

Annual Report
Church Year 2021-2022

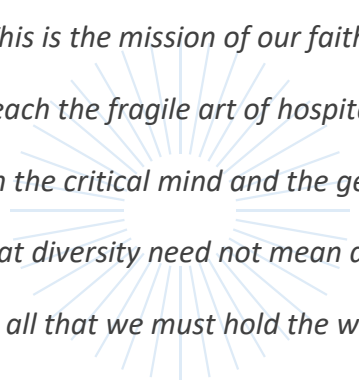
St. John's

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH



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*This is the mission of our faith;
To teach the fragile art of hospitality;
To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;
To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;
And to witness to all that we must hold the world in our hands.*

- Rev. William Schulz

President's Report

Kathy Shell, Board President

What a year this has been! Key areas of focus for the Board this year have included the continuing balancing related to COVID, improving our ability to offer multi-platform Sunday services, developing a deeper understanding of church finances, and making important decisions.

As COVID continued to be a shadow in our world during this year, the Board weighed many decisions – large ones (in-person attendance, choir singing, how to safely engage children) and small ones (when to begin offering coffee after Sunday service). We have shared many emotions during this pandemic time. St. John's came together for memorial services that had been delayed so we could remember and honor our old friends. We have new members who first explored St. John's on Zoom who are now serving as greeters on Sunday morning! We know there have been some folks for whom life has changed their focus, resulting in less engagement with our congregation AND we are grateful for the new members who have joined our community.

Changes forced on us by COVID have also brought new revelations and new learning. For two years, an awesome crew of volunteers kept St. John's connected on Sundays via Zoom. In summer 2021, realizing the benefits of St. John's continuing to offer multi-platform services "post-COVID," the Board authorized the **AV Team**, led by [Claire Wagner](#), to research a new system that would improve our audio and video capacity both in the sanctuary and online. After pandemic-related supply chain delays, our new equipment was installed this spring, enabling livestreaming of Sunday services from the sanctuary via the St. John's YouTube channel. Thankfully we now have a great new system with improved audio for all, a big screen in the sanctuary, and we have hired Roberto Henriquez to provide professional support in operating the new system.

The Master Planning Team has been working diligently since early in 2021. The team – **Matt Cowperthwait, Cliff Shisler, Tony Potochnik, Joetta Prost** - have focused first on addressing the much-needed restoration of the sanctuary and they are now bringing us options for building improvements that we all hope we can achieve. The Board has been kept apprised of the Team's work and approved each major step in the process. We are grateful for the congregation's embrace of the sanctuary restoration project and excited to explore for other ways we can improve our church home. We can do it! Let the fundraising begin!

St. John's auction returned this spring! After a 2 ½ year hiatus, we gathered to see what interesting and creative items, opportunities and events were available for bidding – and we raised over \$11,000 for the operational budget – YAY! Thanks to **Erin Zoller** and her team of volunteers, as well as all who donated and purchased.

St. John's members have had the opportunity to participate in educational programming with UUs from other area congregations. St. John's has invited members of other UU churches to join some of our activities (Grief Group, Book Study) and we have zoomed in for programs that others were providing. St. John's members were well-represented in the UU Council of Greater Cincinnati's programming regarding anti-racism.

During the past two-plus years the **St. John's Choir** has continued to stay focused on bringing music to us. They have created recorded music in small groups and as soloists, and then joyfully came back to engage with our new Music Director **Rob Thacker**. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated group and excellent leadership. On Sundays we enjoy the music shared by **Peng Cheng**; what a delight that he provided his doctoral recital and lecture at St. John's this spring!

It's important to acknowledge the many groups of members and friends who volunteer to support our church community and I can only name a few here. **Property Team** leader **Cliff Shisler** will hand the reigns to **Matthew Peterson** in July, and we are grateful for Cliff's attention to our building for the past several years. **The Caring Circle** reaches out and provides assistance as needed. **The Spirit Team** helps us to recognize members who sometimes go unnoticed with the many ways they volunteer at church. Our **Grounds Team** tackles weeds and

mulch to make everything look so beautiful. The **Outreach Committee** educates St. John's about deserving community organizations that benefit from our financial and volunteer contributions. And there are so many others who give of their time, talent, and treasure to make this a beloved community.

We have unfortunately said goodbye to one we loved so dearly, **Marie Inanli**. Marie has been with St. John's for several years and she worked diligently to support the St John's community, with adult education, children's programming, chalice groups, Community Connections (some of these early-pandemic groups are still active) to name a few, and she also assisted with E-news. We thank Marie for her warm and engaging service to our congregation and wish her well with her new endeavors.

We appreciate **Nancy Greenlee**, our dedicated office secretary, and **Jeff Flanagan**, who not only cleans and fixes "stuff" in all areas of the building during the week but also makes cookies and coffee for us on Sunday!

The creativity and flexibility that characterizes **Rev. Mitra's** approach to her work has been so very helpful during these challenging times. We embrace her taking a sabbatical this fall to refresh and recharge after these difficult years.

I am grateful to my fellow Board members for their commitment to St. John's, which they demonstrated throughout this year. The congregation is blessed to have members who volunteer to help lead St. John's.

It has been an honor to serve as the Board President this year.



Minister's Report

Reverend Mitra Jafarzadeh

Dear Church,

This past year has been joyful in many ways and challenging in ways we never expected. We have had some significant changes in staff as we said goodbye to **Ashleigh Rhodes** and **Marie Inanli** and hello to **Rob Thacker** and **Roberto Henriquez**.

We have had memorial services for many of our friends, including **Tom Conroy**, **Jean Ashcraft**, **George Dershimer**, **Chase Tonne**, and the **Rev. Linda Eppert**. I also served at three services in the wider community.

Choosing to train members to be pastoral care givers has proven to be wise over the course of this year. I have been able to use their talent several times and am grateful for their service. We also ran a grief group which was well attended.

Last July, I was minister of the week for one of our summer camp communities at Ferry Beach in Maine.

Over the year, we offered a variety of opportunities to gather and learn together. Some of these were:

- Morning Meditation
- Thursday Theology (which became a Tuesday group).
- a book study on Job and one on Trevor Noah's book, *Born a Crime*.
- a book study for the board on *Serving with Grace*.
- a field trip to the Temple of Tolerance in Wapakoneta (*We will do a second fieldtrip to the Skirball Museum at Hebrew Union College before the end of this church year.*)
- Evensong returned in spring of this year.

Worship life in the congregation

- We had 8 services offered by congregants this year.
- We started July with an outdoor concert on the front lawn.
- We had outside speakers from the Quaker, Disciples of Christ, and Baptist traditions.
- We had JOYFUL music services both in December and for Flower Communion in May.
- We had a fun multi-age service with the children of the church in mid-December.
- Seasonal celebrations outside of worship included erecting the maypole and celebrating winter solstice with more than 40 people who came for belly dancing and dinner of chicken with pomegranate and walnut sauce.

We also offered a class on sermon writing and a “Worship Round Table” to discuss how and why we worship as we do. I am grateful for the worship associates and those who help with flowers to make our services beautiful.

Opportunities for public speaking have been fewer this year, but I did participate in a service remembering the events of January 6 and an event regarding the war in Ukraine.

On a personal note, this year feels odd in so many ways. Sometimes I feel like we have moved very slowly and at other times, the work seems all-consuming. Adding tech to our worship space has made new opportunities for visual engagement possible. In the next year, I hope to explore the possibilities of worship and community building more fully together.

Yours in Faith,

Rev. Mitra



Religious Life Report

Alicia Rosselot, Religious Life Team Leader

The Religious Life Team (1 or 2 Directors + 2 Volunteers) met 12 times from July 2021-May 2022, most often through video conferencing. The Religious Life Team meetings mostly consisted of setting schedules of who can volunteer on which Sundays, planning activities, discussing challenges and successes.

The Religious Life Team has embraced a more inclusive approach since I accepted the role as team leader in July of 2019. Instead of having children gathered in small, similar aged groups following a UU curriculum that may not have much to do with what is going on at St. John's, we've aligned our weekly themes to correspond with topics that are discussed in our weekly service. This enables families to 'bring church home' with them every week and discuss what it means to embrace our principles in everyday life.

Covid-19 restrictions have been a challenge in regard to providing services for children at St. Johns. During the summer, we focused on providing outdoor activities, often on the front lawn, where we would reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The team discussed incorporating more family-focused activities such as Weekday Walks, horseback riding, building campfires, Matthew 24 Walk/Run, and our traditional pet blessing, gingerbread house event and no rehearsal holiday pageant. We kept our fingers crossed for good weather as we headed into the fall.

Although vaccines for adults were available in the spring, there were only rumors that the vaccines for children would be coming. Many parents were not comfortable with bringing their unvaccinated children, so our numbers were usually less than 5 a week. We approached 'children's chapel' with a one room schoolhouse approach in Krolfifer when the weather became cold. While the numbers were low, it seemed manageable. As vaccines are more readily available, and schools dropped their mask requirements, we have had more parents return with their children. While this is to be celebrated, it poses greater challenges as the number of children and their age ranges vary, but our volunteers have not.

During our December meeting, both Alicia and Amy were feeling overwhelmed with having to spend 2 or 3 Sundays of the month serving the children's needs. Volunteers never came forth and we continued to help. The Board's decision not to replace the infant and toddler childcare provider on Sunday mornings and the more recent decision to decrease the hours of the Religious Life Director, has brought into question whether the Board considers our children as lower priority at St. Johns. Perhaps this summer will be a good time to reassess religious life for St. John's families and children. I am unclear what children's services will be offered as the Director of Religious Life position is vacant.

Perhaps it is best to go back to the model of not providing children's services during the summer until the position is filled. I've spoken with Reverend Mitra about transitioning out of the Team Leader role in June of 2023.



Music Report

Rob Thacker, Director of Music

This past year has had its starts and stops, pauses, and bumps, as music has been brought back to in person worship services, but despite the challenges, it has been a great year of music making as the choir and congregation. The former music director, **Josh Dufford**, left St. John's due to acquiring a different full-time position that required re-location, so music was put mostly on hold during many of the virtual services for a time after his departure.

As in-person services re-started, music was first incorporated by asking small groups of singers/choir members to come together, masked, and sing the hymns. Those who volunteered their talents during this time were greatly appreciated for the effort and the spirit that was brought to the services through their combined voices. With the desire to move another step toward normalcy, a search was made, and a new choir director was hired, but unfortunately just as choir was officially re-starting, the life circumstances of the new choir director made it necessary for him take a step back and eventually fully step away from the position. Despite this bump, the momentum had started, the choir was ready to keep going, and I was asked to fill in.

As we continued into Fall of 2021, there was a desire to put on a December/Christmas program as well as a Christmas Eve Service, so I and **Chris Wagner** were able to work with those choir members who came out to put together a program for December 12th, and December 24th. December 12th included 4 hymns and 4 choral anthems that the choir prepared, and Christmas Eve had 2 hymns and 4 choral anthems, all of which were learned and then performed in a matter of weeks. The choir's hard work and dedication were amazing but paid off and both services were wonderful!

With the start of 2022, I was officially hired as the music director, and then a COVID surge sent several choir members back into virtual services, but those who stayed continued to provide choral anthems on most Sunday's. There was a need to sing and that kept choir members coming back. The music not only brought a feeling of worship to enhance the service and support the congregation, but also lifted and healed the hearts and minds of the choir

members in a time of need. With lowering COVID numbers, congregational singing was able to be re-introduced and special musical numbers and soloists were also arranged by utilizing the voices of several SCPA students to enhance the anthems that were chosen. The season ended with the choir putting on a choral program (still masked), as part of flower communion, on May 22nd, 2022. That program included multiple congregational hymns but featured 4 choral anthems that connect the colors of springtime and those “voices” of nature being shared. We, like the flowers, should let our voices be heard, as we show our “colors” through singing. As we continue to seek the new normal, this is the hope for the future – that we can all continue to sing and speak and share our colors to lift all those around us, at St. John’s, at home and in our communities as we make our way through the stops and starts life throws at us.



Personnel Committee Report

Mike Johnson, Personnel Committee Chair

During this past year we have been transitioning back to in-person services while maintaining our online presence. The pandemic made high quality online services a must. The church Board approved expenditures for an updated AV system that would allow those unable to attend Sunday services to still have a quality experience.

With the improved and expanded AV system it was felt that a staff member responsible for operating and maintaining the AV system was needed. In May of 2022, **Roberto Henriquez** was hired as a part time AV person who will manage the Sunday AV operations and assist in other technology related efforts.

The return of in-person services also saw the return of the choir and the need for a Choir Director after the departure of **Josh Dufford** for a fulltime position in Toledo. A search

committee comprised of choir members was formed and two candidates emerged. After interviewing both, it was decided to proceed with **Sterling Finkbine**. Unfortunately, within a few weeks of starting, Sterling had several personal issues arise, and in January he resigned from the Choir Director's position. During his absence, **Rob Thacker** had been leading the choir on an interim volunteer basis. When he expressed an interest in the position, he was hired to fill the position. He has been doing an excellent job bringing back choir music to the Sunday services.

The budget process for the upcoming 2022-2023 fiscal year revealed a \$40,000 shortfall. Although painful, it was decided to eliminate the current Religious Education Director's position. After four years of service, **Marie Inanli** will be leaving St. John's on May 20th. We wish her well in her new endeavors. An RE program focused on youth and children is being explored. The new position will be a 15-hours-per-week position. A search to fill this new position will be conducted in the coming months.

Due to the budget shortfall salary increases for our staff were not able to be provided for this coming year.

The pandemic saw the suspension of the need for paid child care workers during Sunday services. How this will be handled going forward is currently under review.



Finance Report

Mike Johnson, Finance Director

Operational Budget

This has been a difficult budget year. We entered the current fiscal year with a projected shortfall of nearly \$19K and had to set aside cash reserves to avoid budget cuts. The actual year will finish better than expected but with a shortfall.

The problem is expenses have continued to rise at the rate of inflation for the past ten years while the income has remained flat. What was a \$40K surplus ten years ago is now a projected \$40K deficit in the coming fiscal year.

Addressing the deficit has led to an examination of each line item and some difficult decisions. Despite a spike in inflation, and small or no salary increases the past few years, salaries will remain at their current level for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This is no reflection on the effort of St. John's staff, but a result of our current financial position.

It was decided to eliminate the current Director of Religious Education position. The current RE position is 30 hours per week with both health care and retirement benefits. It is a position that focuses on both children and adult religious education. The new position will focus on youth only and will be a 15-hours-per-week role without additional benefits. The adult religious education is being examined with the role of volunteers handling many of the tasks.

The expense category called Board of Trustees has been trimmed from \$3,200 to \$1,000. This is an expense category that is not typically fully used.

There should be unused cash reserves that were set aside to cover the budget imbalance for this past fiscal year. These unused reserves will be applied to the upcoming fiscal year.

Making the above adjustments will result in a balanced budget for the coming year.

Capital Expenditures

Outside of the yearly operational budget there have been several capital expenditures that have utilized funds from either the trust funds or the cash reserves. The major items included the following:

- Replacement of the roof. The roof had been leaking for some time. Temporary fixes had been ongoing, but a more permanent solution was needed. The replacement of the roof was completed in the summer of 2021. The total cost for this project was \$51,000.
- Audio/Video System. The pandemic made it necessary to provide stay-at-home Sunday services. It became apparent that the A/V equipment we had was not able to provide a quality at-home experience. The Board approved an upgrade to the A/V system and the system was put in place in the Spring of 2022. The cost for the system was \$46,000.
- Master Planning Costs. Funds have been approved to fund the development of the master plan and to engage a consultant for the fundraising effort that will be required for the building modifications. These costs are ongoing and should be offset by the income from the capital campaign.

To begin the work on fixing the sanctuary wall, a special congregational vote was taken this spring to approve applying for a bridge loan to cover the costs prior to the start of the capital campaign. Efforts to secure the bridge loan are ongoing.



Treasurer's Report

Chris Wagner, Treasurer

Allow me to introduce myself. Although I've been a friend of St. John's for some 35 years and a member for about half that time, I've only been the Treasurer for about 10 months. I'd like to thank [Jim McDonough](#), not only for his many years of dedicated service in a variety of roles but more personally for his time and patience showing me the ropes and orienting me to the many facets of this position. Thank you, Jim. I'd also like to thank [Nancy Greenlee](#), St. John's Office Administrator, who performs the day-to-day in-the-trenches bookkeeping. She also has helped me with the accounting system, sharing her experience and knowledge.

The Treasurer oversees the accounts and bookkeeping processes. Each month I review bank and fund statements, post adjusting entries, reconcile all accounts, and produce financial statements. I provide reports to the St. John's Board, team leaders, and members of the congregation. These reports include financial statements, pledge status reports, and detailed listings for programs or administration.

During the past year we have replaced our roof, enhanced our security with lighting improvements and modern access control; implemented an audio-visual system expanding our reach through live streaming our services; and embarked upon a campaign of sustained improvements and renovations. Through May 2022, we've approved \$95,930 and disbursed \$102,757 to fund these capital and major projects. Funding sources include a mix of endowment, gifts, and cash reserves. Although it appears that our endowment funds are stressed, most of the \$115,409 reduction you see below is from reduced market valuations. Only \$21,800 has been withdrawn from the endowment funds this year.

Because this report reflects activity through 10 months, actual income or expense items should be at 10/12ths, or 83.3%. Using that benchmark, we're above on pledge income (thank you!), and behind on our other income, mainly due to reduced rentals and other activity-based income as a result of COVID. (The successful auction which brought in about \$11,000 occurred in May is not included here). Other than Property expense, all other expense categories are coming in under budget. Some of this is a result of reduced church activities.



| Fund Balances | 04/30/2022 | 06/30/2021 | Difference |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Operations Account [Fifth Third] | \$169,694 | \$172,430 | (\$2,735) |
| Securities Account [Fifth Third] | \$75,492 | \$106,164 | (\$30,672) |
| Certificates of Deposit [Union Savings] | \$60,096 | \$60,096 | \$0 |
| Legacy Endowment Fund | \$274,237 | \$323,798 | (\$49,561) |
| Miller-Lorentz Property Endowment Fund | \$225,714 | \$286,291 | (\$60,576) |
| Music endowment Fund | \$93,850 | \$99,122 | (\$5,272) |

| Income and Expenses (Operations) | Actuals through 04/30/2022 | FY 2022 Budget | Actuals % of Budget |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|

| Income | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Pledges and other donations | \$245,606 | \$283,750 | 86.6% |
| Fundraisers and other income | \$4,416 | \$15,750 | 28.0% |
| Income from cash reserves | \$0 | \$18,792 | n/a |
| Total Income | \$250,022 | \$318,292 | 78.6% |

| Expense | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Personnel compensation | \$172,612 | \$226,020 | 76.4% |
| Mission, Religious Development & Community | \$22,886 | \$36,322 | 63.0% |
| Admin, Board & Finance | \$16,140 | \$27,500 | 58.7% |
| Property | \$26,591 | \$28,450 | 93.5% |
| Total Expense | \$238,229 | \$318,292 | 74.8% |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| Net Income (from Operations) | \$11,793 | \$0 | 0.0% |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|

Caring Circle

Sharon O'Neill, Team Leader

3-5 members met monthly via Zoom. Often, we were joined by our minister or Marie Inanli in her role as Director of Religious Life.

We continue to send birthday cards as well as sympathy, get well and congratulations as we learn of congregants' life events through Joys and Concerns. We helped celebrate one significant birthday with cake after the service.

We provided meals and medical transportation to families and individuals who had needs. The work of our volunteers has been generous and flexible.

Several of us attended a training regarding dementia as a way to prepare for being supportive of congregants who face this illness or their caregivers who need support.

We and our volunteers assisted with six Memorial Services.

Fund Trustees Report

Melissa Asman, Fund Trustees Chair

Nicole Stanforth, Fund Trustees Secretary

This year was quieter for the Fund Trustees as we were awaiting the results of the architectural survey for the restoration of the sanctuary. Approved allocations from each of the funds for the year were as follows:

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Miller–Lorentz Fund | \$21,800 for the architectural survey. | |
| | Remaining to Spend | \$26,036 |
| Music Fund | \$4300 for repair of the pipe organ, but this project was discontinued, and the money returned. | |
| | Remaining to Spend | \$9300 |
| Legacy Fund | No funds requested this year. | |
| | Remaining to Spend | \$40,077 |

Partner Church

Mary Darner, Partner Church Team

The Partner church Team met during the pandemic into the fall of 2021. Money was sent from St. John's in December to Szentlaszlo to provide weekly bread for the calendar year 2022 for the elderly, ages 70 plus, who depend on it. With the pandemic, regular video communications between our congregations have ceased. With **Rev. Mitra's** and **Edie Holder's** trip to Transylvania in April 2022, the focus has been on face-to-face interactions reinvigorating partnership activities and our connections. The trip included social gatherings, shared leadership of religious services, a gift from St. Johns, and exchanges of gifts and letters to friends in each congregation. **Rev. Mitra** is having more frequent contact with our partner church minister, **Rev. Szilamer Szilagi**, to deepen that relationship and to flesh out ideas for future activities

St. Johners miss our soup and bread luncheons. With the lower COVID numbers there is a plan to offer a soup and bread lunch at the Annual Meeting in June. **Myra Pucci** and **Will Bronson** are stepping forward to conduct the lunch.

It is time to inquire what each of our churches want from partnership in the future and then recommit to it by updating the Covenant of Partnership signed in 2006 by our Board of Trustees and the Szentlaszlo church leadership. It is important that we also find ways to connect our congregation directly to the Szentlaszlo congregation so there is more than minister to minister contact. We did begin exploration with Lexington, KY UU church members about joining forces for partnership activities since they are partnered with the Nyomat church 2 km from Szentlaszlo and the minister serves both Nyomat and Szentlaszlo churches.

Mary and Tom Darner have decided to step down from providing leadership for the program that has included dinners, soup, and bread lunches, organizing trips to Transylvania, and keeping communications going with the Szentlaszlo Unitarian congregation these last 32 years. They will continue to participate in the Partner Church Team. **Rev. Mitra** and **Edie Holder** are providing needed leadership during this transition and expect to resume Team meetings soon.



Pledge Campaign Fund

Joetta Prost, Team Leader

Following a planning meeting to brainstorm themes, the campaign for financial support of the 2022 – 2023 operating budget was launched in March 2021. **Rev. Mitra** offered a sermon connected to the theme of nourish our congregation with financial support for the church year that begins in July. Pledge materials included a bookmark with seeds embedded and the message: Nurturing our spirits, Planting the seeds of justice, Growing our church community.

Our stewardship consultant **Rachel Maxwell** told us in 2019 that overall annual giving at St. John's is low compared to other UU congregations our size and in Ohio. In a continued effort to both educate the congregation about appropriate giving levels and encourage greater generosity, pledge materials mailed to all households included a cover letter and additional information addressing:

- “HOW DO PLEDGES AND BUDGETS GO TOGETHER?”
- “HOW MUCH SHOULD I PLEDGE...?”
- “HOW MUCH DO OTHERS PLEDGE?”
- “WHAT DOES MY PLEDGE SUPPORT?”

In addition, the UUA Suggested Giving Guide was included.

As of May 15, 2022, we have received approximately \$253,000 in pledged commitments. We had hoped to match or exceed last year's campaign total of \$270,000.

Last year we had a total of 168 households who pledged. 131 households have pledged so far.

We have approximately 30 households who pledged last year whom we still hope will respond; our team is continuing to make contacts with these members and friends. Last year at this time we noted that we had a larger number than in the past of households who still had not responded to the pledge request despite our usual follow-up contacts. This trend continues. It is a challenge to connect with those congregants who aren't active on Sundays and these days many people don't respond to phone calls or emails. Even so, we remain hopeful that they will eventually make a financial commitment. Special thanks to the following members who are

helping this year with follow-up contacts: [Greg Terhune](#), [Nancy Henry](#), [Pat Brown](#), [Kathy Rentz](#), [Emily Hodges](#), and [Cliff Shisler](#).

Here's some good news: So far, 62 households have increased their pledge for the coming year, with the increases totaling to \$25,800. The increases ranged from \$5 to \$3,000 and averaged \$400. In 2020, 85 households increased their pledge for the coming year by an average of \$600 and in 2021, 69 households increased by an average of \$445. It is wonderful that so many households are gradually increasing their giving.

However, this year 14 donors have decreased their pledges, with those decreases amounting to \$23,629. The individual decreases ranged from \$25 to \$9,900. It is difficult to make up for these significant decreases.

The effort to bring in the remaining pledges will continue in advance of the annual membership review process in July. During membership review, all current members who have not contributed for two years are reminded that members are asked to make a contribution of record (no specific amount); they are also offered the option of requesting that [Rev. Mitra](#) make a contribution from the Minister's Discretionary Fund on their behalf.

The Board is again planning conservatively for the budget being brought to the congregation for approval. They are budgeting 95% of the anticipated pledged total of \$260,000. This 95% budgeting approach is a best practice to anticipate non-payments, deaths, etc.

Our fundraising efforts during the past 15 months have benefited from the advice and guidance received from Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Regional staff and the Stewardship for Us (UU consulting group).



Property Team Report

Cliff Shisler, Property Team Leader

The Property team has two major responsibilities: Major Repairs and Maintenance. Major Repair includes equipment repair and building repair/updates. Maintenance includes general cleaning and upkeep of the building interior and exterior plus equipment maintenance.

Major Repairs Highlights

- A new roof was installed over Krolfifer. At the same time a new access window was installed to make it easier and safer to access the roof. Additionally, the ladder that accesses the roof over the Chapel was modified. Our custodian and volunteers use these areas monthly. Also, the paint was removed from the skylight.
- The boiler continues to need major repairs. This year several pumps were repaired, and the control panel was replaced.
- Enhanced lighting was installed along both driveways and the other exterior lighting was changed to LED. A live outlet was added at the front sign for use with outdoor programs.
- The plugs in Wells are now all grounded. Switches to turn on the lights have been moved from the circuit breaker box to inside the room.
- The Stair/chair to the lower level needed extensive repair to bring it up to code.
- Our Fire Protection System was updated.

Maintenance Highlights

- General cleaning occurs weekly, and specific cleaning as needed.
- Parking lot is cleared of snow, grass is cut, Rumpke collects the trash.
- Pest control continues quarterly.
- The refrigerator was repaired.
- Parts of the stone entry way and the playground equipment were power washed.
- Stairs to Krolfifer were repaired and painted.

Matthew Peterson has agreed to be Chair of the Property Team!



Master Planning Team Annual Report

Matt Cowperthwait, Team Member

Team Members:

Matt Cowperthwait (Chair), **Cliff Shisler**, **Joetta Prost**, **Tony Potochnik**, **Kathy Shell**

The Master Planning Team has met bi-weekly throughout this year, helping to guide the process of improving our facility at St. John's for years to come.

Accomplishments

Summer Input Sessions - In August 2021, we held 7 input sessions on the Master Plan that was commissioned in 2018, to review it in significant detail with the congregation and gather feedback on the plan. Over 100 unique comments were received regarding the plan, with over 50 congregants & staff attending at least one session.

Sanctuary Façade and Envelope Restoration Work

- The Master Planning team solicited a competitive bidding process for Architectural and Engineering firms to evaluate the St. John's sanctuary structural issues, so that we could fully understand the work necessary to be done and costs associated. Team members spoke with seven architectural firms in this process.
- The Master Planning team selected MSA Design to lead this process and the board approved the contract for sanctuary assessment. MSA worked with THP to provide us with an in-depth engineering analysis and cost estimate for the restoration of the sanctuary façade and envelope. This report was provided to the congregation in March of 2022.
- The Master Planning team, in conjunction with MSA Design, interviewed General Contractors to perform the work outlined by MSA and THP within their report. The Beischel Building Company was selected and approved by the board.
- In April, a Congregational Meeting was held where two distinct motions were approved:
 - "I am in favor of beginning the restoration of the sanctuary exterior as soon as possible."

- “I authorize the board of trustees to obtain a loan up to \$300,000 and/or a line of credit to serve as a bridge to cover sanctuary restoration costs in advance of a capital campaign anticipated to begin later this year.
- This work allows the congregation to fundamentally fix the issues with the sanctuary façade and envelope while maintaining the original architecturally significant design. It also includes a plan for future maintenance.

Additional Master Planning Work for the Broader Facility

- Based on the performance of MSA Design with the sanctuary façade and envelope, the Master Planning team selected MSA Design to assist in refreshing the Master Plan. The board approved expansion of their contract for this planning phase.
- In April of 2022, a congregational input session was held for the architects from MSA Design to gather feedback directly from the congregation and staff. This feedback, in combination with feedback from the Summer 2021 Input Sessions, and guidance from the Master Planning team, served as the basis for MSA’s development of Master Plan Refresh Design Options.
- In May, the Design Options from these sessions were presented to the congregation for the first time to begin the process of gathering feedback on the options, taking into account that we have more options than we can likely fund.

Financial Analysis & Capital Campaign Planning

- The Master Planning team, in conjunction with the board, reviewed current church finances and historical pledging levels. Based on this, the Master Planning team produced a financial strategy to serve the Master Planning process, which was presented to the board for their review.
- The board voted to endorse the broad goal of \$1.1M as a hopeful but pragmatic target for the congregation to reach with the Capital Campaign.
- The Master Planning Team has also partnered with Rachel Maxwell of Stewardship for Us, an outside consultant specializing in working with UU congregations, to provide guidance in this process to help ensure success for our plans going forward.

Next Steps

- The Master Planning team is requesting approval by the congregation on June 5 to begin a capital campaign to raise funds for the sanctuary exterior façade restoration and church building improvements.
- The Master Planning team is looking forward to gathering feedback on the Master Planning Design Options, as we begin the process of selecting the work we would anticipate performing in the years to come.
- Using the congregation's feedback on the plans, MSA Designs will be developing the details associated with the options we would like to pursue further, under the guidance of the Master Planning team.
- Formal selection of the ideas and options of the Master Plan to be performed will take place in the fall of 2022 following the completion of the Capital Campaign.
- We look forward to work beginning on the Sanctuary façade and envelope this Summer!
- If all proceeds as planned, construction on other parts of the building will commence as early as 2023.



Membership Report

Pat Brown, Team Leader

214 active members

1 member emeritus

81 friends

4 resigned

As we resumed in-person services in July 2021, we have had a mix of sanctuary and online attendance. Each had visitors with more and more attending the in-person service. When asked how they found us, many said “Google.”

Clearly the concern for children impacted attendance. We are seeing a resurgence as the 5–11-year-olds are able to be vaccinated & warm weather allows for more outdoor activity.

The Membership Committee consists of the Greeters, and a small group of official “Welcomers.” However, anyone who speaks to a new guest and makes them feel welcome is part of this group. We like to encourage them to get the weekly E-news to know more about us. This means filling out the orange sheet with their email address and saying yes to getting the E-news. We have had 22 guests with orange sheets since January 2022. Some guests choose not to do that initially. Happily, many guests, return – one even joined the choir! Another made an excellent auction offering.

Membership at St. John’s is on one hand very easy: sign the book & membership commitment form promising time, talent, and treasure. On the other, it requires one to engage with oneself and others to find their truth.

We are looking forward to engaging on that journey with many more this year.



Men's Group

Howard Tolley, Team Leader

Over its 35-year history the St. John's Men's Group members have aged gracefully while continuing monthly dinner meetings at the church, annual retreats at Camp America and the Moye Center, and arranging home-hosted summer potlucks. Each January the group records predictions for political, economic, athletic, and other outcomes in the coming months to permit a scorecard tally the following new year. Spouses join for dinner prior to the annual fall program open to all church member previewing the Supreme Court's upcoming term.

Zoom meetings during most of 2021 - 2022 deprived the group of in-person fellowship but allowed both an Arizona snowbird and member who moved Pennsylvania to keep in touch. The group deeply mourned the loss Tom Conroy and of long-term founding member Chase Tonne and commiserated with those suffering a range of challenging medical ailments, surgeries, and growing aches and pains.

The first Sunday in May 2022 the group resumed dinners at St. John's while providing a Zoom connection for those unable to appear in person. Members shared accounts of relationships with their fathers, moving personal stories that facilitated renewed connection within the group. In October, COVID willing, the group will return to the Moye Center in northern Kentucky for its first in-person Saturday retreat in 3 years. Guest speakers and program TBA.

Those seeking to join need not fear expensive dues — none assessed — but simply reimburse monthly cooks for their grocery bills and pay a share of the Moye Center's nominal room and lunch fee. If interested, contact a steering committee member — John Kachuba, Jim McDonough or Howard Tolley.



Outreach Committee

FY 2021 – 2022 SPLIT THE PLATE RECIPIENTS

| Month | Organization | Amount |
|------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Jul. 2021 | No Split the Plate | 0 |
| Aug. 2021 | No Split the Plate | 0 |
| Sept. 2021 | Dohn Community High School | \$636 |
| Oct. 2021 | The Adventure Crew | \$547 |
| Nov. 2021 | Found Village | \$529 |
| Dec. 2021 | Emergency Shelter of NKY | \$643 |
| Jan. 2022 | Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) | \$1,196 |
| Feb. 2022 | Shelter House | \$1,120 |
| Mar. 2022 | Heartfelt Tidbits | \$895 |
| Apr. 2022 | Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center | \$722 |
| May. 2022 | La Soupe | TBD |
| Jun. 2022 | Over the Rhine Community Housing | TBD |
| | Total to Date | \$6,286 |

FY 2021 – 2022 OUTREACH GRANT RECIPIENTS

| CHK. PRESENTED | Organization | Amount |
|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Jan 23, 2022 | Community Happens Here | \$1,250 |
| Jan 16, 2022 | Cincinnati Recycling & Reuse Hub | \$1,250 |
| | Total | \$2,500 |

FY 2021 – 2022 OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Alicia Rosselot | 2019-2022 | |
| Anjali Dutt | 2019-2022 | |
| Deb Potochnik, Chair | 2020-2023 | |
| Linda Heath | 2022-2023 | Appointed to replace Nat Kutcher |
| Charles Spencer | 2021-2024 | |
| Howard Tolley | 2021-2024 | |
| Anne Septic | 2022–2025 | |
| Kathy McDonald | 2022-2025 | |

Security and Health Safety Team

Kathy Shell, Team Leader

The Security and Health Safety Team has been busy with various issues and tasks this year. The Team has kept apprised of health and safety issues and taken action to protect people and property at St. John's.

COVID

- The Security and Health Safety Team has continued to provide recommendations to the Board regarding COVID safety.

Building Access System

- Throughout this year, we have seen the many benefits of the new building access system that was installed during the 2020-2021 church year.
- Numbered key fobs have been distributed to those requiring access; this includes those renting the building.
- We do not need to re-key the church when someone loses their church key because we can simply turn "off" the misplaced key fob.
- We can give access to the building for specific days and hours, securing the building for appropriate use. For example, the church can be unlocked and re-locked at a set time for Sunday services. The system makes it easy to lock and unlock as needed.

Health Safety

- We keep the AED equipment up to date so that we could use it should we have a need. We have also offered classes on how the AED works this year and we plan on have more classes in the coming year.

Building Safety

- The Team has installed more fire detectors in the building. We recently received from Church Mutual (St. John's insurance company) an ALARM ALERT device which will notify us when it detects the sound of a smoke detector alarm in the building; this allows us to know if there is a fire in the building when no one is present. It alerts an emergency

responder, who calls the fire department as well as **Kathy Shell**, Security and Health Safety Team Leader.

- We have installed additional carbon monoxide detectors in the building.
- A fire drill will be conducted at St. John's this fall.

The Security and Health Safety Team is looking for another team member; should you have interest, please contact **Kathy Shell**. Kathy is grateful for her team: **Stan Loeb** and **Rich Overturf** (health and building safety) and **Debbie Combs** (building access system).



Safe Congregation Committee Report

Erna Olafson, Committee Chair

A question arose near the end of the fiscal year about the necessity of background checks for parent volunteers who work with children in the absence of a Religious Education employee to run the program and manage background checks.

To clarify St. John's official policies about background checks and those required by our insurance company, Church Mutual, Erna volunteered to make a presentation to the current Board members on June 1, 2022, to update them and ensure that policies adopted by the Board in 2017 continue to be observed. Erna told the Board that it is church policy that all employees and lay volunteers who work in RE or childcare "shall" have background checks. This rule is consistent with the requirements of our insurer, Church Mutual.

Erna offered to assist Mike Johnson, Personnel Committee Chair, in seeing to it that background checks be completed for all in St. John's who are required to have them according to our policies and our insurer. The Board agreed.

Social Justice Team

Anjali Dutt, Team Leader

This past year St. John's supported the following Social Justice initiatives and organizations:

| Initiative/ Organization | Amount |
|--|---------------|
| The Women's City Club | \$300 |
| IJPC (annual sponsorship & Flying Pig) | \$650 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Clifton United Solidarity Church contribution | \$200 |
| Kentucky UU Justice Action Network | \$400 |
| UUJO | \$828 |
| Total | \$2,378 |

In addition to our financial contributions, several social justice-oriented committees continue to be active at St. John's and numerous individual members are regularly and passionately engaged in social justice work at St. John's Sanctuary and Immigration Team, led by Sarah Seibert, continues to meet regularly, and has several active members. This past year members presented on the current situation for immigrants in our community and sought ways faith communities could offer support. The committee members also continued to support the Kaziala family who were living in the Sanctuary at Clifton United (and recently transitioned into their own housing) and have continued to form strong supportive relationships with other immigrant support organizations in the area, including attending the Immigrant Dignity Coalition meetings.



Spirit Team

Lyn O'Brien, Team Lead

After losing [Ken Cunningham](#) and [Jenni Sommers](#) and welcoming [Mary Newman](#) in the last church year, [Mary](#), [Dot Wehrmeyer](#), and I delightedly welcomed two additional members, [Melanie Malaviya](#) and [Barb Conroy](#) to our team. This team is dedicated to highlighting and acknowledging the selfless contributions of St. John's volunteers and doing so as fast as we can. Although current church activity acknowledgements come first, we're not above slipping into the E-news, as many past contributions by our award winner as will fit. As of March 2022, we have honored 22 people in groups and six individuals and there is a long list of deserving St. Johners to go.

We rely on the help of [Marie Inanli](#), [Claire Wagner](#), and [Sarah Loar Seibert](#) to provide pictures to match our E-news copy and Claire to publish. We appreciate those who email us or post their nominating slips in the small church box in the entryway, and the many others who, on the sly, supply background information on our unsuspecting new honorees.

We spent our entire budget for last year and this year on some special tokens which we intend to present to all previous honorees in a celebration at church soon. After that, our tokens of appreciation will be presented to reward winners ongoingly. This year, we plan to produce the honor celebration; to update our webpage, immortalizing our previous honorees and making it even easier for people to nominate deserving congregants; and to expand our onsite tribute practices.

It is an honor and privilege to be engaged in these endeavors.



Communications and Technology Teams

Claire Wagner, Comms Team Leader, Interim Tech Team Leader

Delivering Services Electronically

When this fiscal year began, we were 15 months into pandemic mode, having switched in September 2020 from delivering services via prerecorded videos on YouTube to delivering them online live, and then as of July 2021, in multi-format – in-person and on Zoom.

We developed a system of having a Zoom producer and cameraperson in the sanctuary or chapel and two Zoom “ushers/greeters” helping from home.

I store some of our service recordings on our YouTube page so that those interested, and those curious, can see and hear them.

We continue to hold most church meetings virtually – mostly on Zoom or Google Meet.

A church Zoom account was renewed this year and in addition to several staff using it, a small number of church-related meeting coordinators continue to use it.



In summer 2021, an ad hoc team of [Bill Surber](#), [Pengcheng He](#) and I invited AV companies to bid on a new audio/visual/projector & screen system for the sanctuary. Five company reps visited church and talked with us and [Rev. Mitra](#). The bid by ASE, American Sound and Electronics, was chosen by the board and in September 2021, we placed our equipment order.

Pandemic-related delays as they were, installation was not possible until the last week of March, 2022.

In the meantime, we greatly improved the variables of home Internet connections, video links and Zoom by improving Wi-Fi and by identifying/buying/setting up a PC at the audio desk in the sanctuary that acted as the audio input for Zoom. We used a smartphone donated by [Pete Asman](#) and two previously purchased Fire tablets as cameras until our new equipment was installed.

A team of producers including [Bridget Shoe](#), [Rita Volz](#), [Brian Snape](#), and I took monthly turns. Other volunteers such as [Joetta Prost](#), [Monica Pellman](#), [Emily Hodges](#), and [Zoe Walldridge](#) regularly volunteered as Zoom ushers for services and [Anne Fleischer](#), [Dave Glasser](#) and [Bill Luerssen](#) served as camerapersons. Monica and Joetta also make sure volunteers are signed up for services.

Since April 3 we have used the new cameras, speaker system and projection system to enhance and create a true streaming of service, and enhanced visuals and sound in the sanctuary. ASE provided an introduction and training to volunteers April 1. Monica and I were the producers of services for the first 6 weeks.

The picture and sound have been praised for their great increase in clarity and quality. We volunteers do well but not perfectly yet running the new equipment.

[Bill Surber](#) has been primary audio volunteer, with [Lyn O'Brien](#) and [Dirk Iwema](#) also handling sound.

As of early May, we hired [Roberto Henriquez](#) in the part-time role of AV operator, with some tech solution duties, so we will need to rely on volunteers likely at the rate of 1/week to be online “ushers” for our service streams.

Communications

This year I again worked with religious life co-director [Marie Inanli](#) and [Rev. Mitra](#) every week to create Tuesday E-News emails and the minister’s pre-service letters on Saturday, all sent via a free MailChimp account. I have sent out occasional phishing notices when bad actors contact members with fake messages allegedly from Rev. Mitra. Last year, E-news emails went out twice/week. This year, it’s once/week.

We try to keep an active presence on the church Facebook page and Marie has coordinated a St. John’s CommUnity Facebook page for invited participation of congregants and friends, where we can share more personal and specific information than on the public-facing Facebook page. I have admin. rights on that page as well as the main church Facebook page.

Our Twitter account is live but not active. I am the only person who posts, though others were invited.

Paul Glasser of the communications and tech teams has helped church groups with their online meeting/gaming needs during quarantine.

Church Website

Our website uses a UUA-developed theme (design infrastructure) on a WordPress platform (technical pieces that make the design work) and is hosted by GoDaddy.com. All of these areas run periodic updates for security and to respond to changing consumer desires. We have kept up. Within our WordPress dashboard, there are apps and “widgets” that make the pages work, and these have frequent updates. [Greg Franseth](#) installed MalCare to keep hacks and viruses to a minimum.

A website homepage is an entity’s front door. Subsequent pages let people know our news, programs and values. Since most church business isn’t necessary to share publicly, we have a Members Corner in which congregants and friends log in to see board minutes and other

information. During the pandemic, more members have paid attention to these pages. Spammers try to gain access regularly (the .ru domain is a dead give-away) and I watch for these in the User section of our dashboard and delete them when they appear. [Greg Franseth](#) is great technical support on our website.

Board secretary [Nancy Henry](#) and [Monica Pellman](#) have helped post items to the website. Greg led a review of a certain app (Ninja forms) so the entire team would be able to create forms on the Web site, but we also use free options such as Google Forms and SignUpGenius.

We intend to switch ISP providers this year to one recommended in a UUA tech forum.

[Internet at church](#)

We hired Only Two Fish to add wired ethernet in the sanctuary and many Wi-Fi access points on all floors of the church; Though concrete floors and brick walls will always pose a challenge, people report far better experiences with the signal. Bill Luerssen and Stan Loeb drilled a hole through the concrete floor in the back of sanctuary to allow ethernet from the basement to come up to the AV cabinet so that the new streaming service could run on a hardwired signal and not Wi-Fi. Stan helped with other AV cabinet alterations to make the new equipment fit and be locked inside.

Finally, I cannot continue as interim tech chair, but will remain on the team.

The Wider UU World Team

Joetta Prost, Team Leader

[Cincinnati UU World](#)

On the local level, St. John's is an active member of "UUCGC" – the **UU Council of Greater Cincinnati**. There are six area congregations who form the UUCGC.

- A major initiative of UUCGC this year has been the provision of a series of 10 gatherings conducted on Zoom for white UUs seeking to become better anti-racists. This cross-

congregational learning environment proved to be very enriching for the 17 St. John's members who were part of the 50 area UUs who participated. [Joetta Prost](#) was one of the coordinators of the programming.

- Our dues to the UUCGC enable the UU Council to be a represent UUs on the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati or [MAARC](#) which works on social justice projects such as Court Watch and Community/Police relations.
- UUCGC will once again have a presence at the Cincinnati Pride parade and festival, as well as at the Festival of Faiths, now called [Equasion](#).
- St. John's representatives for the UUCGC are [Carol Fencel](#), [Pat Brown](#), and [Joetta Prost](#).

[Statewide UU World](#)

A number of St. John's members continue to be active with [UUJO \(Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio\)](#), including serving in leadership and engaging in social justice activism and lobbying.

Launched in 2020, [KUUJAN \(Kentucky UU Justice Action Network\)](#) represents the 900 UUs who live in the Bluegrass State. For St. John's members living in Northern Kentucky, KUUJAN provides a way to connect regarding social justice issues in the Commonwealth because the need is great for a UU perspective in Kentucky. The KUUJAN Democracy Team and Reproductive Rights Team have drawn several St. John's members. Interestingly, there are three Representatives who are Unitarian Universalists serving in the Kentucky State Legislature.

[UU Association of Congregations \(UUA\)](#)

St. John's is one of approximately 1,000 Unitarian Universalist congregations in North America and a member congregation of the **Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, commonly known as the UUA**. Here (in random order) are some of the many ways that the UUA helps us to be a strong, healthy congregation, benefiting us as members, staff, and congregational leaders:

- UUA is our voice on the national and international level for justice, equity and compassion for human rights: immigration, LGBTQ rights, reproductive justice and more. _ <https://www.uua.org/justice>

- The annual General Assembly provides a wonderful dose of UU inspiration for the several thousand UUs who attend in person or virtually. <http://www.uua.org/ga/>
- Connecting us with like-minded UUs on a plethora of subjects and projects. Check out 50 UUA e-mail lists at <http://lists.uua.org/> and find one that interests you!
- Curriculum materials and other resources that we can use in Adult RE, Children's RE, Youth programming, Board education and leadership development.
<https://www.uua.org/ages> and <https://www.uua.org/youth>
- Online spiritual resources for individuals, congregational leaders, chalice groups etc. – just search *Worship Web* using a theme word and lots of resources will pop up!
<https://www.uua.org/worship>
- Development of *Our Whole Lives*, comprehensive sexuality education program for all stages of life. <http://www.uua.org/re/owl/>
- Ministerial Fellowship process to ensure that our UU ministers meet the highest standards. <http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/mfc/index.shtml>
- Ministerial Search guidance and resources.
<https://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/transitions>
- Interim Ministry guidance and resources.
<http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/interim/>
- Resources for Board and Staff leaders regarding congregational governance and management tasks (sample policies, financial guidelines, job descriptions, etc.)
<https://www.uua.org/congregations>
- Retirement program for UU ministers and comprehensive health plan for all full-time congregational staff; these provide continuity over time for ministers and staff who work in different congregations and save time and money for congregations.
<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/congregations-as-employeers/compensation-benefits>
- Multicultural Growth and Ministries Office. <https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism>
- LGBTQ resources and programming. <https://www.uua.org/lgbtq>
- Stewardship and Generosity resources. <https://www.uua.org/finance/fundraising>

- Responding to current environment; when the pandemic hit, the UUA provided important resources to support us and other congregations.

I encourage you to visit www.uua.org and explore the UUA website to see the tremendous amount and variety of UUA resources. This is what our UUA dues support.

How does all of this happen? It happens because we – the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) provide the financial support to make it happen through the [ANNUAL PROGRAM FUND](#) or APF (which is sometimes referred to as our “UUA dues.”)

St. John’s has kept its commitment to our Association of Congregations by providing our “Fair Share” contribution and being designated as an [HONOR CONGREGATION](#) for the past 17 years.

Why do we do that? Our support for the Annual Program Fund is the fulfillment of a promise already made. It is the living embodiment of the covenant between us, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

The Annual Program Fund is the primary source of funding for the Unitarian Universalist Association. We give so that our spirits will be enriched by the practice of generosity in community, and so that Unitarian Universalism can flourish.

We give so that all UU congregations are positioned to transform their communities, our UU religious leaders can innovate and inspire, and our collective voice can be amplified to bring more justice to the world so in need of our healing message. As a concrete expression of our interconnectedness, we give to support congregations other than our own, investing in and strengthening the presence of Unitarian Universalism.

