

# 2021-2022 Annual Report



**First Unitarian Church of Omaha**  
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# **In Memoriam**

Judy Maniscalco  
Steve Raybine  
Virginia Shumate  
Evelyn Whitehill

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## Board of Trustees

Catherine Plumlee, President  
Harold Cruz-Sanchez, President-elect  
Walt Jesteadt, Treasurer  
Diana Byrd (2022)  
Nellie Chenoweth (2023)  
Neva Cozine (2024)  
Bruce Godfrey (2023)  
Peg Pidgeon (2022)  
Bill Tull (2022)

## Elected Trustees of the Capital Trust

Christopher Schmidt (May 2022)  
Daniel Byrd (May 2023)  
Joseph Schaaf (May 2024)

## Nominating Committee

Mary Kay Peters (May 2022), Nellie Chenoweth (May 2022)  
Katrina Schmidt (May 2023), Sara Switzer (May 2023)  
Terri Lynn Brewer (May 2024), Diana Byrd (May 2024)

**Agenda**  
**The One Hundred Fifty-Third Annual Meeting**  
**First Unitarian Church of Omaha**  
**May 15, 2022**

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Covenant of Right Relations Catherine Plumlee, President
2. Confirmation of Quorum Bruce Godfrey, Secretary
3. Zoom Meeting Housekeeping Catherine Plumlee
4. Appointment of Parliamentarian (G. David Richardson) Catherine Plumlee
5. Approval of Minutes of 152nd Annual meeting (May 16, 2021)
6. Approval of Minutes of Mid-Year meeting (January 9, 2022)
7. Annual Reports Take questions from the floor regarding any and all annual reports as printed in the meeting book, including those of the Minister, President, Ministry Team Council, Director of Religious Education, Trustees of the Capital Trust Fund, and all team and committee reports.
8. Presentation & Adoption of Proposed 2022-2023 Budget Walt Jesteadt, Treasurer
9. Elections  
President Elect: Mark Loscutoff  
Board of Trustees: Barb Herring (3 years), Ian Shanklin (3 years), and John Hruska (completing a term, 2 years)  
Right Relations: Kay Lynn Goldner (2 years) and Elaine Wells (2 years)  
Nominating Committee: Ed Kelly (3 years) and Linda Parker (3 years)  
Capital Trust: Jennifer Larsen (3 years) and John Wagner (completing a term, 1 year)
10. Recognition of Completion of Terms Catherine Plumlee
11. Volunteer Recognition The Nominating Committee  
Unitarian Universalist of the Year presented by Oliver Coffman  
Youth of the Year presented by Ryan Cook  
Young Adult of the Year presented by Katrina Schmidt  
Heritage Award presented by Sara Switzer  
Religious Education presented by Mary Kay Peters  
Keeping the Faith presented by Nellie Chenoweth  
Social Justice presented by Terri Lynn Brewer  
Unsung Unitarian Universalist presented by Donna Neff
12. Adjourn Harold Cruz-Sanchez

## **PROPOSED LEADERSHIP SLATE FOR THE 2022 ANNUAL MEETING**

### **President Elect:**

Mark Loscutoff

### **Board of Trustees:**

Barb Herring (3 years)

Ian Shanklin (3 years)

John Hruska (2 years—completing a term)

### **Right Relations:**

Kay Lynn Goldner (2 years)

Elaine Wells (2 years)

### **Nominating Committee:**

Ed Kelly (3 years)

Linda Parker (3 years)

### **Capital Trust:**

Jennifer Larsen (3 years)

John Wagner (1 year—completing a term)

Slate presented by the Nominating Committee:

Terri Lynn Brewer, Diana Byrd, Nellie Chenoweth, Mary Kay Peters, Katrina Schmidt, and Sara Switzer

**Sunday, May 16, 2021  
First Unitarian Church of Omaha  
One Hundred Fifty-Second Annual Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Sunday May 16, 2021

**Location:** Meeting held over Zoom, a web-based audio-visual platform.

**Call to Order:** Sharon Piehler, President

**Confirmation of Quorum:** Bruce Godfrey, Secretary  
Attendance: 75 on Zoom, 68 members, quorum confirmed

**Zoom Housekeeping:** Catherine Plumlee, President-Elect, went over Zoom etiquette and functions

**Appointment of Parliamentarian:** (G. David Richardson) Sharon Piehler, accepted by Mr. Richardson

Approval of Minutes of 151st Annual meeting (May 3, 2020) minutes: approved by congregation

Approval of Minutes of Mid-Year meeting (January 10, 2021) minutes: approved by congregation

**Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation:** Slideshow from staff, with soundtrack

**Presentation & Adoption of Proposed 2021-2022 Budget:** Walt Jesteadt, Treasurer  
Budget approved by congregation: Motion to approve by Walt Jesteadt, seconded by Dave Richardson

**Elections:**

President Elect: Harold Cruz-Sanchez

Board of Trustees: Neva Cozine (3 years), Larry Goeser (1 year—completing Harold's board term), and Michael McAtee (3 years)

Right Relations: Carol Cronin (2 years) and Douglas Lee-Regier (2 years)

Nominating Committee: Terri Lynn Brewer (3 years) and Diana Byrd (3 years)

Capital Trust: Joseph Schaaf (3 years)

The above slate was approved unanimously by Zoom polling

**Recognition of Completion of Terms:** Sharon Piehler & Catherine Plumlee

**Awards:** Nominating Committee

Annual Awards:

Social Justice: Suzanne King

Religious Education: Kate Wiig

Youth of the Year: Lucas Magisana

Young Adult of the Year: Chynna Jedlicka

Heritage Award: Jaime Alexander

Keeping the Faith: Denise Allain

Unsung UU: Lloyd Olson

UU of the Year: The Tech Team

**Update from the MTC regarding Reopening Plans:** Catherine Plumlee reviewed guiding values for decision making on reopening

Adjourn: Catherine Plumlee

Choral Benediction

**Minutes of the Mid-Year Congregational Meeting  
First Unitarian Church of Omaha  
January 9, 2022**

**Call to Order:** The Mid-Year Congregational Meeting of First Unitarian Church of Omaha was called to order at 10:30am by Board President, Catherine Plumlee

**Location:** Meeting held over Zoom, a web-based audio-visual platform.

**Confirmation of Quorum:** Bruce Godfrey, Secretary  
60 attending/35 needed, quorum confirmed

**Appointment of Parliamentarian:** (G. David Richardson) Catherine Plumlee, accepted by Mr. Richardson

**Zoom Housekeeping:** Catherine Plumlee, President, went over Zoom etiquette and functions

**Board of Trustees Update:** Catherine Plumlee  
a. Shared church organizational chart  
b. Update on church Board policies and Taking a Stand

**Ministry Team Council Update:** Harold Cruz-Sanchez  
a. reopening task force continues to monitor Covid in Omaha  
b. building updates have been completed including

- Improved air flow and quality
- New outdoor security cameras installed
- New IT service provider hired (Data Serv)
- The Building Team is gathering quotes for needed repairs to roof, steeple and other areas
- Sanctuary audio and video systems have been updated for streaming services
- Policy on social media access has been updated (see policy)
- Hired a tech coordinator, Mr. Coffman
- Working to support and Afghan refugee family

**Finance report:** Walt Jesteadt  
a. Update on consolidating Capital trust to the UUA Common Endowment Fund  
b. Current budget and pledges reviewed (see finance report)  
c. Discussed 2022-23 budget projections

**Building repair issues:** Jack Round  
a. Catherine reviewed the Preserve Our Building fund and need for congregational approval of expenditures  
b. Jack reviewed our current list of repairs needed (see report)  
c. Kim Dunovan proposed the Board consider restructuring the POB fund to allow the Board more latitude to fund repairs in a timely manner.  
d. Jaime Alexander moved and Katrina Schmidt seconded that we authorize the Board to spend up to \$30,000 from the POB fund to pay for priority repair items from the Building team list that Jack Round has put together. Daniel Byrd moved and Lita Magisana seconded amending the amount to \$50,000. This amendment was withdrawn by Mr. Byrd.  
Marie Sedlacek called the question. The presiding officer decided to vote directly on the motion in question. The motion to authorize the Board to spend up to \$30,000 in POB funds to cover repair items on the priority list. This motion passed unanimously.

**Nominating Committee:** Katrina Schmidt. She directed us to the nomination form on-line.

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**Sister Church:** Mark Loscutoff and Neva Cozine discussed our Sister Church history. Mark noted especially our contributions to the Claire Memorial food pantry and work for Habitat for Humanity. He put out a call for more people to participate. Neva noted the importance of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.

**Media Team update:** Rev. Shari.

Noted all of our staff has been retained during the pandemic and our nursery coordinator returned. Noted hiring of Oliver Coffman as our IT coordinator. She raised up our former Zoom help team for helping with our latest technology upgrade.

- a. Tech update: new equipment has been purchased and installed for streaming services
- b. Noted especially a gift from Beth Conover and Steve Raybine to make these purchases
- c. Lloyd gave us a tour of the new cameras and equipment.

Meeting adjourned at 12:47 pm by Catherine Plumlee

# **Annual Reports**

Minister, Ministry Team Council, Director of Religious Education,  
and other Team and Committee Reports as Submitted

*(Reports are presented alphabetically by group name.  
Unless otherwise noted, reports were submitted  
by the Team Leader or Committee Chair.)*

## Minister's Report to the Congregation 2021-2022

### Submitted by Rev. Shari Woodbury, Settled Minister

If the first year of COVID was a marathon for ministers—as for lots of other front-line workers and leaders of organizations—this past year was the second consecutive marathon, a second endurance race begun with barely a break after the first one. (The “second marathon” metaphor comes from pastor and blogger Jenny Smith.)



Every aspect of ministry this year has been colored by the pandemic, including the three overarching congregational needs I named and was mindful of in my role: reconnecting our members in care; emerging from this time of disruption into What Comes Next; and witness and healing. (Visual inspiration above is from artist Deborah Koff Chapin's SoulCards.) All of these efforts will be ongoing for some time. Here's a summary of where my time and energy went in the 2021-2022 church year.

#### Ministry specific to pandemic times

- Transition to multi-platform church: I worked with volunteers and a new staff position to build our tech systems for multi-platform (aka hybrid) worship, and to grow the team of people who could sustain our streaming program and AV support. While not a techie myself, I have been the convener, scheduler and big-picture shepherd of these efforts.
- COVID safety: I convened monthly meetings of our safety task force, maintained our tracker and policies, and with each new iteration of safety policy, communicated with staff, lay leaders, and the congregation at large about changes. Great care and attention went into these decisions and their implementation.
- Leading staff: in addition to my usual duties supervising and coordinating our staff team, this year has brought two hiring processes (for a new AV Tech Coordinator position as well as a search for new Membership Coordinator) and an intentional transition for our long-time membership staffer; plus helping our staff members handle the pivots and strains of the second marathon. Pandemic respite leave time granted to each of our full-time staff members this summer appropriately shows our appreciation for these dedicated leaders, and will help us retain valued staff members.
- Collaborating with lay leaders: work with the Board of Trustees, Ministry Team Council, and Stewardship Team included the usual business as well as special attention to pandemic adaptation.

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- Communications: the communication load was heavier than usual due to the platform transitions in worship and frequently shifting COVID safety policies. I wrote eblasts or recorded videos each time. I also wrote at least one survey and shared with various parties the results relevant to them.
- The eye of the storm: I did my best to serve as a non-anxious, caring, mission-focused presence during unsettling times.
- Re-engaging: this was addressed formally through several rounds of outreach (coordinated by our Membership Coordinator, with participation from all core staff and volunteers), as well as informally, continuously looking for ways to plug people back into church life.
- Installation: my official installation as the “new” settled minister was delayed due to the pandemic, and all the sweeter when we did hold it. It’s a bit like how the wedding couple plans their own wedding; I planned the service, coordinating with our fabulous installation team, staff, and numerous participating colleagues. We needed the pomp, the beauty and the party afterwards.

#### Ongoing ministry

- Pastoral care and rites of passage: this includes various types of contacts made to our members/friends dealing with death, illness, or other difficulties; officiating celebration of life services (for Evelyn Whitehill and Steve Raybine; a long-postponed service for Ron Withem never was held at the church, but was handled privately by the family); pastoral counseling sessions; referrals and sharing of community resources.
- Encouragement and support to groups: after the previous leader of our congregation’s Soul Matters small group program stepped way, I convened enthusiasts and worked with them to launch small groups for the year; facilitated a charged AHA session and shared resources for future programs; facilitated a YRUU (youth group) session; gave support to young adult leaders and other groups/leaders as requested.
- Preaching and worship: I was “on” for thirty-six Sundays, developing services and most of them preaching; chaired the Worship Arts Team; supported music leaders in efforts to offer vibrant, engaging music programs and rebuild participation; and wholeheartedly developed and delivered services to comfort and inspire, to teach the UU tradition & values, and to minister to the moment.
- Building relationships: through meetings, conversations, worship collaboration and more, I strengthened ties with other UUs in Nebraska and beyond, with other Omaha clergy, and with our sister church, Clair Memorial.
- Working with other teams as needed or requested: I encouraged the nascent Side with Love Team, frequently joined the Sister Church Team, facilitated the first Membership Team meeting in ages, offered support to Nominating Com., etc.
- Community building: I participated in Community Night and other family or intergen activities, joined in a social action poster-making and rally, attended the auction party and offered events of my own through the auction, and connected with church groups socially as the opportunity arose.

I love parish ministry. I am very happy to be doing ministry with this congregation. And I am ready to practice what I preach—take some time for real rest this summer, then re-start this ministry in a way that is sustainable. I look forward to 2022-2023 being my first year of non-marathon ministry with you.

Faithfully,

*Shari*

## Ministry Team Council Report to the Congregation 2021-2022

**Current members:** Harold Cruz-Sanchez, Rev. Shari Woodbury, Kai Clemen, Rosharra Owens (term ended April 30, 2022, replaced by Mary Thomas), Sarah Monaghan (term ended November 2021).

The Ministry Team Council (MTC) can be described as the “Operations Team of the Church,” entrusted by the Board of Trustees with supporting, coordinating, and directing the work of the Ministry Team, and to put board policies into effect.

The MTC consists of four members: The President-Elect of the Board of Trustees, ex-officio; the Minister of the Church, ex-officio (the Minister’s term shall be continuous); and two elected members, each having a two-year term.

The Ministry Team includes all of the individual staff and church teams that operate the church. Each team must understand and support the overall goals of the church that are documented in the Board of Trustees’ Policies, Annual Vision of Ministry, and other sources.

Main list of activities done by MTC during the period June 2021 to April 2022:

### Pandemic Related Activities:

- Flexible undertaking of COVID guidelines provided by Reopening Task Force
- Kept track of COVID-related infections in Douglas County
- Initial reopening using reservations (reservations later removed)
- Pastoral Care visits
- Implementation of Tech Team to improve the video service and multi-channel options

### Building Related:

- Roof repair
- Sanctuary and common room painting
- Ventilation system & air filtering
- Nursery repairs
- Cleaning church for reopening

### Other:

- Installation of new minister
- IT-related changes (from previous contractor to a new service provider - Data Serv)
- Security cameras update
- Dispersed Share the Plate funds to our 2021 beneficiaries and selected 2022 Share the Plate organizations
- Afghan refugee family support (joint activity with Second Unitarian Church)
- Paula Cole Jones workshop regarding the 8th Principle
- Stewardship Campaign
- Hosted a Teams Meeting in November 2021 (on Zoom) and March 2022 in person

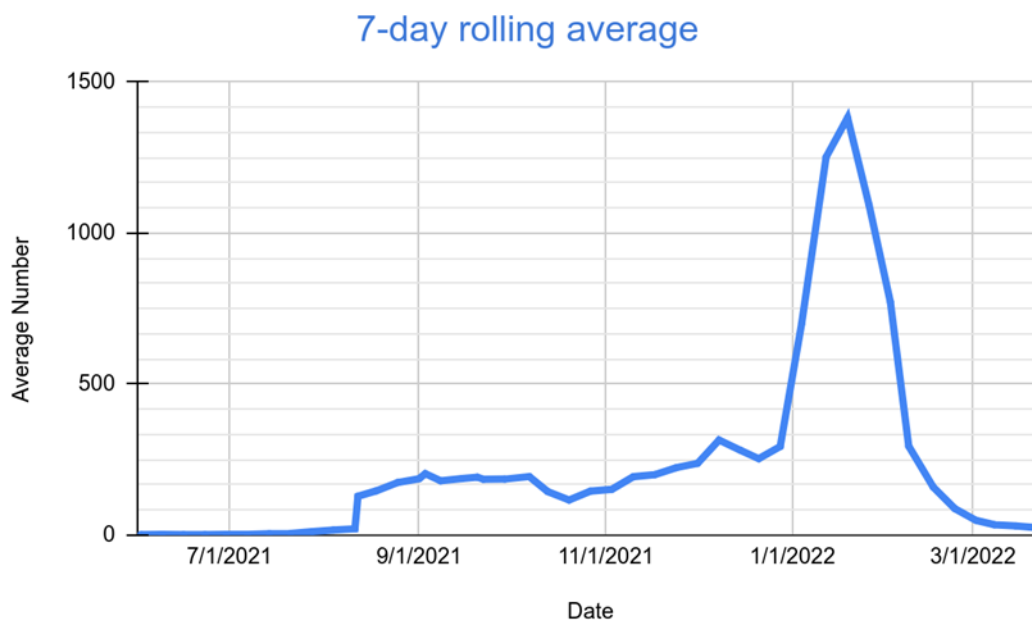
## PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FROM THE WIDENING THE CIRCLE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Widening the Circle discussion group recognizes the responsibility of Unitarian Universalists to commit to the dismantling of systemic racism and other oppressions in American society. Honoring the commitment to our First Principle and the proposed Eighth Principle, the Team would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. Establish a series of workshops to build and refine the skills of church members and friends as we work through the challenging issues of truth and reconciliation in anti-oppression work.
  2. Establish a scholarship fund for People of Color for post-secondary education and/or training. Work in partnership with Second Unitarian and Clair Memorial Church.
  3. Document the history of First Unitarian and its connection to social issues.
- Establish a link to young religious liberals in higher education and professional organizations.

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COVID chart maintained weekly by the MTC:



Risk Level by Cases			
High	moderate	low	all-clear
>100	10-100	<10	< 3

## **Multi-Channel Church Taskforce Report to the Congregation 2021-2022**

### **Submitted by Oliver Coffman, AV Technology Coordinator**

The Multi-Channel Church Taskforce (or MCCT) is a collection of technicians working to optimize the quality of our church's streaming capabilities. This task includes both studying and implementing the technology that makes our Sunday services run. The MCCT is composed of primarily audio / video technicians and Zoom helpers, most of whom are volunteers.

This taskforce consists of many members including: Oliver Coffman, Matt Dewell, Gary Emenitove, Stephanie Lewis, Lloyd Olson, Dave Rosser, Kate Wiig, and Rev. Shari Woodbury

Thanks to the dedicated work of those involved with our efforts, we have surmounted many technical challenges while striving to provide exceptional quality for viewers at-home and in-person. We are so grateful to everyone who has helped run fantastic services at a technical level across many months of work. We also thank those who will soon be joining us on Sundays as we begin to teach and train new volunteers!

### **MCCT Milestones achieved as of May 2022:**

- Experimented with various temporary streaming arrangements
- Worked to optimize preexisting church-owned/borrowed streaming equipment
- Hired an AV Technology Coordinator for the church
- Began hosting regular meetings to strategize and organize technological goals
- Researched options for in-sanctuary multi-media, in alignment with worship goals and the historical/aesthetic considerations of our sanctuary
- Researched and studied new video streaming equipment
- Gathered input from the congregation to support decision-making
- Tested streaming platforms including Zoom and YouTube
- Presented a proposal for funding streaming solutions, which was approved by the board
- Ordered new streaming technology including cameras, cables, dedicated streaming PCs
- Installed new equipment and began setting up streaming software
- Adjusted settings and worked to utilize the full potential of our purchases
- Began preparations for training new tech volunteers

### **MCCT Future planning for 2022-2023:**

- Upgrade audio equipment for further improvements to service quality
- Continue learning from experiences and adapting our methodology
- Train new volunteers who are interested in assisting with sound/video during services

### **Our Thanks:**

- We recognize **Mark Loscutt**, **Jessie Stallings**, and **Catherine Plumlee**, along with **Gary Emenitove**, for being our Zoom hosts since the reopen in October. (Prior to the reopen, during May - Sept 2021, additional Zoom helpers included **Kate Wiig**, **Mike McAtee**, and **Stephanie Lewis**.)
- Task force members **Kate Wiig**, **Lloyd Olson**, **Stephanie Lewis**, and **Dave Rosser** have joined staffer Oliver Coffman at the AV station in the sanctuary, and we appreciate additional folks who have begun training for this tech support.

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- Special thanks to **Kate Wiig** for video editing support on several projects, including the pre-recorded worship service our church contributed to the Midwest UU Summer Worship Co-op in 2021, and the Jan. 30 online service, which engaged the congregations of First Unitarian and Second Unitarian in our joint project to support an Afghan refugee family. **Matt Dewell** deftly edited stewardship videos in the spring.
- **Beth Conover** was a champion for a quality streaming program, including our new Steve Raybine Memorial AV work station.
- The task force is grateful to **Kate Wiig** and **Gary Emenitove** for the leadership they provided in exploring in-sanctuary multi-media solutions for the future, to **Lloyd Olson** and **Quint Ringsak** for many hours of labor building our streaming box, to **Lloyd Olson** for diligent fine-tuning and simplifying of our processes, and to **Stephanie Lewis** for her guidance in creating training materials and plugging more people into this volunteer role.



## **Religious Education Annual Report 2021-2022**

### **Submitted by Christina Strong, Lifespan Director of Religious Education**

**Active RE Team Members:** Sheri Conner, Ryan Cook, Harold Cruz, Donna Neff, Jody Petrow, Patricia Soto, Nellie Chenoweth [drafted]

### **Activities/Projects 2021-2022:**

#### **Multigenerational Worship and RE Activities**

- Weekly Story for All Ages during Sunday service, led by DRE or adult or youth volunteers
- Neighborhood Care Package Assembly (outdoors in June 2021)
- CommUnity Caravans (Summer 2021): Congregants were invited to drive through the church parking lot to visit various stations set up by church staff and volunteers. This included opportunities to donate to the Sister Church food bank and to purchase items from elementary fundraiser for our Share the Plate recipients
- RE Family Hike at Fontenelle Forest (June 2021)
- RE Family Trip to the Henry Doorly Zoo (July 2021)
- Church Clean-Up Day (Sept 2021)
- Recreation, ReUnion, & RitUal (Sept 2021) Water Ingathering with worship and outdoor activities at four parks in the Omaha area
- Bonfire at Bellevue Berry Farm (Sept 2021, 45 participants)
- Rally for Reproductive Rights (Oct 2021)
- Trunk-Or-Treat at Second Unitarian (Oct 2021) 5 First U youth + 3 parents joined Second Us to decorate vehicles and pass out candy to 150 trick-or-treaters.
- Procession of Gifts Service (Dec 2021) Three families (with children ranging from early elementary through high school) participated in our “Holiday Lights” skit for this service.
- Easter Egg Hunt (April 2022) Attended by 25 children and youth, this was our highest attendance in RE on Sunday morning since reopening for in-person worship. The following Sunday also had higher than usual RE attendance (13)
- Youth Service (April 2022) was led by 10 middle/high school youth and attended by 55 people in person and 100 people online

#### **Nursery/Kindergarten**

- Our need for childcare outside of Sunday mornings is growing, as more church groups are scheduling in-person events that need childcare.
- We are down to 3 nursery staff and are advertising for applicants now.
- The nursery has had few attendees on Sunday mornings, but slowly increasing.

#### **Elementary**

- Elementary attendance started off strong when we first resumed in-person classes in Oct 2021. When we went back to online-only programming in the winter, we were not able to sustain Sunday school classes due to low attendance (0-2 attendees per week). If we ever need to avoid in-person classes in the future, I recommend asynchronous RE for this group... online activities that can be accessed anytime, delivery of at-home RE materials, etc.
- Attendance struggled to rebound when we resumed in-person classes. There was a big leap in attendance at Easter, and the kids really enjoyed the Easter activities, which I’m hoping will lead to increased Sunday morning participation in the future. The Sunday after Easter (Apr 24) did have good elementary attendance. The following Sunday was the Youth Service and did not have many elementary attendees, but this seems to be the norm when Sunday school is not offered. It is my hope that the minister and I can create occasional “all ages” service (like youth Sunday, Flower Communion, Water Communion, etc) where people feel comfortable and excited about bringing their children into the Sanctuary.

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## **Middle/High School**

- MS/HS Sunday School teachers and assistants: Greg Petrow, Ryan Cook, Bethany Cook
- YRUU Youth Advisors: Ben Stallings, Jessie Stallings, Ryan Cook
- MS/HS Sunday school class has had small attendance numbers throughout the year. Fifth & sixth graders have moved up to this class, and the younger age group are the more frequent attendees. Are there programs that we can offer that will attract this age group to attending Sunday School? Is a weekend morning class just not a good time for this age group? We are still working to figure these things out.
- YRUU had consistent attendance throughout the year, usually having 10 or more youth each week. They studied mythology (Norse, Greek, Christian), largely through “reader’s theater” [read-aloud plays that require no advance preparation]. They enjoyed game nights and music nights throughout the year.
- Some of the traditions YRUU continued/resumed in 2021-22 were the Bellevue Berry Farm Bonfire, the White Elephant Christmas Party, and the Youth Service. Advisors are working on trying to put together a lock-in before the end of the school year.
- YRUU put a lot of work into the Youth Service, writing and performing an original play. We have two graduating seniors this year and both opted to give speeches at the youth service.

## **Adult RE**

- Some adult RE groups continued meeting on Zoom, while others returned to in-person meetings.
- Active adult programs include: Soul Matters Sharing Circles, Women’s Religious Studies, Compassionate Communication, two Book Clubs, Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics (AHA), Morning Meditation Group, Hiking Club.
- DRE has not had as much involvement with Adult RE as I would like, due to needing to support Children’s RE. It has been a long year of fluctuating circumstances and needing to be creative in finding ways to continue meeting community needs and expectations during many changes. I look forward to the possibility of greater involvement with Adult RE in the coming year.

## **Concerns About Next Year**

This year we had one new YRUU advisor (the spouse of a longtime advisor) and one new Sunday school assistant. Everyone else who was involved with children/youth RE programming this year has been involved ceaselessly for the three years I’ve been at First U (and I know much longer than that), and we have lost the participation of some volunteers along the way (without replacements). I deeply appreciate First Unitarian adults’ interest & willingness to participate with occasional multigenerational events and to support youth fundraisers. Like these events, modern Sunday School and YRUU are also *collaborative* activities between child participants and adult volunteers. I will continue to encourage adults to see volunteering for Sunday school and YRUU as opportunities for multigenerational connection. I encourage adults without children currently in the program to volunteer. I encourage parents to volunteer with age groups outside of their children’s ages. I encourage anyone who wants to see us sustain quality children & teens programming at First U to volunteer, or to encourage church friends they know would be good with children/teens to volunteer. I want anyone who WANTS to volunteer ceaselessly for 3+ years to feel well-supported, and I want anyone who shies away from *that* level of commitment to know that a few Sundays or Wednesdays per year are an important way to support our long-term volunteers and make connections with our children and youth. I am worried about burning out our longtime RE volunteers... I’d rather us be in a position of people stepping up to work alongside them now, than to be in a position of needing to replace them in another year or two because they’ve burned out and quit. I want to get to a place where there is enough support for our current programs that I can work on areas where there is potential to expand our RE offerings (such as Our Whole Lives education, programs for college students and other young adults, and RE “continuing-ed”/spiritual-deepening programs for adults).

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## **Professional Development:**

- I participated in the Administration as Leadership Renaissance Module, April-May 2021
- I attended LREDA Days professional conference online in June 2021
- I attended General Assembly (GA) online in June 2021
- I worked with a four-person team to add multicultural resources to Soul Matters elementary curriculum, May-June 2021
- I co-led Soul Matters “Leader Labs” for DREs who used the 2021-22 Soul Matters curricula and were interested in utilizing more Anti-Racist/ Anti-Oppressive/Multicultural materials in their churches, Sept 2021-Feb 2022
- I attended the UU Ministers Association Institute for the Learning Ministry in San Diego in Feb 2022
- I participated in the Systems Theory Renaissance Module online, Feb-March 2022
- I will be attending & volunteering at General Assembly in Portland this June (2022) and will attend LREDA Professional Day onsite
- I will be co-leading the younger elementary children’s programing at Building Bridges week on Star Island this July (2022)

## **Twenty Years Ago: 2001-2002 Submitted by Dave Richardson**

The 2001-2002 church year was the fourth year of Reverend Richard Benner’s tenure with First Unitarian. Reverend Benner continued his extensive activities in community outreach. He chaired the Greater Omaha Clergy Association. He also served on the Mayor’s Ecumenical Clergy Board. He re-established our connection with the Urban League of Nebraska which was headed by First Unitarian member Whitney Young in the 1950s.

Our Director of Religious Education, Cheryll Wallace, continued her outstanding leadership. Sunday School numbers increased as well as the number of adult volunteers. Cheryll also started a Bhagavad Gita study group nicknamed “the Gita Group.” The class was a mixture of scripture study, personal story-telling, and religious exploration. The group continues today under the title of “The Women’s Religious Study Group” (WRSB). Cheryll also served as chair of the Prairie Star District’s Committee on Religious Education (CORE).

Jan Reardon began her first year as our Office Manager after the retirement of Maurice Jay, who had served in that position for 22 years.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was earning the official status of “Welcoming Congregation.” Yearlong discussion sessions were conducted in pursuit of that goal. In the environment of states passing so-called “Defense of Marriage Acts” it was deemed essential to act. The committee first obtained the unanimous approval of the Board of Trustees on September 11, 2001. An open forum was held at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 13, 2001. On Sunday, October 20, 2001, a special congregational meeting was called to consider the question of becoming a Welcoming Congregation. After a period of questions and answers, the vote was unanimous to seek the designation. The final application was prepared by Cheryll Wallace and Ruth Nicklin and mailed to the Director of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns on February 3, 2002. In early March, the church received the UUA’s official letter of acceptance. On Sunday morning, March 9, 2002, a Candle of Joy was lighted and the congregation was informed that the First Unitarian Church of Omaha was officially a Welcoming Congregation. Enthusiastic applause followed the announcement. David McCracken had the letter of acceptance and the official poster framed, and it now hangs in the church foyer.

Our leaders and award winners during the church year included:

President: Sandi Bruns

UUs of the Year: Joe Hoagbin and David McCracken

Henry Lemon Sermon: Doug Paterson’s “A Trip to Baghdad in a Time of Terror”

## **Afghan Refugee Project Team Report**

### **Joint project of First and Second Unitarian Churches of Omaha**

The purpose of the group is for 1st Unitarian Church of Omaha (1stU) to work in conjunction with 2nd Unitarian Church of Omaha (2ndU) and Family Lutheran Services (LFS), in co-sponsoring an Afghani Refugee Family.

**Co-Leaders & Mentors:** Barb Herring & John Mangini, 1st Unitarian Church  
JoAnne Draper & Michaela Weiss, 2nd Unitarian Church

#### **Additional Mentors:**

Donna Neff & Walt Jesteadt, 1st Unitarian Church  
Pam Miller-Jenkins & Darell Draper, 2nd Unitarian Church

#### **Timeline:**

**November 2021** - Started exploring the idea with LFS.

**December 2021** - The Team was officially approved by 2nd Unitarian's Board of Trustees and 1st Unitarian's Ministry Team Council.

#### **January 2022:**

- All Team Leaders and Mentors completed all paperwork, background checks and online training classes that were required by LFS.
- Started gathering donations of furniture and household items for the future family.
- Helped put together a joint service with both churches.
- Filmed an informational video.
- Designed a [webpage](#) that is used by both churches.

#### **February 2022**

- Asked LFS if we could co-sponsor the Zaher Family of 8.
- Met with family and found out their needs.
- Helped the family with doctor appointments and shopping.
- Helped the family find affordable housing.
- Continued to collect donations.
- Met with YRUU (youth group) who had inquired about helping with the Afghan Refugee Project, plus brainstorming ideas of how they could fit in.

#### **March 2022:**

- Helped the family with understanding and signing the leases.
- Worked with LFS to get funds for the apartments.
- Cataloged donated furniture and household items.
- Purchased remaining furniture items needed.
- Coordinated volunteers to help with moving the family.
- Successfully moved the family into two apartments.
- Helped register Hamid's twin 8-year-olds in school.
- Helped with rides to job interviews and ESL classes.
- Helped with Bank accounts, internet, etc.
- Collected \$8,800.40 in donations between the two churches.

*(continued on next page)*

**Upcoming:**

- YRUU (youth group) is having a talent show at the beginning of June and all proceeds will be used to buy a Zoo pass for the family and other Omaha area event passes.
- A potluck is planned on May 21st for the Zaher Family, the Mentors and 1st & 2nd Unitarian's ministers and family.
- Continue to support the family with rides to school, doctors, ESL classes, job interviews.
- Outings with the family to areas of interest in Omaha.
- Hamid has expressed an interest in meeting with the YRUU to thank them for all their help in moving plus talk about and answer any questions about his life in Afghanistan.

**Future Needs:**

Unknown at this time.

**AHA (Atheists, Humanists, Agnostics) Report**

**Leaders:** Jaime Alexander and Mike McAtee

**Members:** We don't have members but maintain email lists currently of 54 participants (33 are from our church directory plus 21 not listed in the directory).

**Activities:**

AHA had another year of successful meetings entirely on Zoom. We planned to gather quarterly, but skip the summer, so three meetings have become our normal for now.

The May 20, 2021 AHA meeting featured conversation with retired Rev. Ron Knapp and viewing a video recording of his superb sermon "From Wonder Unto Wonder Existence Opens." Comments in discussion included: "Wow, our world religions aren't thinking big enough" and "It made me want to pray even not though I don't believe in God." Ron served First Unitarian Church of Omaha for twenty years (1976-1996). He first delivered "From Wonder " ten years ago at another church. Ron has been a consistent participant, presenter, and friend of AHA since its origination as Tolerant Atheist Group in 2010. We thank him.

The Oct. 7, 2021 AHA meeting's discussion revolved around the question: "Where is our UUA going?" Conversation topics included changes in UUA leadership, the Rev. Todd Eklof excommunication, and the "Widening the Circle of Concern" report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change.

The Feb. 3, 2022 AHA meeting provided a look into the future with discussion questions such as:

"What does AHA mean to our church?"

"What does our church mean to you?"

"What is Humanism?"

"How does *Good Without God* by Greg Epstein portray Humanism?"

"How does this compare to your perspective of Humanism?"

AHA now looks ahead to a year of continuation while hopefully transitioning to in-person or combined Zoom/in-person meetings.

## Archives/Library Report

**Leader:** Linda Parker

The Archives/Library Team did not meet during the pandemic. The following books were ordered and received:

1. *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight For Environmental Justice From Colonization To Standing Rock* by Dina Gilio-Whitaker. Beacon Press.
2. *The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging* by Jane Fleishman. Skinner House.
3. *Conflagration: How the Transcendentalists Sparked the American Struggle For Racial, Gender, and Social Justice* by John A. Buehrens. Beacon Press.
4. *A Black Women's History of the United States* by Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross. Beacon Press.
5. *Shelter in This Place* by Meg Riley. Skinner House Press.
6. *The Hidden Racism in Our Obsession with Civility* by Alex Zamalin. Beacon Press.
7. *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide* edited by Susan Frederick-Gray. Skinner House.

The Archives/Library Team will reconvene in the coming year. New members are always welcome.

## Book Club Report

**Leader:** Dave Richardson

**Members:** Varies widely

The First Unitarian Book Club continues to read and discuss a wide range of books. This year we met on the last Monday of each month at 7pm on Zoom. Our discussions are informal and we encourage participation by everyone. Our motto continues to be “You Don’t Have to Have Read the Book to Attend.”

This past year we adopted a “rank order” system of selecting our books. This new procedure has increased the number of books nominated and the number of people who vote.

Below is our list of books. We did not meet in June, July, or December.

### 2021:

May	<i>The Dispossessed</i> by John Washington
August	Discussion of everyone's summer reading
September	<i>You Will Never Believe What Happened to Lacey</i> by Amber Ruffin and Lacey Lamar
October	<i>Conflagration: How the Transcendentalists Sparked the American Struggle for Racial, Gender and Social Justice</i> by John Buehrens
November	<i>Citizen: An American Lyric</i> by Claudia Rankine

### 2022:

January	<i>Premonition: A Pandemic Story</i> by Michael Lewis
February	<i>Waiting for An Echo: The Madness of American Incarceration</i> by Christine Montross
March	<i>The Genius of Birds</i> by Jennifer Ackerman
April	<i>The Lightless Sky</i> by Gulwali Passarlay

## Capital Trust Report

### Submitted by Daniel Byrd

**Members** (Term expiration date in parenthesis): Daniel Byrd, Default Chairman (2023); Joe Schaaf (2024); Christopher Schmidt (2022)

The Capital Trust was established in 1981 to provide management of the Church's long-term capital investments and keep them independent of the daily operations of the Church. Amendments to the Capital Trust Agreement were debated and approved by the Board and the congregation at the 2018 annual meeting.

The most notable change with the Capital Trust and the funds it has been managing was the shift to investing all monies from the four accounts (the Capital Trust, the Board Investment Fund, the Women's Alliance, and the Music Scholarship fund) into the Common Endowment Fund of the UUA (the UUACEF).

The UUA will be disbursing the agreed upon per annum percentage of 4%. The disbursements are scheduled to occur in April, July, October, and January. Due to the timing of the opening of our account we did not qualify for a January disbursement this year. Accounts with valuations of less than \$25,000 (our Women's Alliance account) will have only a July Disbursement.

Valuations:

	Capital Trust	BIF	Music	WA
March 31, 2021	\$699,492	558,225	31,480	14,656
March 31, 2022	\$725,550	553,602	27,628	14,675

Anyone with more than a passing interest will be aware of the tumultuous fluctuations in the market. The figures above do little to show the extremes in the valuations of the accounts. The good news is we are weathering the volatility (at least on a yearly basis) reasonably well.

One minor book-keeping detail is the delay in reporting our statements. Our figures will routinely be a month behind.

A change in personnel will become effective after the annual meeting. Daniel Byrd is resigning after five years as a trustee. The Nominations Committee has identified his replacement (John Wagner) for the congregation's consideration on our annual slate of nominees.

## **Caring Team Report**

**Co-leaders:** Nadine Keith and Carol Ramsey

**Co-leaders of Memorial Services:** Deborah Duggan and Kay Lynn Goldner

**Leader of Baby Welcoming:** Sara Switzer

**Leader of Cards for Members:** Terri Lynn Brewer

**Members:** Denise Allain, Terri Lynn Brewer, Deb Burton, Kim Callaghan, Sarah Copeland, Deb Duggan, Kay Lynn Goldner, Carrie Helmberger, Barb Herring, Linda Hess, Chynna Jedlicka, Nadine Keith, Douglas Lee-Regier, Donna Neff, Bob Perrin, Carol Ramsey, Dave Rosser, Katrina Schmidt, Sara Switzer, Vanessa Timberlake, Sarah Voss, and Diane Withem

### **Activities:**

The Caring Team has continued to stay in touch with members of the congregation through phone calls, emails, and visits. We are all happy and relieved that the pandemic has receded and that we have the opportunity to have services in person as well as virtually. We continue to reach out to several members who are not able to attend church. Due to COVID numbers going down, team members enjoy, in some cases, being able to visit church members in person this year.

Our team does not have a regularly scheduled meeting, but Rev. Shari Woodbury did convene the team a few times on Zoom to discuss and support the important work of this team. Team members are frequently in touch via email and text as we communicate about the needs of members in the church.

Terri Lynn continues to write beautiful and meaningful cards for our members who are homebound or who are recovering from illness.

Thanks again to Kay Lynn for her leadership in organizing the poinsettia deliveries to members who are homebound.

Team members were involved and supportive of several church members who were ill, recovering from illness or surgery or grieving the loss of a family member or friend. The team reached out by sending cards, making phone calls, visiting, providing transportation to medical appointments, and delivering groceries.

The memorial reception team provided food and served at the reception in the common room after Evelyn Whitehill's service. The team provided cookies for the reception in the foyer after Steve Raybine's service.

The reception team provided support with food preparation and serving for the reception after the installation service on April 2, 2022.



## **Chalice Guild Report**

**Leader:** Kay Lynn Goldner

**Members:** Terri Lynn Brewer, Kim & Brian Callaghan, Neva Cozine, Nadine Keith, Carolyn McNamara, Donna Neff, Robert Noriega, Lois Norris, and Marie Sedlacek

Due to COVID, there was no activity in the church until Fall 2021 when it was hoped that the church was going to reopen. At that time an all-church clean-up was done including:

Dusting all rooms, sanctuary, foyer, etc. Pews were wiped down and cushions vacuumed. The kitchen was cleaned: mugs washed, stove, refrigerator cleaned.

Candles were replaced at the end of February.

## **Choir: Sanctuary Singers Report**

**Director:** William Miller

**Accompanist:** J Gawf

**Librarians:** Kay Lynn Goldner and Christina Noriega

**Choir Members:** Kay Lynn Goldner, \*Daryl Hansen, Barb Herring, Frank McKee, Christina Noriega, Clacy Olson, \*Lloyd Olson, Peg Pidgeon, Carol Ramsey, Gary Randall, Marie Sedlacek, Elaine Wells.

\*denotes first year member/debut season

From September until November 2021, various music was provided for use in virtual services in lieu of choir participation. As the pandemic numbers declined in October and November, the Sanctuary Singers resumed rehearsals in November 2021; shortly thereafter, Covid numbers increased and rehearsals were suspended until January 2022. We were truly disappointed at this turn of events.

With return to in-person services, the group rehearses on Wednesday evenings and sings in the first and third Sunday of the month services. Of concern, from January 2020 to January 2022, no less than 17 members have moved or stopped participating. This is a devastating statistic. On the bright side, we have new participants in the group. I am always looking for more voices to fill out our sections. I am hopeful that come Fall 2022, we will be 'back to normal' and more people will join us in making music; it would be great to double our ranks.

J continues to be an invaluable resource. He is one of the most musically supportive and talented accompanists I've worked with and we are extremely fortunate to have him with us. J has provided numerous solos, both recorded and live, for use in services and is always willing to jump in and help such as the situation in March when the organ malfunctioned and J handled the rest of the service music.

While there will not be a Sanctuary Singers concert this May, we are happy we were able to participate in Rev. Woodbury's installation by singing two anthems and the group particularly enjoyed singing her original composition "Coming Home."

## Early Morning Risers Report

**Leadership:** Stan Harper (Director), Mary Kay Peters (Lay Co-Leadership) and E. Lloyd Olson (Lay Co-Leadership)

**Pianist/Saxophone/Featured Musician:** Stan Harper, Staff

Providing worship and small group ministry through contemporary music.

**Participants:** Bethany Cook (voice, percussion); E. Lloyd Olson (ukulele, guitar, bass, drums, voice); Gilly Pearson (violin); Kate Wiig (voice); Mary Kay Peters (voice, percussion, dulcimer); Mary Thomas (voice); Kabin Thomas (percussion); George Douglas (guitar)

EMR has undergone major changes this past year 2021-2022. Mary Kay Peters and Lloyd Olson continued as lay co-leaders during this shift to online services and participation. That being said, EMR participation is way down over this past year due to the ongoing pandemic. We are looking to recruit more members for the next year. Hopefully numbers will stay safe and we can have more people join as in-person rehearsals will be possible. We are proud that we were able to provide the high quality music we could during this time.

Stan continues his role as Musical Director of this collaborative hybrid model group. The hybrid model of leadership consists of lay co-leadership and active participant collaboration with the Musical Director, who has final say of the choices. Due to the pandemic, we've had to learn a lot of new technology in order to put out recorded music together. Song selections are proposed, discussed and decided by voting, if necessary, using event polls within the EMR Facebook Group and then reporting to the church worship spreadsheet.

Events to highlight from the year were participation in the Christmas Eve Service and Rev. Shari's Installation service.

Lloyd Olson continues to utilize the EMR music box account for files and reference tracks for each individual part of each chosen song that can be accessed by the group for rehearsal and performance recording. Lloyd Olson also devoted many hours and much energy to mixing the final sound for each recorded song included in the service. Mary Kay Peters has been an active participant at the Worship Team meetings to coordinate song requests for special services and themes, and also perform EMR group administrative tasks.

For the next year we want to continue the collaborative process of song selection and performance, where all members of the group can participate collaboratively and bring in suggestions. Group meetings will continue periodically to discuss business, ideas and concerns. We are eager to recruit more members for the future, and also stretch our own skills in learning new instruments. We will be working with Rev. Shari to be more consistent on song reporting for compliance of our song licensure.

## Finance Team Report

**Leader:** Walt Jesteadt

**Members:** Daniel Byrd, Gary Emenitove, Tom Prenosil, Joseph Schaaf, Christopher Schmidt, Peter Solfest, John Wagner

The Finance Team has responsibility for advising the Board, the Ministry Team and the Treasurer on the financial functions of the church and assists the senior staff in carrying out specific functions. Walt Jesteadt continued to serve as Treasurer as well as Finance Chair. Work completed under both headings will be summarized here, but finances for the year and a proposed budget for the 2022-2023 year will be presented in more detail in a separate report. The Sarah Joslyn Society, Stewardship, and Capital Trust also are covered in separate reports.

- We continued to contract with Cheri Cody, Treasurer at Second Unitarian, to serve as our accountant for the year. She handled bank reconciliations, payroll issues, journal entries, and the creation of monthly reports from PowerChurch.
- Most Finance Team members continued to perform specific functions as in the past. Walt Jesteadt handled monthly reports to the Board, updates to the home page for the Donate button, and budget development. Tom Prenosil handled automatic pledge payments through Vanco. Peter Solfest handled all checking and mailing of contribution statements. Gary Emenitove, Walt Jesteadt, Tom Prenosil, and Peter Solfest worked on the Stewardship campaign. Daniel Byrd continued efforts to reorganize the Capital Trust for which he, Joseph Schaaf, and Chris Schmidt serve as trustees.
- Several entries or tiles were added to the home page for the Donate button to make it possible for people to make credit card contributions to the Preserve Our Building Campaign, memorials in honor of church members, and other worthy causes.
- Contribution Statements were mailed in October, January and April. We continued to email contribution statements to 75 households that gave us permission to do so and to send separate emails to the same list so that we can attach letters associated with the contribution statements.
- Tom Prenosil assumed responsibility for maintaining Vanco records and updating the Vanco database, as needed. The Vanco database controls ACH (automated clearing house) and credit card contributions to the church.
- Forty-six members now pay their pledges by monthly automatic deposits handled by Vanco. As in the previous year, all Vanco contributors were contacted early in the stewardship campaign and informed that we would assume continued contributions and a pledge unless we heard from them. This system of opting out rather than in works well. Contributions can now be made from credit cards as well as direct transfers from bank accounts using a Donate button on the church website or the Give+ app. The vast majority of Vanco users have agreed to cover their own processing fees. A new fillable Vanco form has made it easier to sign up for the program.

## **FUNdraising Team Report**

**Leader:** Taylor Eman

**Team Members:** Sara Switzer (Auction Co-Chair)

### **Activities:**

Our tasks are to raise funds for the operating budget (\$14,000 goal this year), and oversee all church fundraising with the Ministry Team. To date, we raised \$7,585, with about \$7,300 from the auction in October, and the rest coming from retail reward cards, etc.

Our major annual fundraiser, the Halloween Heart & Hand Auction, was held despite the church restrictions with food by holding it online again. It was successful, despite notably fewer business donations and only a few pandemic-safe social events. We had 54 donors of 126 items. Given the auction was online, items were delivered, sanitized, and picked up post-auction from the church Common Room. Taylor Eman and Sara Switzer divided up the work with lots of help from Stephen Switzer, Jessica Eman, and Cat Dixon. Auction Week (online bidding) started October 15 and ended October 22 at 7pm with a Halloween Party using Zoom. Steve Switzer was our great MC for a party that included a scavenger hunt, our first 50/50 raffle, a costume contest and even “door” prizes for attendees. Shari Woodbury won “Movie Madness” as an Oompa Loompa; Lion-O Strong the cat won “Posh Pets” as the catbus from *My Neighbor Totoro*; Robby Lewis won “Spook’s Choice” as Pikachu; and Terri Lynn Brewer’s house won the “Haunted House” category. Our 50/50 raffle was a huge hit as well, with the winner being Terri Lynn Brewer. Enthusiastic bidders and cash donations brought in \$7,300!

We are grateful that this year allowed us to do more in-person events with the lowering of restrictions. We hope next year the pandemic is at an even better point and we are able to do an in-person auction again with all the food and entertainment that normally brings. Thanks to all who supported church fundraising through these difficult times.

## **Membership Team Report**

**Team Members:** Jaime Alexander, Beth Conover, Lois Norris, Katrina Schmidt, Vanessa Timberlake, and Frank Wagner

Our Membership Coordinator Carrie Helmberger continued to hold periodic First Steps classes, online or in-person, this year. She ran the Pathways to Membership series online in September; two people subsequently joined as members. An in-person Pathways series planned for January was postponed when the omicron surge hit and enrollment dropped; Carrie was also recovering from COVID herself. Rev. Woodbury is running a final Pathways series for the year in-person this spring (March - May), with twelve new people participating.

We are in the process of restarting the Membership Team after two years of pandemic and the resignation of our leader, Carrie Helmberger, who wrapped up her staff role in late February. We have had two Zoom meetings in 2022 and are scheduling monthly meetings with rotating leaders until a Membership Coordinator is hired by the Board.

Although we have not been officially active, Carrie coordinated and Frank Wagner took part in a joint Membership/Caring outreach project to call all church members during December. The purpose was to check-in with people, make sure they knew the building was fully reopened for programs (including worship), and invite them to the Christmas Eve Service.

At our March meeting with Rev. Shari, we strongly recommended that the Board hire a new Membership Coordinator. A team is being set up under the auspices of Rev. Shari and Harold Cruz-Sanchez for this purpose.

The reopening of the sanctuary for worship in the fall meant we once again needed usher-greeters. While this was handled, prior to the pandemic, through a separate program (most recently, hospitality teams), hospitality and welcoming new people on Sundays is closely linked to our ministry of membership. The Membership Coordinator recruited usher-greeters for each Sunday until her resignation. Since then, a volunteer, not part of our team, has been coordinating the scheduling; this role may rotate every few months. A separate team of coffeemakers has handled fellowship after services.

## **Morning Reflections Report**

**Leaders:** Sharon Conlon and Kim Dunovan

**Members:** Terri Lynn Brewer, Joanne Ferguson, Carrie Helmberger, Suzanne King, Mariah Lee, and Vanessa Timberlake

Morning Reflections was started in September, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to meet online each Tuesday and Thursday from 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. for a period of reflection and silent meditation/prayer. This is an informal drop-in for those seeking a regular spiritual practice, or just needing a little extra support and connection to our church community. Each gathering opens with a short reading, followed by shared reflections and time for silent meditation/prayer.

## **Nominating Committee Report**

Consistent with our by-laws, the Nominating Committee solicited congregational input to identify members qualified and willing to serve in elected positions, and then selected candidates. The committee thanks those who have expressed a willingness to serve in these positions.

### **PROPOSED LEADERSHIP SLATE FOR THE 2022 ANNUAL MEETING**

#### **President Elect:**

Mark Loscutoff

#### **Board of Trustees:**

Barb Herring (3 years)

Ian Shanklin (3 years)

John Hruska (2 years—completing a term)

#### **Right Relations:**

Kay Lynn Goldner (2 years)

Elaine Wells (2 years)

#### **Nominating Committee:**

Ed Kelly (3 years)

Linda Parker (3 years)

#### **Capital Trust:**

Jennifer Larsen (3 years)

John Wagner (1 year—completing a term)

#### **Slate presented by:**

Terri Lynn Brewer, Diana Byrd, Nellie Chenoweth, Mary Kay Peters, Katrina Schmidt, and Sara Switzer

### **ANNUAL AWARDS**

Heritage Award — For significant contributions to preserving, understanding, and celebrating our Unitarian Universalist history: **Daniel Byrd**

Religious Education Award — For outstanding achievement and excellence in religious growth and learning: **Jessie Stallings**

Keeping the Faith Award — For keeping the UU faith alive in the community and touching the lives of congregation and community members in a positive way:

**COVID Safety Task Force: Beth Conover, Jennifer Larsen, Patricia Soto, and Diane Withem**

Social Justice Award — For witnessing to the ideals of social justice and responsibility so important to our UU heritage: **Kim Dunovan**

Youth of the Year Award: **Liam Wiig**

Young Adult of the Year Award: **Sara Switzer**

Unsung Unitarian Universalist Award — For a lifetime of actions that inspire, support and express Unitarian Universalism: **Terri Lynn Brewer**

UU of the Year: **Lloyd Olson**

## Office Team Report

**Church Administrator:** Catharine Dixon

**Team Leader:** Carolyn McNamara

**Volunteer Coordinator/Coffee Supplies:** Kim Callaghan

**Wayside Pulpit:** Kim Dunovan

**Orders of Worship/Office Helper:** Linda Hruska

**Orders of Worship/Office Shopper:** Carolyn McNamara

**Paper Recycling/Office Helper:** Lois Norris

**Pew Volunteers:** Kim Callaghan, Kay Lynn Goldner, Linda Hruska, Frank McKee, and Roman Noriega

The Office Team members helped with mailings, online shopping, and other jobs to support the administrator. The Office Team handled many different tasks when the administrator was out due to vacation or illness. The Office Team also assisted with preparations for the ministerial installation, including creating the printed program.

The church quarterly publication, *Chalice Connections* (which was introduced in 2020), has been discontinued due to low readership. The office continues to send out the weekly enews and other emails as needed. See current news at this webpage: [www.firstuomaha.org/news](http://www.firstuomaha.org/news)

See our new blog, started in January 2022, at this page: [www.firstuomaha.org/blog](http://www.firstuomaha.org/blog)

The office now uses Data Serv, an IT company, for its computer and networking needs.

Catharine would like to thank the office crew for always coming through with their support and time.

## Sarah Joslyn Society Report

**Chair:** Deborah Duggan

**Chair Emeritus:** Dixie Lemon

The Sarah Joslyn Society was founded in 2004 by Dixie Lemon to encourage, enable and thank those who wish to leave a bequest to First Unitarian Church or otherwise participate in the Planned Giving Program. The membership has grown from 32 original members to 76 who have named the church in their estate planning. Sarah Joslyn Society members receive a beautiful plaque made from an original slate tile from the church roof, which was procured by Dean Christensen and painted by Sandi Bruns. There is a yearly recognition gathering, usually in the fall, which began as a luncheon but has since morphed into a cocktail reception. Because of the pandemic, we were not able to host our annual event in 2021.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to two members this year, Evelyn Whitehill and Virginia Shumate. Additionally, Louise Jeffrey has asked to be removed from our rolls. The total of our members is 76, including 25 of whom are deceased. There were no new members added this year.

These are the dedicated church members who have planted a tree so that others may enjoy the shade:

Jaime Alexander	Wendy Hessler	Linda Parker
Jacqueline Anderegg	Joe Hoagbin	Bob Perrin
Anonymous I	Dick Holland	Jack Perry
Anonymous II	Mary Holland	Yvonne Price
Anonymous III	Betty Holloway	Dave Richardson
Bill Bruns	John Hruska	Jim Rogers
Sandi Bruns	Debbie Hunsberger	Raija Rogers
Linda Buehlmann	Walt Jesteadt	Ellen Shurson
Eddith Buis	Bob Jones	Jim Simon
Sharon Conlon	Diane Jones	Kim Simon
Carol Christensen	Dick Joslin	Liz Stawycznyj
Dean Christensen	Scott Kemper	Gretchen Thomas
Deb Duggan	Anne Knapp	John Thomas
Tim Duggan	Ron Knapp	John Wagner
Olive Erickson	Dixie Lemon	Elaine Wells
Margot Fetrow	Harriet Major	Janet West
Richard Fetrow	Katherine Bester McClure	Evelyn Whitehill
Audrey Freyer	Carolyn McNamara	Jim Wigton
Dale Freyer	Donna Neff	Judy Wigton
Larry Goesser	Dave Nicklin	Pat Will
John Goldner	Ruth Nicklin	Edith Wilson
Kay Lynn Goldner	Christina Noriega	Sid Wilson
Megan Gustafson	Roman Noriega	Diane Withem
Lana Hammel	Frank Norris	Ron Withem
Jack Heidel	Lois Norris	Judith Wright
Shelton Hendricks	Dee Otte	



## Side With Love Social Justice Team Report

**Leaders:** Kim Dunovan, Mark Loscutoff, Carol Ramsey, and Dave Richardson

**Members:** Kay Lynn Goldner, Linda Hess, Nadine Keith, Edward Kelly, Rose Kelly, Suzanne King, and Lin Thompson

### Activities & Projects:

- Organized and obtained MTC approval for this new team in August 2021;
- Adopted the following mission: to create more pathways for members to live our values through civic engagement with local, national and international issues, initially focusing on anti-racism and equity for LGBTQIA+ people. The team also intends to build on the success of First Unitarian's 2020 UUtheVote project to increase participation in the democratic process;
- Designed and maintained a [Side With Love webpage](#) for the church website;
- Participated in the National Day of Action in support of the Equality Act, federal legislation to modernize our civil rights laws by including explicit protections for LGBTQ people and strengthening protections for women, people of color and people of all faiths. The congregation was given information about the legislation and encouraged to contact U.S. Senators to ask for their support;
- Provided information and encouraged the congregation to “Decline to Sign” the petition in support of a ballot initiative to embed onerous voter restrictions in the Nebraska constitution;
- Researched, took positions and encouraged the congregation to take action on legislation in the Nebraska Unicameral related to criminal justice reform, systemic racism and reproductive rights. The team took stands opposing building a new prison, supporting a bill to eliminate the lifetime ban on SNAP benefits for drug-related convictions, opposing a bill to ban abortions in Nebraska and supporting a bill to appropriate a significant portion of Nebraska’s share of the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 toward economic development in North and South Omaha;
- Used “Side With Love” moments during the service, weekly news announcements and a Side With Love table after several Sunday services to educate and encourage the congregation to take action;
- Participated in trainings and supported advocacy by other nonprofits, including Civic Nebraska, ACLU of Nebraska and RISE; and
- Organized First Unitarian participation in Omaha’s ‘Rally for Reproductive Rights’ in October 2021.

## Sister Church Team Report

**Leader:** Mark Loscutoff

**Members:** Della Bynum, Sarah Copeland, Neva Cozine, Nadine Keith, Carol Ramsey, and Mary Kay Peters  
In this second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Sister Church team conducted all meetings via Zoom. The pandemic reduced options for in-person activities, so we turned our attention to our congregation.

We promoted acceptance and adoption of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle by:

- Delivering several 8<sup>th</sup> Principle moments during Sunday services.
- Hosting Paula Cole Jones, originator of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle project, with Second Unitarian Church, in a service and workshop in August.
- Conducting an 8<sup>th</sup> Principle-themed Sunday service in February, with Second Unitarian Church.

The team and the congregation continued our support of Clair U.M. Church’s community service programs with donations and labor for:

- The community garden
- The Christmas giveaway
- The monthly pantry

We look forward to increasing in-person engagement as the pandemic wanes.

## Stewardship Team Report

**Leader:** Walt Jesteadt

**Members:** Sandi Bruns, Cat Dixon, Gary Emenitove, John Goldner, Kay Lynn Goldner, Carolyn McNamara, Donna Neff, Mary Kay Peters, Catherine Plumlee, Tom Prenosil, Peter Solfest, and Rev. Shari Woodbury.

### Activities & Projects:

The Stewardship Team organized and conducted the campaign to obtain pledges for the 2022-2023 church year, with a pledge goal of \$300,000 from 150 pledges. The team had many holdovers from the previous year who agreed to perform the same tasks. This allowed us to organize quickly. The team adopted the theme of Funding the Force, proposed by Rev. Shari Woodbury, with a logo designed by Sandi Bruns. This was the year of Yoda.

Walt Jesteadt created the overall schedule, chaired Zoom meetings of the team, recruited people for testimonials, and prepared email messages. Carolyn McNamara and Cat Dixon organized an initial mailing to members and friends containing forms and financial information formatted by Gary Emenitove. The cover letter was written by Rev. Shari and Catherine Plumlee. Thank you notes were mailed by Kay Lynn Goldner. Peter Solfest created an Excel workbook containing pledge histories and analyses for a five-year period and a sheet to be used in recording pledges. Gary Emenitove and Cat Dixon maintained the stewardship web page and recorded contributions. Tom Prenosil and Walt Jesteadt handled Vanco pledges. Donna Neff donated gift cards and arranged for their delivery to winners of the weekly pledge participation drawings. John Goldner called major donors and manned the stewardship table at the reception following Rev. Shari's installation as our settled minister. Testimonials during services were given by Catherine Plumlee, Walt Jesteadt, Jennifer Larsen, Ben Stallings, and Kim Dunovan. Testimonials were edited from recordings of services by Matt Dewell and posted on the stewardship web page. Wrap-up phone calls were made by Jaime Alexander, Sandi Bruns, John Goldner, and Walt Jesteadt.

The campaign began with a stewardship service on March 6 with testimonials during services the next four weeks. We again used online forms for pledging and for recurring contributions through Vanco and organized four weekly drawings to promote early pledging. All forms, guidelines, supporting financial documentation, and testimonials were made available on the church's stewardship web page. Documentation for the campaign was maintained on a stewardship Google drive. We had several increased pledges, but there were fewer pledges than in the previous campaign, perhaps because this year's campaign was too similar to the previous one. Next year's team should take a new approach. In April, we reduced the stewardship goal to \$270,000.

As of April 25, 2021, we had 115 pledges totaling \$252,699. We have yet to hear from several long-term members who typically pledge and expect to have total pledges of \$260,000 or more.

## Worship Arts Team Report

**Team Leader:** Rev. Shari Woodbury

**Members:** core team of Denise Allain, Nadine Keith, Douglas Lee-Regier, Mary Kay Peters, Peg Pidgeon, and Dave Richardson (plus other occasional helpers)

A core group of committed, creative and adaptable worship artists on this team worked together to maintain a high-quality worship program this past year. While we have not been successful during this time of change in adding significant numbers to the team itself, others helped with readings, stories, and practical tasks. This team also works closely with music leaders, story-tellers, and tech support people.

We have continued our mission to create cohesive, meaningful worship experiences that integrate multi-sensory elements; reach the mind, heart, and spirit; and over time, draw on all Six Sources of our living tradition. We aim to create worship that is relevant to the daily lives as well as existential questions of people today, to support the spiritual growth of our members, and to help the congregation deepen our liberal religious values.

Our efforts this year included:

- Adapting to multi-platform worship last October... then Zoom-only for a brief period in the winter (due to the omicron surge and tech upgrade in sanctuary) before returning to multi-platform format; also being ready to go to Zoom-only due to winter weather, which happened once
- Shifting practices with regard to music ensembles, congregational singing, and handling of the offering, as we followed the guidance of our COVID Safety Task Force
- Continuing the practice of collecting Joys & Concerns to be shared by a team member (or helper), from webform, Zoom chat, paper submissions in sanctuary, and more recently, YouTube comments
- Working within current limitations of AV in the sanctuary (e.g., only in-person guests during multi-platform periods; some use of old projector and screen for stories or images)
- Incorporating Social Action Moments, to educate the congregation about the 8<sup>th</sup> principle or invite them into advocacy actions led by our Side with Love Team.

We put a new twist on key liturgical times, holding a multi-generational flower service in our parking lot last June, and hosting a water ritual station as part of our Recreation, ReUUnion and RitUUal in-gathering event that was spread across four parks in the metro area in September. Other special services included the Christmas Eve service, the (delayed-and-worth-it) installation service for Rev. Woodbury, and the Easter service. These were our highest-attendance occasions (Xmas Eve: 129 [99 in person, 30 online], installation: full sanctuary (uncounted) and 56 online, Easter: 140 [63 in person, 77 online]). We continued other beloved traditions as well, including the Procession of Gifts winter holiday service led by our DLRE, new member ceremonies, Youth Service and Lemon sermon (lined up for May and July).

Collaboration and connection to our wider UU world was a strength of our worship life this year.

- That started with the national General Assembly closing worship service which we streamed in June, and continued with the 2021 UU Summer Worship Co-op, which brought us the voices and talents of half a dozen or more other Midwest UU congregations.
- We continued collaborating with Second Unitarian Church of Omaha through a shared service in August on the 8<sup>th</sup> principle featuring Paula Cole Jones, a Samhain service in October, a worship service in January engaging both congregations in the Afghan refugee project, and a shared Youth Service put on by our joint youth group (May).

*(continued on next page)*

Services featuring the UU Hysterical Society (a UU humor group), a reproductive justice message from our national Side with Love program, and the empathetic heart of the Widening the Circle national report (as presented by our own members) further connected us to our larger UU faith.

Another intentional effort of the team has been connecting our congregation to diverse perspectives in the wider community through guest speakers and more. Dr. Rudi Mitchell spoke in both fall and spring about Omaha's indigenous peoples; we debuted a land acknowledgment in the fall which remains a part of our weekly Welcome. Dr. Ferial Pearson and Jeanne Jones brought home the importance of building Beloved Community right here in Omaha. Rev. Woodbury started a pulpit exchange with Pastor Portia Cavitt from our sister church Clair Memorial United Methodist, in North Omaha. Other enriching services featured our members' poetry, a Boxing Day service focused on service and featuring Dr. Carole Patrick of VNA's Shelter Nurse Program, Senator John Cavanaugh speaking about democracy, and Richard Potter on universal consciousness.

Rev. Woodbury and the team have lined up an exciting set of speakers and topics while our minister is away in June and July. Sarah Voss, affiliated community minister, will preach a number of times. Other Sundays will feature PFLAG parent and diversity trainer Joni Watke, a CUUPS summer solstice service, the other half of a pulpit exchange initiated with the Unitarian Church of Lincoln this spring, and notable leader from Omaha's African American community, Preston Love, Jr.

### **Youth Emergency Services (YES) Meals**

**Leaders:** Diana Byrd and Kim Callaghan

The pandemic threw us a curve as YES wanted only catered food until January 2022. It began accepting homecooked food, and then the rule became the food had to be prepared in either a commercial or church kitchen. The team is currently Kay Lynn Goldner, Lois Norris, Linda Hruska, Kim Callaghan, Diana Byrd, and non-member, Kathy Andersen. Donations towards the meals have come from Diane Withem, Vanessa Timberlake, and Wendy Buccholz. We provided a meal for 15 youths once a month since January 2022, with two provided in March due to lack of signups.

In case you aren't familiar with YES or its mission, it is included here:

Youth Emergency Services assists youth experiencing homelessness and near homelessness by providing critically-needed resources, which support them in their desire to be self-sufficient. Basically, we help youth in crisis get back on their feet in whatever ways we can. After meeting their immediate needs for food, shelter, clothing and safety, we create a support system which helps them flourish.

# Appendix Contents

New Members

Staff

2022-2023 Budget

2021-2022 Balance Sheet

Treasurer's Report

## New Members since May 1, 2021

Emily Baker 11/07/2021

Colette Piper 11/07/2021

## Staff

Rev. Shari Woodbury, Settled Minister  
Christina Strong, Lifespan Director of Religious Education  
Melissa Gibson, Membership Coordinator  
Catharine Dixon, Church Administrator  
Oliver Coffman, AV Technology Coordinator  
William Miller, Choir Director  
J Gawf, Choir Accompanist  
Patricia Will, Organist  
Stan Harper, Early Morning Risers Director  
Andrea Laudi, Childcare Coordinator  
Robert Medrano, Custodian  
Rev. Dr. Sarah Voss, Affiliated Community Minister

minister@firstuomaha.org  
dre@firstuomaha.org  
coordinator@firstuomaha.org  
admin@firstuomaha.org  
avtech@firstuomaha.org  
choirdirector@firstuomaha.org  
choirdirector@firstuomaha.org  
organist@firstuomaha.org  
EMRdirector@firstuomaha.org  
childcare@firstuomaha.org  
admin@firstuomaha.org

# FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH TREASURER'S REPORT

## ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING - MAY 15, 2022

	2021/2022 Last Year's Budget	Change From Last Year's Budget	2022/2023 Proposed Budget
<b>Income:</b>			
Pledged Contributions	270,000	-	270,000
Investment Income	43,072	11,578	54,650
Fund Raising	14,000	(1,900)	12,100
Use of Facilities	11,500	-	11,500
Total Plate Collections	7,200	(200)	7,000
Non-Pledged Contributions	4,000	-	4,000
Memorial Gifts	1,000	-	1,000
Other Income - Interest	1,900	100	2,000
Other Income - Misc	608	3,142	3,750
Holland Fund Contribution	15,000	(5,000)	10,000
Transfer from Reserves	10,000	30,000	40,000
Proceeds from PPP Program	36,820	(36,820)	-
Transfer from Restricted Funds	-	4,000	4,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>415,100</b>	<b>4,900</b>	<b>420,000</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>			
Minister	133,624	5,468	139,092
Office & Administration	99,965	3,504	103,469
House & Grounds	41,873	119	41,992
Religious Services (incl music)	35,996	3,949	39,945
Religious Education	59,838	(829)	59,009
Denominational Affairs	21,987	(8,159)	13,828
Discretionary & Team Funds	11,450	250	11,700
Misc and FICA	10,367	598	10,965
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>415,100</b>	<b>4,900</b>	<b>420,000</b>
<b>Surplus or (Deficit)</b>	<b>(0)</b>		<b>(0)</b>



## Balance Sheet (as of 3/31/22)

### ASSETS

Premier Bank - Checking	15,648
Premier Bank - Savings	2,850
Certificats of Deposit	206,373
Capital Trust Endowment	725,245
Bord Investment Fund	553,369
Music and Women's Alliance Funds	42,286
Other Assets	284

<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>1,546,055</b>
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### LIABILITIES

Minister's Discretion Fund	3,183
Deposits - Building Rent	3,000
Sabbatical Fund	2,750
Prepaid Pledges	38,825
Holland Contribution	18,750
Audio Visual Upgrade	(235)
Preserve Our Building Fund	107,085
Afghan Refugee Project	3,563
YRUU/OCUUPs/WA	8,397
WA Merrit Education Fund	800
UUA Common Endowment Fund	1,320,900
YES/Comm. Meals/Caring/Financial Aid	3,570
Music Donation Income	6,486
RE Donation - Nather 2014	265

<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>1,517,339</b>
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### NET ASSETS

Curr Yr's Surplus/Deficit	(25,259)
Prior Surplus/Deficit	53,975

<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>28,716</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>1,546,055</b>
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## **Comments on the 2021/2022 Treasurer's Report and 2022/2023 Proposed Budget**

### **Results for 2020-2021**

Final results were not available for last year at the time of the annual report. Total income for the year was \$380,425, almost \$35,000 below budget. That was due in large part to the fact that we did not show any use of cash reserves as income, where we had budgeted \$25,000, and we had no rental income. Pledge contributions for the year ending April 30, 2021 totaled \$258,220. We had budgeted pledge contributions at \$250,000, but had actual pledges of only \$247,000 at the end of the supplemental campaign in the fall of 2020. Contributions were greater than expected. Expenses for the year totaled \$383,911, \$31,289 below budget, as a result of the building being closed for the entire year. Because we did not show use of reserves as income, we ran a deficit of \$3,486, much smaller than the deficit of \$25,000 assumed in the budget.

### **Results for 2021-22**

#### **Stewardship Campaign**

The initial goal for the stewardship campaign this spring was \$300,000. Many pledges increased but the pace of pledging was slower than in the previous year and the total number of pledges was lower. The goal was reduced to \$270,000 in April.

#### **Proposed Budget**

To take into account the \$30,000 reduction in the pledge goal, the proposed budget of \$438,000 at the beginning of the stewardship campaign was reduced by \$18,000 and the projected use of reserve funds was increased by \$12,000, from \$28,000 to \$40,000. We expect to have more than \$40,000 in the Operating Reserve Fund on the Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2022 and have had only minor use of reserve funds for the last two years. To achieve an \$18,000 reduction in expenses, the dues to be paid to the UUA were cut in half (a savings of \$11,828), the budget for Conventions and Seminars was reduced to \$500, and budgets were reduced by smaller amounts in several hard-to-estimate categories including Snow Removal, Maintenance, and Child Care for church events. The budget includes a 3% merit increase for members of the church staff, increased funds for utilities, an increase of more than 10% in health insurance costs, and \$5,000 for continued support of the audio/video technician.

#### **Balance Sheet**

The balance sheet shown in this report is based on data available from our March financial reports. To simplify the report, we have grouped several accounts, such as YRUU, OCUUPs, and the Women's Alliance, on a single line. A final end-of-year balance sheet and a budget showing end-of-year results will be posted on the church website in May. The line showing the Current Year's Surplus/Deficit is misleading in that it does not include \$21,540 in investment income recorded in April.

Current values of the Capital Trust and the three funds managed by the Capital Trust are shown in the balance sheet. As explained in the Capital Trust report, all four funds are now managed by the UUA Common Endowment Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

