



Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana, Inc.

Annual Report to the Congregation Sunday, June 9, 2024

Current Membership: 447

Board of Directors, 2023-2024

Abby Gitlitz, President

Jane McLeod, Vice President (as of Jan 2023)

Regina DiLavore, Secretary

Bill Lonnberg, Treasurer

Linda Pickle, At-large

Drew Schrader, At-large

Mary Craig, At-large (as of Jan 2023)

Monthly Board meeting minutes are posted here: uubloomington.org/about-us/board-of-directors

Minister

The Reverend Constance Grant, Interim Lead Minister

Contents

Page

Full minutes of previous Congregational Meetings, with attachments, are on the church website:

[Congregational Meeting Minutes](#)

Board Report [3](#)

Leadership Cultivation Committee Report [4](#)

Finance Committee Report [5](#)

Special Purposes Fund Report [6](#)

Reports from Ministers and Staff

Interim Lead Minister [7](#)

Music Director [9](#)

Director of Administration [10](#)

Connections Coordinator [12](#)

Lifespan Religious Education [15](#)

Technology Coordinator [18](#)

Reports from Committees, Teams, Groups & Task Forces

Auction Committee	21
Book Table	21
Caring Committee	22
Chalice Circles	22
Facilities Team Annual Report	23
Holiday Art Fair and Bazaar	23
Humanist Forum / Freethinkers	24
Lifespan Engagement Team	26
LifeStories	26
Planned Giving Committee	26
Wednesday Walkers	27
Welcoming Team	27

Social Justice Annual Report [28](#)

Green Sanctuary	28
Habitat for Humanity	30
Help Feed Our Hungry Neighbors	31
Homelessness	32
Hope for Prisoners	33
International Outreach	33
Just Peace	34
Racial Justice	34
Rainbow Rights	35
Refugee & Immigration Support	36
Reproductive Justice	38
Social Justice Funds	39

UUCB Board of Directors

Outside of the usual board duties of overseeing the lead minister in the running of the church, in 2023-24 the UUCB board has focused on revising church governance and policy documents. To this end, the board established committees of the board and working groups with specific areas of focus. Each group reported to the board, which then took appropriate action.

Some of the groups created:

Bylaws and Policies working group: This group spent the summer and fall of 2023 reviewing our Bylaws. It suggested revisions to make the bylaws clearer and more consistent with our current practices. Amended bylaws were adopted at a special congregational meeting in October 2023. In spring of 2024 the working group reviewed Board policies and made suggestions for clarifications. Updated policies will be accepted at the June 2024 board meeting. Working Group members were Steve Dillon (past president), Stuart Yoak (past president), Steve Gilbert (past secretary), and Mary Craig (at large board member). Rev Grant advised the group.

Pledge Drive Committee: Stewardship in this congregation is now managed by a committee of the Board tasked with the year-round duties of crafting and running the pledge drive in the spring and fostering ongoing year-round conversations about money in this congregation. It has six members, serving staggered three-year terms. Committee members were Corrin Clarkson (chair), Judy Witt, Joan Caulton, JaneAnn Gifford, David Frew, Pat Slabach, and Drew Schrader (at large board member).

Personnel Advisory Committee: This committee focused on bringing the Personnel Manual into compliance with current church practices, clarifying staff rights, benefits, and responsibilities, and developing conflict resolution procedures. The revised manual will be considered for approval by the Board at its June meeting. The committee has three members who serve staggered three-year terms. Committee members were Jane McLeod (chair, Board VP), Lisa Amsler, JaneAnn Gifford; Rev Grant was ex officio member.

In addition to establishing and overseeing the work of these committees, the Board assisted the Search Committee as requested, and helped craft Rev Susan Frederick-Gray's contract and compensation package.

The Board is also looking ahead as we lay the groundwork for 24-25 agenda items including how the congregation deals with major gifts, policies for operational reserves and fair share giving to the UUA, and creating space for innovations by our new called minister, Rev Susan Frederick-Gray.

Submitted by Abby Gitlitz

UUCB Leadership Cultivation Committee

The Leadership Cultivation Committee (LCC) works to develop leadership capacity in our congregation; nominates members for elected leadership positions on the Board, the Special Purposes Fund (SPF), and the LCC; and suggests leaders for other positions as requested.

LCC members in 2023–24 are: Glenda Breeden (chair), Kathleen Sideli (secretary), Abby Gitlitz (board rep), Carol McCord, Daniel Reed, Anabel Watson (ex officio), and Rev. Connie Grant (ex officio). Much gratitude to Daniel Reed, who agreed to join LCC when one of our newly elected LCC members was unavailable to serve.

LCC members tabled at the UUCB Building Community Fair on October 8th where we passed out fliers about LCC's mission and goals, and talked with several members about leadership opportunities. In the Fall of 2023, we also attended several cottage and committee meetings facilitated by the Search Committee, not only to be part of the search process, but also to identify potential leaders from the various groups. In February 2024, we offered a Leadership Training Workshop with Suzanne Fodor: "Workshop Design Lab." This was open to all adults and teens in the congregation; nine congregants attended, including several members of the LCC. Thanks to Suzanne for continuing to share her expertise!

We will present the following nominations for congregational vote at the June 2024 Congregational Meeting:

- Board Member At-Large: Pam MacLaughlin
- Board Member At-Large: Steve Mascari
- Special Purposes Fund: Ruth Aydt
- Special Purposes Fund: Licia Weber

Special thanks to Anabel and Abby for all the groundwork in updating membership lists and Board member terms; and thanks to both of them and Kathy, Daniel, Carol, and Rev. Connie for the hours spent identifying and providing the outstanding nominees we have for the Board and SPF.

Glenda Breeden, LCC Chair

Finance Committee Report with Proposed Fiscal Year 24-25 Budget

Thanks to the members of the Finance Committee for service to the Church. The team has done much good work together, and has been very helpful in putting together the FY24-25 budget. Committee members are:

- Bill Lonnberg (Treasurer)
- Carolyn Emmert (Secretary)
- Ruth Sanders
- Kitty McIntosh
- Arzetta Hults-Losensky
- Richard Slabach, Controller

Here is where the FY23-24 budget versus actual stands as of May 30, 2024.

	Actual	Budget	% of Budget
Income	\$628,426	\$699,583	90%
Expense	\$582,684	\$683,637	85%
Net income	\$45,742	\$15,946	287%

Actual income is ahead of actual expenses.

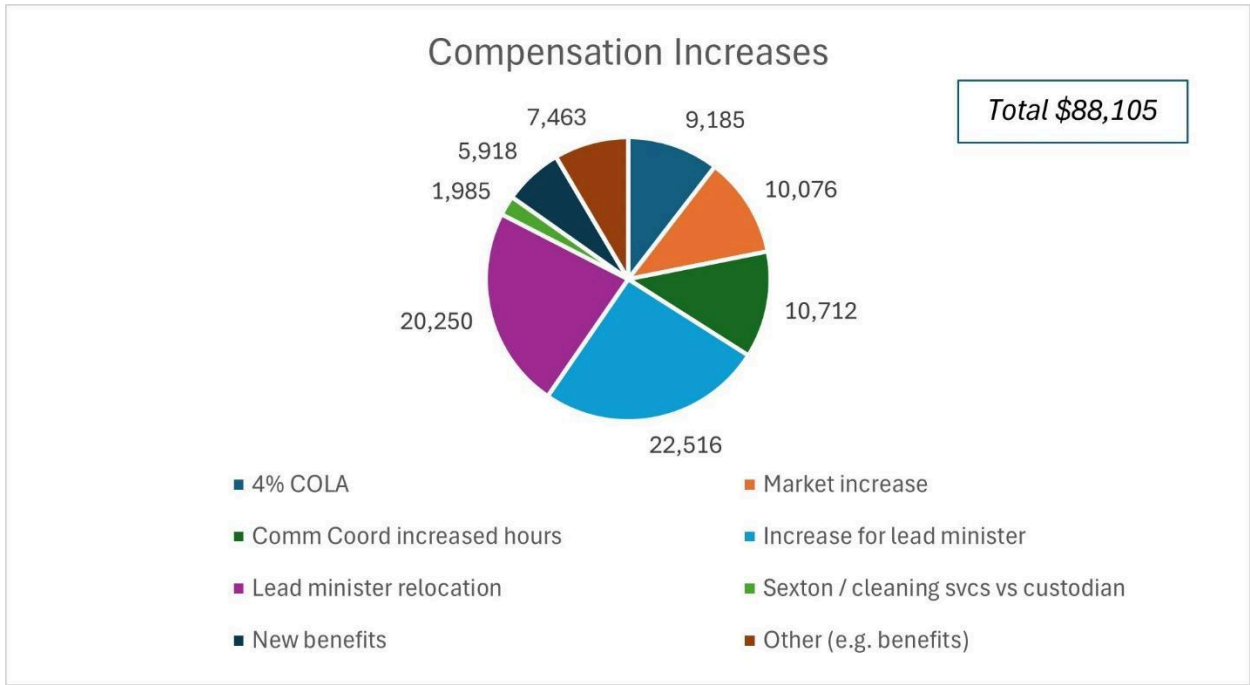
Budgeted income included pulling \$53,000 from Operational Reserves, but to date \$0 has been utilized. The actual amount needed will be determined as FY23-24 draws to a close.

As shown in the following table, the FY24-25 Budget is being presented as three potential cases.

	FY24-25 Budget Cases			FY23-24 12/23 Revision
	Case 1 <i>Pledges committed</i>	Case 2 <i>Recommended</i>	Case 3 <i>Aspirational</i>	
Income				
Committed Pledges	\$ 607,739.00	\$ 630,000.00	\$ 660,000.00	\$ 560,583.00
Operational Reserve	\$ 49,603.29	\$ 27,342.29	\$ -	\$ 53,000.00
Other	\$ <u>110,400.00</u>	\$ <u>110,400.00</u>	\$ <u>110,400.00</u>	\$ <u>86,000.00</u>
Total Income	\$ 767,742.29	\$ 767,742.29	\$ 770,400.00	\$ 699,583.00
Expenses				
Operational	\$ 742,676.95	\$ 742,676.95	\$ 742,676.95	\$ 664,121.98
UUA Annual Program Fund	\$ <u>25,065.35</u>	\$ <u>25,065.35</u>	\$ <u>25,065.35</u>	\$ <u>22,365.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 767,742.29	\$ 767,742.29	\$ 767,742.29	\$ 686,486.98
Net income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,657.71	\$ 13,096.02

The three cases have identical expenses to each other, but differing incomes. Case 1 has the least pledge income (\$607,739) and Case 3 has the most pledge income (\$660,000). Case 1 utilizes the greatest amount of Operational Reserves (\$49,603), while Case 3 utilizes the least (\$0).

The increase in expenses over FY23-24 is largely due to increased employee compensation. Following is a breakdown.



I recommend that the congregation approve Budget Case 2.
Bill Lonnberg, Treasurer

Special Purposes Fund

The Special Purposes Fund (SPF) Committee for the 2022-2023 fiscal year started with Andrew Appel (Chair), Rich Slabach (UUCB Treasurer), Ruth Aydt, Ed Long and Linda Pickle (Board At-Large). Ed Long had to step down when he and his wife relocated. Doris Wittenburg joined the committee in December 2022 in Ed’s place. Many thanks to Ed, especially for his knowledge of how other UU congregations handled financial matters.

During this fiscal year SPF has received memorial donations in the name of John Woodcock, Al Strickholm, Barbara Spencer Edmonds, Sylvia King, and Anne Haynes. Funds were approved to commission an original musical composition (Swaney Composition fund), for Rev. Grant’s moving expenses, and the fall Social Justice Task Force grants (Lundin SJ Fund).

SPF started this fiscal year with \$462,093 (endowment plus available). This was down from \$524,292 at the start of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Annual reports are due before the end of the fiscal year but at the end of the fiscal third quarter total SPF assets were \$456,910. During this fiscal year we closed our account with R. W. Baird (formerly Hilliard Lyons) and opened a Vanguard brokerage account to manage fossil-fuel-divested funds. SPXE, a fossil-fuel-divested S&P 500 index fund, was sold as its total assets under management were too small to remain viable. The First Trust NASDAQ Clean Edge Green Energy Index Fund (QCLN) was chosen in its place. 9% of total SPF funds are now invested in specifically fossil-fuel free funds. Thanks to Molly O’Donnell and David Keppel for their inputs on choosing the new fund. With the closing of the Baird account stock gifts to the church will now be cleared through the Community Foundation of Bloomington & Monroe County located on S. College Ave

MINISTER and STAFF

Interim Lead Minister's Report

The Reverend Constance Grant

Our two years together are nearly done. As I have quoted before, it has been said that congregations always love their interim ministers—they either love them when they are there, or they love it when they leave! I'm happy to be loved by some for my presence. But I really don't mind if you love it when I leave. I don't doubt that some are glad to see me go. But more importantly, when I leave it means that my work here is done and you are ready to welcome your new settled lead minister, Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray.

One of my "tasks" has been to just be a different minister than you have had before—which I have done just by being who I am—so that a minister who follows me can be who they are. I have brought training and experience in interim ministry to help you be who you want to be as a congregation. I have been your minister "for now"—and now that ministry is at an end.

My work has been most visible on Sunday mornings, and less visible when I work with your staff and Board of Directors to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as organizational structures.

Some of the work we, as congregation and minister, have done together to focus volunteer roles:

- ❖ The Pastoral Associates Care Team has expanded and clarified the role of congregation members in working with the Lead Minister to extend care and attention in a ministry of one-to-one presence and support to those who are experiencing illness, loss, isolation, or other life event.

PACT members are a presence for those needing practical and emotional support. Pastoral Associates Care Team members provide nonjudgmental, empathetic listening, while maintaining the privacy of congregants. They share in moments of joy, celebration, and sorrow, and assist people in finding community resources. PACT members have participated in orientation and training, and gather together regularly to reflect and learn.

PACT members are Ruellen Fessenbecker, Celeste McGregor, Sally McGuire, Niki Motz, Brian O'Donnell, Melinda Swenson, and Allison Tomusk. After many years of service in this role, Sharon Yarber will be leaving the team as she moves to Chicago in July.

- ❖ Worship Associates work with the Lead Minister to creatively and practically support the worship services of the church. They sign up for each week based on their interest and availability, and do what needs to be done, which varies from week to week.

Elements of Worship Associates' roles may include:

- Working with the Lead Minister to create and implement services
- Providing ongoing feedback on in-person and online worship experiences
- Suggesting guest speakers including congregation members and diverse voices from the community
- Evaluating proposals for lay-led services
- Supporting guest speakers or lay-led services (to include framing the service with readings, etc. if the Lead Minister is away)
- Providing additional voices for stories or readings

Members of the Worship Associates Team are Madison Colquette, Mary Craig, Sarah Johnson, Jason Michálek, Sarah Montgomery, Avram Primack, Dinorah Sapp, and Erica Whichello.

- ❖ The Transition Team has worked directly with me as Interim Minister over these two years, helping me understand the congregation and its history and alerting me to things I might otherwise have missed. Team members have brought a wide range of experiences with the congregation, and have been conversation partners as I have thought through my responses to issues that have arisen. Members of the Transition Team, which now sunsets as my interim ministry ends, are Andrew Appel, Ruth Aydt, Alan Backler, Sarah Kopper, and Kathy Sideli.

I want to make special mention of your staff. Several staff members are relatively new to their roles, and all are exemplary. Jo Bowman, Ray Fellman, Hans Kelson, Stephanie Kimball, Sue Swaney, Anabel Watson, and Amanda Waye have all been a joy to work with. Dylan Marks, our newest addition, is working well.

Over our two years together as minister and congregation I have built relationships with you individually and collectively, and now those relationships will end. I will hold you in my heart with a prayer (“to whom it may concern”) for wholeness and strength.

In faith and hope,

Connie

Music Director's Annual Report

The 45th anniversary year of the choir was marked by a revival of the choir to pre-pandemic size. And having only one service per Sunday allowed us to sing together every week. Fun fun fun!

Ray Fellman continues as our pianist, with fine back-up from Kim Carballo, Keaton Springfield, Beverly McGahey, and Mary Allen Lynch. We are rich in excellent pianists!

Special music this year:

Schubert's Magnificat and Dona nobis pacem from Bach's B Minor Mass, with orchestra, in December

The premiere of Monika Herzig and Norbert Krapf's "When I Take Leave" with jazz ensemble, in memory of John Lawson.

Song-leader extraordinaire Pam Blevins Hinkle joined us for a weekend of joyful singing, all taught by ear.

And a big celebration of the choir's 45 years (and my 32) on Memorial Day Weekend, featuring pieces performed in the very early years of the choir: Bright Morning Stars, arr. Connie Loftman and Bob Lucas; Palestrina's *Adoramus te, Christe*; and the Gloria from Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata*, with brass. The celebration also included memories from Margaret and Doug Strong, Connie Loftman, Melinda Swenson, and Erica Whichello, a performance of "Sue's Favorite Things" (words by Steve Krahne), a Proclamation, a commemorative sign about the COVID Car Choir for the parking lot, and lots of delicious pies!

Changes and Innovations:

Our beloved Children's Choir Director Jill Courtney stepped away from her responsibilities this year, though she intends to stay involved with the music program. Instead of trying to replace her (impossible), we began incorporating more frequent "Family Choirs," where singers of any age could rehearse with the choir and perform in the service the same day. "All God's Critters" was particularly fun, with Anabel Watson adding her special tap dancing magic.

In January, we integrated a "Congregational Prelude," which – like the choral benediction – is intended to encourage the congregation to sing along.

I look forward to beginning a new era with Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray. There are more adventures before us!

Susan Swaney, Music Director

Director of Administration's Annual Report

Another year has come and gone. It's hard to believe the changes the church has seen in my short time here and the changes that are yet to approach. This has been a wonderful year of community and growth within our congregation. We have had so many large and small changes occur within our walls and through it all you have continued to amaze me with your resilience, patience, and support. You all have taken it in stride, with acceptance, and giving feedback. Some of the changes we've had this year include:

Changes to the Bazaar- Though this change was minimal on the grand scale, feedback from all of you told me that the changes implemented were largely a success. There was much appreciated feedback provided afterwards that I'm looking forward to including in this coming year's Bazaar. I hope to make your long hours and hard work in this wonderful fundraising event easier and easier (with your help and feedback) every year!

Staff Changes- There have been some recent staff changes. I am happy to report that we have a sexton (Dylan Marks) as well as a cleaner (C.J. Wayne) and combined, I believe, they are making Church a better experience for all.

Building/Grounds- Here's what this fiscal year has brought us ...

-We have a new heater installed for the Meeting Room and Fellowship Hall-so no more cold services this coming winter!

-We had an issue with our Doorbells, they quit working for a few months, and they are now fully operational again!

-We have switched to a wireless door access system called Brivo, opposed to handing out keys and collecting a key deposit when someone needs building access. This is proving to be a success! Oh and did I mention it's VERY user friendly?

-Steve Pollitt and crew have updated paint this February/March throughout the building. These rooms include: The Meeting Room, Room 106, Courtyard Entry Bathroom, and a wall in the admin's office. I'm hoping to have more rooms updated by Steve and crew in the coming fiscal year.

-Steve Krahnke installed a brand new water fountain in the courtyard entry this May! Thank you to Steve for installing and SPF for purchasing this upgrade for our building! The new fountain can refill water bottles with ease and less mess! Please go check it out and let it refill your reusable bottle!

-Dick Stumpner and Steve Krahnke have made the playground area more inviting by installing a new cover for the drain in the playground (the old one was a tripping hazard) as well as adding some dirt, seed and straw around the drain to eliminate the huge puddle that would encircle it every rainfall.

-A new toilet was installed in January in the RE bathroom across from childcare (Room 108) due to the old toilets tank constantly running and creating a small pool down the RE wing hallway.

-A new electric water heater was installed in February in the courtyard bathroom due to the previous one leaking.

-Many of our solar panels were not functioning for many months as we were awaiting parts that were back ordered due to COVID. Those parts finally arrived this fiscal year and were installed providing us with full usage of our panels once more (which has drastically improved our energy bill)!

These are just a few of the changes that have occurred around the building this fiscal year. There have been many smaller, less noticeable changes that have occurred as well and many more improvements yet to come!

I continue to learn more about this position every day; whether it's how to improve on something I'm currently doing or taking on new tasks or challenges. I have learned that you all are a valuable resource for me to reach out to for any assistance I might need, for that I am deeply thankful for—thank you!

As you know, this year has also been one of change for me in my personal life with the birth of my youngest daughter. I was brought to tears many times with the generosity and kindness of this congregation and our staff. I want to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for all the gifts, cards, emails, phone calls and follow-ups you've given to us. They have made the greatest of impacts for me and my family. I am blessed to have you all in my life and I am looking forward to what this coming year holds for us!

Amanda Waye
Director of Administration

Connections Coordinator's Annual Report

The Connections Coordinator position is a 24 hour per week commitment that grows connections within the UUCB community through connecting congregants with activities, resources, and each other.

It has been a pleasure deeply participating in the intricate web of life that connects the community at UUCB since my start date of over two years ago. It is rewarding to know that my work strives to strengthen this community. Building thriving connections and helping to nurture welcoming and diverse environments where individuals, from long-time congregants to visitors, feel comfortable and inspired are pursuits that bring me much fulfillment. I know, too, that the connections built at UUCB lead to lasting friendships and partnerships that become the impetus for social justice-based, growth-oriented, and creative endeavors that nourish the broader community of Bloomington. It is truly a joy to go about life, whether at the grocery store, the gym, or at social gatherings, and to cross paths with congregants of UUCB in seemingly every corner of our beautiful town. I am incredibly grateful to this community for welcoming me with such kindheartedness, openness, trust, and collaboration.

The work of this position would not be possible without the collective participation of this community's congregants. I am continuously inspired by the dedicated leaders of our Board, social justice task forces, congregational activity and volunteer groups, and committees with whom I work to help newcomers plug in and to ensure thriving social networks within our community. I am grateful for the time and energy of the Membership Anniversary Call Team, the newly formed Welcoming Team, and those volunteers who step in last-minute to add their knowledge and commitment to lengthy tasks. Connections classes, *New to UU* and *Exploring UUCB*, are made vastly richer and more engaging with the generous time and energy of volunteer facilitators and guest presenters—this year, we successfully continued last year's addition of a social justice task force presentation in each monthly New to UU class; we also continued the addition of a presentation by the Stewardship or Pledge Drive Committee during *Exploring UUCB*, which occurs quarterly. As well, community connections are deeply nurtured by those volunteers rising early week after week to greet at the door, light our candles, and brew the coffee that brings such joy to the sleep-deprived and those seeking social connection. A big Thank You to All for working with me on these endeavors and contributing to a beautiful synergy within our community.

Overview of 2023-24 Connections Activities

- Offered and organized three sessions of Exploring UUCB, a 4 hour two-part course offering participants the opportunity to join official membership
- Facilitated and organized New to UU monthly class, including coordination of Social Justice Task Force guest presenters
- Held membership book signings and “Covenanting Ceremonies” and coordinated the joining of 16 new members and 3 others who previously joined via Zoom
- Coordinated offering of membership ribbons to 20, 30, 40, and 50-year members and co-led recognition ceremony in Sunday service
- Began delivering and modified the Welcome and Announcements and Land Acknowledgement sections of Sunday morning worship
- Staffed the Welcome Table on Sunday mornings

- Communicated regularly in-person and via email, Zoom, and phone call with the larger congregation regarding involvement, membership, and related matters
- Assisted newcomers and new members in cultivating meaningful engagement
- Maintained membership records in UUCB's database, the UU World, the Membership Book, and general files
- Coordinated UUCB's Young Adult Ministry activities including lunches, general communications and promotion, and projects/activities
- Acted as staff participant on the Leadership Cultivation Committee; helped orient new committee members
- Coordinated and maintained online weekly registrations for Java Crew, Greeters, and Flame Keepers groups and assisted volunteers on Sunday mornings
- Led the Membership Anniversary Call Team
- Coordinated with various church groups and committees: Ministerial Search Committee (as needed), Young Adult Game Night (newly formed), Library Committee (UU Pocket Guides to *Exploring* class participants), among others
- Assisted with larger congregational reviews/certification, including a thorough Membership Roll Review that included many phone conversations with members of the congregation
- Maintained and updated documents on courses, activities, and general information on the community and its activities
- Held individual appointments with congregants to discuss involvement, programming, and membership
- Began coordination and facilitation of the newly formed Welcoming Team
- Coordinated a Building Community Fair (social and other church groups)
- Participated and assisted in staff capacity in Sunday service reflecting the learnings from the UUCB trip to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery
- Coordinated 4th of July Parade involvement including communication with Bloomington Parks and Recreation; initiated planning for 4th of July, 2024
- Attended annual UU Association of Membership Professionals Pro Days conference in Naperville, IL
- Attended staff retreats and trainings
- In addition to the regular duties of my job, I delivered readings and personal writings, offered tap dance performances and interpretations of readings, and played other roles in Sunday worship services

Membership

Throughout the year our congregation has continued to welcome newcomers and new members. We have welcomed a total of 16 new members, an increase of two from last year, since the start of the fiscal year with additional congregants registered for the Exploring UUCB membership class occurring this June. Three additional members who joined remotely in prior years were celebrated at Membership Book Signings and Covenanting Ceremonies. Our total membership is currently 447.

A Note on This Year's Roll Review

This year, the church conducted a Membership Roll Review more comprehensive than in many former years. This Roll Review ascertained who on our membership list truly identifies as a member of our congregation and

who may have drifted toward other social communities and endeavors. Consequently, our membership number has decreased significantly as compared to last year's to accommodate those folks who no longer identify as members.

I would like to emphasize that, member or not, all are greatly valued and welcomed to participate in UUCB's community activities. Those who have left membership through the Roll Review process or otherwise are wholeheartedly welcomed to engage in ways that feel meaningful and as often as feels right.

General Engagement

It is the sharing of ownership in our activities that creates a thriving, welcoming, and increasingly interconnected community. Participating in the church groups and registrations located on UUCB's Church Center platform allows all active congregants to be informed of upcoming events, classes, volunteer opportunities, and ensure inclusion in desired mailing lists. This is also where the online directory for official members—with profiles maintained individually by members—is housed. Those looking for deepened connection to and engagement within our community are invited to browse our registrations page (uucb.churchcenter.com/registrations) and/or reach out to me at connect@uubloomington.org to schedule a Connections Chat and/or request resources and information on church engagement, membership, and/or volunteer opportunities.

I am truly grateful to be sharing and growing in community with you all. I look forward to staying connected.

Anabel Watson, Connections Coordinator

Director of Lifespan Religious Education Report

Children & Youth

Childcare. Childcare has been available for children through age 3 on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30, or later by request. (Children over the age of three are allowed in childcare when there is no religious education programming for their age group.) Two Chalice Circles requested childcare for their monthly meetings, and we were able to accommodate those requests most of the time. Childcare was also provided for choir rehearsals for approximately four months, but was then canceled due to lack of use.

Spirit Play. Children ages 4-6 have engaged in Spirit Play this year, led by Christy True, Laura Jesseph, Mary Beth O'Brien, and Mary Mahern. Spirit Play stories are drawn from our UU traditions as well as our six Sources, and exemplify our UU Principles.

Kids' Club. Children ages 7-12 have engaged with the Tapestry of Faith Curriculum Toolbox of Faith, led by Elizabeth Venstra, Drew Schrader, David Frew, and Sarah Kopper. This curriculum describes various "tools" of Unitarian Universalism symbolized by tools used in daily life. Additional activities were provided by teachers and by various volunteers from Social Justice Task Forces.

Youth Group. Youth in grades 8 - 12, along with three 7th graders, participated in Youth Group this year starting in February. Youth Advisors included Sarah Gettie McNeil, Angela Sturdevant, and David Frew. Activities involved art, crafts, games, movies, and discussions.

	Spirit Play	Kids' Club	Youth Group
Number Registered	13	16	3
Number who attended but were not registered	11	7	10
Average daily attendance	7	5	6

Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education (OWL). This year, OWL was offered for K-1, led by Margie Schrader and Cara Snyder, and grades 4-5, led by Pat Slabach and Emily Phelps. Twelve children enrolled in the K-1 course, and seven completed the 4-5 course.

Adult

This year there have been over a dozen adult religious education offerings, spanning a variety of formats and with a range of time commitments. They were:

- Creative Expressions: "Making Things" as Possible Paths to Spiritual, Psychological, and Emotional Growth. Facilitated by Jeanne Myers
- Listening In: A Circle for Spiritual Deepening. Facilitated by Denise Breeden-Ost, Angie Sullivan, and Margie Schrader
- Book Discussion Group: *Poverty, By America*. Facilitated by Ruth Aydt
- A Journey through Unitarian Universalist History. Facilitated by Stuart Yoak
- Forgotten Christianities: Diversity of Belief & Practices among Early Christians. Facilitated by Brian O'Donnell

- Credo-Building Workshop. Facilitated by Rev. Connie Grant
- OWL (Our Whole Lives) for Adults. Offered by Abby Gitlitz and Matt Stonecipher, but canceled due to low enrollment
- Poetry as Spiritual Practice. Facilitated by Linda Pickle
- The Inner Work of Age. Facilitated by Stephanie Kimball
- Sound Bath. Facilitated by Jill Courtney
- Wills & Financial Planning. Sponsored by the Planned Giving Committee.
- Natural Dyes. Facilitated by Kate Ellis
- Article II Exploration. Offered by Stephanie Kimball, but canceled due to low enrollment
- Book Discussion Group: *On Repentance and Repair*. Facilitated by Sarah Gettie McNeill and Stephanie Kimball
- Death Cafe. Hosted by Stephanie Kimball and the 2023 cohort of Inner Work of Age.

In total, 138 people participated in at least one Adult Religious Education program in the 2023-24 church year.

Grant Award

In March, 2024, UUCB was accepted into the Center for Congregations' Mental Health Initiative program via an application submitted by Sarah Gettie McNeill, Deb Fish, Tom Phelps, Martha Nord, Jackie Hall, and myself. This means that we are eligible to receive up to \$40,000 from the Center for Congregations, with a 10% match from our congregation, to complete a year-long project addressing mental and spiritual health.

From April till August of 2024, we will be attending educational events and developing a project proposal. Our final proposal is due in October; funds will be disbursed in December, and the project will run through 2025.

Anyone who would like to be involved in the design and/or execution of this project should contact me at kimball@uubloomington.org as soon as possible.

Admin/Policy

One substantial area of work this year has been the development of handbooks and manuals that spell out various details about our programs and operations. At the time of this writing, we have drafts in progress for the following:

- ❖ UUCB Lifespan Religious Education Handbook
- ❖ Volunteer Teacher Handbook
- ❖ Children and Youth Safety Policy & Procedures Manual
- ❖ Religious Education Development Team Handbook

Each of these is expected to be finalized before the start of the 2024-45 church year, and available both in print and online.

Staffing

At the start of this church year, we created four Religious Education Support Staff positions and experimented with a team approach that combined childcare work with support for Sunday morning programming. For various reasons, that approach did not work as well as anticipated, and over time we transitioned back to the more traditional system of having dedicated childcare staff and one person acting as a Religious Education Assistant.

For 2024-25, Eric Branigan will take on the role of Religious Education Coordinator, working 15-20 hours per week. We currently have two childcare staff, Tiffany Walton and Oscar McDermott-Sipe. Ideally we would have at least four childcare staff.

Professional Development

In 2024-25, I have completed the following:

- ❖ Worship Renaissance Module (July, 2023)
- ❖ Theology Renaissance Module (July, 2023)
- ❖ System Theory Renaissance Module (September, 2023)
- ❖ Wellspring: Sources program (February, 2023-November, 2024)
- ❖ Administration as Leadership Renaissance Module (January, 2024)
- ❖ Curriculum Renaissance Module (February, 2024)
- ❖ YIPA Training: Addressing Suicidal Thoughts and Plans (May 30, 2024)

Religious Education Development Teams

The Children/Youth Religious Education Development Team (CY-RED) and the Adult Religious Education Development Team (A-RED) collaborate with the Director of Lifespan Religious Education to vision, plan, and implement religious education programming at UUCB.

Specifically their tasks include:

- ❖ Envisioning and reviewing our lifespan program;
- ❖ Discuss additional programming needs;
- ❖ Hosting teacher orientations;
- ❖ Hosting an annual Religious Education Fair;
- ❖ Reviewing program proposals;
- ❖ Assisting with teacher recruitment;
- ❖ Reviewing and revising procedures and Handbook as needed.

The teams meet jointly twice per year and separately 2-3 times per year.

CY-RED Team Members: Christine Banister, Sarah Johnson, Mariel Yuhas, and Beth Doolen

A-RED Team Members: Linda Pickle, Stuart Yoak, and Brian O'Donnell

Technology Coordinator's Annual Report

Friends,

What a year it has been! There is so much to talk about. For a start, though, what do I do here? I suspect that some of you may not be aware that I'm a full-time employee of UUCB, or of the extent of my job. Here's a brief explanation:

My main responsibilities are to maintain the website, service and upgrade the livestream system, keep staff computers/networking up to date, and generally improve the usefulness of technology to the congregation.

Year in Review

So, what happened this year? In no particular order:

The New Website

We launched our new website this year! Although I announced it and showed it off at last year's meeting, this year saw the full deployment of our brand new website. It's been a huge improvement. There have already been some major upgrades to the website, even since its launch! These have included:

- A new forms system which has streamlined the process of scheduling events, pledging, and many other processes.
- Our "How Do I...?" page, a searchable index of articles describing how to do various things at the church. This is constantly being improved and added to, and I encourage you to go check it out!
- A greatly improved mobile browsing experience. Did you know that over 50% of traffic on the *entire internet* is from people browsing on mobile devices smaller than tablets?
- And finally, just last week (on June 5th), *another* new forms system, which has more advanced capabilities which will greatly improve the RE registration process (and more, in the future)! Look for a Tech Talks column on this system as it becomes more fully-featured.

And I'm constantly working on new and better ways to expose the great work of UUCB on the internet. If you have comments, questions, or suggestions for our website, don't hesitate to email me.

Online Voting Options

Last December's congregational meeting was the first ever conducted under our newly revised bylaws, which require us to offer an online option for full participation in congregational meetings, including the ability to vote. I built our new voting system to be secure, simple to use, and utilize a "sealed ballot" system properly – it is impossible (even as an administrator) to know any individual's vote. If you want to read more about the high level of how this works, please read my [Tech Talks installment from December](#). For any in-depth questions, or if you would like a technical tour of the system, please feel free to reach out! I love to talk about this stuff.

Meeting Room Tech Improvements

From a tech perspective, last June's congregational meeting did not go as planned. This may not have been obvious to those of you in the room, but people on the livestream likely noticed that the slide projection system crashed *four times* over the course of that meeting. That experience was the last straw for me, and I accelerated plans to replace our slide system with new software. I'm proud to report that this new software –

which I was able to build to do exactly what we need – went into production last July. Since then, the slide system has not caused a single livestream failure. We’ve had other issues, to be sure, including the internet connection failing and a few instances of audio glitches, but the slide system has been rock-solid. This stability is due in part to the simplicity of the new system, and the development principle of only reinventing wheels that are really crying out for it. All of this has created great opportunities:

- I’ve expanded the team of people who can run the service livestreams, which is great. I have plans to add a few more people to this team in the coming year.
- Our hymn lyrics slides now display differently on the livestream than they do in the room, which allows for much better contrast and readability for those joining us remotely. This makes a big difference in terms of the digital accessibility of our services.
- The projection system can now automatically import the order of service from our website, which greatly simplifies setting up slides for Sunday.
- We now have truly reusable sets of slides for every hymn we’ve sung since this new system went into effect, which means I only have to create slides for each hymn once.

As you can hopefully see, this new software has already greatly reduced the amount of time it takes for me to set up slides for each Sunday service, in addition to being more reliable and useful. There’s a lot more to come here, and please watch for a Tech Talks article on this subject as well!

New Internet Connection

We have a new internet connection! This was made possible by the City of Bloomington’s partnership with GigabitNow, which is providing affordable high-speed internet to everyone in the city. If it’s available where you are, I recommend it! Since we got this new connection last month, our livestream has been far more reliable than it was before.

Library Tech Improvements

Together with Stephanie and the Library Team, I helped to overhaul the library’s catalog and circulation system. This is based on [LibraryThing](#) and [TinyCat](#), which together make a modern library circulation setup possible for smaller libraries like ours. There is now a checkout kiosk in the library, and anyone who wants to can receive a library card during Community Hour.

Looking to the Future

I’m so excited about this coming year! I have a ton of plans (some of which I won’t be announcing until they’re closer to ready), but in brief:

- There’s an old joke in software development that the first 90% of the work takes 90% of the project’s time, and the last 10% of the work takes the last 90% of the project’s time. I plan to finish that last 10% of the work on our slide presentation software and the rest of the livestream system. I cannot wait to dive into this project in more depth again!
- I’ll continue to improve the website’s form system – especially on the back end, which will reduce staff time in processing submissions.

- With our new internet connection, we will also be replacing our phone system. I'm really excited about this, as it will be far more flexible and useful than the current system. In addition, this new internet + phone setup should cost **slightly less than half** of what the old one did per month.
- Finally, I absolutely cannot wait to work with Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray on continued improvements to our technology, and to hear her ideas on how to make our technological systems more useful to everyone. I had a brief meeting with her during Candidating Week, and I am really looking forward to continuing that conversation.

Thank you all, once again, for allowing me to do this work that I love on behalf of the community I've always been a part of. It's an honor to serve you all in this capacity, and I look forward to continuing to grow with you all.

In gratitude,

Hans Kelson
Technology Coordinator
Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington

COMMITTEES, TEAMS, GROUPS, and TASK FORCES

Auction Committee

Members: Charlotte Appel, Anne Kamman, Drew Schrader

The 2024 UUCB Goods and Services Auction was held from April 28 – May 7. We raised \$10,838.20. This year's auction had 266 items available for auction with 215 bidders participating. Not all items sold and not all bidders won something, but we consider these numbers a level of participation. The 2023 G&S Auction had 181 items and 176 bidders – we are growing! Our highest grossing items came from the 23 items in our Dinners and Gatherings Category, which raised \$5,030.35. It has been suggested that we limit the auction to just these bigger ticket items, but there is greater value than just money in the participation of so many. We are also suggesting that the items not sold be offered to the Bazaar White Elephant Sale in the fall to open them up to a larger community audience.

Submitted by Charlotte Appel

Book Table

The UUCB Book Table opens after the 10:15 - 11:15 a.m. service every Sunday for 45-60 minutes depending on need.

The mission is to (1) greet everyone, especially newcomers, and provide information about introductory Unitarian Universalist books and brochures, (2) offer books that promote UU Principles and Purposes which are recommended by the ministers, reflect current congregational interests, and support congregational or local authors and musicians, (3) offer books for UU Adult Religious Education courses, and (4) provide an opportunity for congregants to recycle and purchase used books and audiovisual materials.

The Book Table supported the book sale at the annual UU Holiday Bazaar 2023 by providing used book donations and assistance with set-up, sales, and tear-down. Proceeds from weekly sales and donations were used for purchasing new materials for the Book Table and for the UUCB Library. The Book Table is a self-sustaining project.

The volunteer Book Table crew members during June 2023-May 2024 were Anne Clark (14 times), Mike and Rita Drescher (11), Stephen Pock (11), Heather Glass (6), Rachael Norton (3), Marlin Howard (1) and Glee Noble, coordinator (6).

If you are interested in helping with the Book Table, please contact Glee Noble.

Caring Committee

Our Caring Committee has expanded our Caring for our UU community by networking with our Pastoral Care Associates. We do have our distinct roles with serving our congregation. Pastoral Care Associates have been active this year in engaging with individuals in our church community. When resources are needed from the Caring Committee, such as meals or transportation, referrals come from the Pastoral Care Team. This connection helps us serve more people in a more personal way. We are grateful for Rev. Connie's initiative for expanding our services through the interconnecting of both groups to serve the needs in our congregation.

I would like to thank all the members of our UUCB Caring Committee who have served many years. Our members consist of: Martha Dogan, transportation; Sandy Churchill, Meals; Doris Wittenburg, Memorial Receptions; Ruth Ann Cooper, sending cards; plus our member-at-large, Kathy Sideli. I have served on our Caring Committee for over 30+ years. We have been fortunate to have committed and compassionate members on our committee for all these years.

I am no longer serving on our Caring Committee as Deb & I will be moving to the Chicago area to be with grandsons on July 15. The new Convener will be Kathy Sideli. She is very familiar with our mission and has been involved for many years. I appreciate her taking the lead! I also am grateful for Melinda Swenson's involvement in caring for our church community. She has been the person who has contributed so much to the health and well being of our congregation.

Thanks to all of you as volunteers in delivering services to our church community! We are grateful for All you do! Thank you to our UUCB church community for all you have given to me!

In Gratitude

Sharon Yarber

Chalice Circles

Chalice Circles continued to be an active part of congregational life. 56 participants were divided into seven circles that met one or two times a month and were led by trained facilitators. One circle met in person at Meadowood and one met in person at Bell Trace. One circle met over zoom. The other four groups met at church. Deep listening was practiced in all groups.

In addition to the formal group meetings each group performed a service to the church ranging from making meals, serving and cleaning in the kitchen to writing cards of encouragement for Bell Trace residents and making sewing kits for Shalom Center guests.

Evaluations that we received indicate that the circles are meaningful to their members and that the goals of the program are met. The goals of the Chalice Circle program are:

- Allow circle members to make new connections and friendships with other congregants.
- Deepen self-knowledge
- Improve listening skills
- Keep the circle members connected to the congregation and to its ministry
- Enhance the health of the congregation

We are grateful to Reverend Barbara Child for her consulting expertise and leadership ... and the banana bread.

The executive team consists of Steve Pock, Alan Backler, Janeth Welch, and Ruellen Fessenbecker

Facilities Team

With the retirement of Molly O'Donnell from the Building/Grounds Committee after decades of leadership, a new team has formed to step up and divide the tasks that Molly herself had mostly tended to. This new team is called The Facilities Team and it consists of: Amanda Waye as staff lead, Hans Kelson, Dick Stumpner, Steve Krahne, Bill Lonnberg, Devin McGuire, Ann Kamman, and Avram Primack.

We have joined forces to ensure that UUCB's building/grounds needs are communicated, budgeted for, maintained, and kept up. We conducted a thorough walk through on Friday March 22, 2024 where we compiled a hefty list of things we identified throughout the building (interior and exterior) that need to be addressed in the near future. Some of the things within the walk through may not need immediate attention; however, they are projects that will need to be budgeted for and cannot be overlooked.

I believe we have a very solid team and a positive trajectory for the health and maintenance of the building and its grounds. A special thank you to Molly O'Donnell for attending the March walk through, passing down your years of wisdom to all of us, as well as your years of meticulous notes and charts.

Amanda Waye, Director of Administration

Holiday Art Fair and Bazaar

The Bazaar was held in person again this year and attendance was good. The Grand Total raised was \$23,984.64, which is a record for the bazaar.

Dozens of members and friends were involved in baking, staffing tables, creating crafts for sale, donating books and white elephants, and making and serving soup, bread, and lasagna. In addition, the other goals of the Bazaar were achieved: the church put its best face to the public and brought people to the church that might not otherwise have come, and members and friends collaborated on a project that allowed them to feel more connected to the church, meet new people, and have an enjoyable time.

Breakdown

Task Forces

Hunger: \$2,106.02

Habitat: \$1,397.39

IOTF: \$2901.02

Green Sanctuary: \$869.99

Women's Alliance

Gourmet Galaxy: \$3557.53

General Fund

\$13,152.69

Submitted by Ruellen Fessenbecker

Humanist Forum and Freethinkers

The Humanist Forum and Freethinkers have met every Sunday over the past year. Our meetings take place in room 208, starting at approximately 11:40 AM after the service, and conclude around 1 p.m. We typically alternate between the Humanist group and the Freethinkers group each week. Currently, our mailing list consists of approximately 100 members, and we would be delighted to include your name. We have an average attendance of 15-25 individuals, with some participating via Zoom.

The Humanist group selects topics about three times a year. These can be found on the UUCB webpage under "Connections" -> Join a group" -> "Humanist and Freethinkers." The Freethinkers group engages in more spontaneous discussions, exploring current topics chosen during the meeting itself.

Throughout the past year, the Humanist topic titles and the persons introducing them are given below.

2023

- June 25 - Mary Yoke – Nature Deficit Disorder
- July 9 - Marcia Hart – Mass Incarceration
- July 23 - Kevin Craig – Exploring the Bloody Bible
- August 6 - Jason Michálek – Understanding Aliens
- August 20 - Sandra Dolby – Universal Healthcare
- September 3 - Dexter Edge – Capitalism: Introduction
- September 17 - Fall Topic Selection and Potluck
- October 1 - Harold Ogren - Are You Optimistic About the Future?
- October 15 - Carolyn Emmett - Can We Save Liberal Arts Education?
- October 29 - Caroline Craig - Evicted and Poverty in America
- November 12 - Kevin Craig - Humanist Manifestos
- November 26 - Sandy Dolby - My Body, My Choice
- December 10 - Truth, Lies, and Bullshit
- December 24 - Celebration of Humanism

2024

- January 7 - Jason Michálek - Rhetorics of Belonging and Alienation
- January 21 - Mary Yoke - Keeping Your Marbles 'til the End
- February 4 - Humanist Forum Dinner & Topic Selection
- February 25 – Burials, Obituaries, & Ancestors - Sandy Dolby
- March 10 – Homeless Encampments - Bill Baus
- March 24 – The Kinesiology of Happiness - Mary Yoke
- April 7 – Green Burial - David Parkhurst
- April 21 – No Meeting
- May 5 – The Ethics of CRISPR/AI - Barb Backler/Harold Ogren
- May 19 – My Hometown Was a Sundown Town - Sandy Dolby
- June 2 - The Socialization of TikTok - Heather Glass/Jason Michálek

Freethinkers

The Humanist Forum at UU Bloomington began in 2010. After the first year, we added the Freethinkers to our schedule. We agreed to alternate our after-church discussion time between the two groups: a prepared and voted-on list of topics called the Humanist Forum, and a Freethinker group focused on topics of relevance suggested by a participant with no or little preparation. We typically have at least three substantive topics discussed on Freethinker Sundays.

A sample of topics folks have brought up for discussion at Freethinkers this past year follows:

Why have Republicans stopped being truly conservative?
Can one talk about race without being seen as a racist?
Why is profit more important than community?
Is there spirituality that is not based on the supernatural?
Diversity in universities?
If you give up on the USA, where and why would you move?
Heaven, is there one?
When, if ever, can we atone for our youthful errors?
How do I deal with a failing elder?
Worship in UU, what is it?
Face-to-face or online community, which is best?
Words matter!
How to fix "us versus them"?
Is the world indifferent to our needs?
What sort of child-rearing produces hardcore racists?
What is "spirit" in the UU church?
Do most men think they are superior to women?
Should there be legal dictates against misinformation?
How is UU as a "church," good or bad? How is it worrisome to some of us?
If I have bad news about a new child yet to be born, how do I talk to my family?
How is Biden doing?
UU responsibility when another church has sexual abuse issues?
Are college athletes earning \$750,000/year really students?
Art produced, and the artist's agenda? Should we examine both together or separately?
Is our democracy really working?
What good news is there to share, beyond the election results in Poland?
Does wartime make our leaders' speeches so heated?
Can an ethno-religious state be truly democratic?
Will we have to endure another Trump presidency?

Lifespan Engagement Team

Ann Kaman, Christine Banister, Linda Pickle,
Sarah Johnson, Anabel Watson, Stephanie Kimball

The Lifespan Engagement Team was created in 2023 with a mission to promote and create opportunities for participation in all aspects of congregational life for people of all ages and stages of life.

The group's vision is that UUCB will be a place where people of all ages and stages of life – children and their families, elders, young adults, and everyone else – are visibly included, recognized, and appreciated.

This year, the Lifespan Engagement Team organized or assisted with the following activities:

- Breaking Bread Together lunch, following the Thanksgiving worship service;
- Thanksgiving dinner
- Everybody's Birthday Party

LifeStories

Over this last year we continued to meet every single Friday of the year from 10:30am to 12. This is the group that was begun by Bill and Cookie Lynch years ago to read to each other our writings. Each person decides their own method of constructing their Lifestories. We have dwindled down to a very regular five. At Covid's end we voted to keep the group on Zoom. Some were still reluctant to be out and about, and it saved driving, and even getting dressed! Open to new folks locally, another two or three would be great, to fill open time slots in our hour and a half.

Submitted by Ann Watzel

Planned Giving Committee

Members: Charlotte Appel, Ann Kamman, Harlan Lewis

Our Legacy Circle Membership is holding steady at 94 members. We held our Legacy Circle Celebration last fall on Saturday, September 16, with a reception of food and wine. Entertainment included poetry read by Mary Beth O'Brien and her daughter, Marina O'Brien-Zink, and readings from Scott Russell Sanders. This year's LC Celebration has been scheduled for Saturday, September 14.

The PGC also hosted a class "Estate Planning 101" about wills, estate planning and end-of-life resources. The class was presented by Lance Like of Like Law Group and was attended by roughly 45 people of all ages (young families to seniors) and was well received. The Senior Resource Guide handout by the City of Bloomington (including 5 Elder Law Attorneys) was included in the class handouts. The class was videotaped as follows: <https://vimeo.com/922747764/2a53f17fa7>

Wednesday Walkers

Every Wednesday morning weather permitting at 10 am (Fall, Winter, Spring) or 9 am (Summer) a group of UU's meet to take a one hour walk at various Bloomington parks or trails. Emails were sent out on Monday indicating the location of the walk. During inclement weather we walked at 11 am in the College Mall. There are 39 people on the mailing list but the average number of walkers is between 4 and 15. Denise Ogren organizes the walks when in town. Otherwise it was organized by Kathy Gilbert.

Welcoming Team

This church year, a Welcoming Team formed under the coordination of Anabel Watson, Connections Coordinator. The Welcoming Team furthers a radically welcoming community by promoting ownership and action, as well as joy, in hospitality at UUCB within a group of volunteers and aims to further inspire the larger church community. This group aims to assist all congregants in recognizing each unique visitor who chooses to spend their precious time at UUCB and allow open-minded trust in it as a religious home.

Members who participated in this current church year are: Joan Caulton, Libby DeVoe, Jackie Hall, David Keppel, Dee Morris, Emily Phelps, Lynne Struve, and Rev. Connie Grant and Anabel Watson as staff members.

This church year, the Welcoming Team:

- Met five times as a group, with one remaining date planned
- Requested and accomplished the ordering of floor mats for the Meeting Room reserving spots for placement of wheelchairs and walkers
- Requested and accomplished upgrade to a larger welcome table by the courtyard door with availability of more orders of service, name tags, and similar items for congregants
- Communicated need for increased orders of service on Sundays
- Organized name tags in downstairs hallway and main entryway
- Brainstormed for two successful Greeters' Trainings hosted and facilitated by Libby DeVoe
- Revised instruction materials for Sunday morning Greeters
- Drafted informational materials for parents with young children
- Two members of the Welcoming Team delivered the Welcome, Announcements, and Land Acknowledgement in Sunday services when the Connections Coordinator was away
- Provided support to visitors
- Engaged in group education on how to be welcoming in ways conscious of diverse multicultural backgrounds, gender identity, and needs related to aging
- Met with representatives of Lifespan Religious Education and Rainbow Rights to discuss long-term goals

The Welcoming Team has enjoyed seeing improvements come to life in our church spaces and community. Any thoughts or interest in joining can be communicated via email to connect@uubloomington.org.

Anabel Watson
Connections Coordinator

SOCIAL JUSTICE Annual Report



Social Justice permeates all programming at the UU Church of Bloomington – [worship](#), [religious education](#), fellowship, and special groups like [Chalice Circles](#) and the [choir](#). Social Justice Task Forces are formed when a number of people wish to work together around a specific social justice area.

Our congregation is very active in many areas of social justice. All have worked hard, in new ways – leadership in some has changed. Thanks to Barb Backler for her leadership of RISE. She recruited her replacement Jenny Vessels who is actively leading the task force. The year began when the SJ Circle and Rev Connie met to look at the year and plan on SJ Activities. Hunger and Homelessness task forces piloted combining and decided they were better as separate task forces. All task forces spread their work and message throughout their SJ month in many ways, most noticeably actively participating in Community Hour after each Sunday service.

Green Sanctuary Task Force



The [Green Sanctuary Task Force](#) (GSTF) promotes mindful, Earth centered living, working to educate and motivate individuals and institutions to take positive steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the understanding that it is our moral imperative to care for the Earth. To this end the GSTF has been active at various levels in the congregation and the wider community. Contact: Marcia Veldman

Energy Report/Energy Star rating

In 2015 UUCB signed on to Interfaith Power and Light's Paris Pledge. This pledge commits us to working towards a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050. While we have already met our interim goal of a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the harder steps are ahead.

To add to the challenge, in August of 2022 we signed an accelerated version of the pledge, committing to be carbon neutral by 2040, not because we have a specific plan, but because it is what needs to be done to avert catastrophic climate change.

Following are some highlights of how we are moving in the direction of net zero by 2040:

- o From Mid-May 2022 to Mid-May 2023 about \$3,520 was saved due to solar energy production, for a total of \$53,000 saved since May of 2013.

- o Held a sprint fundraiser to repair/replace solar inverters, raising nearly \$7,000 to make the updates and get the arrays fully functional again.
- o Despite the fact that almost half our solar panels were not delivering power from June through December 2023, the past fiscal year of electricity from grid plus natural gas (converted to BTUs) was about 44% of the 2010 usage, before most building upgrades were made and the renewable energy installations.
- o Our goal is to replace natural gas with electricity throughout the building.
 - Six HVAC zones (of nine original) use natural gas heat, to be replaced with heat pumps as funds allow.
 - Two of our water heaters currently run on electricity (including one on-demand). Two gas units will be replaced with electric as funds allow.
- o Our church received EnergyStar® Certification for buildings of worship for the ninth time, with a score of 92 (on a scale of 100) in October 2023.

Social Justice Month Engagement

April is the GSTF's Social Justice Month. To engage people and highlight our work, the GSTF held an Earth Fair. Representatives from several local nonprofit environmental organizations in addition to our members shared information on solar energy, advocacy and ways we can prioritize electrification at home with help from the Inflation Reduction Act.

Implementing Task of the Month

Task of the Month is a GSTF program to help individuals and households take one action each month. Tasks were selected based on their potential for significant energy savings. Most suggestions are for improving homes or changing habits to reduce our carbon footprints, but advocacy is also an important way we can make a difference. The UU community is encouraged to do whatever works for them!

Hosted a Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck

As a way to build community and raise awareness of the connections between climate change and what we eat, the GSTF hosted a vegetarian/vegan potluck in February during Fellowship hour.

Spring and Fall Clothing Swap

Spring and fall clothing swaps were held, working to reduce the purchases of new clothing which contribute to climate change.

Sponsored and Hosted a Faith in Place Virtual Keynote

Faith in Place (which combines three state interfaith environmental (IPL) groups, including Indiana) held an event for Green Teams in the region. The GSTF sponsored the event and hosted the keynote, "Bridging the Divide: Intersectionality in Environmentalism," by Leah Thomas.

GSTF Members Active in Other Environmental Groups

GSTF members are active with Citizens' Climate Lobby, Earth Care Bloomington, Faith in Place, Artists for Environmental Restoration, Center for Sustainable Living, and Sycamore Land Trust.

Habitat for Humanity Task Force



The [Habitat for Humanity Task Force](#) strives to educate the congregation about housing needs of Monroe County, including the purpose and accomplishments of Habitat for Humanity and other related housing groups. The congregation can contribute in many ways to help provide decent affordable housing in Monroe County.

Contact: Barb Berggoetz

The Habitat Task Force during 2023-24 focused on getting more UU congregants to participate in Habitat builds and other volunteer duties that support Habitat for Humanity in Monroe County, as well as raising money for the local chapter to use for housing construction costs and other needs. We continued to sponsor a UU & Friends Women Build+ team and increased our outreach and awareness activities in our designated month of May. We also tried harder to recruit new members to the task force, with some success.

Habitat Task Force members are: Barb Berggoetz, chair, Kathleen Chmielewski, Christine Banister, Mary Blizzard, Kathy Sideli, Brian and Pearl Springfield, Dian Robbins, Jenny Vessels, Sandy Davoren, Dick Stumpner, Licia Weber, Jackie Hall, and new members Jon Smith and Michael Darnel. Several other UUs have voiced an interest in participating in builds and fundraisers. The task force usually meets at 11:15 a.m. on the first Sunday of most months. We sometimes met on different Sundays for the first half of 2024 because we got off schedule.

Objectives/funds: Educate the congregation about local housing needs, including the purpose and accomplishments of Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County and other housing-related groups; support Habitat by providing volunteers, food and raising money for builds and its needs, including equipment.

As of May 2023, we had \$11,730 in our Habitat account. Our May UU account showed \$10,638, but it didn't include revenue from the Italian Feast and after-service light lunch, both in May).

During the 2023-24 year, the task force's activities included:

- **Contributions to 2023 and 2024 Habitat Women+ Build:** Our 2023 team of 35 UU women and friends raised nearly \$20,000 – a record amount for our team -- and was led by co-chairs Barb Berggoetz and Christine Banister. The money was raised by individual builders, donated by UU members sponsoring builders, and earned through fundraisers. The task force also voted to contribute \$1,500 to be a sponsor of the Women+ Build. This year, we are sponsoring a 35-member Women+ Build team on Sept. 4, the first day of the build. Recruiting begins in earnest in June.
- **IU football parking:** We supplied four task force members to oversee parking and collect fees at the UU lot for an IU football games in late November. Other task forces supplied members to collect fees. We each earned \$1,470 in 2023.
- **More Than Houses event:** About 10 task force members and other UU supporters attended Habitat's annual fundraising event at Switchyard Park in 2023 for the community in November. Attendees donated to support Habitat's operating expenses.
- **Autumn Abundance lunch:** We hosted a lunch for UU congregants after an October service, with a take-home option, of a variety of casseroles, vegetarian dishes, salads and breads. We made \$1,410.
- **UU Holiday Bazaar:** We participated in the UU Holiday Bazaar again by offering handmade crafts and other items donated by individual task force members and other UUs in December 2023. We offered soup and cookies-in-a-jar, jewelry, bird seed feeders, three themed gift baskets, handcrafted holiday cards and other décor. We earned \$1,400, a record for this fundraiser.
- **Major donation to Habitat for Humanity:** In February, the task force voted to make a \$10,000 donation to Habitat later this fall to help sponsor a build. We will recruit UU congregants to volunteer on this house for a Saturday group build day. We have earned and saved those funds over about 2 ½ years.

- **UU Parents' Habitat Build:** We supported an initiative of the UU parents' group and led by Christine Banister to sponsor a parents' build with two other faith communities on March 2. The task force paid \$300 for lunch from Jimmy John's for about 25-30 parents and children, some of whom had free child care at UU during the build time. Children also came to the build site over lunch, and all builders and youth got a tour of Habitat's Osage Place neighborhood. Other parents made bird houses with the youth.
- **Eclipse glasses sales:** Thanks to a donation of 250 eclipse glasses from UU member Marcia Hart, we sold glasses for \$2 each after five services in February and March. We earned \$387 and donated about 70 unsold glasses to WonderLab for reuse/recycling.
- **Social Justice moment/activities during May 5 service:** Task force chair Barb Berggoetz spoke about events in our SJ month in May and upcoming builds and members Kathy Sideli and Dick Stumpner spoke about what volunteering for Habitat means to them. Member Mary Blizzard read a HFH children's book about youth helping friends create good housing, and the choir sang "Home Sweet Home" at our request.
- **Italian Feast lunch:** We made spaghetti sauces and lasagna, salads and desserts to sell after the May 5 service and for people to take home. Numerous Habitat supporters outside of the task force donated food and helped in the kitchen. We earned \$1,015.
- **Habitat tabling in May:** We hosted an information table after May services to help educate people about Habitat's activities and encourage people to sign up for a UU build day June 29 and the Women+ Build team day on Sept. 4 and to join our task force.
- **Aldo Leopold outdoor benches:** We are trying a new fundraiser this year to take orders for handmade wooden benches, named for famous U.S. environmentalist Aldo Leopold. Orders for benches, made by Dick Stumpner, will be taken throughout the summer.
- **Volunteer call-out meeting:** For the first time, we conducted a special call-out meeting after the May 19 service for people who want to learn about building and volunteering for Habitat in other ways. Three Habitat for Humanity representatives gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions. We focused on getting people to sign up for June 29 build day and the Sept. 4 Women+ Build team day.
- **UU 25% Sunday Plate Fund:** Our proposal nominating Habitat for Humanity was among the top three groups for the third year chosen for a congregational vote on June 9. We proposed the funds be used for energy-savings and safety initiatives for Osage Place houses in 2024-25. The funds would pay for solar panel installation, energy monitor systems and installation and required radon exposure testing in Habitat homes. (The vote has not occurred as of this writing.)

The Hunger Task Force



The Hunger Task Force engages in projects to reduce hunger in our community.
Contacts: Dee Morris & Lynn Struve

The **Hunger Task Force** meets 10 times per year and has moved our meeting to Fellowship Hall at UUCB. The meeting is listed on the calendar through 12/2024.

Our members include: Jackie Hall, Rev. Grant, Dee Morris-chair, Lynn Struve co-chair, Mary Blizzard, Judy Kelly, Barb Berggoetz, Cecelia Murphy, Sandy Davoren, Dennis Davoren-new, Iris Kiesling, Mary Goetze and Amy Money-new.

Our actives as a Task Force:

- Community Kitchen: we support 2 shifts of 11:30-1:30 and 3:30-6:00 twice monthly.
- Little Free Pantry-we place food in the Little Free Pantry (LFP) daily, with over 500 pounds of food provided per month.
- Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM) -food is collected and donated as holiday food baskets for families in need with donations from our congregation.

- Shalom-each Friday the chief and cook provide a hot breakfast from our food donations, 52 meals per year.
- Holiday Bazaar-we sell knitted, quilted and crocheted items to raise money to support our tasks.
- IU Parking- October 2023.
- Kroger Food Cards-Through the Caring Committee, we give Kroger Food Cards to the congregants in need, when requested.
- KAP-Kids with Absent Parents-food is provided to families in need when requested.
- November- we worked with an RE class to fill baggies of snack foods, given to Shalom.
- Extra Garden Produce-the congregation brings extra garden produce to the church where it is donated to the Community Kitchen.
- Bloomington Fire Department developed a QR sticker which lists recourses of assistance to those in need. The stickers are placed on many of the food products that are placed in the LFP.
- We had a dog food drive in late winter and donated 140 pounds of dog food to Shalom.
- Stephanie Kimball and RE donated 145 cans of food to the LFP.
- Bloomingfoods and Fresh Time food cards are sold to the congregants. The 5% we earn from each sale is used to provide food to Shalom and the LFP.
- Our task force and various members support other task forces and their projects throughout the year.

Homelessness Task Force



The **Homelessness Task Force** works with agencies to provide services/support to homeless people, to develop strategies dealing with issues related to homelessness including hunger and unemployment, and to end homelessness.

Contacts: Alan Backler and Jason Michálek

In 2023, the Homelessness Task Force worked jointly with the Hunger Task Force on the following activities:

- Published an article in UUCB “Prologue”.
- Coordinated volunteers working regularly at Shalom
- Conducted on-going clothing and food drives for Shalom
- Organized a benefit concert for Shalom

In 2024, The Homelessness Task Force decided mutually to separate from the Hunger Task Force and are currently planning for the coming year. We are considering involvement with one of the following major programs:

- Working with Shalom (Beacon) as they plan and construct their new facility on W. 3rd Street.
- Working with Jana Pereau on her project to build and operate housing for the formerly homeless on a property on W. 8th. Street.
- Working with Guy Loftman and the poverty abolitionists on programs such as Eviction Prevention.

We will also engage in other programs and welcome participation in our ongoing efforts. Please contact us for more information: Alan Backler < abackler@aol.com > or Jason Michálek < michalja@mail.gvsu.edu >

Hope for Prisoners Task Force



The [Hope for Prisoners Task Force](#) (HFPTF) works on projects based on recognizing the humanity of those in prison and their families. The goal of this task force is to serve and advocate for individuals during incarceration and their return to this community, and also their families and support systems with a major effort to support KAP, Kids with Absent Parents.

Contacts: Deb Fish and Mary Goetze

HFPTF has continued to connect with approximately 20 incarcerated persons via either the GTL prison email system or through written letters. Money has been put on their accounts that allows them to purchase news feeds, podcasts, music and hygiene products through their tablets. We continue to maintain connections to groups outside of UUCB like: New Leaf New Life, NAACP, Amethyst House (men and women), Abolition Coalition, and Care Not Cages. Monitoring of progress on a new local jail is still a focus.

HFPTF received a Social Justice Grant of \$1,000 in addition to our task force funds to be used to put on an art exhibit displaying the works of three incarcerated persons. With the help of Resilience Theatre, “Songs of a Caged Bird” opened at the Backspace Gallery at Bonne Fete on the Square for the month of June with a poetry reading and reception on Friday June 10th. In the fall, selected poems were read by Bill and Glenda Breeden and Debbie Fish. This was recorded for future reference.

KAP continues to serve 20 children from 10 households offering two gatherings each month.

International Outreach Task Force (IOTF)



The [International Outreach Task Force](#) (IOTF) aims to expand and improve cross-cultural and international understanding through hands-on involvement with projects fulfilling local needs in developing countries.

Contact: Claire Robertson

The next Kenya trip will be in 2025, on our usual 2 year schedule. It is mainly full at this point with a lively group.

Regarding bake sale fundraising, we have been cooperating with Charlotte Appel, who has taken over responsibility for the after church food mandate—this works out very well when we provide desserts for various meals supplied by the Board or Task Forces. We provided a chili lunch in February successfully. Christine Banister, Kevin and Carolyn Craig have been very helpful as consultants, cooks, or substitute organizers on occasion and we have a wonderful group of contributing bakers.

Regarding general fundraising, we decided, in consultation with their leaders, that the main need Spurgeon's School in Kibera, Nairobi, has is a steady flow of new US charitable funding, to be divided into 2 streams, one for infrastructure and one for daily needs. Accordingly, Ed and I are in the process of setting up a separate endowment fund through the Minneapolis Foundation to provide improved funding mainly for infrastructure, while we continue to fundraise through UUCB for daily needs. This is a result partly of reduced by half funding for it from a UK charity, and expensive requirements from the Kenyan government for the school to remain accredited—they must now have a chemistry lab and a computer lab, and a proper roof plus a third story under it for their main building. The trustees of the RISE-Kibera Fund are drawn mainly from church members who have visited Kenya with us and seen the great needs for themselves.

Submitted by Claire Robertson

Just Peace Task Force



The [Just Peace Task Force](#) works to promote peace and justice in the world, recognizing the essential role of grassroots organizing in creating a consensus for a new foreign and military policy. Contact: David Keppel

The Just Peace Task Force has been concerned with the war in Gaza. We were shocked by Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 but immediately worried that a military response by Israel would be a disaster for Gaza's civilian Palestinian population. The war has been devastating: one of the most brutal and dehumanizing spectacles in decades and destructive to our fragile sense of shared humanity.

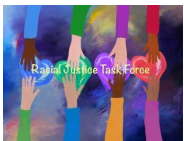
The Just Peace Task Force collaborated with other local groups, including Citizens for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel and Bloomington Peace Action Coalition, to host a program "Windows on Palestinian Life," held at the Church on February 4, 2024. At the end of that program, many of us resolved to work together for a cease-fire resolution in the Bloomington City Council, as groups across the nation were doing.

Our campaign for a cease-fire resolution involved a great deal of grassroots organizing. We carried petitions to the Farmers' Market and circulated it online. After intense conversations with members of the City Council, we succeeded. On April 3rd, the Bloomington Common Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for massive humanitarian aid and a cessation of hostilities in Gaza. Mayor Kerry Thomson announced she would not sign this or any resolution beyond Bloomington (a pocket veto), but on May 1st, the Council unanimously reaffirmed the resolution.

The war and our work remain. The fall will see elections for the U.S. Senate and House, and we plan to ask candidates to take a stand. We will also work with Back from the Brink, a grassroots campaign to control and then to eliminate global nuclear arsenals. We hope more congregants will join us!

Submitted by David Keppel, Taskforce Co-Chair with Rev. Bill Breeden

Racial Justice Task Force



The [Racial Justice Task Force](#) works to dismantle racism in ourselves and our institutions through education and action. Contact: Ruth Ayd

The task force meets every-other-month to educate ourselves about current events and concerns, plan activities, and make spending decisions. The interests and availability of members determine the scope of activities. The mailing list, with 104 members, is an information hub for announcements about racial justice issues and events beyond UUCB. Funds this year came from football parking and the UUCB annual allocation.

Highlights this year:

- In support of Resilience Productions, *whose mission is to educate, enlighten and engage the public regarding the many unknown and un-celebrated contributions of African Americans to our country's history*, provided and served refreshments for their Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 performances at the Monroe County History Center, and sponsored their Spring 2024 5-50 Club fundraiser. The task force is honored to continue as the organizational home for Resilience Productions.
- Offered an Adult RE session as part of the [Bloomington Multi-Faith Alliance Faith for Racial Equity \(BMA-F4RE\) group](#)'s "Poverty, By America" Book Read. *"Black and Hispanic Americans are twice as*

likely to be poor, compared to white Americans, owing not only to the country's racial legacies but also to present-day discrimination." [p22]

- Hosted a free screening of the documentary "Reviving the West Baden Colored Church -A Labor of Love", followed by a Q&A. The task force provided pizza after the event, which was held in Fellowship Hall and attended by UUs and others from the Bloomington community. Prompted by this event, the task force made donations to Elizabeth Mitchell in gratitude for her participation in the Q&A, and to the West Baden Church in support of their ongoing presence in Southern Indiana.
- Donated to the IU First Nations Center, recognizing that our football parking receipts come from land originally inhabited by Indigenous people.
- Donated to the Monroe County African American Cultural Sites project, to support increased awareness of the contributions of African Americans in our community.
- Donated to the Banneker Community Center, for the purchase of books highlighting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) authors and characters.

Report submitted by Ruth Aydt, Chair of the Racial Justice Task Force.

Rainbow Rights Task Force



The [Rainbow Rights Task Force](#) seeks to revive, document, and advance the knowledge, concerns, and rights of the LGBTQIA+ individuals, communities, and causes. Building upon our congregations commitment to the 8th principle's journeying to dismantle racism and other oppressions, this task force acknowledges the spectrum of identities that reside beneath the systematic injustices experienced by marginalized persons, and we commit ourselves to journey in advocating for spiritual wholeness in relation to gender and sexuality.

Our three core values are:

1. **Creating** safe spaces to explore and listen about querying identities
2. **Sharing** alliances that connect us to other spaces
3. **Branching** into the community to promote collective action

Ongoing Work:

- **Queer visibility:** In 2023/24, Rainbow Right began to expand our projects to create more visibility for a range of gender and sexual identities in order to live out our congregational designation of being welcoming. In terms of community representation beyond our church walls, we're in the process of replacing our banner flag that we display in view of the bypass to show the community that we're welcoming to queer-identifying folx. The old flag has faded, which gives us an opportunity to update the representation of identities to include elements of the recent progress flags—especially since Building Community must always be responsible to the ever-changing and expansive solidarity with folx of varying and intersecting identities
- **How we're "Welcoming" to queer folx:** As a precursor to a video project highlighting experiences of the variety of sexual and gender identities within and around our church community, we published a set of anecdotal accounts in a *Perspectives* article in February sharing anecdotal accounts from several members who identify in the category of "women who love women." This demonstrated how we must account for the ways that lived experiences exceed the labels that make people visible, but those labels can also help people understand themselves and be understood by others. As that project transitions from written form to videography, we welcome any interested participants to contact us at RainbowRights@uubloomington.org to inquire about the project and potentially contribute accounts of understanding and expressing gender and sexual identities.

- **Developing community:** As community links continue to be made, we've been working with Protect Our People (POP) and Bloomington Aces and Allies to create community and facilitate social justice responses to the struggles of people who identify on the spectra of trans and asexuality.
- **Legislative Action:** Last year we participated in letter writing to convince state representatives to oppose anti-trans legislation. This year, I (Jason) joined the Stonewall Democrats of South Central Indiana—first as a steering committee member and now as the vice president—in order to further advocate for candidates and policies that are supportive of people who have and love people with LGBTQIA+ identities.

Outreach/Fundraising:

- **Bloomington Pride and Spencer Pride:** Holding tables at local pride festivals, we continue to talk with other organizations and community members about how we can be Building Community through interdependent webs of connection and collective action in various communities.
- **Gay Men's Fellowship Dinners:** Several of our church members have been regularly attending the monthly dinners held for men who identify as gay or bisexual to form community in a pitch-in style gathering coordinated by Doug McKinney. If you have questions or would like to attend, feel welcome to email RainbowRights@uubloomington.org for more information.
- **Football parking:** In coordination with IOTF, we facilitated football parking that welcomed football attendees into the space of our lot while also generating proceeds.

Refugee and Immigration Support and Education (RISE) Task Force



The Refugee and Immigrant Support and Education (RISE) Task Force welcomes people from other countries and reaches out to support folks new to our community and form friendships. Contact: Jenny Vessels

The UUCB RISE task force has three types of support for immigrants in the Bloomington area: education of community members on immigrant issues, direct support of immigrant families (financial, transportation, assistance navigating county, state, and federal aid agencies), and support of The Refugee Support Network. RSN is a 501c3 organization that is dedicated to the acclimation of asylum seekers and refugees who fled violence in their countries by helping them get a new start in Bloomington.

The task force is committed to educating others on what it is like to live the life of a refugee. By reading books by and about refugees one can begin to experience the challenges and frustrations. We maintain a collection of books on immigrant experiences and share the books at coffee hour in 2023 and will do that again in 2024.

By becoming friends with refugees one can understand a little better what it's like to be a refugee. We had the privilege of welcoming the Fakherduin family to Bloomington in December of 2021. Based on the level of independence the family now exhibits, the Task Force members have been reducing the level of support from that which was provided in 2022. The level of support needed is expected to continue to decline with exceptions in the event the family experiences a crisis. The reduced support needed for the Fakherduin family gave the task force members confidence to begin providing some support to two Syrian families who are new to the U.S. this year.

In 2023, several members of the RISE task force worked closely with the Fakherduin family. Deb Fish helped the family navigate the school system and took every opportunity to find extra help for the boys such as enrolling Razwan in preschool and finding funding for this experience, signing up the older boys, Hussain and Hassan, for after school extra support in learning English, alerting the family about kindergarten round up, and attending teacher conferences with Mohammad, the Fakherduin dad. She was also very helpful in getting Shabnam, the mother of the family and the children to many doctors' and dentists' appointments along with

Pete from RSN. Finally, she helps Mohammad with endless paperwork for government and school and health documents. Mary Blizzard helped Shabnam get to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard every week, championed Hussain's passion for soccer by getting him into soccer leagues and taking him to many practices and games and has created lots of publicity materials and our guidebook for volunteers. Now Mary is helping Shabnam find opportunities for employment such as cleaning houses. Several others have helped with transportation, reading to the boys or listening to them read, taking them swimming or to some fun activity. First Marcia Hart met with Shabnam almost daily to work on her English. Then Christine Linnemeier met with Shabnam twice a week to help Shabnam. A new member, Benjamin Ale Ebrahim, was helpful in supporting Mohammad with his efforts in taking classes at I.U. in business. Ben teaches in the Kelley School of Business and was able to connect Mohammad with a professor who has become an advocate for Mohammad. Nancy Judge, a relatively new member, helped Shabnam prepare for the driver's test. She came from Afghanistan maybe 30 years ago, but can still speak Dari, so she could help teach the driver's handbook to Shabnam in her language.

Other helpers in 2023: McGuire, Richard and Christine Linemeier, Marcia Hart, Heather Glass, Jenny Vessels, Diane Legomsky, Mary Goetze, Dave Emmert, Sidney Meyer, Judy Kelly, Michael Johnson, Dinorah Sapp and daughter, Olivia Sapp and Sylvia McNair.

Recently a small group of RISE volunteers met with Shabnam and Mohammad and talked about what our relationship will look like now that they have made some big steps toward independence. First of all, Shabnam now has a driver's license and she is determined to sign up for classes at Broadview Center to learn to read and write English as well as improve her speaking. They expressed their gratitude for all that RISE has done for them. Mohammad mentioned that he and Shabnam had talked for two hours the night before about how much RISE had helped them out. Mohammad articulated that they certainly want to continue being good friends, but they would only contact us in case of emergencies. This was the first family our church has served so intensely for years, and we feel very good about it and feel like we have established a friendship that will last for a long time. It will be fun to watch the entire family grow and become contributing members of the community. They are already reaching out to new Afghan immigrants and trying to help them find things they need and helping them feel comfortable in Bloomington.

RISE is expanding our support to other families. Debbie Fish is now working with two new families from Syria. She has helped them enroll in school and taken them to medical appointments. She celebrated Eid al-Fitr with them. Best of all, she connected the two fathers with Steve Pollitt who has taken them under his wing, since they were professional painters in Syria. Steve has arranged for them to help paint several rooms at our church and he even loaned them a car. Now he is helping them find more jobs. Hopefully, church members will notify Steve if they need painters. We'll be providing lots of transportation this summer to camps and summer school and doctors' appointments, for both the Fahkerduin and the Zaiter families.

On May 19th RISE sponsored a program at the UU Church at 3 p.m. Christie Popp, a local immigration lawyer spoke about the "Wreck of the Asylum System." Sylvia McNair supported her good friends from China and Afghanistan and helped them tell their stories of escaping their countries of origin and describing their journeys to the U.S. and what the challenges were once they got here. Steve Pollitt's group, Cloud 7, performed. Sylvia closed the program with a reading of a poem, God Bless America - All of You. In 2023 RISE members created a guidebook that will help volunteers know how to support refugees and immigrants. An updated version was made available at the May 19th event.

We applied for and received the fall grant from the Social Justice Funds Committee. The \$1000 grant was given to RSN to help pay for dental bills and expenses for surgery. It seems like many refugees come here with a great need for dental work, including root canals, repairs on root canals and other oral surgery besides cleanings that take several visits and filling cavities. Often this work has to be done in Indianapolis at the Dental School, because there don't seem to be dentists in Bloomington who take Medicaid. Unfortunately, the

state limits Medicaid funding, so people have to go without care. There are also 3 women from Colombia with very difficult medical problems that need different surgeries. The Healthnet social worker is working with RSN to find help, but it will be expensive. These women were working at their jobs in pain every day, and the conditions seemed to be getting worse.

The right to health was recognized as a human right in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Since then, other international human rights treaties have recognized or referred to the right to health or to elements of it, such as the right to medical care. No one anywhere, citizen or refugee, should be denied health care and a chance to live a healthy life. \$1000 did not cover all of the expenses, but it certainly helped.

Barb Backler stepped down as chair of RISE and Jenny Vessels took on leadership responsibilities. Jenny has established a monthly meeting of RISE. She took the lead on organizing the presentation by Christie Popp on May 19, and is a regular RSN volunteer. She is getting lots of mentoring from Mary Blizzard, Debbie Fish, Barb Backler, and Diane Legomsky.

Reproductive Justice Task Force



The [Reproductive Justice Task Force](#) (RJTF) mobilizes around the concept of reproductive justice as “the right to bodily autonomy, to have children or not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.” (SisterSong.org) We educate, advocate, and connect within the church and with outside community partners to support and advance reproductive justice for all. Contacts: Nan McKinley and Cindy Lonnberg

Ongoing Work

- **Legislative liaison:** A member monitors relevant bills during legislative sessions and reports out to the task force with “action items” (e.g. phone calls, letters, testimony, committee watch/observation, rallies, etc).
- **City/County Council** - supportive presence and public comments @ meetings for Planned Parenthood (PP) and All-Options Pregnancy Resource Center (AOPRC) grant submissions.
- **All Options Pregnancy Resource Center:**
 - o We promote volunteering such as peer counselors and Talkline support, and with
 - o Virtual diaper drive at the UU
 - o Annual Hoosier Abortion Fund drive at the UU
 - o promote the Practical Support Network-provides rides and other support to women seeking abortions
- **UU 4th Trimester Team-** trains volunteers who provide up to 1 yr postpartum support to members and friends of the UU community
- **Monitor the implementation and work of the state’s Maternal Mortality Review Committee,**
mandated by 2018’s Public Law 48.
- We are for the second year, **monitoring and informing task force members of trans issues** and gender-affirming health care legislation as it evolves in the statehouse. This affects trans youth and the school system.
We sponsored a talk for the congregation and larger community with a presentation by Kristen Jozkowski, PhD, ***Complexity in Abortion Attitudes: Stats and Stories, on Sunday March 24th from 12 to 1:30 in the Meeting Room.*** Dr Jozkowski is the William L Yarber Endowed Professor of Sexual Health, School of Public Health at IU and is a Principal Investigator on the Abortion Attitudes Project. Q & A started before we could get to the presentation with enthusiastic participation, and we ran 30 min over! We never got to the lecture and the slides can be found attached here, to the video link:<https://vimeo.com/921208403>

Our funds are generated from:

Football parking; February Siding With Love bake sale; Annual UUCB \$300 grant to the task forces.

Donations we made this year:

- **Hoosier Abortion Fund** fundraiser - donation of \$2000 by the task force plus donations by UU's brings our total to \$2325 as of late May. The event is still ongoing through May.
 - **All Options (AO) Diaper Program** - Our Diaper Drive is in October w/donations by the congregation and friends to the AO website specifying diapers. Diapers and related products may also be dropped off at All Options. We donated \$244 from tabling during coffee hour the month of October.
 - \$1,000 to the general fund of All Options, Bloomington
 - **UU Our Whole Lives** program- our support wasn't needed this year, but we are assisting in exploring offering of OWL to our larger community.
 - **Middle Way House**- we donated a large box of menstrual products to residents which a friend of the task force donated, using their free OTC allowance on their insurance.
- **Ending balance is \$1204.72** —

Submitted by: Nan McKinley & Cindy Lonnberg, Co-chairs

Social Justice Funds Committee (SJFC)**Fall SJ Grants Campaign**

In October 2023, SJFC sought grant applications for funding consideration by the church's SJ grants fund. The following grant was recommended and awarded:

RISE Helping RSN. \$1000 is given for dental work and surgeries for refugee families in Monroe County. This grant was submitted by Barb Backler.

Spring 25% Plate Fund Campaign

In March 2024, SJFC sought nominations for non-profit agencies to be the recipient of 25% of undesignated Sunday Plate funds for July 2024-June 2025. SJFC selected these three to present to the congregation for a vote at the June 2024 congregational meeting. SJFC is using multiple avenues to educate the congregation about these agencies including tabling a display between services throughout May.

- Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County: To support Osage Place neighborhood home construction and long-term energy sustainability, specifically solar panel installation and labor costs, energy monitoring system installation costs, and radon exposure testing. Nominated by Barb Beregggoetz
- Special Olympics Indiana Monroe County: to give those with Special Needs the ability to participate in the Special Olympics. Nominated by Cindy Brandes
- CJAM The Community Justice and Mediation Center – to support the Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program, to provide opportunities for advanced mediation training, to develop a new volunteer program, to support volunteer outreach and recruitment efforts. Nominated by Mary Mahern

Funds Committee: Denise Ogren, Steve Mascari, Sarah Kopper, Sandy Davoren, Scott Sanders

Advisor: Jackie Hall