

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF  NEONTA
Creating beloved community. . . Freely seeking the light. . . Reaching for a better world. . .

*12 & 16 Ford Avenue
Oneonta, NY 13820
(607) 432-3491*

Annual Report to the Congregation

2015-2016

Index

Minister's Report to The Congregation	3
Board of Trustees	5
Bylaws Committee	7
Cookies and Crafts	7
Design Committee	8
Endowment Committee	8
Finance Committee	9
Fundraising Committee	10
Libraries	11
Mali Task Force	11
Membership Committee	12
Memorial Committee	13
Music Committee	14
Nominating Committee	14
Office Committee	15
Personnel Committee	15
Properties Committee	16
Religious Education	17
Small Group Ministry	20
Sound Committee	20
Social Action Committee	21
Stewardship Committee	25
Web Committee	26
Worship Committee	26

Minister's Report to the Congregation

This has been an exciting, engaging year for our UUSO community. There is a newfound energy among the congregation, resulting in increased involvement in social justice issues, new connections to the wider UU community, and a deeper focus on our shared ministry, mission and vision. As with any time of change, there were some expressions of discomfort and/or anxiety--but our commitment to being a beloved community kept us together and moving forward.

Worship & Preaching

Worship and religious services remain my primary focus. Feedback on the worship services this year was overwhelmingly positive. All of the regular worship services were also made available on the web or as downloadable podcasts. (A summary of worship services presented through the year is included in the Worship Committee report.)

Rites of Passage

I prepared one (1) memorial service and two internments this year. Theda Drake, while a Unitarian Universalist, was not a member of our congregation. The service took place in Windham, NY. (Two weeks before the May, 2016, congregational meeting, long-term member of the congregation, Carol Robbins, died. Her memorial service is scheduled for June of 2016.)

Theda Drake, non-member

"Jack" Bertuccio, non-member

It was an amusing and interesting year for weddings. I officiated three weddings; two for non-member couples and one for a couple that decided to join the society before they were married. One was a baseball-themed wedding conducted right on home plate at Damaske Field. Another was a wedding with science-fiction and fantasy elements, and the last a pirate-themed wedding complete with costumes and pirate talk. (All three were more touching and sincere than you might expect.)

Rochelle White & Sean Wallace, non-members (5/30/15)

Justin Wellman & Whitney Buckley, members (8/15/15)

Mark Bareto & Ann Posey, non-members (2/5/16)

There were no child dedications conducted in the past year, but there have been several children born. I expect there will several children of various ages participating in the child dedication scheduled for the Fathers' Day service in June.

Mission & Vision & Transition

This has been a year of intentional focusing on the mission and vision of the UUSO. It has also been a time of transition. Our Committee on Ministry continued to evolve their focus beyond the minister and to the ministries of the congregation. At their suggestion, we held our first Leadership Retreat in the summer conducted by the Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, the Congregational Life Consultant for the Central East Region of the UUA. Every committee chair, staff person, board trustee, and team leader/coordinator was invited to participate. We had ~40 people attend the group. Out of that retreat, we crafted a leadership covenant, created a plan for revamping our pastoral care program, and began exploring a new model of governance involving committees and ministry teams. The Committee on Ministry continued to explore their new focus and

helped the several committees with challenges they were facing. They also suggested that the UUSO staff experiment with theme-based ministry. That experiment started in January and will continue through December with quarterly themes.

We have spent much of the year planning a new model of pastoral care at UUSO and will be looking for volunteers to help lead and participate in the new program over the coming summer.

Perhaps the most significant event/action of UUSO this year has been the work around the Black Lives Matter movement. Spurred by a suggestion from a member of the congregation, we explored the possibility of displaying a Black Lives Matter banner on our church building. There were strong opinions on both sides of this issue, and the congregation decided to create a Black Lives Matter task force to further explore the issue and educate the congregation. That task force was exceptionally active and participation on the part of the congregation was higher than it has been since I started as their minister. In February, at a special meeting, the congregation voted to hang the BLM banner and to become an anti-racism institution. On May 1st, as a part of the worship service, we blessed the banner and then the Properties committee hung it on the church. So far, there has been only one official complaint, and several people have voiced their appreciation and support. This experience has galvanized the church and there has been a resurgence of social justice and public witness in the congregation as a whole. It truly is an exciting time at UUSO.

Finally, in February, our Office Administrator of almost 15 years, Robin Ahearn, resigned to pursue a full-time position with Hartwick. Robin remains a member of the society and did her best to prepare the way for her replacement. A search committee was formed by the Board, and after a quick but thorough process with several quite-qualified applicants, we hired Evelyn Warren as our new Office Administrator. Evelyn is a welcome addition to the staff. She has big shoes to fill, but the congregation is glad to have her and is giving her the time she needs to get up to speed.

Beyond the Congregation

I continue to serve the following groups and institutions outside of UUSO:

- Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Ministry Team – Board President
I was deployed several times this past year as a UUTRM responder.
- Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association – Hospitality
- Animal Care Committee, Hartwick College – Community Member
- Ministerial Settlement Representative – UUA/UUMA, St. Lawrence District

I resigned from the board of the Family Planning of South Central New York.

Conclusion

This has been a year of refocusing, transition, and change-- with all the excitement and anxiety that normally entails. I believe the congregation is poised to break through to the next stage of congregational life. It's going to be an exciting year to come.

-Rev. Craig Schwalenberg

Board of Trustees
July 2015 through April 2016

This has been a busy productive year for the 2015/16 UUSO Board of Trustees. We thank Susan Turell, Paul Carter, and Keith Willcox for agreeing to partial year appointments to fill vacancies that have occurred. We also thank Virgil Briggs for his dedicated service on the Board.

Our current Trustees are as follows:

	<u>Trustees</u>	<u>Term Ends</u>	<u>Liaison Assignments</u>
President	Karen Palmer	2018	None
Vice President	Jeane Bennett-O’Dea	2017	Mali, Memorial
Clerk:	Mary Ruhoff	2016	Worship, Music, Website
Trustees:	John Bagby	2018	Properties, Design
	Keith Willcox	2016	Fundraising
	Amy Forster Rothbart	2017	Office, RE, Small Group Ministry, Anti-Racism Task Force
	Stan Maricle	2016	Finance, Endowment
	Kate Seeley	2017	Personnel, Membership
	Sandy Smith	2018	Stewardship, Social Action

Here are some of our accomplishments this year in collaboration with our dedicated staff and committees:

Policies

- Created or updated policies/procedures for Membership Affirmation, Projector Use, Service Animals, Pay for Officers, Fundraising
- Initiated Board subcommittee to review policies and present recommendations to all Trustees at Board Meetings
- Clerk has researched and organized policies in logical categories available now in electronic form.
- The Board has addressed exceptions to our policies on an individual basis.

Committees

- Re-established a Personnel Committee with a new charge
- Supported Social Action Committee by helping to develop a new Covenant.
- Newly convened Pastoral Care team is creating a new model
- New co-chairs for Property Committee have been recruited.
- New Fundraising Chair was recruited by Board with encouragement to explore new ways of operating.
- The Board has provided charge to Endowment Committee to form new endowment toward sustaining UUSO in perpetuity and providing a clear avenue for planned giving.
- Collaboration between Board and Committee on Ministry has increased as COM develops a new model of “working for the congregation” and “maintaining a balcony view”.

Leadership Development

- Board participated in Fall Leadership Retreat initiated by COM led by UUA regional consultant Rev. Rene Ruchotzke.
- Some members of the board have attended leadership conferences, visited other UU congregations, offered to lead a Cluster Meeting session, attended on line webinars, and read leadership materials.
- Board has maintained membership by making appointments to date to fill vacancies. This has exposed more people to board leadership who may be potential board candidates in the future.
- Board and staff have published leadership development opportunities in Newsletter and UUSO CHAT.

Congregational Communication/Growth

- Based on congregant inquiry and compelling case by minister, Board voted to bring motion to Congregation to form Black Lives Matter task force and hang banner to support the Black Lives Matter movement. Board members have participated in the task force. The motion was passed at a special congregational meeting in February. The Banner is planned to be dedicated on May 1, 2016.
- The Board this year has continued the practice of Sounding Board with consistent follow up and responses to congregant inquiries.
- A Board Guest Welcome Letter is now provided at meetings to improve the comfort level for board meeting guests based on a congregant's Sounding Board communication.
- Greater transparency is achieved by posting approved BOT minutes and reports on the UUSO website.
- The Board and Minister are exploring a new governance model to increase better communication, efficiency, and focus for the board, minister, and committees.
- The Board and COM are planning an Evaluation of the Ministry using an Affirmative Inquiry approach and intentional gatherings of congregational groups in the Fall of 2016.

Long Range Plan

- Board President and SAC members formed a preliminary Green Sanctuary Team which has developed its charter was approved by the Board and are ready to recruit membership and work with a UUA coach.
- The Board approved an increase in DRE professional development this year resulting in a significant increase in tools and denominational connections for our DRE to help us be a "church for all generations".
- The Congregation has voted to work toward becoming an anti-racist congregation (Added to LRP)
- Board Reserve Fund and Preservation Fund have increased—acknowledgment is owed to the Finance Committee's wise recommendations toward this goal.

Staff

- The Board initiated forming a search committee led by a Trustee for a new Office Administrator and approved the search committee's recommendation resulting in the hire of Evelyn Warren

-Karen Palmer, President, UUSO Board of Trustees

Bylaws Committee

Members:

April Linton Gates, Moderator and Chair
Mary Ruhoff, Board Liaison
Ben Friedell, Deb Bruce

The Bylaws Committee met and worked with Board of Trustees liaison Mary Ruhoff. The proposals sent to the membership for their approval at the May Annual Meeting represented extensive work on making the Bylaws more clear and concise. Some highlights include: creating grammatical agreement throughout the Bylaws; some minor changes that offer the Board some flexibility in determining which months they will meet; clarifying the positions of treasurer and assistant treasurer; and redefining the Committee on Ministry. Copies of the main changes proposed were mailed to the membership with the notice for the May meeting; full copies of the Bylaws with all proposed changes highlighted were made available in the Church Office and were posted on the Sanctuary bulletin board in late April.

-April Linton Gates

Cookies and Crafts Committee

Members:

Jenny Bagby and Liz Jacob-Carter, Co-Chairs
Pam Strother, Alice Siegfried, Jane Bachman, Molly Swain, Brian Bendlin, Jennifer Kemper, Martha Robinson, Deb Bruce, Elayne Mosher-Campoli, Jeane Bennett-O'Dea, Vickie Andritz

We met 4-5 times during the year to plan for our event.

New: This year, we accepted credit cards for the first time. Lynn Beken helped out at the checkout table to make this possible. It worked very well for our organization as well as the customers.

The event made \$3300 for the church. We made \$73 more than last year.☺ This was the most successful year in the history of the event (again!).

The date for the 2016 event will be Saturday, December 3rd.

-Liz Jacob-Carter

Design Committee

Members:

Anne Ray, Chair
John Bagby and Arleen Benedict, Board Liaisons
Bob Brzozowski, Diane Friedell, Mary Krupp

This committee was established to consult and advise on all matters pertaining to the appearance of our facilities and to select furnishings and decor.

This past year, we have undertaken the following projects:

At the request of the Office Committee, we selected new carpeting for Olympia Brown house, including the office, the Minister's office, staircase, and hallways. We also elected to have the hallway repainted prior to installing the carpets; color was chosen to match the office that had been previously redecorated several years ago.

We consulted on the design of the "Black Lives Matter" banner.

We have also been working on the proposal for a new marquee on the front lawn of the church, have selected the style to be purchased, and continue to work with the supplier on the heading and logo design.

-Anne Ray

Endowment Committee

Members:

Grace Smith, Chair
Jenny Bagby, Recording Secretary
Karl Seeley, Financial Secretary
April Gates, BOT Moderator
Bill Benedict, Paul Robinson, Stanley Maricle, Carol Malz

Mission: The mission of the UUSO's Endowment Committee is to raise, invest, manage, and disburse gifts to fund both activities in the Society that are not normally part of the operating budget and activities in the community that are consistent with the principles of Unitarian Universalism.

The formula the Endowment Committee uses to determine the amount of funds available for grants was modified in 2015 and appears in the 2015 Policies and Procedures manual. Using this formula, the Fund provided \$3,917.00 for grants. Eighteen grant applications were submitted and the following projects received funds;

1. UUSO Office Administrator: GA expenses (unused and returned)
2. Music on the Delaware
3. UUSO RE for professional development expenses
4. Gender Wellness Center
5. UUSO Properties Committee for new carpet

6. UUSO Black Lives Matter Taskforce
7. Oneonta World of Learning
8. UUSO Website Video
9. Oneonta Nursery School
10. NAACP/OFO Bedding Project
11. UUSO Properties Committee toward new marquee
12. Oneonta Toastmasters
13. START/CANO Actors' Group

54.9% of funds went to UUSO (18% for capital improvements) and 45.1% went to fund community projects.

The value of the Endowment Fund on June 30, 2015 was \$112,307.00. Contributions continue to come from generous individuals throughout the year, during the Year End Appeal, and from redeemable bottles and cans. Huge thanks to Clark Palmer who attends to this weekly work!

This year the Endowment Committee voted to shift its investments to the UUA Common Endowment Fund. The UUSO Board of Trustees asked the committee to examine the possibility of establishing a second fund whose focus would be to provide support for Society projects. Robert Rothenberg is working with the committee as it explores this possibility.

-Grace Smith

Finance Committee

Members:

Kay Stuligross, Chair
Lynn Beken Treasurer
Tom O'Brien, Assistant Treasurer
Stan Maricle, Board Liaison
Jenny Bagby, Julia Gregory, Beth Rafter, Karl Seeley, Arlana Young

The major responsibilities of the Finance Committee are to prepare a budget for congregational approval and to monitor financial transactions each month.

A draft budget is prepared early in the calendar year for tentative approval at the May Congregational Meeting. Upon completion of the stewardship campaign and the receipt of updated information, the committee modifies the draft budget if necessary and presents it at the October Congregational Meeting for final approval.

The treasurer provides the Board of Trustees with a complete report on the financial position of UUSO each month. If committees have questions about their budget, they may contact their board liaison for answers. The committee will answer any other questions about church finances either in person or by responding to an e-mail received at treasurer@uuso.org. All finance committee meetings are open and anyone is welcome to attend.

Long time committee member and past treasurer, Margaret Maguire, retired from the committee during the year. We appreciate her wisdom, knowledge and her hard work over the years. Beth Rafter retired as treasurer but is continuing on the committee. Lynn Beken has stepped into the Treasurer position as well as continuing her bookkeeping responsibilities. We welcomed Arlana Young to the committee this spring. The committee could benefit with an additional member. This individual must be a member of UUSO and appointed by the board.

During the past year:

- We established an electronic transfer program whereby people can make payment by credit. This was very helpful during the recent auction.
- Annually we manage the Year End Appeal.
- Committee members continue to review bank statements and bill payments, and to deposit the cash collection after each Sunday service;
- Maintenance of UUSO facilities is a continuing financial responsibility. During the past year it was necessary for the committee to find the funds to pay for the new boiler in Olympia Brown House.

-Kay Stuligross

Fundraising Committee

This committee consists of the Chair, Grace Smith, and a representative from each of the fundraising events. See UUSO.org website for the most up-to-date contact information.

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the Fundraising Committee engaged in:

1. The Spring Book and Plant Sales (Julia Gregory and Deb Bruce)
2. The Fall Rummage Sale* (Anne Ray and Julia Gregory)
3. The Fall Wine Tasting evening* (Kathy Paranya)
4. The Holiday Cookies and Crafts sale (Jenny Bagby and Liz Jacob-Carter)
5. Two Evenings of theatrical readings accompanied with sweet treats* (Rosemary Summers)
6. The Spring Auction (Jane Bachman)

- Rosemary Summers has graciously offered to manage our Fall Wine Tasting evening. Kathy Paranya developed and led this fun and profitable event for many years. Thanks to Kathy and to Rosemary, the tradition lives on.
- Diana Friedell has also retired from her role as organizer and director of our ever so popular Dessert Theatre after more than 20 years. So many good memories of these merry productions with the help of Ernie Schneck and the accompanying cakes, pies, cookies, éclairs, etc. This year a new format of a reader's theatre was begun under the leadership of Rosemary Summers. It was everything we hoped! Fun, profitable, delicious.
- The Rummage Sale is looking for new leaders. Anne and Julia have organized this beloved event for over 25 years and are tired. They have generously offered to help a transition team.

The goal for fundraising this year was \$18,000. I believe we will have met that goal, and we will all know the final number when the year-end report is published at the end of June.

-Grace Smith

UUSO Libraries

In December 2005, Mara's grandparents, Irving and Bea Kern, gave \$30,000 to support the Mara Kern Library. This year, her parents, John Kern and Valerie Hurley, gave their permission for these funds to be used for the Adult Library as well.

In 2015-2016, 23 people checked out 72 items from the Mara Kern Library and 38 people checked out 91 items from the Adult Library.

-Deb Bruce, UUSO Librarian

Mali Task Force

Members:

Annemarie Hosnedl, Chair
Shirley Ferguson, Sponsorship Coordinator
Jeane Bennett-O'Dea, Board Liaison
Susan Ryder, Chuck Hudson, Dottie Hudson, Zanna McKay, Barbara Meeks, Suzanne Miller, Jeanette Grimes, Prue Stelling, Carolyn Wolf-Gould

Purpose:

The purpose of the Mali Task Force is to make a difference in the lives of the children in the Kalabankoro neighborhood of Bamako, Mali, by sponsoring 52 children to attend Youchaou's School. We hope for them to become better equipped to make a positive difference for their families, their communities, and for Mali—one of the poorest countries in the world.

Goals:

- Run a yearly sponsorship drive to provide school fees for 52 children.
- Support Youchaou's School through fundraising and education.
- Encourage cultural exchange between our two communities.
- Provide educational opportunities about African cultures and about social justice issues in Africa.
- Provide opportunities for connection with our local Muslim community.

Activities:

- Raising Sponsorships: All 52 students are sponsored for this year at \$250 apiece.
- Other Funds Raised for the School: In January of 2016, \$15,000 was wired to Mali. This included \$13,000 for 52 scholarships and an additional \$2000-\$3000 to purchase library books for the new library.
- Muffins for Mali Fundraiser: We sold muffins and some other items on the four Sundays between Thanksgiving and Christmas. We raised approximately \$1400.
- March 19th Benefit Banquet, Movie, and Bazaar: Approximately 80 people attended this event. The total raised was \$1800. The banquet featured Moroccan cuisine. The Mali Market included some new items made by Susan Ryder as well as a new shipment of African jewelry imported by Shirley Ferguson with the help of Youchaou and friends. The Academy Award nominated film *Timbuktu*, was shown. It generated a strong reaction and discussion about the first hand effects of living under Jihadist occupation and their interpretation of Sharia law. The extent of the disruption of the fabric of the

local citizens' lives was shocking, but important for us to understand why our work with Youchaou is so important.

- Suzanne Miller and Susan Ryder presented at the Annual NYSCUU meeting held at UUSO on October 23rd this year. They spoke about the Mali Task Force during a session on Social Justice Projects That Work. And the second item is that we are in the process of feting Susan Ryder for her 10 years of Chairmanship of the Mali Task Force. We are also celebrating our 10th anniversary of existence. It has been a decade since the inception of the project and connection with Youchaou's School. We are anticipating many more years of our work together.

School News:

The new library is completed and shelves are built. We believe that they are in the process of being stocked and await confirmation that that is the case. The library will be used by the elementary and secondary schools as well as by the neighborhood. This year Youchaou's School includes elementary students and secondary students as well as its own vocational school. There are 52 sponsorships at the elementary level administered by the Mali Task Force. When students reach high school level, the government pays their tuition, so we are not responsible to support our students all the way through high school if they choose to attend. This situation allows new children to enter the sponsorship program as the older ones age out of our sponsorships. Mali has been declared Ebola-free, but security is tenuous as evidenced by the Hotel Mali terrorist attack in November. There continue to be enough security concerns that members of the task force do not feel comfortable visiting the school. We have been informed that the Earle-Richardson's (UUSO friends) who were living in Bamako with the Peace Corps, have been evacuated from the country. Before the attack, one of our member's daughters, Katie Zanna McKay, was able to visit Youchaou and publish an interview about the school and his life on the internet. We were very proud and happy to see this publicity for both of them. In it, she mentions that Youchaou helped to resettle many refugees from the north during their time of crisis and incorporated them into the neighborhood and school. A new issue that Youchaou talks about in our correspondence is that he is having trouble keeping his staff because he is not able to pay them as much as the government pays teachers in the government supported schools. The conditions and training are much better at Youchaou's school, but once they are trained and experienced many leave for the higher salary paid elsewhere. Youchaou's School has won high honors and awards for their students' success on this year's national tests, and we believe this upward trend will continue due to the fine program being run there. We believe that our support and guidance in some way has helped Youchaou achieve this success. He expresses appreciation in every email that we receive.

-Annemarie Hosnedl

Membership Committee

Members:

Elayne Mosher-Campoli, Chair

Kate Seeley, Board Liaison

Rev. Craig Schwalenberg, Laura Reyda

Welcoming in new members to the congregation is an important function of the Membership committee. The committee puts together information folders for visitors and sends cards

welcoming each visitor who fill out a registration form. A list of visitors is retained and all are invited to the 'Getting to Know UU' classes. Getting to Know UU classes, for those interested in learning about UUSO and Unitarian Universalism started in April 2016; several people are participating. New member recognition was held last year on May 3rd, 2015, and this year's is planned for May 15th, 2016. Name tags have been tended to by Alice Siegfried and Clarissa Steward.

Membership committee has been responsible for planning and hosting social activities throughout the year that grow the connections in our congregation. From now on, social activities will be planned by folks interested in keeping these events going a "FUN" team! This will allow the membership team to focus on transitions in membership.

A Welcome Potluck was held directly after Ingathering in September. Candlelight Dinners were held in October. The Holiday Workshop was held on December 13th. Secret Valentines spanned many weeks, from January to mid-February. We had a blast with another Pi Day celebration; folks enjoyed eating a lot of pie together and voting for the best sweet and savory pies. Pizza and Games is held every other month on Friday evenings throughout the academic year. During the summer of 2015 we organized a meet up at a baseball game and at a concert in the park.

We also maintain a Facebook group called UUSO Community which we invite all members and friends of UUSO to join and participate in. This is another way to grow our connections. We have been using the group to post information about events and to share things of interest. All UUSO committees and groups are encouraged to use this to share information about events and activities.

-Elayne Mosher-Campoli

Memorial Committee

Members:

Arleen Benedict, Chair

Mary Ambrose, William Benedict, Julia Gregory, Linda Wilcox

The Memorial Committee contacts families of members and friends of UUSO who have died and facilitates having the names and dates of those no longer with us on the memorial plaque at the back of the sanctuary. We also maintain a Memorial Book of Records with information about those who are on the memorial plaque.

We welcome photographs and any kind of memorials that contribute to our understanding of those who have died but whose memory remains as part of the life of our church. We share the Memorial Book of Records during coffee hour Memorial Day and our Days of Awe services.

-Arleen Benedict

Music Committee

Members:

John Rafter, outgoing Chair
Beth Small, incoming Chair
Tim Horne, Music Director
Michael Frye-Hunt, Worship Musician
Mary Ruhoff, Board Liaison
Kathy Shimberg, Leah Bridgers, Jeane Bennett-O'Dea.

Tim Horne directed the choir and/or played the piano for the majority of the Sunday services; Michael and Dorothy Frye-Hunt played and sang for some of Tim's days off, and other community musicians volunteered to do the music for the remaining Sundays.

The UU choir, with Tim Horne at the piano, sang once or twice each month from September to June. The committee's budget was spent almost entirely on new music for the choir to sing; the choir also sang a great deal from the "teal" hymnals, hoping to encourage the purchase of copies of those books for the whole congregation.

-Beth Small

Nominating Committee

Members:

Cindy Squires, Alice Siegfried, Ben Friedell

Slate of Nominees for UUSO 2016:

Board of Trustees (each for a three year term)

Stan Maricle (incumbent)
Keith Willcox (incumbent)
Suzy Beddoe

Moderator (one year term)

April Gates (incumbent)

Endowment Committee (each for a three year term)

Carol Malz (incumbent)
Donna Behrendt

Nominating Committee (three year term)

Molly Swain

-Cindy Squires

Office Committee

Members:

Kathy Paranya, Chair
Amy Forster Rothbart, Board Liaison
Vickie Andritz, Stan Maricle, Anne Ray, Pam Strother
Robin Ahearn (June 2015 - March 2016) and
Evelyn Warren (April – June 2016), Ex Officio

For most of the year, our Office Manager has been Robin Ahearn, who has served the Society well by taking care of all the day-to-day tasks that need to be done: office telephone, email, and other communications; maintenance of the database of members and friends; procuring supplies; managing the building use; updating the calendar of Society events; editing, typing, reproducing, and emailing the biweekly newsletter; typing and copying the weekly order of service; document filing; and many, many other tasks. In March, Robin left us for another position, and Evelyn Warren was hired in April as our new Office Manager. Evelyn has been rapidly coming up to speed as she learns about us and all the many duties that fall under the umbrella of the Office Manager. The church office in the Olympia Brown House (OBH) is now staffed between 9 AM and 3 PM Monday through Friday from September through June, with reduced hours during July and August.

The UUSO biweekly newsletter is delivered electronically to all those who have email. Any member or friend who wishes to have a post office mailed copy of the newsletter may request to have a regular mailed copy, and hard copies can also be picked up in the church.

In addition to the voluntary discussion list for members of our congregation, UUSOCHAT@googlegroups.com, we added a new email list this year, UUSONEWS@googlegroups.com. This distribution list is used only by members of the UUSO staff to communicate information to all members of the congregation. Unless a person opts out, all adults with email addresses receive messages sent to this list.

In January, Lifetouch Photography took portraits of most of the active members and families in our congregation so that we could publish a Picture Directory in 2016. We are currently awaiting a draft version of the directory and plan to have the published directory available before the end of the fiscal year.

-Kathy Paranya

Personnel Committee

Members:

Margaret Maguire, Chair
Ben Friedell, Rosemary Summers

Duties:

1. Ensure consistency of personnel policies and procedures (job descriptions, evaluations, e.g.)
2. Assist as needed with employee benefit administration
3. Make annual staff compensation recommendations to the Finance Committee, in consultation with the staff supervisor and using UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines

4. Review requests for changes in the number of budgeted hours for staff positions and make recommendations to the Board and Finance Committee
5. Consider pay rate adjustments for significant/permanent increases in duties
6. Create and maintain Human Resources Policy Manual
7. Communicate as necessary with relevant committees, the Board, and the staff supervisor

January 2016 The Committee studied the newly published UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines and the updated tables for 2016. All of our employees are paid within the range of the guidelines for their job titles. We requested that \$400-\$800 be added to the stewardship goal to fund pay increases in addition to our usual COLA, based on an increase in the minimum wage. The next increases are scheduled for January 2017, and we will adjust our recommendations given the final outcome of the Stewardship Campaign and other budgetary constraints.

The \$15 per hour goal proposed in a recent petition is not the only factor under consideration. We are concerned about the wage compression for our long term part time employees with respect to the minimum wage increase. It is also true that while the professional staff members are being paid within the broad range of the Fair Comp Guideline, they are not making enough based on their length of service.

On the bright side, please note that all of our part time employees get four weeks of paid time off per year, which exceeds the recommendation of the Fair Compensation Guidelines.

In summary, if things work the way they did the last time we tackled this, we will come up with some goals that may take more than one budget cycle to achieve, assuming the congregation and the board agree on the priority. It would be most desirable to fully implement the changes in January 2017, if that could be accomplished without creating a deficit.

March 2016 Margaret Maguire participated in the development of the job description, advertising plan and interview questions for the Office Administrator search. Rosemary Summers participated in the interview, evaluation and selection processes.

-Margaret Maguire

Properties Committee

Members:

Duncan Smith and Paul Robinson, Co-Chairs

John Bagby, Liaison

Tom O'Brien, Rev. Craig Schwalenberg, John Bagby, David Ray, Grace Smith

The Properties Committee had a change of leadership this year. Duncan Smith and Paul Robinson are now co-chairs. Many projects took place during the last year.

- No project was more challenging than the “Black Lives Matter” banner to be hung on the Sanctuary. The banner has been tweaked and should go up soon.

- The City of Oneonta Code Office scheduled a public assembly “Fire Safety/Property Management inspection for March 23. All went well.
- Our lighted sign out front will finally be replaced this summer. Plans call for a new sign with the surrounding vegetation to be removed or trimmed to allow better vision.
- The office carpeting was replaced thanks to the Endowment Fund Committee chipping in.
- The Chapin refrigerator sprang a slow leak in the refrigerant compartment and had to be recharged. Ultimately, the refrigerator had to be replaced.
- Plumbing insulation will be undertaken in the kitchen, to prevent the exterior pipes from freezing next winter.

There are probably a dozen or so more entries that could be made to this list. However, I have listed what I know and I apologize in advance for any I missed.

-Paul Robinson

Religious Education

Members:

Susan Ryder, Director of Religious Education
 Sallie Han and Adrienne Martini, Co-Chairs
 Amy Forster Rothbart and John Bagby, Board Liaisons
 Deb Bruce, Darryl Fineout, Amy Forster Rothbart, Adrienne Martini, Alexandra Tolin
 Schultz

RE Attendance and Participation: 35 Children and Youth attended program events with 8 volunteer teachers. There were 5 paid Nursery childcare providers, 2 of whom were scheduled to work each Sunday from 10:15 to 12:15am. RE parents, RE committee members and UUSO Youth were substitute teachers.

RE Kick-off event: On Sept 20th, the Religious Education Program hosted the Annual Fall Kick-off Event at the Carriage House Art Studio across the street from Chapin Memorial Church. This year, we created our version of our church using the computer game Minecraft. This task included thinking about what we need from our worship space, what makes a church community, and what kinds of changes would we most like to see happen for our church building. We are grateful to Michael Bagby and RE students Ben and Garrett for their expertise and time spent setting up the computers and helping everyone access the Minecraft program during the event. We also thank Doug Hallberg for the use of the Carriage House computers and space.

The Explorers (preK through 3rd grade) theme for this year was our Unitarian Universalist Heritage. They worked with the UU curriculum *Spirit of Adventure: UU Identity* by Kate Tweedie Erslev. Each lesson included learning about a Unitarian, Universalist, or UU who made a difference in our world. There were activities related to this person's contribution. This year we also highlighted social justice projects and tied them to the theme of the day whenever possible. The class created a "Social Justice Wall" in their room featuring their new and ongoing projects. Teachers were Barbara-Sue Agoglia, Sallie Han, and Alexandra Tolin Schultz.

The Seekers (4th through 6th grade) worked with the Popcorn Theology UU curriculum written by Michelle Richards. Unitarian Universalist values and principles were explored while watching and discussing popular movies. This year's classes fit into the following themes: 'The Choices We Make', 'The Search for Truth', 'Acceptance of One Another, and Ourselves', and 'Working for a Peaceful, Fair World'. Teachers were Carolyn Cooper and Danica Sessions.

The Mid-Teens Group (7th - 9th graders) This year OWL (Our Whole Lives) was offered to all 7-9th graders as well as to those outside of our church community. There were four participants. Participation in the OWL class was by parental permission only and class registration ended in November in order to create a safe space for discussion among the participants. This is also the only RE class that doesn't allow guest participants. The class was led by UUA OWL trained teachers Deb Bruce, Amy Forster Rothbart, Chris Wolf-Gould and Susan Ryder. The program is an award-winning comprehensive sexuality curriculum that focuses on self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, justice and inclusivity. It provides a safe and comfortable environment in which to learn and explore issues of sexuality as well as providing knowledgeable, trained leaders to answer questions. UUSO Youth (7-9th graders who chose not to participate in OWL) were welcomed to participate at UUSO in other ways. Some worked in the nursery or assisted in classrooms. Some attended the service.

Older Youth: (10-12th grade) There were not enough teens this year to hold an YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) group on Sunday mornings. They met together occasionally to plan and provide vision for future Youth programs and events with Carolyn Cooper, Jim Mills, and myself. They also assisted in classrooms, worked in the nursery, or attended the service. Caroline B. and Tinsley B. worked as assistants to the DRE when needed. Older Youth were active in our greater UU district this year where they found a large community of UU teens. They attended Youth Cons (Conferences) and Tinsley and Caroline are both planning to be trained as Youth UU Chaplains in May to serve UU Youth at a District level. They could not have attended Cons without the adults who drove and chaperoned them. These were Jenny Bagby, Jen Buffington, Chris Wolf-Gould, and I.

The Nursery: This year's sitters were Hailey Ahearn, Avalon McCaslin-Doyle, Caroline C., Caroline B., and Tinsley B. They also joined Kate Ahearn, Ben, Maddie, and Sonja as substitute sitters and those authorized to do childcare for other events. I especially commend this year's sitters for their thoughtfulness in thinking of great projects and activities for our youngest UU's. They provided the "gateway" to many new families at our church.

Children's Worship is held approximately once every two months. The service offers elements of adult services with a theme, chalice lighting, meditation, and songs. Joys and Sorrows are celebrated in a way that is unique to the children's RE program called "Stones of Sharing." The service is followed by activities that relate to the service theme. I prepare and lead the services with the help of volunteer adults. Highlights this year include lessons about Mindfulness and an

upcoming Celebration of the Animals.

The January Sessions: Each January the RE Committee creates Sunday workshops for all RE participants around a theme. The monthly theme is also the same for adult services in the sanctuary. This is a time when we are often joined by people from our congregation who don't generally work with the RE program. It is one way to build connections in our church community among all ages. This year's theme was: "Our Flaming Chalice." The January Intersession had four Sundays or "Sessions." J Session I was called "About the Flaming Chalice" and led by Lisa Zuend-Misner. She told the story of our UU Chalice and the class explored what it means to them. She brought in part of her collection of beautiful chalices. J Session II was called "The Light of Truth." Suzanne Miller provided inspiration about the light inside all of us to make a difference in the world. She spoke about the work of the UUSC and the UUSO Social Action Committee. J Session III was called "The Warmth of Community." It was led by Donna Behrendt who spoke about homelessness and hunger in our area and local organizations that work to help people. Her lesson was about having awareness of those who often seem invisible but who need our help. J Session IV was called "The Fire of Commitment." Zanna McKay and Spike Paranya, from the UUSO Black Lives Matter Task Force, focused on fairness. They looked at some of the unfair ways whole groups of people are sometimes treated in our society and asked the question "What can you do or say when something is unfair; when someone says something that's not fair to someone else right in front of you?" They looked at trying to recognize white privilege and staying with this work, even though it is difficult. Each workshop included making chalices that were lit together at the end of each session. We displayed all of our chalices and presented the Sunday service called "What Our Flaming Chalice Means to Us" on January 31st. We are grateful to Michael Frye-Hunt and Tim Horne for organizing the music for our worship service and for Rev. Craig Schwalenberg for coordinating the January adult worship services with our January Intersession theme.

The RE Intergenerational Service was held on April 10th. We performed an adapted version of Rev. Erika Hewitt's Service, The Creator's Workshop, from her book Story, Song, and Spirit. We also celebrated our RE teachers, volunteers, and advisors at that time.

Social Justice Projects: Children collected for UNICEF in October and November. A large basket of hats, scarves, mittens and gloves was collected by RE throughout the winter holidays. The Explorers and Seekers classes made cookies for Habitat for Humanity Workers and they baked muffins for the UUSO Mali Task Force "Muffins for Mali" fundraiser in December. We collected 87 cans of food to donate to Community Connections Food Bank during the annual Easter Can Hunt on March 27. Many individual RE children do their own social justice projects at home.

Other Intergenerational Services and Activities: I prepared lessons and classrooms for each Sunday morning. I did the "Time for All Ages" portion of the service when needed. I worked with the Web Committee to regularly update the RE portion of the UUSO webpage. I met with the UUSO Worship Committee to coordinate quarterly calendar plans. I met with Craig, the office staff, our treasurer, parents, teachers and child care workers. I attended a meeting of the Committee on Ministry. I made postcards for the Stewardship Committee's annual pledge drive. I created monthly reports and attended UUSO Board of Trustees Meetings and RE Committee Meetings. I created children's activities on an African theme for the March Mali Task Force Fundraising dinner. I wrote newsletter articles twice a month. I sent out fewer mailings to families about upcoming RE events this year as this information is now available on our church

webpage. Some snail mailings were still required.

Professional Development and Involvement: I maintained membership in LREDA, the professional organization for UU DRE's. I asked for and received a discount on the cost of yearly dues. I joined the Seaway Chapter of DRE's (Upstate NY) and attended their annual meeting. I made many important connections with other upstate DREs. We plan to meet in person more often. We hope to share resources and to get our Youth groups together. I attended the National LREDA Fall Convention in Morristown NJ Oct. 22-25. The theme was RE Without Walls: Technology, Theme-Based Ministry, and Full Week Faith. I found much support and many new ideas that have been vital to my work at UUSO. This exchange of information and ideas is ongoing as we are all connected through DRE list-serves and Facebook groups. I attended our District's Minister/DRE annual retreat with Rev. Craig on Mar. 30-Apr 1 in Hamilton NY. The theme of the retreat was Storytelling. The connection and exchange of information that I have had this year with District Representatives, the UUA and with DRE's from UU churches both locally and nationally has been important to me in crafting an RE program that remains relevant into the future.

Many thanks to Rev. Craig Schwalenberg, the RE Committee, RE teachers and participants, staff members, Board of Trustees, parents, members, and friends of UUSO for their continued support of our RE program. So many have volunteered their time, expertise, materials, and taken the time to voice appreciation of what we do in RE. We are blessed to enjoy such enthusiastic and positive support from our congregation!

-Susan Ryder, Director of Religious Education

Small Group Ministry

For the 2015-16 fiscal year, SGM has had four groups. These are two daytime groups, one evening group and a second evening group for couples only. Groups average about eight people and are each led by a trained facilitator. We hope to keep growing the program and involving more people from our congregation in SGM.

-Mary Krupp

Sound Committee

Members:

Scott Segar, Chair

Julian Pecenco, Beth Small, Paul Carter

The general operation of the sound system has been fairly smooth this year with only a couple instances of recordings being paused or interrupted. Complaints about volume or clarity have been minor.

Production of podcasts now has an established routine and has generally been made available within a couple of weeks of the service. The CD copies of the full services have now been turned over to Deb Bruce and the library in Olympia Brown House.

Equipment: A direct Input box was purchased to make it easier for various output devices

(projectors, computers, and iPods) to interface with the sound system. Over the summer, we are planning to assess the entire system and put together a plan for upgrades to present to the Board of Directors.

-Scott Segar

Social Action Committee/SAC

Members:

Suzanne Miller, Chair
Sandy Smith, Board Liaison
Lisa Barr, Norma Lee Havens, Dottie Hudson, Dawn Kilts, Carol Malz, Martha Robinson, Kathy Shimberg, Alice Siegfried, Janet Sutta, Clarissa Stewart, Kay Stuligross, Rachel Ainslie-Hamblin

Mission: To connect, communicate with, and support social, economic, and environmental justice groups, and to provide information regarding social justice issues with opportunities to work on those issues through financial contributions and gifts of personal time and effort.

The UUSO Social Action Committee has been involved in a variety of projects and issues over the past year covering the period from April 2015 to April 2016 when the UUSO committee reports are submitted for the year.

A SAC retreat was held on August 9, 2015, and a Social Action Committee Covenant was written with the help of Karen Palmer. This covenant has become the committee's guideline for working together and includes interactions both at meetings and on email. **Plans and hopes for the coming year were also part of SAC's day-long retreat.**

Antiwar Speakers and Petitions

Medea Benjamin, long time peace and social justice activist, founder of Code Pink and author of eight books including *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*, spoke at UUSO on August 13, 2015, on "Working for Peace: From Drones to Diplomacy." Over 70 people attended from four counties. She was interviewed by a *Daily Star* reporter and featured in an article that described her views and her antiwar organizing. It was videotaped by Joe Stillman and made available online via YouTube. She advocated supporting the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Signatures on a petition to support the Iran Nuclear Deal were gathered at the Social Action table and sent to our US senators and representatives in the weeks following the Medea Benjamin talk.

David Swanson, antiwar author and activist, will speak on "War Is A Lie: What Your Tax Dollars Buy" at UUSO on April 24 at 7:00 p.m. as part of a book tour for the second edition of his book *War Is A Lie*. The talk will be followed by a question and answer session and refreshments. A grant request was submitted to the NY State Convention of Universalists by the Social Action Committee for this event and was funded for \$1250. An invitation has been sent to area faith-based communities and regional UU churches in Albany, Schenectady, Binghamton, Saratoga Springs, Big Flats, Utica and Cortland. The talk will be videotaped by two videographers, Joe Stillman who will make it available online via You Tube, and Wilton Vought,

who will broadcast it on his program “Other Voices, Other Choices” on public access cable networks.

A special session with area college students will take place at 5:30 with a short talk by Swanson, a discussion, pizza and drinks. The SUNY Oneonta Social Justice Society and the Africana Latino Studies Club are co-sponsoring this event. An effort has been made to get similar involvement by Hartwick College students.

Information on how our tax dollars are spent in the form of a pie chart put together by the War Resisters League is available on the Social Action table.

Signatures on a petition to US presidential candidates to end drone warfare, if elected, will be gathered at the David Swanson event and at the Social Action table in the weeks following his talk.

Presente, newspaper of School of Americas (SOA) Watch, is available at the SAC table for UUSO and attendees at the Swanson event. SOA Watch is a nonviolent grassroots movement against the School of the Americas (SOA), which is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2001 it was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).

A shortened version of Martin Luther King’s famous antiwar speech at Riverside Church was made available at the Social Action table at the Sunday morning service on January 17th and at the Interfaith Martin Luther King birthday celebration service that afternoon at UUSO. SAC decorated the chancel table in celebration of Martin Luther King.

A worship service on the words of Pete Seeger by folksinger Dan Berggren was proposed in a grant request to the UUSO Endowment Committee. It was not funded.

Advocacy and Support for Low-Income People and Raising the Minimum Wage

Family Service Adopt-A-Family Holiday Project supported three families with children with clothing, toys, grocery cards and gas cards. Many people in the congregation participated.

Habitat for Humanity—Lunches were provided for workers on Habitat houses built for low-income people.

Clothing Project—UUSO partnered with Endicott United Methodist Church to use the sanctuary as a location to supply clients in need of clothes. Recipients’ wish lists were obtained from people at Saturday’s Bread and the Lord’s Table. Left over clothing was donated to Family Service.

Living Wage Campaign—Over 70 signatures were collected on a petition for a \$15 minimum wage which were sent to our members of Congress, NY State legislators and local lawmakers.

Information on the advantages to raising the minimum wage was available on the Social Action table and two articles were written for the UUSO newsletter.

A letter was sent by the Social Action Committee to the UUSO Board requesting that UUSO staff be paid \$15 an hour reflecting our campaign on this issue.

Backpack Buddies and Hygiene Helpers-A new project has been launched to help supply food for backpacks of low income children and hygiene products for people who need them. There

will be a collection on the first Sunday of every month beginning May 1st. An article describing the project in detail was in the UUSO newsletter- April 13, 2016.

The Chancel Table featured Mother Jones, labor activist in the early 20th century who championed the rights of coal miners, textile workers and child laborers. This was on the Sunday preceding Labor Day.

Housing Issues—Several SAC members regularly attend and report to SAC on the meetings of the local Housing Taskforce organized by Opportunities for Otsego and NAACP. The taskforce is looking for ways to provide housing for low income individuals and families. SAC was involved in recruiting child care workers for a Tenant’s Rights meeting held in March 2016.

Micro-Loan Taskforce—SAC proposed a Micro-Loan Taskforce at the Congregational meeting in October to study the feasibility of creating a micro-loan program that would loan money to people in need. The task force met several times. Different models were explored. Oneonta resources already existing for low income people were investigated. It was concluded that a micro-loan program run by UUSO would not be feasible at this time.

Support for Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and Save the Children-Bolivia

Work of Unitarian Universalist Service Committee/UUSC was the focus on a Sunday service on May 17, 2015. Suzanne Miller spoke on “Head, Heart, Hands and Hope—UUSC at Home and Around the World” and led the same service at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Wyoming Valley in Wilkes Barre, PA, on Nov. 15, 2015. The children’s story for the service was *¡Si Se Puede! Yes We Can!* based on true story of a janitors’ strike in LA. UUSC is a strong supporter of immigrants’ rights. UUSC supports partner organizations in more than a dozen countries in such ways as defending the human right to water and teaching trauma resiliency in times of disasters.

Guest at Your Table, a campaign by Unitarian Universalist Service Committee/UUSC to raise awareness of its work and to raise funds to support it, took place at UUSO from before Thanksgiving until the end of January. Guest at Your Table boxes were given out by the children at a service and were made available on the SAC table. Articles about the work of UUSC were written for the newsletter. A total of \$765 was raised at UUSO to support the work of UUSC. Nine people became members of UUSC by donating \$40 or more.

Donations for Save the Children—Bolivia will be taken in a second collection on May 1st.

Daphne Sorenson, one of our former congregants, is now the director of Save the Children in Bolivia, an organization that works to improve the lives of children and youth in that country. SUNY Oneonta students, who are doing an upcoming service trip with Save the Children in Bolivia, are raising money in the Oneonta community to donate to the organization. Two of the students will be at the social hour on Sunday morning, April 24, to talk about the project.

Advocacy on Environmental and Climate Justice Issues

Stop the Constitution Pipeline has been an ongoing campaign by SAC. Postcards have been available at the Social Action table to send to Gov. Cuomo to deny the water quality permit needed for the Constitution Pipeline project to move forward. SAC hosted Dennis Higgins at

Social Hour to write messages to Cuomo in a book to be sent to the governor. Signatures on a letter by Dennis Higgins to Gov. Cuomo based on Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change were gathered and mailed to Gov. Cuomo.

Rally in Albany on April 5th re. Stop the Pipeline was attended by several from UUSO and a report was made to the SAC committee at the April meeting.

Solarize the Southern Tier held at meeting at UUSO to inform participants of community solar opportunities on April 30, 2015.

Green Sanctuary Committee has been formed including four members of the Social Action Committee. A Green Sanctuary Charter has been written and approved by the UUSO Board.

The Social Action Committee wrote to the UUSO Board advocating for a solar-powered message board in keeping with our Green Sanctuary goals.

UUSO Green Guidelines have been made available on the Social Action table.

Signatures on a petition to “Divest New York State and Local Retirement Funds of Fossil Fuels” are being collected on the Social Action table to send to NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and the NYS legislature.

Suicide Prevention --Refugee Crisis--and Muslim Rights

Suicide Prevention—Eleven UUs participated in the “Out of the Darkness Walk” to prevent suicide on Sept. 19, 2015 and over \$700 was raised in our congregation to support this effort. An information table at the Grand and Glorious Garage Sale on Main St. on Sept. 12 was organized by a SAC member. Information on suicide prevention was also made available at the UUSO Social Action table.

Syrian Refugee Crisis—Several members of SAC have participated in meetings about this issue and two attended a meeting in Utica on the refugee resettlement process at Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. Prof. Ellen Percy Kraly from Colgate University was the speaker. A detailed written report of this meeting was given to the Social Action Committee.

In response to a biker group planning a rally against local Muslims, SAC explored responding with signs, buttons, posters etc. that say we support the Muslim community. Rev. Craig will find out if the Muslim community would like our support.

Change for Change Recipients for 2015-2016 Church Year:

One of the tasks of this committee is to select the Change for Change recipients for the year:

April 2015	GOFAR Greater Oneonta Fund for Animal Responsibility \$125
May 2015	Caring Connections \$167.50
June 2015	OFO Violence Intervention Program \$115.50
July 2015	OCCA- Otsego County Conservation Assoc. \$125.50
August 2015	Habitat for Humanity \$176.00
September 2015:	OWL- Oneonta World of Learning \$120.00
October 2015:	NAMI Otsego, National Alliance on Mental Illness \$134.50

November 2015: Delaware Violence Intervention Program \$189.50
December 2015: Family Service Association \$111.00
January 2016: The Golden Eagle Program, Delaware Otsego Audubon Society \$168.50
January fifth Sunday Caring Connections \$34.00
February 2016 Family Planning Center of South Central NY \$160.28
March 2016: Saturday's Bread \$117.50

Amounts submitted by Cindy Squires

If there is a fifth Sunday in month, it was decided that the Change for Change for that Sunday would go to Caring Connections.

-Suzanne Miller

Stewardship Committee

Members:

Karl Seeley, Chair
Sandy Smith, Board Liaison
Rev. Craig Schwalenberg (ex-officio)
Deb Bruce, Mary Krupp, Judy Tator

The Stewardship Committee began meeting in November, 2015 to plan for the 2016-17 campaign. Our theme was "Sound the Call! Lead the Way!" building on the trumpet background of the committee chair and the sense that the congregation is increasingly active, both amongst ourselves and in the wider community; we wanted to energize that existing activity and elicit the funds to provide greater support for it.

Members of the Board and chairs of committees were asked for pledges ahead of the public start of the campaign.

On kickoff Sunday, March 6th, Karl Seeley introduced the theme, and the musical theme. After the service there was a pizza party, with letters and pledge forms distributed to as many people as we could reach that day. Members and friends not reached that day received their forms by mail. On subsequent Sundays Karl or a substitute (Judy Tator from the committee on March 27th; Kate Seeley on April 10th) gave an update on the progress of the campaign, and then introduced a speaker to address the questions of: 1) why the UUSO is important to them; and 2) the leadership and work being done by some aspect of the church that they were involved with. We heard from Paul Robinson (Properties Committee), Dottie Hudson (Green Sanctuary), Karen Palmer (Board), Susan Turell (Anti-Racism Taskforce), and Caroline Bagby (youth).

We had a basic goal of \$180,000, with a "stretch" goal of \$183,000; this higher amount would provide for more adequate raises for staff, and better support of the congregation's activism.

We fell well short of even the basic goal. On Sunday, April 10th, we had received pledges totaling only \$149,022.47. By April 17th we had pledges of \$161,627.47 in hand, with a forecast of \$164,790 (based on last year's pledges from pledge units who had not yet responded).

Pam Strother provided significant help with calling pledge units who had not been heard from. Treasurer Lynn Beken stayed on top of the numbers as the pledges came in.

-Karl Seeley

Web Committee

Members:

Kathy Paranya, Chair

Mary Ruhoff, Board Liaison

Lynn Beken, Robert Kaldenbach, Stan Maricle, Julian Pecenco, Rev. Craig Schwalenberg, Grace Smith, Evelyn Warren

This year the Web Committee worked at refining our web page, UUSO.org, as well as adding some new pages. Keeping the web pages interesting and up to date is an ongoing task. For most of the year, Robin Ahearn helped by updating our home page with the upcoming sermons and upcoming events each week and also by posting the current newsletter every two weeks. These tasks will now fall to Evelyn Warren, our new Office Administrator.

As Scott Segar made the podcasts of the Sunday sermons ready, we posted them online. Lynn Beken has taken over the job of posting the podcasts when Scott has made them available.

We added a secure area of the web site this year with the help of Sweet Home Productions. Any active member or friend of the UUSO can request a username and password so that they can access this secure area. The secure area contains the online directory of members and friends as well as minutes from the Board of Trustees meetings and financial statements.

We also subscribed to a service through Vanco Payment Solutions so that we can take donations securely online and so that people can set up recurring monthly payments through their credit card or bank toward their annual stewardship pledge. Because of Vanco, we are now able to take credit cards for payment at UUSO events and fund raisers.

-Kathy Paranya

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee works with the minister to create quarterly worship schedules and provide consistent, quality worship services for the congregation. Each member of the Worship Committee is responsible for coordinating some aspect of the worship services at UUSO. The minister, Rev. Craig Schwalenberg, is primarily responsible for worship and serves as the chair of this committee for purposes of scheduling and facilitating meetings. Other members of the committee include Tim Horne (Music & Choir Director), Pam Strother (Pulpit Guest Coordinator), Adrienne Martini (Worship Associate Coordinator), John Rafter (Music Committee chair, responsible for coordinating musical guests), and Scott Segar (Audio Coordinator). Michael Frye-Hunt, as the Worship Musician, and Susan Ryder, Director of Religious Education, also serve on the committee. At the start of this year, Diana Friedell discontinued her practice of leading Spiritual Vespers services. We thank Diana for her many years of service to UUSO and the wider community with these services.

The Worship Associates for the 2015/2016 church year were: Adrienne Martini (coordinator), Kevin Schultz, Cathi Wiltsey, Charles King, and Keith Willcox. Adrienne Martini is planning to step down as coordinator in the near future.

Once again, this year, Rev. Craig coordinated and planned service topics to match the R.E. Intersession topic. This year's topic was Our Flaming Chalice. Three services, based on the words we use to extinguish the chalice every Sunday, were presented to the congregation and were received well. The children and youth, along with the R.E. volunteers, did a great job with their services this year.

Worship Schedule Summary July 6, 2014 - June 28, 2015

34 services (plus two Christmas Eve services) by Rev. Craig Schwalenberg

8 services by pulpit guests

Rabbi Molli Karp, of Temple Beth El in Oneonta

Rev. Cindy Maybeck, United Church of Christ, author and storyteller

Rev. Judy Thistle, local chaplain and long-term friend of UUSO

Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed, Unitarian Universalist author and historian

Lou Kimmel, Executive Director of the Worker Center New Labor

Michael Friedman, Rangjung Yeshe Gomde Meditation Center of Cooperstown
and regular, favorite guests, Sam Goodyear and Cheryl Petersen.

5 collaborative services

Father's Day service, Days of Awe, the R.E. service, Poetry service, Music service,

10 lay-led services

Alex Schultz, Alexander Riba, Adrienne Martini x2, Pam Strother x2, Michael Forster Rothbart, Diana Friedell, Kevin Schultz

We also had two services involving chancel dramas this year-- both of which were a great success. We also had the pleasure of having "Answer the Muse" and the Hartwick Brass Ensemble as musical guests for a services.

Rev. Craig visited and co-preached a service at the UU Society of Schenectady as part of his role as the Ministerial Settlement Representative.

-Rev. Craig Schwalenberg