

# Annual Report

2022 – 2023



**The First Unitarian Universalist Society of Middleborough**  
**25 South Main Street**  
**Middleborough, MA 02346**

**FUUSM – Annual Report**  
Edited by Bob Waterman

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## **Ministry**

Report contributors: Rev. Peter Connolly; Sue Curtiss, *Pastoral Care Team*

### Minister's Role and Responsibilities

*"The Minister and the Congregation share responsibility for the leadership and ministry of the Congregation. Achievement and maintenance of this collaborative relationship likewise shall be shared. The Congregation shall look to the Minister for spiritual leadership and initiative, for assistance in setting and articulating its vision, and for professional and inspired performance and oversight of the Congregation's programs, in collaboration with the Parish Committee and the Congregation's committees and teams."*

### Minister's Overview

This was an unusual year for the Church and its ministry in several respects. Though the Church year started on July 1, 2023, I did not begin my ministry until September 1 due to the unusual circumstances of my hiring, including an initially unsuccessful search by the Church for an interim minister. Second, this year saw a return to in-person services after an extended period of "virtual" online services occasioned by caution surrounding in-person gatherings during the high period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, mine was not the role of settled minister, which the Church membership had grown accustomed to, but the first year of an interim ministry.

There was a challenge for someone like myself who (1) is charged with providing guidance through an interim period which encourages self-examination on the part of the Congregation, as well as reflection and engagement in a process of discernment about its future; and (2) has had a rewarding personal history with the Congregation stretching back twenty years to my first year of student intern ministry in 2003, under the tutelage of Rev. Tricia Tummino and the Church's first teaching parish committee. I found myself called to both lead the process of self-reflection and discernment and to provide ongoing pastoral care and the kinds of sermons designed to stimulate the spiritual growth of both the Congregation as a whole and the individual members -- the work of all ministries everywhere, it seems to me.

### Summary of Minister's Activities

I played an active role in pastoral care, attending all weekly meetings of the Pastoral Care Team, providing insight and guidance where I could and providing care directly throughout the year at Church members' homes or in my office. By the time the church year ends, I will have led worship services 29 times and offered 30 sermons and a Christmas Eve homily. (Twice, others had to actually deliver sermons I had prepared as I was incomed by illness.) Sermons were offered on a broad range of topics from the historical context of the European conquest of North America to the life of St. Francis of Assisi, from social justice concerns to modes and methods of spiritual development.

I provided supervision to a staff of four: the Church Administrator, Music Director, Religious Exploration Director, and Sexton, though, truly, little supervision was needed as all staff members are competent, professional in their approach, and motivated to provide the highest level of service that they are capable of. It was a special pleasure to work together with Music Director Susan Hotchkiss to create the

structure for worship services that were consistently well constructed, thematically unified, and generally appreciated by the Congregation.

I attended virtually all of the online meetings of the Social Justice Team, contributing whatever advice and guidance I could, though the team sets its own priorities and organizes its own activities as well as robustly supporting efforts of organizations with common concerns in Middleboro and surrounding activities.

In an effort to get to know parishioners better (and for them to get to know me), I hosted (along with members of the Parish Committee) 52 members and friends over the course of eleven meetings in October and November. Insights gained from those meetings were shared throughout the year in sermons, classes, and Parish Committee meetings. I accepted the Parish Committee's offer to lead a Public Relations Team in April and am currently meeting with potential members of that team.

I attended a 5-day on-site training in Montgomery, Alabama in August and monthly 3-hour long online sessions of Transitional Ministry Training hosted by the UUA Office of Transitions. I attended monthly cluster meetings almost every month of the Inland Cluster of the Ballou Channing Chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and hosted that meeting in December.

I led two sections of a 5-week class on a short history of American Universalism, using as a text *The Larger Faith* by Charles A. Howe, which met once weekly (one group on Sundays, one on Wednesdays), attended by seventeen individuals.

By the time the Church year ends, I will have led another two sections of a 5-week class, this one using as a text the book *What Do We Mean When We Say God?*, which also met once weekly on the same days. Sixteen have signed up for the classes.

Unusually, there were no rites of passages (weddings, memorial services, baby dedications) celebrated or observed this year, though arrangements are in place for me to officiate at weddings in September and October, 2023. I will be providing the invocation for the Memorial Day observance at the Middleboro Town Hall hosted by Middleboro Veterans' Services.

#### Pastoral/Parish Care

The Pastoral and Parish Care Teams are comprised of the following:

Minster and Head of Team	Rev. Peter Connolly
Lay Minister and Coordinator	Sue Curtiss
Lay Ministers	Sue St. Germain
	Dave Kraemer
Parish Care Coordinator	Mal Marvill
Meals	Juli Gould
Rides	Marc MacQueen
Caring Choir	Val Fontaine
Prayer Shawls	Juli Gould

The Team, consisting of the Minister, Lay Ministers, and Care Coordinator met weekly throughout the Church year. The team would like to extend our thanks to Rev. Peter for the interest, support, and leadership he has provided to our team. He has participated in every one of our meetings and provided advice and guidance as well as moral support.

**Our Goal:** The main goal we set for ourselves for this Church year was to increase our presence and visibility in the Congregation in order to increase awareness that we are available and ready to assist congregants in a variety of services. The ways in which we do this are the following:

**Visits:** COVID sidetracked our visiting schedules over the past few years. This Church year we were able to resume our visits and hope to expand this service in the future. We visited those who are homebound, in hospitals or nursing homes, or isolated by circumstances that make it difficult for them to join in services and the normal activities of the Church.

**Cards:** We have acknowledged major events in people's lives by sending cards as we become aware of illness, bereavement, isolation, and the need for support and encouragement. Some cards are sent from the entire team. However, there are situations where one of us may have had more contact or been more involved and have chosen to follow through with personal cards or notes in addition to contacts from the entire team.

**Birthdays:** As a new project this year, we decided to acknowledge birthdays by lighting a candle of joy and celebration during the Joys and Concerns part of the Sunday service closest to a birthday. We started this over the past winter, and are still in the process of collecting information on birthdays. Having birthdays acknowledged in this manner has been well received.

**Meals:** We did not receive any formal requests for meals this year. However, we know that this is an area where Church members have traditionally stepped in and helped out by dropping off food and meals in times of need. We have the organizational ability to help with this, but we are also proud and grateful that we belong to a community where there is so much generosity and caring.

**Rides, errands, chores, prayer shawls, baby blankets:** When we had requests for these services or team members were made aware of the need, we were able to help out.

**Caring Choir:** With the assistance of Susan Hotchkiss, we were able to schedule Caring Choir events.

**Outreach from the Care Team:** This involves both formal and informal efforts from the team to reach out to members, including phone calls, texts, and emails: We have joined the electronic age and have found that a quick email or text lets people know that we are thinking of them and widens our circle of connection. We gave up trying to keep track of every single phone call or text. Our outreach also includes casual conversations that often come up in the context of the fellowship at Coffee Hour following Sunday services or simply running into people and inquiring how things are going. These conversations often lead to more follow-up and the offer of services and support. These interactions can be a little slippery to keep track of, but we've done so to the best of our ability.

**Outreach to the Care Team:** This is a category that we are proud to say speaks to our original goal of becoming more visible in our community and shows that Church members are beginning to think of us as a resource. When we launched our team effort, many people in the Congregation weren't aware that we existed, and had no idea of what we did. This year we had a number of people contacting us for

themselves or on behalf of others in order to ask for assistance. This tells us that we are beginning to be recognized and our role is better understood.

Church Service on 3/12/23: We decided that one way to move toward accomplishing our goal for the year was to conduct a Sunday Service where we had the opportunity to introduce ourselves and our work to the Congregation in the context of a worship service. All members of the team participated. We found that doing this service not only helped us to achieve the visibility that we had hoped for, but also helped us to clarify and better understand our roles, and to introduce and acknowledge our expanded team of those who have graciously agreed to coordinate meals, rides, caring choir, and prayer shawls.

Coffee Hour on 3/12/23: It was a challenge to take on a Service and a Coffee Hour on the same day, but it seemed important to us to do so since Coffee Hour has been for us a way for us to make contact and check in with people. It often informs the work that we do in a new and fresh way and provides us with a casual and comfortable way to touch base.

Joys and Concerns: A member of the team has assisted Rev. Peter at the end of each service by helping light candles for stated joys and concerns. We felt this is another way for us to have visibility to the Congregation and provides a pastoral care presence when people are sharing their personal thoughts with the Congregation.

Summary of the Care Teams' activities this Church year through May 2023:

Visits – home, hospitals, nursing homes	45
Cards from Team	51
Cards from Individual Team Members	40
Meal Requests	0
Rides, errands, chores, prayer shawls, baby blankets	27
Caring Choir visits	2
Outreach from Team	144
Outreach to Team	38
Church Service – Connection through Caring 3/12/23	1
Team hosted Sunday morning Coffee Hour 3/12/23	1

## Religious Exploration

Report Contributors: Kelly Lownds, *Director of Religious Exploration*; Christine Hoyle, *Religious Exploration Committee*

### Theme

This year we *Explored Beyond our Walls*. Every day our children are faced with difficult decisions and situations. We agreed as a group to really try to understand and learn our seven principles and throughout the year we collected gems that represent our learnings through moral tales. Our youth explored various types of worship and they did some work regarding ethics. Our older youth met on Sunday evenings every second and fourth Sunday starting on October 9th.

### Classes and Attendance

This year we met each week in person at 10:45 am. Attendance shifted from 2-4 children each week. One week we had 8 children! There were three to five youths in the Youth Group.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Average Attendance	3	9	10	10	11	18
Highest Attendance	8	12	15	19	26	26
Lowest Attendance	1	1	1	2	2	9
Number of Teachers	3	3	3	10	23	27

Kelly Lownds taught the classes every Sunday morning this year. We had one guest teacher, Christine Hoyle, who covered a couple of Sunday classes and Chris Dargelis joined in when an extra set of hands was needed. Niko Pucillo-Dunphy was downstairs weekly, available to help with the RE program.

### Youth Group

Barbara Bancroft, Chris Dargelis, and Christine Hoyle helped with the youth group. We met with the youth every two weeks from October through June in the evenings. The group had five youths, four of whom attended regularly. We planned a craft event where we made valentines together and worked on social action together. We shared pizza monthly and played games in each class. The youth helped organize the youth service. Rev. Peter and Kelly met with the Bridgewater UU church to consider what the youth groups could do together in the upcoming year.

### Worship

RE led one service this year: The Youth Service. The Bridging Ceremony for two graduates is also coming up within the regular service.

### Social Action/Fundraising

We did one community service project helping at the Sip and Stroll last July, providing crafts for kids. We will also be participating in the Middleboro Pride Fest and will help bring tables over, set up the event, sell popcorn and clean up.

### Child care

Niko Pucillo Dunphy and for a short time, Mia Stevens, were available for childcare this year. There were only a couple of occasions when childcare was needed.

### Events

- RE youth and children had a pool party in September to start off the year; five families in attendance.
- RE Halloween party, holiday party, and some outdoor activities were held in person.
- RE hosted a fun Friday gathering in February with a potluck dinner and Valentine craft-making.
- Support and social group for LGBTQIA+ and Allies started in April.
- Parent Coffee Hour will be held again in the upcoming year.
- RE will be participating in the Middleboro Pride event on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

### RE Committee

Christine Hoyle was the RE committee chair. She, the DRE, and Chris Dargelis met monthly. The meetings happened regularly on the first Wednesday of the month. Maria Pucillo-Dunphy continued to act as our CORI liaison. We welcome new members.

### Next year

The children are looking forward to having a themed year so work will be completed over the summer to create a comprehensive program to excite their interests. We will combine Junior and Senior youth for the youth group. We will meet two times a month on Sunday Evenings from 5-7. There will be pizza once a month. We are planning to do OWL (Our Whole Lives) with the Bridgewater church. We will outreach to other churches to discuss options for holding OWL with the youth that are getting old enough to attend.

Kelly will be recruiting teachers again and will be looking for people to be with younger children and the older youth, so there will be opportunities mornings and evenings. We were immensely grateful for all the teachers and volunteers who helped us this year. It is greatly appreciated that you all take the time to speak with the children when you see them. They love to be recognized and feel noticed and cared for by everyone.



## Music

Report contributor: Susan Hotchkiss, *Director of Music*

**The 2022-2023 Church year has been busy and fulfilling!** Although Covid 19 is still with us, we have moved back into community gatherings, following the CDC guidelines for caution. Masks are always welcome, but not always required.

**Chalice Choir: Centerpiece of our Church music program.** The Chalice Choir sang roughly every other week throughout the Church year, and most of the “non-choir Sundays” featured individuals and small groups from the Chalice Choir. We were able to include children a few times and look forward to nurturing a Family Choir/Children’s Choir next year.

We started off with 27 choristers and are closing the year with 21 active singers: Dody Adkins-Perry, Katie Allen, Nancy Backus, Holly Begley, Cindy Benard, Rick Benard, Jim Bonnar, Sandie Brangan, Joan Breen, Sue Curtiss, Rob Dragunas, Kimberly French, Bet Giddings, Dan Hotchkiss, Dorine Levasseur, Mal Marvill, Ed Priest, Patty Simon, Sony Soares, Jeff Stevens, and Nicola Wilbar. We are glad that Valerie Fontaine, Marc MacQueen, John Mullen, Andrea Priest, Bill Sherman, and Sue Sherman could be with us for part of the year, and we hope they join us again in the fall.

**Caring Choir: Combination of Chalice Choir and Chalice Choir Alumni.** The Caring Choir had its busy season during December with caroling at Middleborough Council on Aging, and a trip to Heritage at Falmouth to sing for Larry and Tricia Tummino. Ed Priest led caroling at Serenity House in Middleboro.

**Special Worship:** Christmas Eve was a LIVE treat with guest Shelley Otis on Celtic harp. On April 4, we hosted Jazz Sunday with Jeannie Gagné and Stan Strickland. This was the first live Jazz Sunday since 2019. Music Sunday took place on May 21, featuring Requiem by John Rutter. The choir sang six of the seven movements, accompanied by Ruth Iampietro (piano), Nancy Kidd (double bass), and Patty Simon (flute). Rev. Sarah Person joined the choir, and Kate Mechior was the soprano soloist. This Music Sunday was a top achievement for all involved, and we certainly appreciated the Congregational attendance.

**Clay Family Gift:** We are thankful for the generous donation from the family of beloved former member, Avis Clay. After parlor renovations, the interest from the remainder of this endowment will be used to benefit the Church’s music program.

**Music Committee:** We started off with six members – Dody Adkins-Perry, Katie Allen, Bet Giddings, John Mullen, Valerie Fontaine, and Linda Thompson. New members this year include Cindy Benard and Nicola Wilbar (new recording secretary.) After 33 years of service, Linda Thompson retired and subsequently enjoyed a well-deserved luncheon in her honor. John Mullen recently retired, and Bet Giddings is the new chairperson, effective in May.

The Music Committee has accomplished most of the items on a vision list compiled last June. They reviewed and approved their Statement of Purpose which is now posted on the website as follows:

*The Music Committee is a part of First UU Society of Middleboro, operating under its mission and focused on helping to support our Church’s music ministry and music director. It is our intent to help enrich the goals of the Society, including spiritual and personal growth of congregants and outreach*

*to the community at large. We strive to help build a program of inclusivity as well as excellence. We wish to promote diversity, creativity, fun, fellowship, and community through music.  
(Statement of Purpose, revised May 2023)*

Currently, the Music Committee is working on a fall Concert honoring Avis Clay scheduled for Sunday, November 19 at 3:00. We are hoping to host Jeannie and Stan in a March 2024 concert (rather than a worship service). The choir will enjoy a vocal workshop with Deb Perry in early September, and we hope to have a Church and community drumming workshop led by Sam Holmstock sometime in the fall.

**Bits & Pieces:** Part of my professional development has been joining other UU musicians in AUUMM (Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries). I'm looking forward to attending GA virtually in June.

Our instruments are well cared for. The piano was tuned twice – fall and spring. The organ had annual maintenance and tuning in the fall, with one return visit for a minor repair.

The Middleborough Music Guild has folded. I'm hoping to compile a brief history of the organization over the summer.

Kudos to Bet Giddings and Dan Hotchkiss for helping navigate copyright protection for our streaming services.

**It takes a veritable village to run our music program!**

## Church Life

Report Contributor: Bob Waterman, *Vice President of Parish Committee, Fundraising Team*;

Thanks to all of you, ours is vibrant community busy with many activities and events that engage members, friends, and our surrounding communities. The hard work and dedication of many committed and talented individuals help makes all this a success.

## Groups & Gatherings

We have several small groups that met during the Church year:

- The *Spirituality Group*, led by Bob Waterman, provides a safe, quiet space to explore personal spirituality, learn more about teachings and practices from a variety of traditions, and share life's journey with fellow travelers.
- *Just This Sangha Meditation*, led by Tom Tanguay, provides an opportunity to develop a deeper meditation practice.
- *Moon Mediations*, offered by Natalie Johnson, follow the cycle of the new and full moons each month and give an opportunity to gain wisdom from various spirit guides.
- A book discussion group, led by Carleen Loper, provides a wide array of thought-provoking material and interesting conversations.
- Rev. Peter Connolly led two book discussion series, each having two groups that met for five weeks. The first was centered on a short history of American Universalism, using as a text, *The Larger Faith*, by Charles A. Howe. The second used the book, *What Do We Mean When We Say God?*
- Deanne Bonnar facilitated a group, initially called a *Coping Circle*, then later billed as *Searching for Well-Being in Challenging Times*. The group served to address the higher levels of distress that many might be feeling, and to share concerns, explore ways of managing stress, and think about how we live out our Unitarian Universalist values in these times.
- Juli Gould and Nancy Backus coordinated *Fun Fridays*, which featured four sessions of various craft-making activities, preceded by a sumptuous dinner provided by Juli and Nancy.
- Tanya Trzeciak hosted a craft making session of turning ordinary vases or bottles into works of art by using a technique that mimics mercury glass. Participants enjoyed a potluck dinner before getting to the craft.
- Bet Giddings, Andrea Priest, and Ed Priest hosted monthly song circles beginning in March, featuring a potluck of hearty snacks followed by lively sharing of songs, musical offerings, and poetry.

The Church hosts a CUUPS chapter which meets regularly and contributes to several of our worship services. The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) is an organization dedicated to networking Pagan-identified Unitarian Universalists (UUs), educating people about Paganism, promoting interfaith dialogue, developing Pagan liturgies and theologies, and supporting Pagan-identified UU religious professionals.

## FUNdraisers

Our fundraising programs continued to be not only a source of funds, but also a wonderful addition to our Church life. Bob Waterman and Andrea Priest helped coordinate the overall schedule of offerings, trying to balance events with all the other offerings, meetings, and needs of the Church. These events support the work of the Church, help keep us connected, and give us a chance to have some fun together.

- In July, Kelly Lownds and the RE group coordinated a Snack & Play station at the Burt Wood School's Sip & Stroll event.
- In September, Dorine Levasseur and Kelly Lownds coordinated a snack sale and information booth at the Burt Wood School's Sip & Stroll event.
- In October, Tony Soares, Bob Waterman, and Andrea Priest organized a yard sale on the Church lawn. Families rented tables and sold their goods.
- In October, John Mullen and members of the Music Committee organized and ran a Road Rally.
- In November, Katie Allen coordinated a holiday craft fair, with Church and community members renting tables.
- In November/December, Bob Waterman and Andrea Priest coordinated a virtual Holiday Auction. Many creative items were contributed.
- In January, Andrea Priest and Dorine Levasseur organized a soup sale and gift basket raffle.
- In April/May, Bob Waterman and Andrea Priest coordinated a Spring Auction. Thanks to the incredible generosity of many in the Congregation, this was the year's largest fundraiser.
- In May, Tony Soares and Stephen Larrett hosted a Mother's Day Brunch.

## Membership Development

The Membership Development Team's purpose is to help the Church attract newcomers and help those who are new become engaged and connected. The team helps newcomers find their way to increased participation and identifying roles that might be of interest to them. The team also helps recruit greeters for Sunday services.

## Public Relations

Rev. Peter Connolly and Bob Waterman began reorganizing the Public Relations Team this year. The team's purpose is to get information to as many people as possible in as timely a fashion and in as many ways as possible about our Church and our many offerings and activities. Avenues include our website, social media sites, email updates/alerts (UU Updates), features in local newspapers, and specialized brochures.

Andrea Priest agreed to assist with monitoring and contributing content to our social media sites. Though, everyone can take a part in helping spread good PR about our Church. The easiest way to do this is to interact through the Church's social media sites. You can comment on posts, and share them with family, friends, or to a broader audience.

Find us on the web: [uumiddleboro.org](http://uumiddleboro.org)  
Like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/uumiddleboro](http://www.facebook.com/uumiddleboro)  
Follow us on Twitter: [@UUMiddleboro](https://twitter.com/UUMiddleboro) [www.twitter.com/UUMiddleboro](http://www.twitter.com/UUMiddleboro)  
Subscribe to us on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/UUMiddleboro](http://www.youtube.com/user/UUMiddleboro)

## Social Justice

Report Contributors: Bill Howe, *Social Justice Team*; Bob Waterman, *Social Justice Team*

Social Justice is widely viewed by this Congregation as an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to our faith and our connections to one another and the surrounding community, and as a means to engage our children and newcomers in serving our larger principles. The Social Justice Team drives projects and initiatives, and helps educate and raise awareness in the Congregation. The team is led by Deanne Bonnar and Dody Adkins-Perry, and includes Bill Howe, Lois Aldrich, Christine Hoyle, and Bob Waterman. We meet every other week, with Rev. Peter Connolly joining us.

The team's main objective is to facilitate efforts in our Congregation to make a concrete, substantial positive difference in our community. The team accomplishes this partially by organizing events that directly benefit the immediate community of Middleboro and its neighboring towns. Over the past year, the team conducted a letter-writing campaign to get out the vote for the November Congressional elections. We hold a "Black Lives Matter" vigil on the Church's front lawn each Saturday morning. Each month, we made a recommendation to the Parish Committee for a recipient of the Congregation's Cash in the Plate donation.

The team finds that our Church's social justice objectives can often be most effectively achieved by joining and supporting programs run by other local non-profit organizations. During this Church year, we strengthened our on-going relationships with several of these, attending their meetings and becoming friendly with their volunteers. The Church also donated our Cash in the Plate collections to some.

- Bridgewater Communities for Civil Rights' (BCCR). Lois and others in our Congregation have joined the organization. We are participating in and helping staff their Juneteenth program.
- NAACP – Brockton Area Branch. Deanne and Dody attend regular meetings. Some of us attended an MLK breakfast and various other events.
- Sustainable Middleboro. Several in our Congregation are members. We participated in three events.
- Matthew Mission Food Pantry. Bob serves on the board. We collect food and personal care items to stock the pantry and help promote their fundraising efforts.

Much of our discussion and work this year has been directed at improving our processes as a team, speeding our ability to respond to requests and regularizing our processes for communicating with the Congregation. With a HUGE assist from Dan Hotchkiss and great weekly cooperation and help from Valarie Ortelt, we now have a regularly updated page on the Church website. The team also, mainly through the efforts of Deanne, set up an information display in the parish hall, which includes a suggestion box for anyone to propose items of interest to be posted.

We have spent time examining how much of our efforts we should spend generating programs ourselves for the Congregation versus facilitating Congregation members' interests. We believe we will be most successful if we do some of both. We do not have the resources to put the weight of the Church behind every interest of each Congregation member, but when we can, we can broaden the positive impact of our Congregation members' social justice passions. If we can't sponsor a program

directly, we can still often assist or provide guidance and/or contacts for those wanting to become involved. With our process improving, we are planning new initiatives over these coming months: Juneteenth celebration, Middleboro Pride Event, a summer service presentation, a domestic violence exhibit, de-escalation training for the Congregation (how to handle a hostile verbal or physical response at a vigil or protest).

### Cash in the Plate

Each month, the Congregation makes a donation to a worthy organization that provide services consistent with our Church's mission. Any funds collected on a Sunday that are not specifically earmarked as pledges or gifts to the Church are considered donations to the month's recipient. This year, we donated to:

July	National Network of Abortion Funds
August	Black Mommas Matter
September	Vote Riders
October	Movement Voter Fund
November	Matthew Mission Food Pantry
December	Minister's Discretionary Fund
January	Minister's Discretionary Fund – for veteran's assistance
February	International Rescue Committee
March	New Life Furniture Bank
April	South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center
May	Trevor Project
June	NAACP- Brockton Branch

As of May this year, the Congregation has given \$8,787 in cash donations.

### Minister's Discretionary Fund

The Minister's Discretionary fund helps Church friends and members, but primarily helps individuals in our surrounding communities with emergency situations. This fund is supported by the Scott Trust and our Cash-in-the-Plate collections during the year. Rev. Peter works with our Care Teams and local service organizations to offer emergency assistance to individuals and families experiencing financial challenges. This year, approximately \$3,160 was disbursed to help with various needs, such as food, rent, and utilities.

Thank you to everyone who supports the fund for your generosity. You have made and will make a real difference in the lives of our friends and neighbors at a time when they needed it most.

### MAAC

The Middleborough Area Assistance Coalition (MAAC) is a community group comprised of representatives from agencies and organizations in the Middleborough area that deal directly or indirectly with conditions that are detrimental to the health, safety, or social well-being of individuals and/or families in the service area. Our Church has been involved almost since its inception. Sandy Smiley served as the Church's representative this year. She attended regular meetings and reported

back to the Church on the group's initiatives and projects. The group has been a key source of referrals for individuals who could be helped by the Minister's Discretionary Fund.

After a hiatus of several months, MAAC had an Open House in November, 2022. It now meets usually the third Thursday of the month, at Nichols Middle School, with a hybrid format. These meetings are a time for community and regional service agencies to share information and partner on projects.

This year, Church members supported the following community projects organized by MAAC affiliated organizations:

- Holiday Giving Tree, sponsored by Sacred Heart Food Pantry of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
- Cooler Middleborough Fair in April, sponsored by Sustainable Middleborough, the YESS Club of Middleborough High School, and others. Members of the Congregation volunteered at the event.
- Collection of personal care items and rolling luggage for veterans and homeless folks, sponsored by Elks Lodge #1274.
- Little Library Box, sponsored by Rotary Club, a MAAC member group, was installed on the church lawn for community use.



## **Governance/Administration**

Report Contributors: Bob Waterman, *Vice President of the Parish Committee, Transition Team, Governance & Policy Team, Leadership Development Team, Staff Support Team*

### Parish Committee

The Parish Committee worked continuously this year to address many issues from mundane to more significant to the life and future of our Church. Key items included:

- Continuing work on the PC's vision for the Congregation for 2022-2023.
- Providing budget updates to the Congregation.
- Designing and planning for our Annual Pledge Drive. Gil Cote, Marc MacQueen, and Cheryl MacQueen led a task group to contact pledge units.
- Beginning the process of preparing for the search for a settled minister during the next Church year.
- Forming other task groups.
- Addressing update and revision of policies and procedural guidelines, in particular, safety policies related to operations during the pandemic.
- Making decisions on Cash in the Plate recipients based on the Social Justice Team's recommendations.

### Transition Team

The Transition Team, consisting of Bob Waterman, Jim Bonnar, Lois Aldrich, Andrea Priest, and Nicole Sykes completed an evaluation of the Congregation's progress during our first year of interim ministry.

### Governance/Policy

The Governance/Policy Team, comprised of Bob Waterman (Lead) and Rev. Peter Connolly, serves to: (1) Examine current governance and management structures and methods, and make recommendations on revised or new approaches; (2) Draft and facilitate implementation of changes to Church by-laws; (3) Create, review, and revise policies as needed; (4) Design mechanisms for effective communication of policies (e.g., Policy Handbook, postings on website).

This year's projects included: (1) Developing charges for task groups; (2) Preparing proposed revisions to policies and procedural guidelines; (3) Developing a new organizational chart for Church committees, teams, and task groups.

Thanks go to the committees, teams, and individuals who assisted with the above.

### Leadership Development

The Leadership Development Team consists of Bob Waterman (Lead), Jim Bonnar, and Rev. Peter Connolly. The team's purpose is to assist with the cultivation of leadership in the Congregation. Specific

objectives include: (1) Helping define and establish the mission and vision of leadership in the Church; (2) Assessing needs for leadership development opportunities; (3) Developing and delivering leadership development activities, such as training, retreats, and meetings for Church leaders; this may include identifying outside activities at the regional level, UUA, or other sources, and identifying resources to provide activities in-house; (4) Assisting with seeking out and identifying individuals in the Congregation who have the skills, abilities, experience, and willingness to serve in leadership positions on committees, teams, and task groups.

This year, the team's main focus was on seeking candidates for Parish Committee positions, as well as other leadership positions.

#### Staff Support

The Staff Support Team, consisting of Bob Waterman (Lead) and Marc MacQueen, provides support to the Church's professional staff and to the Minister, as staff supervisor. This year, the team examined staff compensation and benefits issues, and made recommendations for staff salary increases for next year's budget.

## Physical Plant/Infrastructure

Report Contributors: Sue Sherman, *Building & Grounds Team*

It takes many hands to keep our Church facilities and infrastructure in good working order. Our glorious old building and surrounding grounds continue to delight, but also present many challenges to keep things presentable and functioning properly. Many thanks go to all who work tirelessly to see after this very important work.

### Building & Grounds

Susie Sherman continued to lead the efforts to oversee the work of maintaining the building and grounds. She notes that there are many individuals who contribute to this work. The summary below captures only some of the main work that was done during the year.

### Maintenance/Upkeep/Improvements

- Five new windows were installed on the lower level, a very generous gift from the Benards.
- The oven was repaired, with a donation by the Shermans to help defray the cost.
- The rods across the sanctuary were tightened by Brian Kowalski and Barry Simon. Bob DesRosiers, Structural Engineer from ASAP Engineering & Design Co. assisted.
- Jim Bonnar and Alan Melchior installed doorbells on the Nickerson Ave and parish hall doors that ring in the office.
- Kitchen update work is planned for the week of June 12-15. Three drawers will be removed, wall will be repaired, and floor tiles will be applied where the drawers are removed.
- Received an estimate from Chris Dorsey Electric to replace the fluorescent tubes in the parish hall with LED fixtures. Work not yet authorized.
- The two air filters in the parish hall were replaced quarterly. The filters in the sanctuary were checked at the same time, but did not require changing.
- Susie and Andrea Priest have continued to work on keeping the kitchen safe from a persistent problem with mice.
- Val Ortelt contacted the fire extinguisher company for the annual check.
- The elevator was inspected and approved for use for two years.
- Susie and Val spent a day cleaning all the candleholders for the Christmas Eve service.
- Patty Simon completed fall yard clean-up at a cost much less than our landscaping service.

### Parlor Renovation project

Thanks to a very generous donation by the family of Avis Clay, work on renovating the parlor began. Jim Bonnar is leading a task group charged by the Parish Committee to: (1) Determine how the parlor will be used (What is its purpose?), engaging the Congregation and seeking input using surveys, meetings, or other appropriate methods; (2) Assess and remedy any structural issues that need to be addressed, e.g., electrical, window/doors, room design, engaging with appropriate construction professionals to do so;

(3) Complete refurbishment/redecoration of the parlor, including painting, furnishings, etc, seeking input from the Congregation, as appropriate.

As of June, the task group has completed the first set of work and is in the process of addressing the second. Work on reducing the depth of the altar structure was completed. Estimates and bids for plastering, floor refinishing, electrical work, and lighting are being gathered. Work will proceed over the summer. When the work is completed, the room will be dedicated as The Avis Clay Parlor.

### Green Sanctuary

Our Church has been an accredited "Green Sanctuary" since March 2011. In living up to this commitment, we have continued to strive to engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in all that we do, including purchase and use of goods and materials, energy conservation, and recycling. Susie Sherman initiated a renewal of this commitment by circulating a revised covenant that would help us continue our accreditation and participation in the UUA's Green Sanctuary 2030 initiative. Work on this will be continued.

### Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden Team, led by Patty Simon, oversees maintenance and care of the Memorial Garden, which is the repository for ashes of former members of our Church. The Garden is a place of contemplation and remembrance, and many hands have contributed to its upkeep and beautiful presentation.

### Technology

The Technology Team keeps our technical systems and equipment in working order, maintains our Church website, social media accounts, and email addresses, and streams and records our Church services. Contributors include JR Pucillo-Dunphy, Maria Pucillo-Dunphy, Dan Hotchkiss, Stephen Larrett, Rob Dragunas, Frank Girard, Bob Waterman, Jeff Giddings, and Valarie Ortelt.

This year:

- Our Website Wizard Dan has continued to refine our website for greatest appeal and ease of use, adding content from more groups, such as Social Justice. He also engineered a process to generate the UU Updates directly from website content.
- The Stream Team, led by Dan, and the Sound Team, led by Stephen, work together to live stream and record our Sunday services on YouTube. Sermons from each service are then posted to our YouTube site for later viewing. The Sound Team and Dan put together a proposal for upgrading the sound system; the proposal was approved by the Parish Committee.
- JR repaired one of the office printers.
- JR is investigating a new security system for the Church. The current system needs to be replaced.

## Finance

Report Contributors: Bob Waterman, *Acting Treasurer, Fundraising Team*

### Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget Highlights

- Some pledge units have indicated that while they will try to complete their pledges for this year, they may be unable to do so.
- Our fundraising income exceeded expectations, thanks to the efforts and incredible generosity of many in the Congregation.
- Expenses were lower than usual, mainly due to our not paying the minister's salary and benefits for the first two months of the year. (Rev. Peter started on Sept. 1.) In addition, staff professional expenses and committee budget allocations have not been fully spent. The decreases in staff professional expenses are not consistent with Fair Compensation principles; however, staff members were willing to forgo much of the benefit for the sake of economy.
- We did not take the budgeted draw from the Unrestricted Fund, as we were able to manage cash flow with our other sources of income.
- We anticipate the net result to be a budget surplus at the end of the fiscal year.

### Church Bank Accounts

Account	Balance (6/15/23)
Checking	\$37,868
Debit cards	\$499
Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$7,854

### Investment Funds

The Church has several investment funds, some that are restricted and one general fund that is unrestricted. The Investment Team, consisting of Bill Howe (Lead), Marc MacQueen, Alan Melchior, Gil Cote, and Bob Waterman, oversees the investment strategy for these funds.

Investment Account	Balance as of 6/30/22	Balance as of 5/31/23	Change
Unrestricted Fund	\$124,112	\$132,172	+6.5%
Mary Fuller Fund	\$25,430	\$27,068	+6.4%
Memorial Garden Fund	\$1,310	\$1,107	-15.5%
Organ Fund	\$1,150	\$497	-56.8%
Scott Trust	\$20,778	\$22,113	+6.4%
Avis Clay Fund	0	\$98,802	--
2100 Growth Fund	\$14,082	\$20,942	+4.9%
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>\$186,863</b>	<b>\$303,702</b>	<b>+62.5%</b>

## Notes:

- In 2022, the Church received an incredibly generous gift of \$100,000 from members of Avis Clay's family. Avis was a long-time active member of the Congregation and an avid supporter. This gift is being used in part to fund renovation of the church parlor, which will be dedicated as The Avis Clay Parlor. The remainder will be retained in an investment fund, the interest income of which may be used to support the Church's music program and other needs.
- In 2021, the Church established a true Endowment Fund, the 2100 Growth Fund, whose purpose is to benefit the Church in perpetuity. The money is invested with Schwab Investments. The principal will never be available for use, and no interest will be available for Church use for the first three years after establishment of the fund. Thereafter, the Church may use interest income annually to supplement the operating budget. The amount taken each year will be based on a rolling average of the interest income from the last three years, not to exceed 4% of principal. Since this fund is being managed for the very long term, it is being managed more aggressively than regular Church investments, in the expectation that this approach will reap greater rewards over time. This fiscal year, we received a generous donation of \$7,315 to this fund from a member of the Congregation.
- Funds were drawn from the Fuller Fund, Memorial Garden Fund, and Organ Fund to cover expenses.
- Not counting donations and funds drawn, our investments saw modest gains this fiscal year, with the exception of the Endowment Fund, which saw a slight loss.

## Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Proposed Budget Notes

For the past several years, the Congregation has been focused on maintaining a fully funded budget, something we have managed to achieve in prior fiscal years, despite the challenges of the pandemic. Looking ahead, as we continue to emerge from pandemic life, our hope is for increased participation by current members and friends, and newcomers who may have found us by way of virtual Church life.

This year the Parish Committee undertook the work of the Annual Pledge Drive, with Gil Cote, Marc MacQueen, and Cheryl MacQueen leading a task group to contact pledge units. Much thanks to Jim Bonnar, Dan Hotchkiss, Bill Howe, Tanya Trzeciak, and Bill Sherman who contributed to this effort. Our goal for the drive was \$180,000, and the amount pledged so far by our 57 pledge units is approximately \$168,000, an increase of nearly \$6,000 over last year's total. This is despite the fact that we lost over \$8,000 from pledge units who moved away, could not or did not pledge, or reduced their pledge. The Congregation has been very generous in its financial commitment.

In the next fiscal year, we hope to continue to increase our fundraising activity and see a resulting increase in income. We expect certain expenses, such as utilities, to go up. We plan to continue to support the UUA's Annual Program Fund. In order to achieve a fully funded budget, the Parish Committee's is proposing no staff salary increases. This is with due consideration to the fact that we have been striving for over a decade to get closer to the UUA's fair compensation standards, and providing no salary increases will significantly hamper these efforts. We are also mindful of the fact that we will be entering into search for a settled minister and a competitive salary offering will be a major factor in who we might attract. However, the PC believes we must begin to seriously address our fiscal solvency to help sustain us into the future. Despite this, given the expected budget surplus this year, the

PC is proposing a lump sum payment to staff at the end of the current fiscal year to honor the staff's efforts and in consideration of the recent effects of inflation and increase in cost-of-living expenses.