quickly, and my spouse and I moved to Michigan in late January 2024. I began serving BUC as "Targeted Minister" on February 1, and my service will conclude just before the 4th of July. (The name is NOT meant to indicate that anyone has targeted me as a minister, but rather that I am working with you for a targeted period of time, and helping to target the issues that can help the congregation move forward during its transitional time.)

After arriving, I held two dozen meetings – mostly 1-on-1 meetings, with a few exceptions – with BUC staff, lay leaders, and others knowledgeable about the church. I've been preaching three sermons per month, meeting monthly with the Board, Worship Associates, and Pastoral Care, and meeting weekly for worship planning, as well as with staff: both as a group, and individually with those I supervise. (Since the Board currently holds executive functions, they supervise administrative staff, and I supervise program staff.) I've also prepared a 3,000-word report of initial findings for the Board, researched trends in how UU congregations' membership numbers, RE enrollments, and budget amounts have changed over time, attended a clergy study group on "The Future of Ministry" that partially addressed issues currently confronting BUC, met individually with several

members and a couple other committees and teams regarding various topics, as well as advised the Interim Minister Search Committee on their search and fielded inquiry calls from prospective interim ministers.

I will continue this work over the next eight weeks (as of this writing) until the conclusion of my time with you. Also, I am offering a four-session workshop series on setting boundaries in May.

I have deeply appreciated my time in service with this church and wish you the best in the future.

Board of Trustees Report

Andrew Schreck, *President, Board of Trustees*

This has been a year that will be remembered in the history of BUC. The departure of our senior minister, Rev. Mandy Beal, in October was unexpected and added a challenge to our agenda moving forward. Anytime a minister departs it is a major event and a chance for the church to take stock of who they are and where they want to go in the future. The issues surrounding our separation with Rev. Mandy are complex, and we have not yet begun to unpack them. This is work I hope we will engage in with our Interim Minister in the upcoming years.

Our goal as a Board was to work on the ongoing operating deficit, being transparent and communicative, completing several initiatives that had begun in previous years, and working on a plan for the campus, among other items. In the fall we were joined by Mark Ewert, a stewardship consultant, who met with us and helped us to see better the opportunities and challenges we face. Following Mark's visit, the Board decided to not move forward with a popular plan for solar panels on the church, and instead focus on long-standing budget and maintenance concerns. This work has continued with the creation of the Facilities Task Force who have developed several recommendations for the church moving forward.

The Board held seven town hall meetings this church year, an unprecedented level of access, transparency, and commitment to communication. These town halls

covered topics such as Rev. Mandy's departure, membership, budget and finance, facilities, our relationship with the UUA and Article II, building a culture of giving at BUC, and volunteering. In addition, the Board finalized and approved a new personnel handbook for the staff, finalized and approved a disruptive behavior policy, hired a targeted minister, initiated an interim minister search, created a facilities task force, started work on a new strategic plan for the congregation, and implemented a two-year plan to eliminate the operating deficit. On the recommendation of our Article II Task Force, we voted to continue to affirm and support the UU Eight Principles and Six Sources, while continuing to explore the concepts behind the new Article II language.

I would like to thank all of the staff members and lay leaders who have stepped up and filled in to handle the work done by the Senior Minister/Executive of the church, and to thank Rev. Eric Posa for joining us in the pulpit this church year. It has been a difficult year for many people, on many fronts, and the commitment to keep BUC, our programming, and our worship services going without any noticeable hitches is greatly appreciated. I would also like to personally thank this year's Board of Trustees for all of their hard work, time spent in planned and unplanned meetings, and continued commitment in the service of our community. I'm proud of the work we accomplished this year.

This year also saw us bid a fond retirement to Joanne Copeland as BUC's Bookkeeper and all-around source of information and assistance. Going forward, the Board has elected to not fill this position in the same manner; we're working with the staff, the Budget and Finance Committee, and some outside sources to reassess the work needed in this role and look for further efficiencies. We thank Joanne for all her work over so many years and look forward to continuing to see her in the choir loft and around campus.

We have work ahead of us as a congregation: continuing to work on our revenue and expenses so that we can operate with a balanced budget in FY 2025-26, determining the future of our campus, planning for what BUC will be in the coming years. There are a lot of questions about membership numbers: how do we stop them from dropping? Can we return to being a congregation with 300, 400, or even 600 members again? I will once again urge us to not focus on the numbers but to

focus on our community. Let's work on building a beloved community of which we are all proud and in which all feel welcome: people of color, the queer community, young and old.

The budget, the campus, and declining membership numbers are important, but they pale in comparison to the larger task ahead of us: continuing to remain a community. I would like to see us work on how we communicate with others, handle conflict productively and appropriately, speak truthfully and honestly with one another, think about what it means to be in covenant with one another, and how we need to call people back into covenant. This is not work expressly done by the Board but done in partnership with our minister and our congregation, building a beloved community with a shared ministry. And these are the tools we will need to remain together as a community.

I wish the incoming Board success in dealing with the future. I know firsthand the challenges we face, and the work that we need to do.

Treasurer's Report

Craig Stroup, *Treasurer, Board of Trustees*

FY 23/24 Budget

The Fiscal Year 23/24 budget was approved with \$632,665 of expected revenue and \$716,179 of expected expenses, for an overall deficit budget of approximately -\$83,514. Unlike the prior few years, there was no budgeted revenue from federal relief funds, but this deficit budget was approved with the knowledge that there were remaining excess funds of \$86,074 available from the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program in 2021. The ERTC was a one-time refundable tax credit for organizations that continued to pay employees while experiencing significant declines in revenue due to the Covid-19 pandemic. BUC received a total of \$131K from this program for 2020 and 2021.

Financial Position

BUC's current financial position is relatively stable, but we need to make significant changes to our operating model to bring our budget to a balanced state. As of March 31, we had \$132K in unrestricted cash, and through careful financial management by BUC's staff and oversight by the Budget and Finance committee, the current fiscal year-to-date Operating Loss is approximately -\$46K, which is about \$25K favorable to the budgeted Operating Loss through March. Lower-than-expected rental revenue is the largest contributor to a shortfall in revenue, and increasing our Facilities Reserve for anticipated needs of our building drove Operating Expenses higher but this was largely offset by decreases in expenses in most other areas. With the expected current year deficit, BUC is projected to have approximately \$125K in uncommitted cash at the end of fiscal year 23/24.

Fiscal Year 24/25 and Beyond

The Budget and Finance Committee is working with the Board on a FY 2024/2025 budget that will decrease the deficit significantly from the deficit that was approved for the current fiscal year, and we are actively working on a proposal that will balance the budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year. Reaching the goal of a balanced budget will require some paradigm shifts in the way we operate, and the Board has enlisted the assistance of a Facilities Task Force to explore the feasibility of staying in our current aged facility with a congregation size and pledge budget that has decreased over the past several years.

Congregational Life

Sara Constantakis, *Director of Congregational Life*

My second year as BUC's Director of Congregational Life has been filled with both great joy and great challenge. Here's a look at the programs and events that have been under my leadership this year.

Director of Religious Education Shannon Snideman and I collaborated on our second annual Field Day event on Saturday, August 5. There were games, crafts, tie-dying, food, and beverages and much summertime fun was had by all. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this event a success.

Our second annual Homecoming Sunday Volunteer Fair after service on September 10 featured tables staffed by 12 BUC committees, programs, and fellowship groups in Hodas Hall (along with a virtual component). New this year was a Volunteer Fair Punch Card with a listing of questions about each group. Fair visitors were invited to stop at a table, ask the question on the punch card, and collect answers from every table to win a prize. We also offered three bonus "punches" for signing up for a shift as an usher, RE volunteer, coffee hour ambassador, or greeter. The punch card listed contact info for group leaders, making it a helpful takeaway resource for information about BUC's programs, committees, and groups.

In October, Rev. Mandy and I led an offsite group retreat in Adrian, MI. 10 BUCers gathered at the Weber Center for a weekend of group activities and discussion, worship, fellowship, fun, and connection. Special thanks to our retreat food crew for planning and procuring our lunches and dinners for the weekend and to our gracious hosts at the Weber Center for the comfortable accommodations.

Sunday coffee hour has continued successfully this year with a volunteer signup system for bringing doughnuts when needed and Colin Phillips working weekly shifts handling coffee service. Monthly all-ages community birthday celebrations take place one Sunday a month, typically on Celebration Sunday, the first Sunday of the month (but can flex depending on other Sunday activities). During our birthday celebrations, we recognize anyone celebrating a birthday that month with a

few moments at the microphone, a group song, and cupcakes. This has continued to be an enjoyable and well-received tradition.

Two fun and delicious Action Sunday pancake breakfasts were held this year, on July 30 and October 29. The dedication of the volunteers on our pancake crew in preparing, serving, and cleaning up ensured the success of these events, and I am so grateful to all of them for their commitment and enthusiasm.

Like last year, the October Action Sunday was followed by a Trunk or Treat co-organized with DRE Shannon Snideman. This year's event grew into an outreach event with a focus on attracting new families to BUC, and the resulting Trunk or Treat Family Fun Fest was easily the highlight of the church year. We added a bounce house to the festivities and widened our advertising reach with a Facebook ad and articles/posts on several family-oriented community calendars, and it paid off big time. Best estimates indicate that we had 250-300 kids visit with their families. We flew through our pizza, Tim Bits, and cider in less than an hour and had to make a mad dash for lots more candy for our awesome trunk hosts.

Tremendous thanks to those who were part of this fantastically fun and successful event: the setup and cleanup helpers; parking and bounce house attendants; trunk hosts; leaders of activities, games, and crafts; ticket/prize attendants; greeters at the Membership table; and anyone else who helped us build beloved community by welcoming families and showing them the true spirit of BUC.

Our Small Group Ministry program is thriving thanks to the commitment of our group facilitators (thank you, all). We have 30+ BUCers participating in monthly groups, including a group made up of those actively parenting, helping to strengthen the bond of families with BUC. I write the session plans, which align with our monthly worship topics. The program runs October through May and signups open every September, so be on the lookout if you are interested in participating next year.

The DCL serves as staff liaison to the Membership team, and this year I initiated several efforts in support of member engagement and welcoming:

- I condensed the four-session Getting to Know UU class into two sessions and moderated those sessions on Sunday, February 4 (11 attendees) and Sunday,

February 18 (10 attendees). Out of eight individuals who became members for the first time or reactivated their memberships this church year, four were GTKUU attendees who signed the membership book after the Feb. 18 session.

- I updated the Sunday greeter documentation and co-led a greeter training session with Membership team member/greeter coordinator Kevin Kozlowski on Sunday, January 28, with 9 attendees.
- In response to feedback from newcomers that coffee hour can be a little intimidating if it's your first time at BUC or you don't know many people, I initiated a restart of the Coffee Hour Ambassador program, coordinated by Membership team member Allen Craig. Coffee Hour Ambassadors are volunteers who circulate in Hodas Hall during coffee hour to seek out newcomers and be extra welcoming and conversational, with the goal of enhancing community and fellowship. Positioned as an opportunity to meet new people and spread the word about BUC and as a role that can be done when already at BUC for Sunday worship, we have been asking for two ambassadors each Sunday to be available for the duration of coffee hour.
- In tandem with the Coffee Hour Ambassador program, I also instituted a "secondary greeter table" for Hodas Hall during coffee hour. This consists of a portable basket with a smaller quantity of essential items from the main greeter table. The secondary greeter table supports greeters, Coffee Hour Ambassadors, and anyone talking with newcomers during coffee hour. In addition, if visitors feel rushed and/or overwhelmed in the front lobby on the way into service, the secondary greeter table provides the opportunity to fill out forms and look through outreach materials in a more relaxed environment.

BUC is seeing regular interest in our church from a variety of sources, and I am extremely grateful to the Membership team for their dedication to welcoming and engaging newcomers this year.

This year I also engaged in professional development around Membership work in UU congregations. I joined the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) and attended their Pro Days, held April 16-18 at DuPage UU Church in Naperville, IL. Pro Days was an energizing and supportive time spent learning and connecting with fellow UU membership professionals. I have also become involved in a UUAMP team working on revising our professional

certification program. UUAMP as a whole is looking to raise our profile within the UUA and recognize the value and importance of membership professionals in UU congregations, and I am eager to contribute to that work.

Early in the church year I asked our UUA Congregational Life rep, Rev. Sharon Dittmar, for recommendations for a mentor working in membership, and she connected me with Tina Lewis, Director of Membership and Engagement at DuPage UU Church, which is similar to BUC in membership size. Tina and I had a few Zoom discussions in the fall and connected in person at UUAMP Pro Days, which happened to be hosted at her congregation. The relationship has been supportive and beneficial, and we plan to continue meeting regularly in the future.

The DCL also supports the Program Council and leads their regular meetings, which moved to the odd months this year. I cannot thank our Program Council members enough for their hard work, perseverance, and resilience in building beloved community through our committees and groups this year.

I also manage BUC's communications program, which includes creation of weekly emails, announcements slides, program and fundraiser publicity, maintaining BUC's public Facebook page and the BUC Community Facebook group, updating the website, annual meeting support including the voter's guide and this annual report, and support for special projects like Stewardship and Auction. I also manage the BUC events calendar, handle internal room reservations, and serve as a staff liaison to the Revenue Committee.

It has been both a joyful and humbling experience on staff at BUC this church year, a very turbulent one for our congregation and me personally as your Director of Congregational Life. I want to extend a sincere thank you to our Targeted Minister, Rev. Eric Posa, for his invaluable support these past few months. I look forward to building beloved community with this congregation in the year to come.

Worship Associates

Teresa Honnold, *Worship Associate*

This was a very challenging year for the Worship Associates at BUC and we worked hard to provide meaningful worship services to the congregation. While the worship services were planned through November, the departure of Rev. Mandy Beal left the implementation of the services up to the Worship Associates. The Worship Associates worked with other members of the worship team to provide fulfilling worship opportunities for the congregation during this period. We were fortunate to have Targeted Minister Rev. Eric Posa join us in February to lead us in thought-provoking services for the remainder of the church year. Rev. Posa helped us to be ready for an Interim Minister beginning in August.

We would like to thank Abha and Steven Dearing and Shannon Snideman for their important contributions in making our worship services rich and meaningful to all attendees. We would especially like thank David Uricek and Taylor Phillips for managing the technology in the sanctuary and coordinating the Zoom broadcast of the service, extending the reach of BUC into the world. Finally, we appreciate the leadership of Rev. Posa and wish him well in his next ministry.

Special thanks to all of the Worship Associates: Keith Ensroth, Derrick Karteczka, Bette Moen, Colin Phillips, Julia Pulver, Shawn Rooney, Ed Sharples, and Chris Slon.

Music

The BUC Chalice Choir continues to be a bright spot in the musical life of our church. These singers' spirited willingness to be challenged by various genres, languages, and styles of choral music has been inspiring for me, their director for the last 22 years. These individuals take considerable risks as both developing and seasoned (spicy!) singers by committing to Wednesdays from late August to early May. During these months, Chalice Choir singers provide high-quality renditions of various pieces which complement and sometimes provide the focal point of the services at BUC.

Some of these highlights included singing with the band on Homecoming Sunday ("Lovely Day"), several beautiful choral pieces by female and under-represented composers through the year, as well as some favorites, culminating in the well-received performance of John Rutter's "Gloria" as a Christmas gift to our congregation. Rev Mandy Beal's autumn departure was a challenging time for the BUC community, but the Chalice Choir worked hard to provide continuity, stability, and consistency to services, supporting with music and group-singing while being a strong presence in the choir loft and among the congregation. Winter 2024 continued to include a variety of music, and the May 5 Choir Sunday's theme of "Resilience" was inspired by our need and ability to band together as a strong spiritual community to face the future together.

Many people collaborated towards the success of the BUC Chalice Choir this year. Our Targeted Minister, Rev. Eric Posa, supported music at BUC in many ways. Mira Walker, our skilled, sensitive, and compassionate Pianist supported the Choir with sectionals and rehearsals when I was unable to be present. Amy Smalley, fabulous alto, continues to be indispensable as our librarian. Valerie Phillips and Sara Constantakis helped secure dates and spaces for us. Shannon Snideman coordinated kids' activities to accompany all of the music events. In addition to being a stellar alto, Joanne Copeland was a mentor and steady presence for support of whatever needed doing.

The BUC Chalice Choir was made up of the following people this year:

Tom Allen, Judy Amir, Cindy Baldwin, John Brus, Pat Butkiewicz, Cheryl Courage, Steven Dearing, Kathy DuHame, Mary Dunn, Barb Eschner, Keith Ensroth, Carol Forrester, Carol Hayford, Barb Koch, Carol Lee, Rosemary Long, Ginger Luckins, Mary Markovski, Debbie McMillan, Jess Newman, Cynthia Osterhage, Tom Raffel, Kathy Ransome, Kaye Rittinger, Shawn Rooney, Rich Schreck, Tim Selberg, Ed Sharples, Susie Sherman-Hall, Chris Slon, Diane Slon, Amy Smalley, Dawn Stephenson, Chris Stoddard, Kelly Taylor, Jimmy Vogel, Sylvia Whitmer, and Music Minister Emerita Barbara Woolf

Warm thank you to the beloved BUC congregation for your support of the BUC Chalice Choir this year and always. It is encouraging and validating to hear how the choir affects your worship experience positively. I feel blessed to work with such incredible humans in this place of love and integrity. I hope that all of you, regardless of your singing experience, will remember to raise your voices in song whenever we are gathered in community!

--**Abha Dearing**, *Co-Director of Music Ministry*

This church year started unlike any other in my 13-year tenure, on a path full of potholes. It began with proposed changes to our work agreement with BUC, followed by a sudden departure, leading to being responsible for worship planning and coordination. Thanks to Diane Slon, Art Hillman, Craig Stroup, Marilyn Kelly, Jenn Karteczka, and Rev. Eric, who all listened and acted on our behalf. Our work agreement issues have moved towards being resolved.

A BIG thanks goes to former Worship Associates who came back to help serve our BUC community on Sunday mornings, including Teresa Honnold, Chris Slon, Keith Ensroth, and Shawn Rooney. Shannon and I appreciate you all for stepping back into leadership roles on the chancel, coming to planning meetings, and presenting thoughtful reflections that help create a spiritual message.

Our traditional Music Sunday in December continues to be a highlight of the church year, when our wonderful Chalice Choir merges with a chamber orchestra. This vibrant service could not take place without the dedicated talent of many BUCers

offering their services. A warm thanks goes to Walter Dean, Andrea Thorne, Cathy Sherwin, and Lillian Dean for their fine work on John Rutter's "Gloria."

The Sound Messengers enlivened our sanctuary throughout the year while focusing on music by Black composers. We had folx up and out of their chairs dancing along, spurred on by Rev. Eric. I learned about a new concept called "chair dancing" that seems appropriate on a Sunday morning. Dear congregants, your clapping along, your movement, and your tears as you "gel" with the band go a long way, more than words can describe. Many thanks to all involved in bringing contemporary worship music to BUC, including Amy Smalley, Brian Schandavel, Abha Dearing, and David Uricek as well as special guests Craig Stroup, Darryl Johnson, and Raina Dearing.

The BUC band was asked to help support the RE program for the traditional youth-led services, including Youth Sunday and Coming of Age Sunday. It has always been heartwarming to work with our youth over the years, watching them come out of themselves to put together meaningful, engaging services.

Our pianist Mira Walker brought her talents to the band on several occasions this year. She always brings her best self to everything she does at BUC, and it is pure joy to work with her, whether it be discussing ideas for traditional or for popular music. Mira is a beautiful soul.

Abha, Mira, and I dedicated a recital called HeartSounds, which raised \$2400 for the Music program in February. We presented an evening of solos, duos, and songs to a large, warm audience. Thanks to Barb Eschner for helping with publicity and to David Uricek for his fine work making us sound good over Zoom so that people who could not be in the Sanctuary could listen to quality live music.

Doing music at BUC is a shared ministry. It takes LOTS of spirited individuals to come together to make a whole experience. Abha and I want to thank everyone who has stepped into this orbit, whether it be long ago, or those who continually help us refresh ourselves while away from BUC during the summer, allowing us time for work study, to attend conferences, and to simply have time off. Eric Sargent, Brian Schandavel, Tom Allen, Mike Kendra, Kathy DuHame, and John Hammer, thank

you for stepping up to help keep quality music going during the summer while keeping Music on budget.

Lastly, deep gratitude goes to our Music Committee who supports the programs we offer and helps us execute our vision to sustain the beloved BUC community: Kaye Rittinger, Brian Schandavel, Carol Forrester, Bette Moen, Monica Vogel, and Larry Wisniewski.

--**Steven Dearing**, *Co-Director of Music Ministry*

Music Committee

Kaye Rittinger, *Chair*

We started our year off with a table display on Homecoming Sunday at the Volunteer Fair. Brian Schandavel and Bette Moen met with Monica and Jimmy Vogel, who expressed interest in the Music program. Monica joined the Music Committee and Jimmy is singing in the Chalice Choir. Both play musical instruments. We are blessed to have them. Our presence was represented by Brian Schandavel at the Trunk or Treat Family Fun Fest in October. He decorated his trunk and passed out lots of candy. It was a great success. The Chalice Choir sang Rutter's "Gloria" with orchestra on Music Sunday in December. The Music Committee again served scones for coffee hour in honor of the choir. In February, Steven, Abha, and Mira presented a fabulous benefit concert. The Music Committee sold tickets and ushered for the event. The funds raised are to be used for a sound system for Hodas Hall. We were asked to present a lesson in an RE class and Brian brought his drums and several other props for the students to use and make shakers. This happened in March. Shannon said the students really enjoyed it. Choir Sunday took place on May 5 and the Music Committee brought scones for coffee hour. They have been a great success in the past, so we brought them again. For all of our music activities, we would like to express our gratitude to David Uricek (A/V Coordinator) and Taylor Phillips (A/V Technician) for all the support they give us throughout the year making sure we have the best possible sound.

MAMA's Coffeehouse

Jim Bizer, *Booking Coordinator and Emcee*

MAMA's Coffeehouse is a monthly acoustic music concert series here at BUC. We present monthly concerts September-May, featuring a mix of regional and national acts, some well-known, some not-so-well-known, but all of them compelling and engaging performers.

As of this writing, MAMA's Coffeehouse is finishing up its second season following a long, Covid-related shutdown. The pandemic wreaked serious havoc on the entertainment business; some local music venues closed, and others have been coping with reduced audience numbers. We are happy to report that these recent, post-Covid seasons have gone well, with attendance at or even above pre-pandemic levels.

This means that MAMA's is solidly profitable. We are proud to be able to fulfill our mission of supporting the music and the musicians, while also earning enough to provide a (modest) extra income to the church after operating expenses.

The pandemic and the long shutdown caused some attrition in our committee's ranks. Jim Bizer, Larry Wisniewski, Kathy Ransome, and Cindy Gunnip are the remaining church members on our staff, assisted greatly by concessions coordinator Kathy Thornton and publicity/social media manager Angela Ward (both non-members). Our long-time sound technician Dennis Kingsbury has also retired; we hope to find a qualified replacement soon.

We can always use a few extra bodies at our concerts to help with setup and teardown or to provide baked goods (typically brownies) for our intermission concessions. We have signup sheets at every show; if you can help us out, you can attend the show for free!

Too busy to volunteer? You can support MAMA's Coffeehouse simply by coming to see the shows! If you haven't attended recently (or ever), you owe it to yourself to check it out. We promise it will be a good time.

Religious Education

Shannon Snideman, *Director of Religious Education*

Unitarian Universalist Religious Education is evolving, and in this year of many changes, we tried some new types of programming. We continue to hold monthly “Celebration Sunday” services for all ages to worship together in the Sanctuary. On the other Sundays, we explored different ways we can make connections, build community, and live out our faith.

K-7th: REmix

The goal for programming was to align worship topics and practices explored during services in the Sanctuary with the lessons being taught in RE so that families could talk about these themes together. Several lessons included hands-on exploration, as well as exploring connections to other faith traditions and religious practices. We continued to expand upon a “makerspace” model of learning, where children and youth were encouraged to find their own connections and seek their own spiritual needs through play or art.

This year RE collaborated with several program and fellowship groups to facilitate programming. This was a wonderful opportunity for our youth to meet some of the other adults in the congregation, but also learn about what these groups are doing at BUC and how they are helping to build our UU faith. Many sessions were designed around worship themes and pulled from several UUA curricula, but many were also a homegrown effort to build community across generations. I am especially grateful for our Program Council and the groups that offered programming:

- Living By Heart: LuAnne Holder, Cindy Goldman, and Beth Singer
- Stewardship: Eric Sargent and Paul Vachon
- Racial Justice: Mary Jo Ebert and Mary Masson
- Music Committee: Brian Schandavel
- Environmental Action: Jane O’Neil, Kimery Campbell, and Drieka DeGraff

We also introduced monthly BakerSpace days. Stemming from our makerspace model of exploration, the BakerSpace gives children and youth an opportunity to

create something that will be shared with others and learn some hard skills along the way. Children and youth measured, mixed, kneaded, boiled, and baked ingredients for several different sweet treats, including no-bake oat cookies, rice crispy treats, mini pumpkin muffins, funfetti scones, and coffee cake. What made these days so successful was the generous support of volunteers who brought in ingredients and/or baking supplies for us to borrow! A huge thank you to all who supported our BakerSpace throughout the year.

8th-9th: Coming of Age

A cornerstone of BUC's youth religious education programming, and a rite of passage in Unitarian Universalism, the Coming of Age program began the start of a new programming model. OWL (Our Whole Lives) and COA (Coming of Age) will now alternate years and the programs will run fall through spring. This year we had two 9th-grade participants, Fiona Haines and Avery Pulver. This year also saw the return of the UU heritage trip to Boston. Fiona and Avery were accompanied to Boston by COA Advisor Dave Graham and DRE Shannon Snideman. They are also preparing to read their credo statements at the Coming of Age Sunday service in June. In addition to Dave Graham, Tanya Nordhaus was our other Coming of Age Advisor, with lots of additional support from Kimery Campbell, Bill Fox, and Emilia Askari.

9th-12th: GUUSH (Great Unitarian Universalist Senior High)

GUUSH is a time for our young people to be able to gather together and be in community. Youth were interested in learning more hard skills and finding ways to act on their faith. This resulted in finding opportunities for youth to be of service to BUC.

Several of BUC's high schoolers served in leadership positions, including worship planning and delivery, coffee service, assisting in Remix, and supervising young children in the Toddler Room. Youth in leadership positions include Colin Phillips, Virgil Pulver, Jason Pulver, Avery Pulver, and Fiona Haines.

Fellowship

An important part of Religious Education programming for youth includes fellowship with other UU youth. Together with the local DREs from Northwest, UU Church of Farmington, and First UU Detroit, we collaborated on offerings that allowed for fellowship across congregations. This included two Teen Nights and an overnight where youth gathered for food, games, and fun.

Middle school youth and high school youth leaders went on the retreat to Mystic Lake YMCA Camp. BUC youth gathered with youth from Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Southfield. In addition to outdoor recreation and educational programming that was offered by the camp staff, the youth planned and led a worship service for Saturday night. For almost everyone (some DREs included), this was their first con experience. For others, it was a chance for them to mentor their peers. This retreat is a wonderful opportunity for all youth to lean in as leaders and be inspired to take on leadership roles in their home congregations.

A tremendous amount of gratitude is extended to all of our RE volunteers who activated these important spaces for faith formation and community building for our children and youth!

RE volunteers (in alphabetical order) (+ RE Council member, * COA Advisor)

Emilia Askari
Kimery Campbell
Cheryl Courage
Aletha Craig
Liz Cranston
Mary Jo Ebert +
Bill Fox
Dave Graham *
Chris Haines +
Fiona Haines
Jenn Karteczka
Kevin Kozlowski
Andrew Lorenz

Marilyn Mast
Sharon Niedermaier
Tanya Nordhaus *
Colin Phillips
Virgil Pulver
Jason Pulver
Avery Pulver
Jordan Schwarz
Sarah Sullivan
Chris Sullivan
Marti Szilagyi
Kristine Valo
Bruce Webber

Membership

Sara Constantakis, *Staff Liaison/Director of Congregational Life*

The Membership Committee is comprised of a small but dedicated group of BUCers whose mission is to create a welcoming environment, build fellowship, and foster connections within our congregation. Team members are Allen Craig, Kevin Kozlowski, and Paula Olson (no chair at this time). This year the team and Sara met monthly on the first Thursday at 2:00 pm. Board President Andrew Schreck attended the November meeting and Targeted Minister Rev. Eric Posa attended the March meeting.

Events

The team kicked off the church year by staffing a table at the Homecoming Sunday Volunteer Fair, which included signup sheets for Sunday greeters and coffee hour ambassadors. Thank you to Paula for updating the display board!

The year's biggest event, in partnership with RE, was our October 29 Trunk or Treat Family Fun Fest, which had a focus on attracting new families to BUC. We turned our yearly Trunk or Treat into an outreach event by adding a bounce house and widening our advertising reach with a Facebook ad and articles/posts on several family-oriented community calendars, and it paid off big time. Best estimates indicate that we had 250-300 kids visit with their families. Membership handed out BUC booklets and RE brochures and the event went a long way toward positioning BUC as a good neighbor and community member.

Outreach

This church year through the writing of this report (June 24, 2023 through May 6, 2024), Membership has tracked 80 visitors and friends who expressed interest in BUC by subscribing to our email list, visiting us on a Sunday, or reaching out in another way. Importantly, this count does not include newcomers who have engaged with us but not yet subscribed to the email list or otherwise provided contact information. Visitors who do provide contact info (this year, all but 3 of the 80) receive a personalized outreach email from a Membership team member which includes the BUC booklet a link to our newcomer survey (also available on the

[Newcomers page](#) on our website). The newcomer survey has a place to provide contact information, check off areas of interest, and request a follow-up email from Sara. We continue to welcome new visitors on an almost weekly basis, and we have also seen the return of some members and friends after some time away.

We planned to do outreach at Ferndale Pride on June 1, but unfortunately, we (and many other applicants) were turned away due to lack of vendor space at this very popular event. Next year we will make sure to jump on it as soon as applications open.

The Membership team believes that welcoming the newcomer is a congregation-wide effort, and we encourage everyone to engage with people you may not know or may be new to BUC.

Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism (GTKUU)

This year we condensed the four-session GTKUU class into two sessions, held on Sunday, February 4 and Sunday, February 18. Session 1 had 11 attendees (10 in-person/1 Zoom) and covered introductions, a short general exercise on individual beliefs, UU principles/sources/values, BUC history, and the website/calendar/getting involved. Session 2 had 10 attendees (9 in-person/1 Zoom) and covered UU history, Board President remarks, Stewardship Committee remarks, Path to Membership, and the building and campus tour. We extend a special thank-you to Paula Olson, Judy Amir, Kimery Campbell, Paul Vachon, Bob Clement, and Andrew Schreck as contributors to GTKUU sessions. Most happily, four GTKUU attendees signed the membership book after the Feb. 18 session, leading us to...

New Members 2023-24

This church year, the following eight individuals became members for the first time or reactivated their memberships: David Boddy, Gloria Boddy, Kasey Alderete, Jimmy Vogel, Monica Vogel, Sarah Redmond, Doreen Murphy, and Tom Murphy. We are thrilled to welcome you! During our March 31 worship service, we held a New Member Recognition for those who joined or reactivated membership since our previous New Member Recognition on May 21, 2023.

Sunday Greeters

The Membership Committee recruits and organizes greeters to staff the greeter table in the front of the church for in-person Sunday worship. The greeter signup sheet is posted on the BUC website and bulletin board and shared in the weekly email update. Kevin manages the greeter schedule, putting out regular email calls to the roster as needed. Although there are 31 people on our greeter roster, it remains challenging to fill slots (two per week) farther than two to four weeks in advance, though people do generally step up to fill open slots when the email call goes out.

On Sunday, January 28, Kevin and Sara led a greeter training session that was attended by nine established greeters. All participants received updated greeter procedure documentation, a copy of which is also kept with the greeter basket. Brief ad hoc greeter training is available to anyone who signs up who has never greeted before.

The greeter table continues to be stocked with UUA brochures, wallet cards, 8 Principles coloring booklet, the BUC booklet and RE brochure, connect forms, temporary nametags, signup sheets for permanent nametags, stickers that are fun/inclusive/social-justice-oriented, pronoun stickers and pins, masks, hand sanitizer, and tissues.

Coffee Hour Ambassadors

In response to feedback from newcomers that coffee hour can be a little intimidating if it's your first time at BUC or you don't know many people, this year the team made an effort to restart the Coffee Hour Ambassador program. Coffee Hour Ambassadors are volunteers, identifiable by their special nametags (like greeters), who circulate in Hodas Hall during coffee hour to seek out newcomers and be extra welcoming and conversational, with the goal of enhancing community and fellowship. Positioned as an opportunity to meet new people and spread the word about BUC and as a role that can be done when already at BUC for Sunday worship, we have been asking for two ambassadors each Sunday to be available for the duration of coffee hour. Allen Craig manages the signup sheet, which is posted on the BUC website and bulletin board (along with a training one-sheet) and shared in the weekly email update. Participation has been low, so the team will re-evaluate

and decide whether to continue next year. However, BUC is demonstrably a “greeting congregation.” We frequently see members talking to newcomers during coffee hour, so this is something that may just happen organically here rather than through a formal program.

Secondary Greeter Table

In tandem with the Coffee Hour Ambassador program, this year we also instituted a “secondary greeter table” for Hodas Hall during coffee hour. This consists of a portable basket with a smaller quantity of essential items from the main greeter table (BUC and RE brochures, connect forms, temporary nametags, signup sheets for permanent nametags, fun stickers, and pronoun stickers and pins). The secondary greeter table supports greeters, Coffee Hour Ambassadors, and anyone talking with newcomers during coffee hour. In addition, if visitors feel rushed and/or overwhelmed in the front lobby on the way into service, the secondary greeter table provides the opportunity to fill out forms and look through outreach materials in a more relaxed environment. This year there was no formal home for the secondary greeter materials, and they were positioned among coffee hour seating or on a spare card table. For next year, we will look at different ways to display these materials so that they can be more easily seen and accessed (maybe a table inside the social hall doors, raised on an easel, etc.)

Pastoral Care

Ed Sharples, *Pastoral Care Associate*

With guidance from Rev. Eric, Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) are available to help members and friends of BUC who have issues or concerns for private discussion. Conversations are held in confidence. Pastoral Care Associates have been trained via UUA resources.

If a person has deep concerns, a starting point should be with Rev. Eric, who can determine the best potential source of help, whether it be outside the church or with a PCA. All PCAs are listed in the BUC Member & Friend Directory and are available for calls from members or friends for self-defined concerns that are a step below an initial conversation with Rev. Eric.

BUC's Pastoral Care Associates are Rob Davidson, Dan Kosuth, Kim Schultes, and Ed Sharples.

Sunday Morning Ushers

Janet Brown, *Usher Coordinator*

We need more people to volunteer to help usher. The benefit to you is becoming part of the ushering team and making connections with others in the church. This is probably one of the best beginning volunteer jobs at BUC. The role of the ushers is to greet service attendees, pass the collection baskets, and count and secure the money. None of this is done alone, but as a team. Ushering procedures are reviewed prior to the beginning of the service so that you will feel comfortable and confident in your duties. It is a great way to become more involved in the church and to meet more people. I hope that you will consider volunteering. If you would like to sign up to usher for a particular service, you can go to the BUC home page (bucmi.org) and scroll down to near the bottom. In the middle of the screen, there is a Sunday Usher Signup button that will take you to a signup page with dates to choose. I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

Stewardship

Annette Sargent and **Eric Sargent**, *Co-Chairs, 2024-2025 campaign*

Bob Clement and **Paul Vachon**, *Co-Chairs, 2025-2026 campaign*

“Pledge Train” was the theme for this year’s pledge campaign. The campaign goal for the 2024-25 fiscal year was set at \$450,000. Members and friends of BUC were encouraged to “get on board” by supporting our beloved community with a financial pledge for the coming church year.

Targeted minister Rev. Eric Posa wove stewardship-themed messages into services and sermons during February and March. Paul and Eric taught a stewardship-themed RE class in February. Bob and Paul presented information about stewardship to the Getting to Know UU class. During these weeks, six congregants also presented personal statements about the importance of BUC in their lives and why they support our church financially.

Stewardship Kick-off Sunday was March 4. The worship service included a video produced by Eric Sargent of RE, Music, and Congregational Life staff sharing the high points and goals of the church year. The Sound Messengers performed “Pledge Train,” a song with stewardship-related lyrics to the tune of “Love Train” by the O’Jays. The Pledge Train poster of the *BUC Unlimited* steam locomotive with cars labeled Community, Learning, Service, and Joy hung at the back of the chancel. After the service, the congregation enjoyed brunch and fellowship in Hodas Family Hall. Two congregants gave personal statements. Thanks to Annette Sargent and many volunteers who made the brunch a delicious community event!

Congregants received pledge packets via email or USPS mail, based on their responses to an email poll. The packet included the UUA Suggested Fair Share Contribution Guide, a letter from Board President Andrew Schreck, and information about church programs. Thank you to Valerie Phillips and Sara Constantakis for providing administrative and communication support for the Stewardship project.

During March and April, the Pledge Train poster and pledge form drop box were displayed each Sunday before and after service. Each pledge received was represented by a smiling face added in a train carriage window. Week by week, the train windows are filling up and by late April smiling pledgers are filling the caboose!

As of April 22, 2024, 154 households have responded and 88% of the pledge goal has been achieved. The Stewardship Team continues to follow-up with members and friends whose pledges are outstanding. Thank you to all who have pledged. Every donation helps our church stay on track as a beloved community of integrity, learning, service, and joy.

Budget and Finance

Craig Spangler, *Chair*

The Budget and Finance Committee (B&FC) was charged with developing a budget for FY 24/25 that reduced the deficit from the FY 23/24 budget and worked toward a balanced budget in future years. With the departure of Rev. Mandy Beal in October, the B&FC was totally responsible for construction of a new budget to present to the Board of Trustees. The Budget and Finance Committee also assumed the responsibilities of the Planned Giving Committee, and those actions are detailed in the next section of this Annual Report.

All areas of spending by the church were evaluated for cost efficiency and necessity. Spending cuts were primarily focused on items that did not affect Worship and Religious Education. Costs associated with maintenance and repair of the church were also reviewed by the B&FC, as well as other groups within the church. The committee also discussed opportunities for increased revenue such as rentals, increased pledging, and building improvement fund campaigns.

The budget for FY 24/25 was submitted to the Board of Trustees for their review and approval. We would like to thank Valerie Phillips and Joanne Copeland for their assistance in obtaining information necessary for our committee to do its job.

Budget and Finance Committee:

Valerie Phillips, *Staff Liaison*

Craig Spangler, *Chair*

Craig Stroup, *BUC Treasurer*

Kathy DuHame

Diane Slon

Planned Giving

Kathy DuHame, *Budget and Finance Committee member*

The purpose of the Planned Giving Committee (PGC), currently under the Budget and Finance Committee, is to oversee the three endowment funds of Birmingham Unitarian Church: General, Music, and Memorial Glen. Utilizing a financial advisory firm that follows an investment policy statement provided by the PGC, the funds are monitored and recommendations provided to the Board for annual withdrawals based on end-of-year values. The withdrawals, 2023 ending year balances, and withdrawal percentages for this fiscal year were:

General - \$24,042.46 / \$601,061.46 / 4%

Music - \$2,478.48 / \$49,569.57 / 5%

Memorial Glen \$2,337.56 / \$46,751.26 / 5%

The investment policy statement (IPS) is reviewed periodically. During the previous and current fiscal years, changes were made to the IPS and approved by the Board this fiscal year. Changes included:

- Updates to the Purpose and Investment Philosophy

- Language to indicate that the PGC is currently under the Budget and Finance Committee
- Updates to the asset allocation guidelines by asset class and allowable investment types

Special thanks to Melissa Joy at Pearl Planning, BUC's current financial advisory firm. Under Melissa's watchful eye, the endowment funds achieved the desired growth as stated in the investment policy statement.

Funds are also provided each year from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan which offers a charitable gift annuity. The annuity provides an annual fixed income from donations made in honor of BUC. This year, BUC received \$36,403 from the foundation. The funds were received the week of April 8, 2024.

An additional role of the PGC is to encourage members and friends of BUC to donate to the endowments, community foundation, and/or join the Hallock Heritage Society by providing a gift to BUC in their estate plan. To this end, an updated brochure was created and made available in print (by the Hallock Heritage Society plaque in the church lobby) and electronically (on the BUC website's [Giving page](#) via a button labeled "Endowments & Bequests." Also, a form was mailed to current Hallock Heritage Society members to update the church's information. Future efforts are being considered to bring more awareness of society to the church community.

Other duties of the PGC include:

- Advising the Board on emergency withdrawals from the endowments
- Reviewing the performance of the financial advisory firm

Revenue

Amy Smalley, Chair

The Revenue Committee continued the work it began after being reconvened the previous year. Our objectives are to eliminate overlap in fundraising activities, increase fundraising net revenue, identify and recommend best practices for fundraising activities, and form new fundraising groups as needed.

We began the year by setting the revenue calendar for the 2023-24 church year. We then revisited the existing charter and approved it unchanged for use this year. We discussed the BUC Ends Policies of service, learning, worship, fellowship, stewardship, and sustainability and vowed to consider these policies in our fundraising efforts. For example, we applied a service lens to the RE poinsettia sale when we suggested that people donate plants for the teachers and staff at Walt Whitman Elementary.

Fundraisers directly under the purview of this committee included the following:

- Flamingos! Our pink friends made another 3-week migration and raised \$1,960.
- Talent & Services Auction. Our Blue Boat Bash raised \$22,490 gross revenue as of this writing.

We had fewer fundraisers this year, for several reasons: (1) stewardship consultant Mark Ewert, who visited BUC in the fall, warned against fundraising fatigue; (2) working with Stewardship, the goal was to stress a culture of stewardship rather than continuous fundraising; and (3) the stress on the congregation of multiple transitions following Rev. Mandy Beal's resignation.

Revenue Committee members this year included the following dedicated individuals: Sara Constantakis (staff liaison), Barb Eschner (Auction, member-at-large), Craig Spangler (Budget and Finance), Judy Amir (Rummage), Shannon Snideman (RE), Annette and Eric Sargent (Stewardship), and Amy Smalley (Board, Auction). The committee meets quarterly on Zoom.

Talent & Services Auction

Amy Smalley, Barb Eschner, and Teresa Honnold, Co-Chairs

The *BUC BidFest* sailed away in a sea of fun, food, and friendship on Saturday, April 13, at the biennial Talent & Services Auction. The BLUE BOAT BASH-themed event was a happy success: more than 60 special items were offered for bidding, and \$22,575 in revenue was raised for BUC.

The Auction Crew chose this theme for its spirit of sailing: of moving forward after our last Zoom-only, pandemic-defiant Auction... of navigating through change happening at church... and of feeling exhilarated by the connections built by this one event. Peter Mayer's song, Blue Boat Home, inspired our planning and even kicked off the Live Auction in a stirring singalong.

Some of the fantastic items donated were hosted dinners and homemade treats, walking tours and travel talks, week-long getaways, cultural events, helpful services, and unique treasures and experiences. People took chances in "Bait Bucket" raffles and a 50/50; the latter raised \$625 and led the generous winner to donate their share back to BUC. A great response to the "Clean Sweep for Clean Seats" netted \$1800 for maintenance of Sanctuary and other chairs throughout the campus.

To recap, by keeping expenses well under \$1000, we came within a hair of the budget target of \$22,000 profit. Past auctions with attendance in the 130s achieved that revenue ballpark as well, so this year's smaller number of items and participants still worked hard for BUC.

This year's strolling supper featured a special food station just for gluten-free and vegan dishes, and the "dishes" were in fact coated paper boats that were rinsed and recycled afterward. Any paper the committee used in marketing or decorating also was recycled, and the colorful flag décor can be re-used at future BUC events.

Many hands-on-deck deserve heartfelt thanks for this success:

- The 86 who bought tickets, the 71 able to attend the event, and those that bid through Buddies!

- Our many donors—individuals and teams—who devised creative and fun ways to share their talents and services.
- Tireless volunteers who helped with set-up, registration, bartending, selling raffle tickets, and cleaning up. Thank you to the whole Phillips family, Eric Sargent, Claudia Kocher, Shawn Rooney, Julie Fream, Rob Lawrence, Brian Schandavel, Chris Slon, Diane Slon, Craig Spangler, Kimery Campbell, Bill Fox, Kathy DuHame, and Mike Kendra.
- To BUC staff Sara Constantakis and Valerie Phillips, your support in promoting the auction and helping to coordinate donor events is key. Thank you!
- Deep appreciation goes to a team we rely heavily on: Mary Jo Ebert's experienced auction tracking and check-out crew of Beth Lorey, Steve Lorey, Diane Slon, and Bruce Webber. Hats off to Bruce for a BIG time-saver: writing a computer script that generated all the item descriptions for the Silent Auction tables, plus all the invoices!
- What would an event like this be without delicious food? We thank our awesome menu planners and chefs Teresa Honnold and Barb Schandavel, assisted in the kitchen by Kathy DuHame.
- For great ideas and hands-on help, thank you to first-time Auction Crew members Sharon Niedermaier, Mary Masson, and Andy Masson, along with veteran members Dick Cantley, Joanne Copeland, Mary Jo Ebert, and Bruce Webber.
- Last but not least, thanks to Andrew Scheck for reprising his role as auctioneer!

To all participating BUC members and friends, it's your generosity of time, talent, spirit, and funds that makes Auction a treasured BUC tradition.

Rummage

Walter Dean and **Carol Lee**, *Co-Chairs*

Rummage is a community event that would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of many people.

This year we were saddened by the death of Ann Throop, who had organized and run the Rummage layaway and treasury departments for many, many years. Her place was taken by a new member of the Rummage Team, Barb Schandavel (Treasury) and by Judy Amir (Layaway), but because of Judy's surgery, Barb and Carol Lee substituted for her. We also welcomed two other new members to the team, Sarah Redmond and Soren Andersen. In addition to these new members and the co-chairs, the rummage team includes Judy Amir, Elizabeth Cranston, Ginger Luckins, Kym Worth, Stephanie and David Greer, Laura Lee, Karen Stankye, and Steve Wright.

In addition, we are fortunate to have the help of rummage auxiliary members Kimery Campbell, Drieka DeGraff, Mary Dunn, Mary Lanphier, and Margaret Marsh.

Beyond this core team, we are grateful to the larger Rummage community, which includes everyone who sets up, prices, sells, manages the flow of shoppers, and tears down, as well as those who organize, attend meetings, keep the records, handle the money, and cook and serve food, and the non-BUC "Friends of Rummage" who for many years have made up a significant portion of our workforce. We also deeply appreciate the help received from BUC staff, sometimes outside the scope of their normal routine. Spring 2024 rummage employed the talents of 155 volunteers, of whom 21 were first-time rummage workers. In addition, there were seven food workers and 45 food donors. All these numbers matched or exceeded last year.

Projected income from the Spring 2024 sale is expected to be more than \$18,000, with a number of items yet to be sold online. The total for the 2023-24 fiscal year will be available at the end of the church year, in June.

Planning for the Spring 2024 Rummage sale began immediately after the 2023 sale, with regular monthly meetings beginning in September in a multiplatform format, and biweekly meetings beginning in March. Planning concentrated on improvements in publicity and recruitment, streamlining operations, increasing revenue, and improving the volunteer experience. One innovation was to issue vouchers to select charitable organizations and partners which could be given to their clientele, who could bring them on the last day of the sale to exchange for any unsold rummage. It is hoped that this will get more items directly into the hands of those needing them, as well as reducing the amount of unsold rummage. Groups invited to participate were St. John's Royal Oak, Haven, Lighthouse, Freedom House, Detroit Rescue Mission, Alternatives for Girls, Walt Whitman Elementary School, Baldwin Center, Samaritas, Welcome Inn, and Cass Community Services. The remaining unsold rummage was donated to Purple Heart.

Recruiting volunteers, including shift managers and point persons, continues to be one of our main objectives. SignUpGenius has, over the last few years, become an important tool and is becoming well accepted by the congregation. As well as enabling online signups, it allows us to identify and greet new volunteers and generate reminders, and generally keep it all straight and up to date. Thanks to Drieka and Steve for getting this all working so well. We will, however, continue to welcome in-person signups after services as well.

Building and Grounds

Dick Cantley, *Committee Member*

Current members: Dick Cantley, Jane O’Neil, and Valerie Phillips (staff liaison). 2023 member and chair, Dan Kosuth. Seeking a 2024 chairperson.

The Committee meets on an ad hoc basis, as needed. It is typically involved in repair and maintenance projects for the structures on the BUC campus, as well as maintenance and improvements to the landscaping and grounds.

During the past fiscal year, a major focus has been evaluating our various campus roofs and HVAC systems to determine near-to-medium-term physical and financial needs. Here is a brief recap:

Exterior

The annual Spring Work Day was held last April as part of an Action Sunday. Special thanks to everyone who helped, including spreading wood chips on parts of the path through Capek Woods.

Dan Kosuth performed work to enhance drainage in the prairie between the Sanctuary and Woodward Ave. The prairie plantings are thriving, as well as the other native plantings in front of the church. They will help manage water flow in those areas.

A survey was conducted to assess the age and condition of each of our roofs. Seven of the roofs (Hodas Hall, Purple Door, office, Red/Green Door building, Pavilion, Gallery, and Sanctuary) are at or near the end of their useful lives. These roofs likely will need replacement in the next three or so years. (Note: This information was conveyed to the Board of Trustees, which then convened a Facility Task Force to address the issues. During a March 10 Town Hall, the Task Force explained the situation, so members had the knowledge during BUC’s Stewardship campaign.)

Interior

A survey was conducted to assess the ages of our HVAC units. Seven of our furnaces and seven of our air conditioners are now more than 25 years old. In addition, funds have been reserved to replace the Hodas Hall rooftop HVAC units as they are nearing the end of their useful lives.

Personnel Committee

Art Hillman, *Chair*

The Personnel Committee worked to support policies impacting the Board, staff, and volunteers at BUC. This was a challenging year. After getting Board approval on the personnel manual, we worked on job descriptions and employee relations issues. I am very pleased with the effort and professionalism of this team.

Members of the team are Jenn Karteczka, Marilyn Kelly, Sharon Niedermaier, and myself. The longest-serving member, Marilyn Kelly, and I will be stepping down at the end of this church year. I strongly support Jenn Karteczka as Chair.

Sharing Dinners

Dave Sabbagh, *Coordinator*

In 2023-24, Sharing Dinners was back in full swing. Per-dinner participation rates are still around 30%, with 12-18 members attending the dinners. The number of people who registered for this season is 55. It is unclear why the monthly participation rate is so small. The monthly signup process allows for maximum convenience, so long-term commitment hesitancy should not be an issue. I have decided to just accept the monthly attendance numbers and not worry about trying to increase the numbers. Besides, if the monthly participation rate did increase, the possibility of not having a sufficient number of hosts also increases. As the procedures state, group assignments are on a first-come, first-served basis with excess attendees not being assigned to a group.

Sunday Morning Discussion Group

(from a report-out at the March Program Council meeting)

The long-running Sunday Morning Discussion Group (SMDG) made the decision to deactivate in February. The group was active before Covid, and then during the Covid quarantine moved to meeting virtually at 3:00 pm on Sundays, at which time Mary Samal took over to keep the group alive virtually. Membership has skewed a bit older, and some members have passed away and others moved to virtual participation at BUC. As time has gone on, members have found other priorities. The group moved back to their original time on Sunday mornings, but the early-morning time also posed a challenge to members. After decreasing to 3-4 people per meeting, the group decided there wasn't enough interest to continue.

Tremendous thanks and kudos go to Mary Samal for her efforts and commitment to this group. Sara encourages all former SMDG participants to get involved in Small Group Ministry.

Living by Heart

Cindy Goldman and Karen Schreck

Living by Heart is an ongoing group of people who explore their spiritual awareness through creative expression. Penny Hackett Evans started our group in 2010 and we have been meeting weekly since then. We meet Monday afternoons, mostly on Zoom, for two hours doing art, writing, and poetry, led by members of the group. This church year we have made the intention of meeting in person at BUC in the Blue Door room at least once per quarter. Last October we actually met in person all month to prepare our group for an art exhibit. In October and November, Living by Heart held an exhibit of some of our works of poetry and art in the BUC Gallery. We have contributed works of art to many BUC activities, including the Auction and the Religious Education Bake-Off fundraiser. Living by Heart was also one of several BUC programs and fellowship groups that collaborated with RE on a classroom session for the K-7th graders. LBH is very sad to have lost a longtime member of our fellowship, Yvette Kaplan.

Humanists of BUC

Larry Larson, *Program Coordinator*

The Humanists of BUC are completing our ninth year fostering an ethical philosophy that encourages the goal of a better world without supernaturalism. Humanism is an important source in Unitarian Universalism. Learning is part of the mission of our church and a primary goal of our programs. We highly value reason, science, experience, compassion, and human rights.

This year we met monthly on Zoom at 7:00 pm on the third Sunday of the month. Meetings were recorded and shared in the weekly update emails.

Last June, we held a joint presentation with BUC Civic Engagement in which Harper West spoke about the National Popular Vote initiative.

In September, our discussion topic was the code of ethics for the US Supreme Court.

In October, our topic was immigration reform, and our speaker was an asylum seeker who reflected on his attempt to become an American citizen.

In November, we held a joint presentation with BUC Environmental Action on a Monday evening. BUC member Mary Dunn, a member of the Citizen's Climate Lobby, spoke on climate change and how we can cope with the climate crisis. As usual, a discussion followed.

In January, we held a joint presentation with BUC Racial Justice. BUC member Lillian Dean presented "Turning Points on the Civil Rights Trail" highlighting her tour of select Civil Rights Trail sites in Georgia and Alabama, with links to sites in Detroit, followed by a discussion of segregation and slavery.

In February, a video on Humanism was shown with a discussion of the changing beliefs of Humanism from 1933, 1973, and 2003.

In March, BUC members and IT specialists Keith Ensroth and Kevin Kozlowski led a discussion on Artificial Intelligence, an update of Keith's presentation from last Spring.

In April, Professor Whitty (UDM) led a discussion on engaging in the 2024 election with a focus on the value of the human family. He is a member of the Congregation of Humanistic Judaism and the World Future Society.

In May, BUC's Targeted Minister, Rev. Eric Posa, will present on "Humanism, Atheism, and Article II."

Our planning committee is composed of five church members: Dave and Stephanie Greer, Steve Wright, Larry Freedman as communications coordinator, and myself as program coordinator.

Social and Environmental Justice (SEJ)

SEJ Council: Mary Jo Ebert, Jane O'Neil, Harper West, Kym Worth

Through our Social and Environmental Justice program, BUC ministers to the needs of our communities, promotes social and environmental justice, and serves as an agent of social systemic change. The SEJ team is committed to leading the congregation through learning and action to confront the social justice issues of our time, of which there are many. We welcomed Kym Worth to the SEJ Council in the fall of 2023 to lead the Economic Justice area of our program. Our work in 2023-24 was focused in primarily four areas: Racial Justice, Environmental Action, Civic Engagement, and Economic Justice.

Racial Justice

Our racial justice program offers education, public policy advocacy, and community engagement opportunities for congregants to learn about and address structural racism and its harms so that all people may be treated with dignity and equity. Team members are *Mary Masson, Izzy Khapoya, Bette Moen, Sarah Redmond, Lillian Dean, Marti Szilagyi, Susie Safford, and Mary Jo Ebert (Chair)*. Activities during 2023-24 include:

❖ Conducting our third 12-hour Living the Pledge To End Racism workshop series in March-June 2024.



- ❖ Organized monthly visits to restaurants with Black owners, enabling participants to experience a variety of foods while learning about and supporting the selected businesses.
- ❖ Conducted an Introduction to Microaggressions workshop for interested BUCers to learn how to recognize and respond when microaggressions occur.
- ❖ Organized and hosted “The Case for Cash Bail Reform” webinar, open to UUs statewide via MUUSJN, featuring Rubina Mustafa, Senior Staff Attorney for Detroit Justice Center. The team is also promoting the “Bold Against Bail” program.
- ❖ Hosted Rev. Edward Pinkney, a long-time activist for Black/African American folks and people of lesser economic means in Benton Harbor, Michigan, for a lively Sunday service.
- ❖ Continued working in relationship with Michigan Liberation, a BIPOC-led (Black, Indigenous, & People of Color) nonprofit dedicated to ending mass incarceration and transforming the criminal legal system.
- ❖ For Black History Month, led an activity for the K-7 RE class to learn about Black kids making history. Their projects were exhibited in the BUC Gallery.
- ❖ Hosted discussions of fiction and nonfiction books with race-related themes.
- ❖ Presented “Turning Points on the Civil Rights Trail” in a joint program with Humanists of BUC.

Environmental Action

Members of the Environmental Action (EA) team do this work because we are painfully aware of the urgent need for serious action to address climate change. Time is running out, and progress has been frighteningly slow. We all want to see and be part of real action



on impactful solutions. While there is much dire news about our climate every day, there are also many reasons to be hopeful. Technology continues to advance, more citizens are becoming involved in activism, and even the Federal government is taking action, albeit slowly.

In 2023-24, the EA team focused on implementation of some of the items in our Environmental Sustainability Plan. The Plan was created in 2021-22, with significant input from the congregation, and was approved by 96% of voters at our Annual Meeting in 2022.

Native Plantings: We continue to add native plantings in various places on the BUC campus. In 2022 we started work on the lower-level lawn, seeding it with natives. In the Spring of 2024, there are thousands of new plants to be seen and we expect a glorious prairie in that space. In 2023 many new plants were added to the bed in the front of the church, and we look forward to seeing them return in 2024.

Solar Panels: Work continues at the Board level to devise a potential funding strategy for solar panels. In 2023-24 the Board hired a consultant to help ascertain the advisability of a capital campaign for solar panels and other sustainability projects, along with other capital needs. Consideration is ongoing.

Environmental Action Team: *Jane O'Neil, chair; Anne Calomeni, Cindy Clement, Mary Jo Ebert, Izzy Khapoya, Jeff Kingzett, Sharon Kirchner, Donna Larkin Mohr, Karen Stankye.* Many other members of the BUC congregation have become involved in various of our projects. Their participation is deeply appreciated and essential to our ongoing focus as a community on finding and implementing solutions to the climate crisis.

Civic Engagement

Project Leader: Harper West

State-level civic engagement slowed after the 2023 election, due partly to the even split between Democrats and Republicans in the state House, which brought legislative action and lobbying to a standstill for months. (Although, Harper West did engage in direct political involvement when she ran for Rochester Hills Library Board--and won!) BUC's civic engagement efforts during 2023-24 included:

- Circulated a petition to support Michigan water affordability legislation that was sent to the Senate Housing and Human Services Committee.
- Ministers and social justice leaders of BUC and Congregational Church of Birmingham signed a letter urging the Bloomfield Hills mayor and city council to support having bus stops along Woodward Avenue. In October, a SMART bus stop was added at Woodward Ave. and Long Lake Rd. Special thanks to Pat Hammer for co-authoring the letter and for her tireless leadership on public transit expansion.
- Harper West spoke about the National Popular Vote initiative in a joint program with the Humanists of BUC.
- Organized a virtual program on “Watchdogging: Make a Difference by Monitoring Your Local Politicians,” featuring BUCers State Rep. Natalie Price, Oakland County Commissioner Charlie Cavell, and Rochester Hills Library Trustee Harper West. They offered perspectives and practical advice on advocating with local boards and commissions.

Voter education and get-out-the-vote activities will ramp up as we head into the fall. Recent changes in election law since the 2022 voter initiative will require education of voters on new absentee and early voting opportunities in the August primary and November general elections.

Michigan UU Social Justice Network (MUUSJN)

MUUSJN Board Chair: Mary Jo Ebert

BUC is an active member of MUUSJN, a statewide coalition of UU congregations. Social justice leaders received action alerts from MUUSJN on a host of topics including voter engagement, reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights and safety, water affordability proposals, environmental justice, gun violence prevention, and cash bail reform, each with actions people could take. MUUSJN also offered webinars and conferences on these topics and launched a Partnering for Native Justice project. Any UU or friend may join MUUSJN’s contact list or become a member at uujustice.org.

Economic Justice

Leader: Kym Worth

South Oakland Shelter Support

Project Leader: Paul Plante



Housing costs have increased dramatically in recent years. South Oakland Shelter (SOS) houses guests and assists them with securing housing and employment and meeting other needs. A fundraiser was held to finance meals provided by Meals on Wheels for SOS guests for a week in November. BUCers donated \$3,470 and, together with Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation and Muslim Unity Center, raised a total of \$5898, surpassing our goal of \$4,200. Thank you to every person who contributed!

Walt Whitman Elementary School Partnership

Book Trolley team: Cindy Clement, Kimery Campbell, Barb Sosnowski (Beacon UU), Karen Stankye, and Irene Walter (Beacon UU). Tutoring and Educational support: Mary Dunn, Mary Masson. Project Leader: Mary Jo Ebert

The book trolley team from BUC and Beacon UU operated our mobile in-school library service for K-5 classrooms throughout the school year. Others provided tutoring and educational support. This service is provided under the banner of Communities United for Children (CUFC), a nonprofit created by BUC in 2003. It is funded through donations from plate collection, BUC Alliance, and individual donors.

Holiday Sponsor-a-Family

Project leader: Jane O'Neil

BUCers made the holiday season bright for 38 Walt Whitman families by purchasing gifts from their wish lists for their collective 108 children. Every person who shopped or donated money for gifts, wrapped them, and delivered them to school contributed to the success of this project and shared the spirit of the holiday season with the recipient families.



Serving Guests at the Welcome Inn

Project Leader: Annis Pratt

The Welcome Inn in Royal Oak provides a daytime warming center for unhoused people during winter months and weekly drop-in service at other times of the year. BUCers purchased and delivered items needed by the guests.

Goldsmith Scholarship

BUC Contact: Kym Worth

The BUC Goldsmith Scholarship Fund, administered through the Community Foundation for SE Michigan, awards a \$2,000 scholarship each year to one or more graduates of Pontiac high schools and is renewable for three additional years. A total of \$62,000 has been awarded since the program's inception in 2013. For the 2023-24 academic year, no scholarship was awarded because the only applicant did not continue through the process. Additional attention is being given to making the application process more widely known and accessible for next year. Any BUC member or friend may donate to the scholarship fund.

Sharing the Plate

Administrator: Janet Brown

Our congregation shared half of our weekly plate offerings with local nonprofits serving needs in our communities. Recipients were selected in alignment with the Social and Environmental Justice focal areas. This year's recipients are:

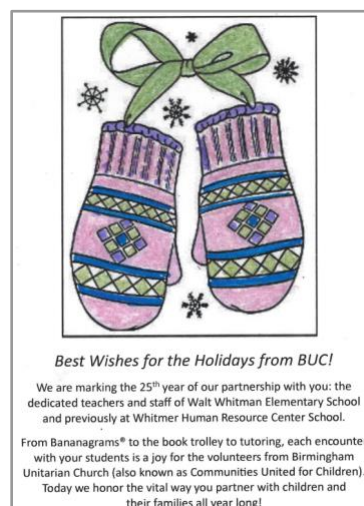
- ★ [Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence](#)
- ★ [Communities United for Children / Walt Whitman School](#)
- ★ [Michigan Urban Farming Initiative](#)
- ★ BUC Emerging Needs Fund (assists BUCers and others requesting support)
- ★ [Welcome Inn](#)
- ★ [Wisdom Institute](#)
- ★ [Michigan UU Social Justice Network](#) (MUUSJN)
- ★ [Freedom House Detroit](#)

- ★ [Transportation Riders United](#)
- ★ [Michigan Liberation's Michigan Black Mama's Bailout](#)
- ★ [Samaritas New American program](#)

Building Community on Action Sundays

During months that have five Sundays, the **fifth Sunday is designated as an Action Sunday**. The program begins with a 15-minute service, followed by a service project, and then a pancake breakfast. These events promote community among our congregation and support of our neighbors who need a helping hand. Following are the 2023-24 projects.

- ❖ July: Assembled food and hygiene packs for Night Angels Detroit, a nonprofit reaching out to people being trafficked. Cards from the Living by Heart group were enclosed in the packs.
- ❖ October: Participants donated snacks and hand sanitizer and wrote cards to accompany poinsettia plants which were delivered to teachers at Walt Whitman School in December. The poinsettias were gifted from BUCers via the RE poinsettia sale.
- ❖ March: Assembled 104 hygiene packs for Freedom House in support of the growing number of people arriving at their door seeking asylum. BUCers donated items for the packs and wrote cards to enclose.
- ❖ June: We will support Samaritas' Southeast Michigan Refugee Resettlement and Placement Program.



Thank you to Mary Dunn for her organizing leadership, Barb Eschner and Living by Heart for helping create cards for the recipients, and to all BUCers who participated in these projects.

Nominating Committee

Jennifer Karteczka, *Chair*

The Committee started the year by reviewing the tools and information available and determining the roles that needed to be filled and how we would work together. One item that quickly became apparent was that, over the years, our committee has developed a lot of technical resources that require a certain amount of technical knowledge and training to use. While we appreciate the flexibility of a multiplatform option, some aspects presented challenges, leading to several training sessions and the need for working documents to be created. The committee expects to end the year providing improved security, instructions for consistency year over year, and technical training resources. All members of the committee took steps to learn the needed skills, step up to take notes, and make calls to our members to secure leaders for the congregation.

After two introductory meetings to review the tools available to us and what positions were needed, Rev. Mandy Beal left the church, leading to a return of a number of members who had not been present during her tenure. At the same time, the committee developed a Google Form leadership application for anyone who may have an interest in a leadership role within the congregation but may not be well known by committee members. Only one response was received, and the committee reached out to the interested member.

From the 250+ active members in good standing, the committee reached out to 60 members of the congregation to secure the 18 positions required to be filled this year. We heard from many of our members that they are already engaged in another committee, just finishing a commitment and needing a break, or helping ailing friends or family. We are a small, mighty, and very busy congregation!

Members of the 2023-2024 Nominating Committee:

In second year (term expires June 30, 2024):

Mary Dunn, Jenn Karteczka (Chair), Dick Rappleye, Mary Samal, Carey Wendell

In first year (term expires June 30, 2025):

Janet Brown, Tom Cranston, Heidi Kapsokavathis, Marilyn Mast, Paula Olson

In Memoriam

In loving memory of the members of our Beloved Community
who passed away this church year:

Barbara Jean “Bobbie” Parks

Kurt Jung

Fred Straky

Maurice Lefford

Ann Throop

Ashok Bhambri

Andy Molnar

Marilyn Webster

Yvette Kaplan

Susan Arnold

Dick Schwing

Service and Leadership Awards

Every year, our congregation presents awards to congregants who have provided outstanding service and leadership. These lay leaders have cheerfully and consistently given of their time and talent to accomplish or support a goal or program need. Awards are given from specific program areas of the church, but the work of these outstanding congregants has benefited the entire congregation. This year's recipients are:

Religious Education

While all of our RE volunteers have been of amazing service to BUC and I will have something to recognize all of them, there is one person in particular that I would like to recognize for his leadership.

Dave Graham has been an integral part of rebuilding BUC's youth programming. He is one of our OWL facilitators and facilitated OWL programming in fall 2022. And this past year, he served as one of the Coming of Age advisors. Both OWL and Coming of Age are programs that serve our 8th-9th grade youth. They are a cornerstone to many UU youths' religious education journey, including my own, and have been landmarks in BUC's RE programming for decades. Unfortunately, these programs as they were known to BUC had to be suspended for a little while because of the pandemic and have been restructured as a result. Dave's commitment to both of these monumental programs has been a beacon of light in these post-pandemic years as we are moving forward in new directions.

Additionally, Dave accompanied Fiona, Avery, and me to Boston for the historic UU Heritage Trip, which is no small feat. Of course, we have to thank the BUC community for helping us get there and having a hand in creating a truly memorable experience for these young people. For some of us, this was the first time visiting Boston. For all of us, it was our first time going on a UU heritage trip to Boston.

Dave is a traveler, and his knowledge of Boston and navigation throughout our travels was absolutely invaluable. But what is most remarkable is how much he values youth autonomy. He intentionally creates space for them to make choices

and take the lead. He suggested that Fiona and Avery choose how we spend our free time in Boston, and he encouraged them to be the ones to navigate us there! He saw this Coming of Age trip as an opportunity for them to test out the waters by giving them an opportunity to make the kinds of decisions and learn the skills that they might need as they venture out into the world upon Bridging. It was a wonderful experience in trusting the process, letting go, and empowering our youth. This is exactly what I cherished about my UU religious education, and it is what I like to see in BUC's Religious Education program.

It is my greatest honor to award the RE Service and Leadership Award to Dave Graham.

--Shannon Snideman, Director of Religious Education

Music

The award for Service and Leadership for Music for 2024 is *Kaye Rittinger*. She serves as our committee chair, sings in the Choir, and leads hymns when asked. Kaye has also helped with music events, such as February's HeartSounds. Congrats, Kaye!

--Abha and Steven Dearing, Co-Directors of Music Ministry

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has chosen *Jenn Karteczka* as our service award recipient. Jenn provided us with expert help and guidance this year as we navigated Rev. Mandy's separation agreement and worked with the staff during the transition. She has been a steady support, available for meetings and consultation as needed. Jenn has been an essential resource for our leadership this year, and we unanimously support her receiving this award. Congratulations, Jenn, and thank you!

--BUC Board of Trustees

**Annual Meeting of the Membership
Birmingham Unitarian Church
Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2023**

This Annual Meeting was held virtually on the Zoom internet platform. The Zoom polling feature was used for voting on motions.

Welcome and Call to Order – Donna Larkin Mohr

- The Zoom polling feature was used to confirm that the chair could be heard with 97 voting yes.
- The meeting was called to order at 1:13 PM. Donna used a gavel donated in memory of George H. Meyer to commemorate his role as parliamentarian at annual meetings and in appreciation for his donation to the General Endowment Fund.

Invocation and Chalice Lighting – Rev. Mandy Beal

Quorum Count – Donna Larkin-Mohr and Cynthia Osterhage

Attendees were counted. A quorum count was declared.

Reading of BUC Covenant – Mary Gawel-Ensroth

Motion to Proceed as Usual – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Craig Stroup moved that we proceed as usual.
- The motion was approved using the Zoom polling feature with 99 voting yes, 1 voting no, and 4 abstaining.

Meeting Covenant and Rules of Procedure – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Donna explained that Robert's Rules of Order would be used during the meeting with the Zoom polling feature employed to conduct voting on motions. She asked that votes only be submitted by those who are currently members of BUC. The Zoom polls would be displayed on the screen, and screenshots would be taken of the results. Keith Ensroth would function as Parliamentarian.

Minutes from the 2021-2022 Annual Meeting – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Refer to page 43 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Craig Stroup moved that the minutes of the May 22, 2022 Annual Meeting as published in the 2022-2023 Annual Report be approved.
- The minutes were approved using the Zoom polling feature.

Service and Leadership Recognition – Steven Dearing, Rev. Mandy Beal, Shannon Snideman, Craig Stroup

- Refer to page 41 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report. Five congregants were recognized for their service and leadership.
- From the Co-Directors of Music – Craig Stroup
- From the Minister – Janet Brown

- From the Executive – Craig Spangler
- From the Director of Religious Education – Nathan Schreck
- From the Board of Trustees – Barb Eschner

Nominating Committee – Cynthia Osterhage

- Refer to page 37 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Cynthia informed everyone that voting had closed at 1:00 PM and that the results would be reported at the end of the meeting.

Social and Environmental Justice Council – Jane O’Neil

- Refer to page 32 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- As chair of the Environmental Action Team, Jane reported that the team had focused on implementing the items in the Environmental Sustainability Plan. The plan had been created in the 2021-2022 church year and had been approved by 96 percent of voters attending the May 2022 Annual Meeting. Specifically, action was taken on water mitigation and native plantings. Ice abatement with more environmentally friendly solutions was not implemented. And work continues to devise a funding strategy for solar panels.

Treasurer’s Report – Diane Slon

- Refer to page 8 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Utilizing a slide presentation, Diane stated that BUC’s current financial situation is relatively stable. The 2022-2023 fiscal year is forecasted to end with expenses \$15,000 over budget, due mostly to lower-than-expected rental income and the cancellation of Fall Rummage along with higher-than-expected expenses for the building and grounds.
- Upon the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee, the board approved the budget for the fiscal year of 2023-2024 with an estimated \$64,000 deficit, reflecting a decline in expected revenue due to lower membership pledges and decreased rental and rummage income.
- Including the upcoming church year, BUC will have experienced deficit budgets for five years. Some of those losses have been covered by funding and tax relief to businesses from the Federal CARES Act. The remainder of these funds will be used to cover the upcoming approved budget deficit in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. There will be no more funds available from the federal government.
- BUC’s cash position is strong and is projected to have approximately \$200,000 in uncommitted cash at the end of fiscal year 2022-2023. Those funds will be used to cover the upcoming fiscal year’s deficit and any unknown expenses.
- The number of households pledging to BUC has declined by approximately 25 percent. This decrease impacts not only pledge income, but also results in less fundraising dollars, plate collections, and endowment donations.
- Maintaining the BUC building and grounds will cost an estimated \$100,000 to \$300,000. Maintaining the building is important to attract potential rental income.
- Diane concluded that BUC must look for new solutions to ensure stable and balanced budgets. She ended with a call to action asking members to give of their time, talent, and treasure. She made a special appeal to those individuals who have not yet submitted their pledges for the current Stewardship campaign.

President's Remarks – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Refer to page 5 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Donna highlighted some aspects of the Board of Trustees Report including the work of the Policy Governance Task Force, whose work is expected to conclude at the end of the calendar year.
- Donna also thanked the volunteers who worked on the Article II Task Force and the Board officers who helped and guided her in her role as board president.

Article II Discussion and Vote – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Donna explained the UUA General Assembly delegate process. Based on membership numbers, BUC is eligible to send six delegates from the congregation to the General Assembly. These delegates can choose to attend as business only participants and be able to take part in the business portions of the General Assembly without having to pay the usual conference fees.
- Craig Stroup put forth the following motion: “Based on the proposal to amend Article II of the UUA Bylaws and Rules, as this proposal stands as of January 20, 2023, and considering no possible future amendments, do you approve that we charge BUC’s delegates to vote in favor of the proposed changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws and Rules?”
- A vote of “yes” would approve the UUA moving forward with the proposed amendment to Article II. A vote of “no” would not approve any additional work to change Article II now and for the next two years. And a vote of “abstain” would indicate that the voter is abstaining from voting on the proposed amendment and is recognizing that the abstention will not affect the charge to the BUC delegates in any way.
- Mary Jo Ebert and Keith Ensroth explained how the discussion on the motion would proceed. Anyone wishing to express an opinion could use their laptops to indicate a green dot speaking in favor of the amendment and a red dot speaking not in favor of the amendment. If anyone was using an iPad or phone, they could click on the “raise your hand” icon. Should all else fail, one could just raise their actual hand to be recognized to speak. Each speaker would be allotted one minute to speak. Utilizing this process would enable speakers to take turns speaking for and against the amendment. Everyone was reminded that this process was taking place for discussion purposes only. The vote on the amendment would take place afterwards.
- A procedural question was asked as to how BUC delegates would be instructed to vote at the General Assembly once amendments were put forth. Donna answered that BUC delegates will vote as the congregation votes at the annual meeting and that those delegates will have the latitude to decide what they feel reflects the wishes of the congregation if amendments are made to the proposed changes.
- The following comments were made concerning the amendment:
 - The most important thing we are doing today is deciding if the language will draw future generations in the same way the principles and sources drew us.
 - UUism is grounded in reality; yet the proposed values do not include science.
 - Science and reason; the right of conscience and freedom of belief; the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society; peace, liberty, and justice for all are the values that drew us to Unitarian Universalism. They are even more important in today’s world. But these values – with the exception of justice – are either absent from the new value statements or significantly moved to the background.
 - The changes to Article II were poorly drafted. It appears that there was a lack of carrying forward the value of some of our key principles and a lack of any explanation of what the deficiencies are in the current principles and sources and how the new values and inspirations are

supposed to address those deficiencies. Instead of making changes to the current Article II, the Eighth Principle should be adopted.

- Change is necessary, but not all change is good. For example, when Karl Marx's views were put into practice, the effect was disastrous. Bylaws exist to set up ways to govern, and principles should exist in a preamble, not in a constitutional document.
 - The current article is valid. There is no clear statement as to what is wrong with the existing Article II. Many important words have been omitted.
 - Historically, the UUA has struggled with guidance. The current guidance is fifty years old. The process needs to be focused on the future. It is time to move forward.
 - The changes to Article II point out the importance of love, while the current language avoids the word love.
 - BUC needs its best talent to work on resolving its financial issues rather than spending the next year focused on the amendments to Article II and building coalitions with fifteen other churches to get those amendments passed.
- Using the Zoom polling feature, the motion was not approved with 32 voting yes and 71 voting no.

Results of the Election – Cynthia Osterhage

- Cynthia announced the results for the Board of Trustees: Andrew Schreck, President (one-year term); Tony Kubien, Vice President (one-year term); Craig Stroup, Treasurer (one-year term); Amy Smalley, Secretary (one-year term); Julia Pulver, Trustee (one-year term), Diane Slon, Trustee (two-year term), Claudia Kocher, Trustee (three-year term), Tanya Nordhaus, Trustee (three-year term), and Brian Schandavel, Trustee (three-year term).
- The results for the Stewardship Committee were Bob Clement and Paul Vachon for two-year terms.
- The results for the Nominating Committee, all two-year terms, were Janet Brown, Tom Cranston, Heidi Kapsokavathis, Marilyn Mast, and Paula Olson.
- Cynthia thanked the remaining nominees for the Nominating Committee and reminded them that should circumstances come up that necessitate a committee member having to leave, the remaining nominees might be called upon to serve, as has happened in the past.

Issues Arising for the Good of the Congregation

- Craig Stroup expressed gratitude and appreciation to Cynthia Osterhage for her work as chair of the Nominating Committee, to Donna Larkin Mohr for her work as president of the board of trustees, and to David Uricek, who managed Zoom for the meeting.
- A question was asked to confirm the location of the BUC Constitution and Bylaws. The document is on the BUC website.

Craig Stroup moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved using the Zoom polling feature.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Gawel-Ensroth, Secretary