

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF  ONEONTA**  
A welcoming community, nurturing spirit and working for a just and sustainable world



# 2022-2023 Annual Congregational Report

Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta  
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## Annual Report 2022-2023

### Interim Minister's Annual Report

Submitted by Rev. Rachel Baker, Summer 2023

#### Accomplishments

- This past year the congregation concluded the three years of Interim Ministry. The congregation, led by the InterCOM, worked together to create new Mission and Vision statements. These were placed on the website, newsletter, Order of Service, and used in other communications. The second interim project the congregation completed this year was to prepare for a ministerial search. The congregation voted for a Ministerial Search Committee, and then participated in surveys and listening circles to gather information for the Congregational Record.
- I complied existing financial management policies and procedures and recommended financial polices into a draft Financial Management Policies and Procedures Manual. I handed this off to the BOT, Finance Committee, and Treasurer for review and refinement.
- With a hiring team, interviewed, hired, and trained a candidate for the Office Administrator position.
- Though this is not necessarily the role of the minister, I worked with Kathy Paranya of the Aesthetics Committee to sort and organize the storage places in the basement. There is now space for the Archives folks to sort through the many boxes of archives. The balcony chairs, religious exploration materials, and Director of RE office items are mostly all organized.
- For information on the *Joys and Sorrows* format, please see the Worship Ministry Annual Report

#### Challenges

- The most challenging aspect of this year has been the lack of members serving the congregation in all the many ways. [I do want to recognize the incredibly committed members who serve in so many wonderful ways! Thank you!! However, I also recognize that you cannot do it all.] This is true for all our congregations. As one of my colleagues said, "some of our congregations are still waking up from Covid." I think UUSO is still waking up. But I trust that UUSO will soon stretch its arms up and wide and be ready for what is next. (The congregation only recently started having social hour with caffeine again.)
- At the very end of my time with UUSO, I have been turning over the tasks and responsibilities that I had taken on. This has been a slow process but is coming along at the time of writing this report at the end of June.)

### Future Goals

- I have no future goals, but UUSO will always be a part of me and my future ministries. I love UUSO and love Oneonta! You are good people who care deeply for each other and the congregation. I know you will carry on into the future!

## **Worship Ministry**

Submitted by Rev. Rachel Baker, June 28, 2023

### Worship Planners and Contributors:

Rev. Rachel Baker, Interim Minister

Tim Horne, Music Director

Michael and Dorothy Frye-Hunt, Musicians

The UUSO Choir members and song leaders

Worship Associates: Julian Pecenco, Rosemary Summers, Sue Cotter, Linda Wilcox, Katy Bridgers, Zanna McKay, and more

AV Operators: Julian Pecenco, Beth Small, and Teen AV Tech Staff

### Mission:

Collaborate with the minister and guest leaders to offer Sunday morning and special worship services.

### Accomplishments

Offered worship services almost every Sunday and Christmas Eve

After experimenting with different ways to share personal Joys and Sorrows during worship and feedback gathering session, we settled on a new way to share joys and sorrows. The new way incorporates lighting candles and spoken joys and sorrows.

### Challenges

The primary challenge for the past two years has been finding members and friends to serve the worship ministry of the congregation. Though the minister is accountable for the worship life of the congregation, this is done in collaboration and shared ministry.

For the second year in a row, we have not had a Worship Team or others to collaborate with the minister to create the worship arc of the year. However, this year I handed off guest worship scheduling to Rosemary Summers and Zanna McKay. I have been scheduling the paid teenage AV Operators, while the Worship Associates have been self-scheduling.

### Future Goals:

Find a solution to the lack of worship help!

### Gratitude:

Special thanks to Suzanne Miller for offering to decorate the Chancel Table most Sundays; to Scott Segar for coordinating AV for years; to Beth, Paul, and Julian for serving as AV Operators and filling in as needed when the teens have not been available; and the Board members for serving as Worship Associates, when needed.

# Board of Trustees

Submitted by Elayne Mosher Campoli

2022-23 UUSO Board Annual Report

Board members

President: Linda Wilcox\*

Vice President: Ben Friedell

Clerk: Elayne Mosher Campoli

Cathi Wiltsey\*\*

Katy Bridgers

Zanna McKay

Rosemary Summers

\*joined in August 2022

\*\*left in January 2023

The Board met monthly, we started off the year with Zoom meetings and in November moved to in person meetings with visitors attending mostly by Zoom. We had a retreat in August for some team building work like learning and sharing our personal leadership styles, reviewing and updating the Board covenant. We continue to use a Consent Agenda in our regular meetings which allows us to accept reports and minutes which have been previously distributed, any Board members can request that an item be pulled out for discussion prior to accepting it.

Board leadership changed during the year, we tried a new model with Cathi and Zanna serving as co-presidents. We were excited to see how this model would work for us, but recognized mid-year that this was not working out for the team or the individuals serving and reverted back to a more traditional leadership structure.

Rev. Rachel guided us throughout this year to prepare for moving onto our next ministry and then switching gears to prepare for leading ourselves without a full-time minister. Policies were reviewed and updated throughout the year and the board clerk continues to work on document retention.

Ongoing discussions include religious education and search for a Director of Religious Education, continuation of online service and support for A/V services, discernment around 10 Ford Ave. Additional meetings and listening circles were hosted by the Board to hear the congregation's thoughts about 10 Ford Ave. We approved work needed for both properties including roof, step flashing, masonry, electrical, fencing, tree removal, demolition of garage, and survey of 10 Ford. After much consideration of current health trends and requests from the

congregation, we moved to mask optional for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

The Board supported the work of the Ministerial Search Committee, and when we were not matched for settled ministry by the end of the year we worked with them to meet with our regional representatives and come up with a plan for next steps and opening up the search to include contract ministry. Recruitment of volunteers was a challenge we addressed throughout the year, and Rosemary developed a survey “Now Is The Time” that had fantastic results helping us fill many open committee and other positions.

The Board communicates with the congregation through at least monthly newsletter articles, UUSO News email notices, and the continued use of the Sounding Board email. Board members rotate responsibility for monitoring the Sounding Board. Each Board member is assigned committees to liaison with throughout the year. We keep a “Parking Lot” of items that we’d like to address in the future that is reviewed at each meeting, along with our annual

# Aesthetics Committee

Submitted by Kathy Paranya

Mission: The Aesthetics Committee makes recommendations to the Board related to the furnishings and décor that consider the nature of each space such as historical context and function. The committee collaborates with affected and interested parties.

Members of the Aesthetics Committee have worked on projects both inside and outside the church this year. For some of these projects they have coordinated work with the Properties Committee, the Memorial Committee, and the 10 Ford Ave Task Force.

## **Projects Completed in 2022-23:**

### **Display Cabinet:**

Thanks to a generous grant from the Endowment Committee, we were able to purchase a display cabinet for the UUSO. It was mounted on the wall of the vestibule at the entrance to the church by Paul Agoglia and Rich Stelling, and we have been displaying both historical items and pages from the memorial books. Rich Stelling also built a beautiful wooden table to go under the cabinet. In addition to being a place to lay out pamphlets and other items for the public, it helps keep people from bumping into the cabinet.

### **Reorganizing and Cleaning the Basement:**

When the UUSO sold the house at 16 Ford Ave, most of the items from that building that we wished to keep were moved into the basement of the Chapin Building. Kathy Paranya worked for many weeks with Rev. Rachel sorting, organizing, discarding, donating, and relocating items so that the rooms can be used for adult meetings, religious exploration, and organized storage by members of the congregation.

### **Church Grounds:**

The Aesthetics Committee worked with the Properties Committee to improve the outdoor spaces of both the Chapin Building and the 10 Ford Ave. Building. We held a Work Saturday in June and cleaned up a lot of the area. We also had several dead and diseased trees removed from the property and some smaller trees taken down to allow more sun into the area. The garage building at 10 Ford Ave was demolished and grass was planted by the Properties Committee. That new yard area will need more work in the coming years.



**Future projects:**

We are planning to have another work Saturday in September to continue with beautification and cleanup of the outdoor spaces. We are planning to have a few of the stumps from the larger trees that were taken down ground up and removed this fall. In coordination with other committees, we plan to install a fence along the border between the 10 Ford and 8 Ford properties.

**Committee Members during the 2022-23 fiscal year:**

Kathy Paranya – Chair

Linda Wilcox – Board Liaison

Arleen Benedict

Bob Brzozowski

Carolyn Cooper

Heidi Siegfried

Rosalind Thomas

# Audio Team

Submitted by Beth Small

## Mission

The AV Team or Audio Committee is responsible for set-up and operation of the sound system for Sunday services. The committee also records services for archival purposes and the production of podcasts. On occasion, the members of the committee are called upon to provide technical support for other events sponsored by UUSO. Since the COVID-19 pandemic the team has provided technical support for Zoom services as well.

## Annual Report:

Services have been hybrid this year, with most people attending in person but a steady, small number of Zoom attendees. Several teens have been trained to run the AV system and have been paid to do it, a system that has been working fairly well, though the AV team competes for their time with the childcare team. Also, among the folks regularly attending via Zoom we now have a list of Zoom Assistants, who can handle things like putting hymn lyrics into the chat and spotlighting the pulpit cam; this has allowed the AV person to set things up and step out of the booth to play other roles in the service.

Some aspects of last year's Annual Report and plans have still not been addressed, to wit: Many projects involving the physical set-up have been put off due to the pandemic. Those items will be pushed into this year's plans, including:

- Expanding hearing loop to the choir loft
- Adding speakers for the choir loft and choir seating area next to stage (equipment already purchased)

Previously, an issue that came up indicated a need to separate the booth electrical service from circuit breakers servicing the kitchen – this issue remains unresolved. Additionally, the need for better lighting on the pulpit needs to be addressed for improved visibility of both the congregants in the chapel and online viewers. Both of these projects will need to involve the Properties Committee.

## Members:

Beth Small (team leader)

Scott Segar (podcast only)

Julian Pecenco

Nithya Iyer

# Committee on Ministry

Submitted by Scott Segar

Chair/Co-Chairs Laura Reyda

Members Kate Seeley, Laura Reyda, Sue Cotter, Judy Tater

Mission/Purpose of Committee: The Committee on Ministry works with the minister to monitor the ministries of UUSO and encourage right relationships within the UUSO community.

Annual Report: [Items and events of note from the period of July 2022 to June 2023.]

This year Com worked closely with Interim Minister Rev. Baker and the Interim Committee to finalize our Mission and Vision Statements and to assist with the transition to a called minister.

Since there was no called minister as of June 2023, COM committed to help fill the pulpit along with the worship committee until a minister fills the position

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Segar

# Bylaws Committee

Karl Seeley, Mary Ruhoff, April Gates

In 2022 -2023 the Bylaws Committee "met" via phone calls and emails.

A request that the two required Congregational Meetings be set on specific dates was deemed too restrictive. The BC felt that the Board should have flexibility in setting the meeting dates in June and October. The request was sent to the Board without the BC's recommendation.

A request to change the the section of the Endowment Committee's Bylaws with respect to the Moderator or the Moderator's appointee being on the EC was postponed for consideration since the requested change was not congruent with the Society Bylaws. We expect the change to both the Endowment Committee's Bylaws and the Society's Bylaws will be brought to the Congregation at the October 2023 Congregational Meeting.

# Caring Circle

Submitted by Kari Reynolds

**Mission Statement:** Caring for one another is a core spiritual practice for Unitarian Universalists. The Caring Circle Team serves our UUSO ministry through pastoral care of congregants in coordination with the minister.

**How does the Committee or Team support, impact, and fulfill UUOS's mission and the UU principles?** See mission statement

## Annual Report

**1. Accomplishments, challenges, and/or other items and events of note from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023:** The Caring Circle Team was established in August of 2023.

**2. Plans for the future:** We plan to serve our mission and support the new minister's pastoral care of the congregation. With the support of UUSO volunteers we will strive to:

- Reach out to congregants by sending cards, notes, or emails; making calls and visits, coordinating meal deliveries and arranging transportation to doctor or other healthcare visits
- Support our congregants who may need assistance with financial issues, household projects, transportation, and help them take advantage of services available to them through local organizations
- Offer assistance with organizing memorial services
- Assist new parents or young families in times of need
- Listen deeply with compassion
- Respect and care about congregants, and value their privacy and confidentiality

## Committee/Team members

1. Team Leader: Kari Reynolds

2. Board Liaison: Rosemary Summers

3. Members:

Deb Bruce

Evelyn Culpepper

Spike Paranya

# Cookies and Crafts

To raise funds for UUSO and bring cheer to the UUSO and Oneonta Community around the holidays.

Cookies and Crafts December 3, 2022

- Overall Sales: \$8,467.5
- Vendor Sales(UUSO Keeps a percentage): \$ 5,821.5
- Cookies, Gourmet Table, Kitchen and Raffle Sales (100% UUSO Profit) \$2,646
- Total Profits to UUSO \$3,519.23

Plans going forward:

- We are planning our in person event for this year complete with eat-in cafe portion, vendors, gourmet items, assorted cookies, and a raffle table all ready to go on Saturday, December 2, 2023

Rhiannon Ham and Justine Roefs, Co-Chairs

Committee Members:

Jane Bachman

Brian Bendlin

Jeane Bennet O'Dea

Deb Bruce

Vickie Andritz

Liz Jacob-Carter

Jennifer Kemper

Prue Stelling

Pam Strother

# Endowment Committee

Submitted by Karen Palmer

## **Endowment Committee Annual Report 2022-2023**

**Mission Statement:** The Endowment Committee is charged with the stewardship of all endowed funds of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta, Inc. This stewardship shall include the raising, administration, and disbursement of the income from those funds.

**How does the Committee support, impact, and fulfill UUSO's mission and the UU principles?** The Endowment Funds are used exclusively to support the Mission of UUSO and the UUA Principles.

**Annual Report (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)**

**Accomplishments** from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

1. The Endowment accounts have been reorganized for better clarity, safety, investment, and socially responsible criteria with more utilization of the UUA's Common Endowment Fund with our local bank being exclusively Sidney Federal Credit Union.
2. We have navigated some leadership changes while the former Chair, Karl Seeley, has been engaged with the Search Committee. We have benefited greatly from the excellent foundational and historical knowledge of Margaret Davis and Deb Bruce, Larry Armstrong, and Paul Agoglia during the transition.
3. We have increased the frequency of meetings to monthly rather than quarterly and have made sure the meetings are advertised in the UUSO newsletter. They have all been open to the Congregation.
4. We have had the expertise of the Treasurer, Alan Zimmerman on our Committee which is helping to integrate the understanding of the Endowment finances with the total financial picture of UUSO.
5. We are communicating with the Board effectively with the help of Board liaison, Ben Friedell
6. We continue to run the CLYNK program. UUSO members and friends take green bags available in the UUSO kitchen to their households, fill them with deposit earning cans and bottles, and then drop the bag off at the recycling center at Hannaford which then sends the funds to add to the UUSO Endowment Community Fund.
7. We dispersed Community Fund interest income for the 2022-23 round of grants benefiting the following projects:
  - St. Mary's for the Oneonta Community Thanksgiving Dinner (\$500 for food expense)
  - The Oneonta Concert Association (\$1,150) to help with Arjun Verma's sitar concert and the Percussion concert w/Julie Licata & Friends
  - The UUSO Aesthetics Committee (\$1,000) for a display case for historical documents
  - The Upper Catskill Burial Association (\$500) for education and outreach;
  - The Family Services Association (\$1,000) for purchasing hygiene supplies.
8. We dispersed money from the Mara Kern Library Fund to purchase books that align with our UUSO values and follow the criteria set forth by the Kern family which established the Fund. We are



grateful for the dedication and expertise of our UUSO Librarian, Deb Bruce.

9. We dispersed monies from the interest earned from the West African Fund established by the Lane Foundation per the request of the Mali Education Project Team which supports Youchaou's School in Mali, Africa.
10. The Committee is currently discussing and revising draft policies for each of our funds which will then be reviewed by the Board for final approval.

### ***Challenges***

1. We recognize that we need to better educate the Congregation as to the purposes of our Endowment Funds, the various ways members and friends can contribute to them, and the procedures we follow that foster trust and accountability.
2. We will be looking for legal guidance to ensure that the structure and operations of the Endowment Committee as an entity that is under the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta, Inc. is consistent with all NY State regulations and laws. Once we have more clarity, we will share any possible changes that need to be made with the UUSO Board and the Congregation.

### ***Plans for the future:***

1. Complete the development and revisions of policies for all Endowment Funds.
2. Present updated education to the congregation concerning the purposes of each fund and the opportunities members and friends of UUSO have to contribute. Currently financial contributions may be made out to UUSO with the name of the Endowment Fund you wish to contribute to in the memo line (Community, Mara Kern Library, West Africa, or Legacy/Love, Alice) . If you do not wish to specify the fund, it will be placed in the Legacy/Love, Alice fund.
3. Gain greater clarity on legal regulations and practices concerning the structure and administration of the UUSO Endowment Funds.

### ***Additional Information***

The Endowment Fund totals are currently:

- West African Fund (Supporting the mission of our Mali Education Project which sends funds to Youchaou's School in Mali, Africa): \$16,857

- Mara Kern Library Fund( supporting the Mara Kern children and adult libraries): \$34,731
- Community Fund (providing grants for community and UUSO projects): \$187,680
- Legacy/Love, Alice Fund (Supporting the financial sustainability of UUSO and its Mission-based projects) \$54,114

**Committee members**

1. Chair: Karen Palmer
2. Board Liaison: Ben Friedell
3. Other Officer:  
Keith Willcox–Financial Secretary
4. Other Members: Margaret Davis, Paul Agoglia, Deb Bruce,  
Karl Seeley, Alan Zimmerman (Finance Committee delegate)

Signed, Karen Palmer

## Finance Committee

Report as submitted by Finance Committee 9/21/23

**Finance Committee**

**1. Name of Committee**

UUSO Finance Committee

**2. Committee’s Mission Statement**

The Finance Committee oversees all UUSO financial management and assures best practices are followed. In coordination with the bookkeeper, the monthly financial reports are prepared for the Board of Trustees. In cooperation with the staff and committee leadership, the annual budget is prepared by the committee for review by the Board of Trustees and approval of the congregation at the annual meeting.

### **3. Accomplishments during this period**

During the 2022-2023 year, the Committee:

- met monthly and reviewed monthly financial reports, which the Treasurer presented to the Board of Trustees at its regular monthly meetings.
- prepared the final 2021-2022 and 2022- 2023 budget to present at the Spring Congregational meeting, distributed the proposed budget, conducted an open meeting for discussion of the budget prior to the meeting, and presented the budget for approval at the meeting.
- continued work on a comprehensive internal review of current UUSO financial policies and procedures and examination of the financial records for presentation and accuracy
- coordinated volunteers to collect, count and deposit in the church safe the weekly “Share our Plate” collections at the worship service
- consulted and advised the purchase of 10 Ford, Ave. Oneonta, NY
- expressed concern to the congregation describing urgent immediate and long-term fiscal concerns that need to be addressed.
- prepared the preliminary 2023-2024 budget, distributed it, arranged and conducted an open meeting for discussion of the preliminary budget, revised the proposed budget based on input from the BOT, and presented the preliminary budget to the congregation at the spring annual meeting. With the help of accurate projections from the Stewardship Committee, we were able to come up with a workable deficit budget.
- participated in a subcommittee that evaluated the fiscal health of the congregation and made suggestions on how to move forward a we continue to have deficit budget proposals
- transitioned pertinent committee documents including policies, procedures, minutes and treasurer’s reports to <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LZ-ixDJ4edTPJA8fDSNliRYHM0gx6kil>
- The Finance Committee wishes to assure the congregation that we continue to improve our financial reporting and transparency. We are also very fortunate to have Taylor Czyzewski continue as our bookkeeper – She has been key in the improvements and is a pleasure to work with.

### **4. Plans going forward—goals, expected events, etc.**

- a. continue to monitor the finances of the congregation
- b. support the subcommittee in implementing the suggestions made in order to promote fiscal health in the congregation

### **5. Name of the Committee Chair, Co-Chair, Vice Chair, and any other specific roles during this time period.**

The Committee Chair during 2022-2023 was Laura Reyda.

Members: William Benedict, Jendy Murphy  
Treasurer: Alan Zimmerman  
Assistant Treasurer; Tracy Verma  
Bookkeeper: Taylor Czyzewski

**Addendum:**

**Current members [effective 7/1/23]**

Laura Reyda (appointed spring 2020)	term expires 6/30/27
Jendy Murphy (appointed spring 2021)	term expires 6/30/25
William Benedict (appointed spring 2021)	term expires 6/30/25
Linda Wilcox (appointed spring 2023)	term expires 6/30/27

Treasurer –ex-officio member, non-voting.	Alan Zimmerman
Assistant Treasurer –ex-officio member, non-voting	Tracy Verma

Staff:	
Bookkeeper	Taylor Czyzewski

**Current officers [effective 7/1/23]**

Committee Chair: Laura Reyda

## Historian

Submitted by Bob Brzozowski

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

UUSO HISTORIAN

The mission of the UUSO historian is to collect and preserve archives and artifacts reflecting the Society's history over the 170 years that Universalists and Unitarian Universalists have met in

Oneonta. Knowing our past enriches our present and prepares us for the future, as individuals and a congregation.

The UUSO artifacts and archives are in an unsecured room at Chapin Memorial, except for some documents that are still at my home for safekeeping. In the past year, I spent many hours going through materials passed to me from the finance and religious education committees, culling duplicate materials and materials that are not relevant to the history of our congregation.

With the new display case purchased by the aesthetics committee, the cases' two shelves have been utilized for UUSO history and the UUSO memorial books. Thus far, the items reflecting our history have included a biography of Rev. Edwin Hubbell Chapin, the autobiography of Rev. John Murray, an early photo of Chapin Memorial depicting the steeple, a circa 1940s photo of two members of the Association of Universalist Women and a AUW project, and the 2023 congregational photograph.

Some progress has been made on a handout about the church windows, the religious symbolism reflected in them, and their donors.

I miss Cynthia Squires and her work collecting references to our congregation in the local papers. I will try to be as diligent as she was over many, many years, but if others find such references, please don't hesitate to turn them in. If you have other materials that you believe belong in the UUSO collections, I recommend that you hold them until there is a secure location for their storage.

Bob Brzozowski, UUSO Historian

## Mali Education Project

Submitted by Susan Ryder

UUSO Mali Education Project Annual Report for 2022/2023

Vision: We reach for a better world.

Mission: To support Youchaou's School in Mali to support education for children and to promote intercultural growth for ourselves and our communities.

Values: We value respect, collaboration, empowerment, and transformative personal growth.

Accomplishments: In the Summer of 2022, we were still concerned about meeting inside, in-person, because of the risks of contracting Covid. We met for an outside picnic and a porch picnic. All other meetings were held via Zoom or with a Zoom alternative offered for in-person meetings.

We attempted to organize fundraisers but were mostly unable to do so due to problems gathering in-person. We did a "Muffins for Mali" fund raiser after the Sunday services on Dec. 4 and 18 in 2022. We also sold items, such as jewelry and crafts, through our "Mali Market" at that time. We raised a total of \$376.35. The Oneonta High School French Club sold our hairbands and scrunchies as a benefit for Youchaou's School and raised \$75. We received other general donations totaling \$492.65. In all, we raised \$944 beyond regular tuition. We are hopeful we will be able to host more fundraisers going forward.

We raised \$15,400 for tuition that sponsors 56 children for one year at Youchaou's School.

Alan Zimmerman, UUSO treasurer, worked tirelessly to help us send a wire transfer to Mali through the Community Bank of Oneonta. We were able to send \$15,768 in February 2022. We are so grateful to Alan for his assistance.

We have been bequeathed funds for what is called the Lane Endowment totaling \$17,000. This fund is administered by the UUSO Endowment Committee. These funds have been invested through the UUA. We hope to receive \$700 per year from the interest.

We hope to get back to regular, in-person, meetings as well as fundraisers. Adirondack folksinger Dan Berggren, a UU, agreed to come to UUSO as guest worship leader for a Sunday service, as well as to put on a benefit concert for our Mali Education Project on the Saturday preceding the worship service. He will donate all proceeds to Youchaou's School with the exception of \$150 to pay his travel expenses. This was originally scheduled for October of 2023, but has been postponed to the spring of 2024.

Our group has done and would like to continue to do social events together such as going out for breakfast, reading a book together, and/or working on Soul Collages.

We will continue to try to understand the complex political situation in Mali. Youchaou says that he and his school have not been in danger. He continues to offer education to girls. Our sponsorships pay for those girls and boys attending his school who would otherwise not have access to formal education. Youchaou's School continues to have higher success rates than other schools in Mali.

Project Members 2022/23: Susan Ryder (Chair), Shirley Ferguson (Sponsorship Coordinator), Patricia Donnelly, Jenny Grimes, Annemarie Hosnedl, Dorothy Hudson, Zanna McKay, Suzanne Miller, Karen Palmer, Ellen Phillips, Prue Stelling, Abigail Wendell, Lewis Wendell, and Carolyn Wolf-Gould .

All of us at UUSO can be proud that we all are making a difference for these children, even during Covid and a harsh political climate in Mali. The Mali Education Project is part of the ministry of the UUSO.

## Memorial Committee

Submitted by Arleen Benedict

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 MEMORIAL COMMITTEE**

#### **Memorial Committee**

Mission Statement:

The Memorial Committee has a threefold purpose:

- 1) To maintain the Memorial Plaque in the sanctuary and to record on the plaque the names and dates of deceased members and friends of UUSO.
- 2) To maintain permanent records which will contain information on the Memorial Plaque and standard biographical data (when found and provided) for historical and family use.
- 3) To monitor the maintenance of the Ruth Achenbach Memorial Garden so that it endures as a place for quiet reflection, remembrance and the interment or scattering of cremains.

#### Accomplishments:

The name and birth and death dates of Leon Wiggin were added to the Memorial Plaque at the back of the sanctuary: Letters were sent to the families of the deceased Leon Wiggin and Donald Booth informing them we wished to honor and remember their family member by adding their name to the Memorial Plaque unless the deceased person had self directed. An engraved brass plate was ordered and the family was informed the name plate had been added to the plaque.

Obituaries, photographs, mementoes, and Orders of Memorial Services, if found or donated, were put in The Book of Records with at least a page dedicated to each person.

The Chancel Table was decorated for the service on the Days of Awe Sunday Service, Sunday, March 5, and Sunday, May 28th of the Memorial Day weekend. The Books of Records were included in the display and were made available after the service for the congregation to look through.

Paul Robinson's and Cynthia Squire's cremains were buried in the Memorial Garden according to their wishes.

Cynthia's two daughters were visiting and requested that Cynthia's cremains be buried while they were here. Paul Agoglia from the Properties Committee graciously consented to dig the hole for Cynthia's cremains.

One of Martha Robinson's sons dug the hole for her husband's Paul's cremains.

#### Committee Members:

Arleen Benedict, Chair Person

Mary Ambrose, Formerly Book of Records

William Benedict, Plaque Manager  
Julia Gregory, Garden Placement

Jendy Murphy, Book of Records

Linda Wilcox, Former Chair Person



# Office Administrator

Submitted by Darlene Carrington

## Mission

The Office Administrator manages all UUSO facilities, office procedures, equipment, and internal/external communications. Additionally, the Office Administrator tracks membership data and completes administrative requests as directed by the Minister and in consultation with the Treasurer, UUSO staff and leadership.

## Future Goals

I began this position in January of 2023 – during the past year, I have learned a tremendous amount about UUSO and how I might best serve the congregation and community in my role as Office Administrator. My goals for the upcoming year are to continue the process of uploading and organizing UUSO's documents to Google Drive for long-term storage, and to work with our new Minister Rev. Stacey Mitchell and the UUSO staff members, officers, and leadership.

## Office Committee

Submitted by Linda Wilcox

The mission of the Office Committee is to support the Office Administrator so that the UUSO office runs smoothly and efficiently.

Members of the Office Committee assist as needed or requested to facilitate the smooth functioning of the administrative office as it serves UUSO as a whole, including all components within our own congregation and in relation to the wider community, in keeping with Unitarian Universalism's Principles and UUSO's own consensually established Mission and Vision Statements.

This committee did not exist in 2022-2023, nor for many years prior, as the Minister took over these duties. However, with the absence of a Minister, it was re-instituted at the direction of the Board of Trustees.

Going forward, this Committee will work with the Office Administrator, and the Minister, to facilitate the smooth operation of the UUSO office. We will assist with the annual updating of the Directory of Members and Friends of UUSO.

Linda Wilcox, Chair  
Katy Bridgers, Board Liaison  
Kathy Paranya  
Kathy Shimberg

## Personnel Committee

### UUSO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

*Submitted September 24, 2023*

1. MISSION STATEMENT (excerpted from the revised charter dated September 23, 2020)  
The Personnel Committee exists to monitor and maintain the personnel policies and procedures of the congregation. The committee provides administrative accountability

for the minister in his/her role as staff supervisor and works to ensure compliance with all relevant employment laws and guidelines.

## 2. CHALLENGES

- The departure of Reverend Rachel, who had been serving as the third member of the committee, left the committee short-staffed. Rosemary Summers subsequently agreed to serve as the third member and liaison to the Board of Trustees.
- The three-year terms of the remaining two members have expired, however they continue to serve, for which the Board of Trustees is grateful.

## 3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Compensation recommendations were provided to the Finance Committee for staff salaries in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.
- The Sexual Harassment Policy was updated per New York State guidelines and will be added to the Employee Handbook for approval by the Board of Trustees.

## 4. PLANS GOING FORWARD

- Prepare compensation recommendations to submit to the Finance Committee for the 2024-2025 budget
- Work with the new minister when they arrive to support them in their role as Head of Staff.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosemary Summers, Chair and Board Liaison  
Amy Forster Rothbart  
Kathy Shimberg

## Properties Committee

# Properties Committee Annual Report for 2022- 2023

*Submitted by Paul Agoglia  
August, 2023*

## Committee Members

Paul Agoglia

# Mission

To steward the maintenance and improvements of UUSO's historic Chapin, the sale of 16 Ford and maintenance/upgrades to newly acquired 10 Ford.

## Accomplishments, Challenges, Future Goals

### *Accomplishments:*

- Purchased a new lawn mower July 2022
- Purchased new weed whacker batteries July 2022
- Approached AG Construction – July regarding leak into main entrance and had a temporary fix installed.
- Cut back hemlocks and shrubs in memorial garden.
- Worked with aesthetics on securing bids and action on demolition of garage by Eastman Associates.
- Determined that brickwork in certain areas needed repointing. UU hired Mike Eckerd to do the work and are awaiting the start of project.
- Obtained two bids for replacing rubber roofs at steeple level and above the main entrance. Clapper Construction was chosen by the BOT and will likely start the work this summer. It should only take a few days at most.
- Replaced batteries in all thermostats and smoke detectors (once a year)
- Took furnace inspector through for insurance inspection of system.
- Took fire extinguisher inspector through for inspection.
- Dispose of trash and recycles once every two or three weeks.
- Check dehumidifier system for function and manually empty buckets on two dehumidifiers in basement hallway twice a week.
- Purchased two new electric heaters. One for entrance foyer and one for utility room, for use during heating months
- Replaced thermostat in Sanctuary.
- Replaced 200-watt lightbulbs in sanctuary with LED equivalents.
- Obtained a bid for rewiring seven hanging lamps in sanctuary from Trieferson Electric. This task is hopefully going to be done when there is a slot in their schedule. It has been approved by the BOT.
- Worked with Aesthetics to determine which trees should come down and which stay. Work completed in spring 2023.
- Dealt with city on issue of lack of permit for garage demolition. Resolved by Eastman paying a fine which UU offered to cover 50%. No response received from Eastman on offer.
- Installed new display case with help from volunteer Rich Stelling.
- Had Rich Stelling volunteer to fix some tables and build a cabinet for placement under the new display case.
- Purchased a roll of traction ice shield to be put down on ramp before next winter.
- Judy Tator volunteered to trip shrubs in front of Chapin in June.

- Tested in late June/early July each dehumidifier as stand alones to ensure they were functioning. Included in the test were the three in storage. Two that were hanging on the walls were no longer functioning. Fortunately, two of the stored dehumidifiers do work, so substitutions were made. We now have four hanging and functioning dehumidifiers and one functioning stand alone in the basement hallway. The stand-alone bucket fills up in less than 24 hours, so it requires frequent emptying. I will look into attaching it to the other four that drain into the slop sink. Also, the pumps that push the water from each hanging dehumidifier to the slop sink, as well as the dehumidifiers themselves are aging. Some replacements may be necessary over the coming year or two. To do a complete overhaul would be about \$1,750. This price would replace five dehumidifiers and five pumps. I may write a minigrant to the endowment committee this fall to cover this cost.

### *Challenges*

- Low committee numbers. This dictated the need to only work on immediate and emergency issues.
- 

### *Future Goals*

- To work with or independently of Aesthetics on the 10 Ford Project.
- To work with aesthetics/memorial committee on best approach to removing tree stumps and planting new shrubs to replace hemlocks.
- Continue with regular maintenance and scheduled items (fire extinguisher and boiler inspections, etc).
- Recruit more members.
- Work with other committees to determine best path forward with house at 10 Ford.
- Prepare for replacement of dehumidifiers and their pumps. As stated earlier, this will cost about \$1,750.
- See if there is a way to get central dehumidification in the basement and AC in the sanctuary.

## Religious Education Team

### **Mission Statement**

*“We are here for the Spiritual Growth of our Society’s youngest and most vulnerable members, guests and friends. We are also here for our own Spiritual Growth and Enlightenment. We will share our opinions, ideas, suggestions, and criticisms in the most respectful manner we can. This respect will be manifested towards ourselves, each other, the children of the UUSO and the congregation.” -Jon Powers*

### **RE Programs and Participation**

This year, instead of Sunday morning Religious Exploration classes, The RE Team offered monthly Second Saturday Celebrations at Chapin Memorial. The mid-day celebrations were designed for children in grades K-6 and consisted of a simple service followed by a pizza lunch and board games. Two volunteer parents/teachers led each Second Saturday Celebration with 3-5

families regularly attending. A small staff of nursery care providers also offered care during Sunday services whenever possible.

### **OWL Program**

In January 2023, with Reverend Rachel's support, we explored offering the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program for 7th-9th graders in conjunction with First United Methodist Church. Ultimately, we did not find enough interested families/teens to run the program.

### **Future Plans**

UUSO's RE program is still in transition after the pandemic. We continue to face challenges of inconsistent participation in our programs. This coming year, with the support of the incoming minister, we would like to offer at least one Sunday morning RE class staffed by volunteer teachers. We believe this offering would help us continue to support families who attend UUSO. As we anticipate challenges in finding two volunteer teachers each week, we may reach out to the congregation to offer support as non-teaching volunteers. We may also decide to continue offering the well-attended Second Saturday Celebrations along with a Sunday morning class. We will also seek the incoming minister's and the board's advice about hiring a part-time RE Coordinator.

### **Team Members**

Carolyn Cooper

Cathi Wiltsey

Amy Forster Rothbart

Barbara Sue Agoglia

Zanna McKay

## **Social Action Team**

Submitted by Karen Palmer and Kari Reynolds

**Mission Statement:** Our mission is to be a catalyst for congregational members and friends to organize and participate in opportunities to further social, economic, and environmental justice through financial contributions and gifts of personal time and effort. We also aim to connect, communicate with, and support other social, economic, and environmental justice groups.

**How does the Committee or Team support, impact, and fulfill UUSO's mission and the UU principles?** The Social Action Team strives to meet the "working for a just and sustainable world" aspect of the UUSO mission and the UUA Sixth Principle of the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.



## Annual Report

### 1. Accomplishments and/or other items and events of note from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

- The Share Our Plate weekly collection raised \$3,353 for the fiscal year.
- The Backpack Buddies and Personal Care Items collections were put on hold due to lack of donations from the congregation. We hope to reinstate it in the future. The Green Sanctuary Task Force led the April 16, 2023 worship service. Karen Palmer's presentation was titled "Those Least Responsible Are the Most Vulnerable." Dotty Hudson contributed the children's story. The service focused on the island communities that are most vulnerable to being decimated by climate change and yet are the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Green Sanctuary hosted a Zoom presentation on October 23, 2022 on Natural Burial in coordination with Upper Catskill Natural Burial Association. The reflection was given by Anna Rutenbeck and Karen Palmer, Bob Brozowski, and Jim Mills supported the service and provided the social hour. The presentation was about natural burial practices with information about how to get involved in the UCBNA'S mission of creating of a green cemetery in Otsego County.
- The team's covenant was updated.
- A UUSO Google Drive file was set up for all the records of the Social Action Team.
- Our communications coordinator, Kathy Shimberg, has kept the congregation informed of SAT activities throughout the year, providing invitations for engagement. We are now a smaller group since COVID and continue to reach out for others who may be interested in joining us.
- We continue to promote the work of the Otsego County Conservation Association such as the annual April Drive-Thru Drop-Off recycling day, for a variety of items that can't be put in Otsego County's regular recycling.
- We discussed further educating the congregation on the proposed UUA 8<sup>th</sup> Principle and suggest to the Board of Trustee that the congregation vote to adopt it:  
*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.*  
Although the Principles will not be part of the UUA's revised Article II to be voted on at the 2024 General Assembly, we hope to discuss the option of adopting the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle by the UUSO with the new minister.

### 2. Challenges

- We are a smaller group than previously prior to COVID. This makes it difficult to organize larger scale actions and therefore we are needing to enlist the larger congregation in Social Justice/Action efforts in order for UUSO to fulfill its Mission.
- We have had a bit of a challenge with transition in leadership after Carol Malz stepped down as SAT team leader. After a period of rotating facilitation, Karen Palmer has acted

as team leader (facilitator) with excellent assistance from Kari Reynolds, Kathy Shimberg and other members who readily share the tasks of the team.

### **3. Plans for the future:**

- We hope to coordinate with our new minister on engaging the congregation more in our social justice efforts. We have been discussing a new model for SAT in which we seek to draw from the congregation the issues that people would like to engage in to make a difference. We've developed a draft form for people to let us know the issues they would like to work on and SAT would be available to support them in any way our team can be of service.
- We are excited by the addition of 3 new members to our team who are already bringing fresh ideas, perspectives, and enthusiasm.
- Karen Palmer will be leading a book group in January to discuss the UUA's 2024 Common Read "*On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World* by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg
- We plan to offer Food for Thought programs and other public programs in which other houses of worship and local nonprofits are brought together in community discussion with the creation of action plans. The subjects of these events will be based on feedback from the congregation and other organizations.

### **Committee Members**

1. Team Co-Leaders: Karen Palmer and Kari Reynolds

2. Board Liaison: Soon to be Rev. Stacey

3. Other Officers:

Kari Reynolds, Secretary-Treasurer

Kathy Shimberg, Communication Coordinator

4. Sub-Committee:

Green Sanctuary Task Force; Karen Palmer, Leader, Dot Hudson, Member

5. Team Members:

Pat Gleiberman

Dot Hudson

Carol Malz

Sean "Sea" Moundas

Heidi Siegfried

Janet Sutta

## Visitors Connection Team

Submitted by Karen Palmer

### Mission Statement:

To warmly welcome all visitors to UUSO and assist them to receive relevant information, answer any of their questions, and orient them to the life and opportunities of the congregation toward fostering their engagement and sense of belonging.

How does the Committee or Team support, impact, and fulfill UUSO's mission and the UU principles? We work toward building Beloved Community and affirming the worth and dignity of every person as well as recognizing our interdependent web of existence.

Annual Report

Accomplishments and other items and events of note from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023:

The team has hosted a "Welcome Table" for most Sunday services, created a brochure specifically describing our UUSO congregation and ministry (this now needs updating), and revised the visitor form to be simplified and more organized so that people receive the newsletter

and are entered into the Realm data base. Buttons are also made with the names and pronouns of

people who want one. Welcome Table hosts also often assist with ushering when needed. The Welcome Table hosts also take attendance for each service and report this to the Office Administrator as well as send completed visitor forms.

2. Challenges:

We have had a good number of visitors but many do not return.

COVID has led to a lower overall attendance during Sunday services than in years past.

We do not have a system currently for providing classes for those wishing to become members or a way of celebrating membership formally. We are hoping the new minister will help address these issues.

3. Plans for the future:

We plan to invite those who have visited to a service that has some kind of draw such as a service led by our new Minister.

We will be updating the UUSO Welcome brochure once the new Minister is settled and has a picture to share with us.

We will work with the new minister to formulate plans for hopefully developing rituals and practices for educating and honoring potential and new members.

We are working with the Aesthetics Committee to determine a new location for storing the buttons and also possibly a new way of producing them.

Team Members:

1. Team Leader: Karen Palmer

2. Board Liaison: Katy Bridgers

3. Team Members: Kari Reynolds, Kathy Shimberg, Tracy Verma

4. Other people who have hosted the Welcome Table: Laura Reyda, Zanna McKay, Keith Willcox, Suzanne Miller

5. People expressing interest in membership on the team after June 30, 2023:

Bob Brozowski, Lisa Kelly

Signed, Karen Palmer

# Worship Team

Submitted by Beth Small

## Mission

To produce quality Sunday morning and Christmas Eve services.

## Annual Report

The UUSO has conducted hybrid (in-person and Zoom) services each Sunday, this year, with participation slowly bouncing back post-COVID. The Worship Team reconstituted itself after Rev. Rachel's time with us ended and many former team members stepped back from the group; after a few weeks in the spring/summer when it seemed that all the planning was falling on Rosemary Summers, the new Worship Team took on the urgent task of arranging Sunday services until the new minister arrives. It's been quite a challenge finding volunteers to fill the many roles required for an effective service. A useful tool that Rev. Rachel created is a Google spreadsheet with columns for each role and rows for all the upcoming dates. Volunteers have

been able to put their names down to help and everyone can also see where no one has signed up.

We anticipate the arrival of Rev. Stacey Miller in the second week of October, at which time the team will consult with her to see how she would like to organize things.

#### Membership

Zanna McKay (board liaison)

Beth Small (AV tech and Zoom assistant coordinator)

Sue Cotter (Worship Associate coordinator)

Laura Reyda

Judy Tator

Sean Moundas

Tim Horne (Music Director)

Michael Frye-Hunt (Worship Musician)