

# UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SCHENECTADY

**Bending toward Justice, Acting in Love**

Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
*2017 Stewardship Drive*



**Annual Report**  
**2016-2017**  
**May 21, 2017**

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**Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
Annual Meeting Agenda  
May 21, 2017**

- 12:00      Call to Order
- Chalice Lighting – Rev Margret A. O’Neill
- Appointment of Parliamentarian and Tellers
- 12:05      Presentation of Slate  
            Donald Whisenhunt, Nominating Committee Chair
- Election of Trustees
- 12:10      Minister’s Report – Rev. Margret A. O’Neill
- 12:20      President’s Report  
            John Reschovsky
- 12:30      Treasurer’s Report  
            Pat Lillquist
- 12:40      Presentation of 2017-2018 Budget  
            Donald Whisenhunt, Finance Chair
- 12:50      Affirmation of Budget
- 12:55      Call for Resolution of Ratification  
            of Actions of Board of Trustees
- 1:00      Closing Words  
            Rev. Margret A. O’Neill

**Nominating Committee Report  
 Submitted by Donald Whisenhunt  
 Board Nominations for USS 2017-2018  
 Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 21, 2017**

Board Member	Serving Thru	Action at Annual Meeting
Gerry Schuth*	2018	none
Kim Schnell*	2018	none
Francisco Gomez-Dossi	2020	Vote - 3yr term
Pat Lillquist	2020	Vote - 3yr term
Sara Warner	2019	Vote - 2yr term
Mindy Whisenhunt	2019	Vote - 2yr term
Trish Williams	2020	Vote - 3yr term

\*Continuing term thru May 2018

**Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
Congregational Meeting Minutes  
May 15, 2016**

**Call to Order and Chalice Lighting**

John Reschovsky, Board President, called the meeting to order at 12:16 PM. Opening words were by the Reverend Margret O’Neill,

**Appointment of Parliamentarian and Tellers**

Scott Horgen, Lisa Jorden and Francisco Gomez-Dossi were appointed as tellers. Holly Hawkes was appointed time keeper. Anne Horgen was the recording secretary. Ernie Hall was appointed parliamentarian.

**Approval of Minutes from 2015 Annual Meeting**

The motion was made “to approve the minutes from the 2015 Congregational Meeting”. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

**Report of the Nominating Committee**

Donald Whisenhunt presented the report of the Nominating Committee.

**Election of Trustees, Officers, Council Members and other elected official**

The motion was made “to approve with one vote the election of the slate of officers as reported in the Nominating Committee Report”. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

**Update on the Interim Time**

Reverend Margret O’Neill presented an update on the Interim Time. She summarized the many activities and events of the past year.

**Report from the President**

Board President, John Reschovsky, presented the President’s Report.

**Report from the Treasurer and the Finance Committee**

Pat Lillquist, Board Treasurer, presented both the Treasurer’s Report and the Finance Committee Report.

**Presentation of the 2016-2017 Budget**

Pat Lillquist, Board Treasurer and Finance Committee Member, presented the 2016-2017 Budget.

**Budget Questions and Discussion: Open Microphones**

Ernie Hall questioned whether we were paying our staff at least minimum wage – the answer was yes, we are. Christy Multer suggested that we include a budget item next year for a contribution to the Hudon-Mohawk UU. Donald Whisenhunt requested details on the current pledge drive. Answer – the projected estimate is at 438K, we are on target for reaching our goal.

Gary Feinland asked about the decrease in health insurance costs as reflected in the budget numbers. Answer - All staff continue to have health care, costs have gone down for several reasons (including one staff person being under their parent’s policy for half the year).

**Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
Congregational Meeting Minutes  
May 15, 2016**

**Vote on 2016-2017 Budget**

The vote was called by John Reschovsky. Voting was by secret ballot. As the votes were being counted, John continued the meeting with the following:

**Members Recognition**

John Reschovsky recognized:

**Rising Star:**

Morgan Anne Myatt

**Unsung Heroes:**

Lee Danielson and Mary O'Keeffe

**Call for Resolution of Ratification of Actions of Board of Trustees**

Mike MacLaury made the motion "that all actions of the Board of Trustees over the last year are ratified and approved". The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

**Report of the Tellers**

Of note – we had well over the quorum. Voting was by secret ballot, 97 voted yes, 0 voted no and there was 1 abstention. The motion passed by the required two-thirds majority

**Extinguishing the Chalice**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM, with extinguishing of the Chalice and closing words by the Reverend Margret O'Neall.

**Submitted by Anne Horgen, Recording Secretary**

Reverend Margret O'Neall delivered opening words.

Allison Lee, Catherine Miller and John Good were appointed tellers. Holly Hawkes was appointed timekeeper. Ernie Hall was appointed parliamentarian.

A quorum was met, 78 members were in attendance.

**Update on the Goals for the Interim Period – Reverend O'Neall**

Reverend Margret O'Neall presented a progress report on the interim period. See attachment. There were no questions.

**Treasurer's Report – Pat Lillquist**

Pat Lillquist presented the treasurer's report. See attachment. There were no questions.

**Report on Governance Transition – Christy Multer/Governance Task Force**

Christy Multer presented the Governance Task Force report. See attachment. There were no questions.

**President's Report – John Reschovsky**

John Reschovsky presented the President's report. He cited the many new initiatives at UUSS and acknowledged Reverend Margret O'Neall as the catalyst for much of the excitement and growth we are currently experiencing.

**Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
Congregational Meeting Minutes  
May 15, 2016**

John commented on the Plaza Project process and explained some of the challenges involved. John acknowledged Rob Brash's significant contribution that enabled the project to be successfully completed. Rob was presented with a plaque of appreciation.

**Consideration of Special Grant from the Legacy Fund for Entry Plaza payment – John Reschovsky**

John presented the summary of the Entry Plaza costs. See attachment. The Board motion was presented to the Congregation "requesting a special grant from the Legacy Fund of \$75,000 to complete funding of the Plaza Project". John opened the floor for comments and questions. After a brief discussion, no move for further comment was made. John called the question. Voting was by secret ballot, there were 78 ballots handed out, 73 were returned. 71 voted yes, 2 voted no and there were no abstentions. The motion passed by the required two-thirds majority.

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 PM with closing words by the Reverend Margret A. O'Neill.

**Submitted by Anne Horgen, Recording Secretary**



**Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
Annual Congregational Meeting Process**

1. Time keeper appointed.
2. For discussion: each person can speak up to 3 minutes.
3. Members speak before non-members. A person cannot speak more than once unless no other person wishes to speak.
4. All discussion is respectful.
5. After 20 minutes of discussion, the question can be called or the voting members can vote by simple majority to extend the discussion by 5-minute increments.

The timekeeper is instructed to:

1. Time the overall time of the discussion and of each speaker.
2. If a speaker goes over time, and the time keeping instrument does not have a beep (audible by all), then the timekeeper stands in a visible place — visible to the speaker. The President should interrupt if the speaker does not wind it down immediately.

## 2016-2017 ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES AND STAFF

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President .....	John Reschovsky
Vice-President .....	Mindy Whisenhunt
Treasurer .....	Pat Lillquist
Secretary .....	Sara Warner
Corresponding Secretary .....	Gerry Schuth
Buildings & Grounds Rep .....	Kim Schnell
Stewardship Rep .....	Paul Newsome
Adult Program Council Liaison .....	Francisco Gomez-Dossi
Religious Education Council Liaison .....	Joel Best
Social Action Council Liaison .....	Vicki Michela
Assistant Treasurer .....	Mike MacLaury

### COUNCIL CHAIRS

Adult Program Council .....	Jill McGrath
Religious Education Council .....	Carol Conyers
Social Action Council .....	Robin Schnell

### STAFF

Interim Minister .....	Rev. Margret A. O'Neill
Director of Religious Education .....	Julie Rigano
Congregational Life Coordinator .....	Kristin Cleveland
Music Director .....	Gareth Griffiths
Church Administrator .....	Susan Marino
Bookkeeper .....	Terri DeGregorio
Custodian .....	Helen Freeland
Assistant Custodian .....	Ed Holen
Nursery .....	Amanda Buczeksmith
Nursery .....	Carrie Mattis
Nursery .....	Darcy Neff-Hall
Accompanist .....	Graham Wolfe



## **COMMITTEES**

*(2016-2017 Designated Chairs or Coordinators)*

Assets Verification .....	Ralph E. Smith, Dan Leonard
Buildings and Grounds.....	Randy Jennings
Caring Team .....	Mike MacLaury
Communications .....	Christy Multer
Finance .....	Donald Whisenhunt
Green Sanctuary.....	Nancy Peterson
Membership .....	Nancy Bogdanowicz, Kathy Fernandez
Memorials.....	Allen Brower
Music.....	Christine Bernard, Sarah Bilofsky
Nominating .....	Donald Whisenhunt
Partner Church.....	Dan and Katy Leonard
Personnel.....	Mindy Whisenhunt
Philosophy Discussion Group.....	Michael Foster
Soup Kitchen.....	Kendra Pratt
Stewardship .....	Mark Hyland
Trusts .....	Richard Baertsch
UUSS BUGS.....	Lisa Angle, MaryAnne Mangano

EBWA (Evening Branch Women's Alliance).....	Carol Furman
Women's Alliance .....	Pat Lambert

### **Delegates to the Schenectady Inner City Ministry**

Allison Blackwell Lee

### **Delegates to the Capital Region Unitarian Universalists of NY**

Gerry Schuth, Rev. Margret A. O'Neill

# *Minister's Report*

*Reverend Dr. Margret A. O'Neill*

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## **UUSS Progress Through the Interim Time A Report from the Minister June 2016 - May 2017**

The third year of the interim time brought a new sense of focus, as the congregation realized the results of the goals you set in September 2014 to guide the transition toward your next settled ministry. As a reminder, your three interim-time goals were in the areas of **Governance, Sustainable Stewardship, and Member Engagement**. You also wanted all the discussions and projects related to work on these goals to be open to all members of the congregation. You will find more details on each of these focal areas in other sections of this Annual Report, so I will provide just an overview of the work this year.

**Governance:** The Governance Task Force (GTF) (members: Holly Hawkes, Dan Leonard, Christy Multer John also mentions Kathy Fernandez and Frank Coon) continued to guide a monthly working session with the Board of Trustees, and over the course of this year a full Board Policy Book was completed and posted on the church website, along with a new Employee Handbook that complies with current best practices in personnel management. A Bylaws Task Force of GTF and Board members drafted revised Bylaws to create the formal authority for the governance changes, and that was approved by congregational vote on April 9. The conversion of existing structures into the new Board Advisory Committees and Ministry Teams is well begun and ongoing.

**Sustainable Stewardship:** Once again the Stewardship Team elected to implement the Visiting Steward model which continues to extend and deepen connections, friendships, and involvement through conversations, creating a healthy focus on the true meaning of stewardship and love of this vital church community.

**Member Engagement:** The pathway into member engagement has been strengthened by adopting a redesigned Website using the UUA template in WordPress with Bluehost as the hosting platform. Implementation of the BREEZE member database is facilitating connections with members and friends, including registration and attendance tracking for RE and adult activities.

The clearly identified Path to Membership begins at the Welcome Table, continues with Fireside Chats, the Getting to Know UU and Membership classes, and extends into an expanded range of Adult

## *Minister's Report*

*(Continued)*

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Faith Development opportunities. The addition of Kristin Cleveland in the staff position of Congregational Life Coordinator has increased the capacity to support volunteer involvement and information management for all these member engagement initiatives.

The two congregation-wide social action projects, Family Promise and Climate Justice, are continuing to flourish and provide a range of new opportunities to learn, serve, and create change. The new Social Action Team on Race is stepping into leadership to bring an increased focus on racial justice in an increasingly diverse and complex world.

The annual multi-congregational worship service of the re-named Hudson Mohawk UUs (HMUU) cluster (now expanded to include five area congregations) was held this year on March 26 at Doane Stuart School in Rensselaer, featuring a five-congregation choir and a sermon by Tom Andrews, the Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

In addition to supporting and coaching the various activities of the congregation, I serve UUSS as Head of Staff, working with each of the staff members to plan, supervise, coach and collaborate with them, and to strengthen the integration of the staff team. A new telephone system, and renovations in the church office, have contributed to a more efficient and productive work environment for the staff. The newly formed Safety Team planned and orchestrated successful fire drills this year, in Waters House in the fall, and the first-ever fire evacuation drill in the main building in April. A push-bar door was installed in the Nursery, bringing the building closer to compliance with safety standards.

Following the election of the Ministerial Search Committee last spring, the culminating process of this transitional time has moved ahead right on schedule, as Reverends Lynn Gardner and Wendy Bartel completed the Candidating Week in early May, and the congregation prepared for the decision to call them at the congregational meeting on May 7.

And so we come to the end of our time together. It has been a pleasure and a gift to serve here. This is a wise and wonderful congregation, and you stand on the threshold of a bright future.

## *President's Report*

*John Reschovsky, President*

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In the many years since I first came to UUSS in the mid-1970s, I cannot remember a more exciting and hopeful time. As I write this report, we are all eagerly awaiting the arrival of The Reverends Wendy Bartel and Lynn Gardner for candidating week. By the time you read these words, I hope, we will have called Reverends Wendy and Lynn as our next settled ministers.

I expect there has always been great excitement when we have called a new minister, but, somehow this feels different. Never before have we worked so hard to prepare for a new ministry, and never, in my memory, have we been in such a good place as we make that transition.

Let us look at some of our recent accomplishments that prepared us for this time.

Member engagement is at an all-time high. So many have stepped up to do their part, engaging in many ways throughout our community. This is happening across the spectrum of congregational life: Religious Education (RE), worship, social justice activities, personal exploration and learning, and just having fun. For so many of us, church is not just where we go on Sunday mornings; it is part of our lives' mission: to deepen our experience and to make the world a better place.

We have been growing in membership. For the first time in many years, our membership count recently passed 380. This has not happened by accident. It is a result of a concerted effort by our Membership Committee and staff and particularly, with the addition this year of Kristen Cleveland, serving so ably, in the newly established Congregational Life Coordinator position.

Our Stewardship of UUSS continues to be strong, a dramatic turnaround from just a few years ago. As of this writing, we are within just a stone's throw from meeting our 2017-18 Pledge Drive goal, and the feedback from our visiting stewards are that the visits are fun.

The process of governance transition is accelerating and beginning to change the way we do church. We just adopted a new version of our Bylaws, reflecting these changes. We are beginning to establish the new Board Advisory Committees. The Board of Trustees recently posted its draft Policy Book, and other policies and handbooks are also being prepared. The Board has focused on putting in place all of this policy and structure. Going forward, its work will shift more fully to its ongoing role of strategy formulation and oversight.

But, perhaps most importantly, this new governance structure prepares us for our new ministers, with a collaborative relationship between Board and Ministers, in which the ministers are empowered to lead and guide us in more effectively achieving our mission.

## *President's Report*

*(Continued)*

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As I complete my tenure as Board President, I want to acknowledge the other Board members: Francisco Gomez-Dossi, Pat Lillquist, Paul Newsome, Mary O'Keeffe, Kim Schnell, Gerry Schuth, Sara Warner and Mindy Whisenhunt. The culture of the Board has changed, as we transitioned from a model where members participated largely as representatives of a Council or Committee, to one in which we reflect on the issues and challenges we face, together as a unified body representing the entire Society. All of our members have risen to fulfill this new role, and the result has been deeper, more thoughtful and engaging exploration. As the Board moves forward, this change will serve us well.

I cannot speak about the Board without also acknowledging the Governance Task Force, who have been our partners in the intense work we have done in the past two years. Frank Coon, Kathy Fernandez, Holly Hawkes, Dan Leonard, Christy Multer served on this Task Force, which has done much of the hard and creative work of governance change. We are all indebted to them for their wisdom and diligence. Particular thanks to Christy, who also led several Board Members in completing the work of the Bylaws Task Force.

And then there is the Search Committee, Betsy Bitner, Eric Dahl, Gary Feinland, Melissa MacKinnon, Mike MacLaury, Kevin O'Connor and Trish Williams who navigated so skillfully through the complex search process, really came together as a single-minded team and have delivered us with, not just one, but two fantastic Ministers. Well done!

I could go on and on thanking all the people who have made our church thrive, but space does not permit. Suffice it to say that many committees and teams have worked diligently in their roles, and all their members have contributed to our success.

But to run a church takes more than just volunteers. There is also our terrific staff who is dedicated and capable, keeping all our wheels turning. They work well as a team and will be invaluable in maintaining our continuity as we transition to our new Ministers.

Finally, I want to give special recognition to the one person who deserves the most credit. For harnessing all our collective energies, for selflessly giving so much of her time and energy and for offering such incredible leadership and wisdom, we all owe The Reverend Margret A. O'Neill a huge debt of gratitude. For us, this interim time has been truly transformational. We could not have done it without her and she will be missed. As she packs her bags to move on to another congregation, where she will start anew, we all wish her smooth sailing and renewed fulfillment.

***Director of Lifespan Religious Education***  
*Julie Rigano, Director of Lifespan Religious Education*

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This year was another fantastic year for the Lifespan Religious Education program here at UU Schenectady. This year we moved more fully into our lifespan model as we enhanced our adult faith development programming while maintaining quality programming for children and youth.

In 2016-2017, we ran eleven programs for our children and youth, including four Our Whole Lives classes, our sexuality education curriculum. Many of our classic adult faith development programs returned this year, such as “World Religions” and “Long, Strange Trip.” I also partnered with and supported other teams leading adult faith development opportunities, such as the Social Action Team on Race’s successful course “Race: The Power of an Illusion.” We had 131 children and youth registered this year with an average of 16 adults participating in our 15 courses, not including the outlier 56 participants in the “Race: The Power of an Illusion” course.

This year we had over 60 volunteers supporting our lifespan religious education program from volunteer teachers and facilitators to Sunday Supervisors and RE Greeters. We also welcomed two new staff members supporting the RE program this year. Carrie Mattis joined as our third child care provider in the nursery. As we have had more need for child care with our expanding adult faith development programming, we have found the need to have a rotating nursery staff so our child care providers can have a well-deserved rest. We also welcomed Kristin Cleveland, our Congregational Life Coordinator. Kristin’s roles in supporting membership outreach and supporting RE engagement overlap to give new depth and perspective to the RE program.

The Our Whole Lives program, commonly referred to as OWL, found new energy this year with five newly trained volunteers as well as support from the newly formed OWL Coordination Sub Team of the RE Team, led by our new OWL Coordinator, Jenn D’Arcy. In the fall, we started the K-1 OWL class on Sunday mornings as well as the 7-8 OWL class on Wednesday nights. K-1 OWL ended in December and two new OWL courses began in January: 5-6 OWL on Sunday mornings and 11-12 OWL on Wednesday nights. While we had practically 100% for every OWL session in every class, only four youth were able to register for the 11-12 OWL. As we look towards our next OWL cycle in 2018-19, we are considering how we can adjust the 11-12 OWL sessions so more youth could be involved - meeting on Sunday afternoons, once a

## ***Director of Lifespan Religious Education*** *(Continued)*

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month overnight sessions, etc. Our Wednesday night RE classes prompted us to create a new volunteer role: Wednesday Supervisor. The Wednesday Supervisor is comparable to a Sunday Supervisor and supports the teaching teams while they are in class.

With the help of the RE Team and the new various sub teams (OWL Coordinator Sub Team, RE Policy Sub Team, Adult Faith Development Sub Team, etc.), the RE program has focused on creating an institutional memory and creating policy that supports all members of the RE program- teachers, children, youth, and parents.

We also held a fire drill in both buildings this year. Waters House evacuated in under two minutes and the main building, including the two RE classrooms, evacuated in its first fire drill ever in five minutes.

Next year is shaping up to be another great year. Coming of Age will return next year following a similar model from last year with youth participating in worship and sometimes having afternoon courses. We will also be returning the mentor program to Coming of Age in a new model that best supports the youth on their spiritual journey. The Adult Faith Development Sub Team is also working on expanding the adult faith development opportunities with more varied offering and opportunities for deeper self-discovery.

The RE program continues to grow and thrive in no small part due to the dedication and passion of the members of this congregation.

*Adult Program Council*  
*Jill McGrath, Chair*

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**Mission Statement:**

*The Adult Programs Council strives to create joyful community, inspire personal growth and maintain our living tradition for the members of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady.*

**In-Gathering party:** September 11, 2016

**Holiday party:** December 3, 2016

**Homemade Holidays:** December 4, 2017

**Winter Camp-in:** January 14 -15, 2017 in the Great Hall

**Chili Cook-off and Trivia night:** March 18, 2017

**End of year Picnic:** Planned for June 11, 2017

The Adult Program Council will be restructuring in the 2017-2018 church year and adding new team members.



## *A Place For Folk*

*Lara Turney, Chair*

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A Place For Folk is a small but determined group of people who are committed to increasing the availability of high quality folk music in our community. While it is true that there are two other folk venues in the Capital Region it is also true that the NERFA (Northeast Regional Folk Alliance) views our area as underserved for folk artists based on our demographics and geographical location, specifically for younger artists within this genre.

We see our series as a three-fold opportunity to 1) open our historic and acoustically vibrant space to both nationally known and local artists (This year we began by offering local musicians as “openers” to our headliners), 2) to get people from the greater community into our space which will promote some knowledge of who we are and what we believe, and 3) to provide an opportunity for other groups within the church to fundraise for their projects by offering refreshments during the intermission for a suggested donation. Announcements related to our work in the community at large and these fundraising events are promoted during the introductions at the beginning of the performances.

We are currently closing our 5th season and project to be profitable once again. While we are currently not making additional funds to contribute to the church (except for the fundraising activities at intermission), we should run even or perhaps a little better overall for this season. In time, if embraced by the larger congregation and its committees and through building a larger audience, this venue might actually provide a profit and be in a position to contribute to the church in a more financial way. We hope that our efforts increase visibility in the community at large and open our building to more people who may otherwise not enter.

We welcome all UUSS members who share a love and appreciation for folk music, who wish to promote musicians both nationally and locally in our community at large and congregational life.

APFF Guest at Season 5 Concerts = 190 plus volunteers and musicians

Members: Lara Turney (Chairperson), Melinda and Dan Perrin (Founders, volunteers and mentors), Anthony Krivitski, Pema, Barbara Weingart Frankie Coon (Volunteers)

*Assets Verification Committee*  
*Ralph Smith & Dan Leonard*

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The Assets Verification Committee has reviewed the church assets as required by UUSS By-Laws. Our examination included church asset accounts and Balance Sheets of the Church and Trust accounts as of June 30, 2016.

**Current Assets**

Verifiable current assets at the close of the June 30, 2016 fiscal year as shown on the final Treasurer's Balance Sheet as follows:

10000	Operating Account (TrustCo)	\$120,992
10010	GE Elfun	1,969
11001	Operating Account (Chas Schwab/PBC)	18,837
11005	Ministerial Search Committee (new account)	50
11006	Community & Congregational Assistance (TrustCo)	5,638
11007	PayPal	263
11008	Women's Alliance Checking (TrustCo)	1,514
11010	Petty Cash	25
11011	EBWA Checking (1 <sup>st</sup> Nat'l. Bank of Scotia)	936

We find that the value of the above current assets, as stated on the Church Treasury Balance Sheet, to be consistent with statements provided by the entries holding Church funds.

**Other Assets**

Trust Funds: The June 30, 2016 brokerage statements for the several components of the Trust Funds agrees with the amounts shown on the summary sheet maintained by the Trust Committee.

Trust Committee Managed Assets	\$1,911,387
Women's Alliance Investments	<u>82,531</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,993,918</b>

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**Comparison with UUSS June 30, 2016 Balance Sheet:**

<b>Account</b>	<b>Fund</b>	<b>Amount</b>
14100	UUSS Trust Funds	\$1,796,532
14200	Building Fund	114,855
14300	Women's Alliance Investments	<u>82,531</u>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,993,918</b>

The Committee commends the Society Treasurer, Bookkeeper, Women's organization Treasurers, and Richard Baertsch of the Trusts Committee for their exemplary record keeping. This summary is an extract of the full report available at the church office.

## ***Buildings & Grounds Committee***

*Randy Jennings, Chair*

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The Buildings and Grounds team, in coordination with our professional custodial staff, is tasked with keeping our aging facilities safe, clean, and functional. We meet the issues of repair and maintenance as they arise. We seek to anticipate the needs of important infrastructure systems before a major failure occurs. We strive to find the balance between maintaining the historic integrity of our buildings, reducing our energy consumption and meeting the ever changing needs of our community and our staff.

Ongoing maintenance items are too numerous to mention now, but here are a few of the projects completed so far for 2016/2017:

### **1221 Wendell Ave:**

- New carpet for office and minister's study
- Upgraded our phone system
- New signs for church and for Waters House
- Upgrade lighting to high efficiency LED (ongoing)
- New egress-compliant exit door installed in Nursery
- New counters and sinks in restrooms, refinish stall doors

### **1248 Wendell Ave - Waters House:**

- New emergency lighting
- New exterior lighting
- New parking area to support improved  
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access
- New boiler
- New basement windows

### **Highlights of some of our pending projects:**

- Create an ADA compliant entrance to Waters House
- Build new steps behind church, to back yard
- Obtain proposals to address our decaying trellis wall
- Get estimates to upgrade our heating systems

## *Caring Team*

*Mike MacLaury, Coordinator*

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Caring Team members are Kristin Cleveland, Mike MacLaury, Carol Neff, Marion Nelson, Lisa Temoshok, Nancy Tobiessen and Paula Shaw working closely with Rev. Margret to help the congregation provide caring support for one another when a member or friend is in need.

The networks within our congregation often respond spontaneously to members' needs as they become known, and the Caring Team assists in supporting the caring response and filling the gaps in the natural network system. That response can include visiting and phone contact, and helping to find or mobilize resources for meals, transportation, emergency child care, respite care, yard work and small home repair. The team sends cards of condolence or congratulation, and is working to maintain contact with members who can no longer be actively involved in the congregation.

This team hopes to evolve into one that can create a sustainable network of caring response from the congregation as a whole. Anyone interested is welcome to get involved.

## ***Communications Team***

*Christy Multer, Chair*

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At the urging of Rev. Margret O’Neill, in April 2017 a number of people who play key roles in writing and/or disseminating public information at UUSS agreed to form a Communications Team to improve the various ways that we keep one another informed. The group is examining our communication vehicles to identify which are working well and which can be improved. Communication policies and “how to’s” are also being developed so that appropriate procedures can be in writing and easily shared.

The congregation’s wonderful “new” website at <http://uuschenectady.org> has been up and running for more than a year now. Based on a WordPress template created by UUA consultants, it is has become the primary means by which new and prospective members find UUSS. The website’s homepage alone is typically visited 150 – 350 times per day. We thank John Bacheller for doing not only most of the work to create the site but also weekly work to update it.

The congregation also has an active social media presence. We have a Twitter page with 47 followers at <https://twitter.com/uusschenectady>, a public Facebook page with 480 followers at <https://www.facebook.com/UUSSchenectady>, and a private Facebook page (what Facebook refers to as a “group”) called “UUSS Families, Fellowship and Beloved Community,” which has 193 members and is open to anyone who is a UUSS member or staff.

Initial members of the Communications Team include John Bacheller, Deb Best, Kristin Cleveland, Gigi Gabriel Dillmann, Mark Hyland, Susan Marino, Rev. Margret A. O’Neill, Julie Rigano, Robin Schnell, Paula Shaw, and Christy Multer, chair pro tem. Others interested in communication are welcome to join!

*Earth Circles*  
*Patti Gile and Melinda Perrin, Co-Chairs*

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Finishing up our third year as Earth Circles UUSS, we continue to grow with active members in the congregation and in the larger community. Everyone is welcome to participate and our e-mail list contains about 150 people. Our Full Moon Drum Circles routinely draw over 20 and everyone loves drumming in the garden in good weather where we also celebrated the Summer Solstice. Preceding the Fall Equinox service we led a protest at the corner of State & Washington in Schenectady to support the Water Protectors blocking the Dakota Access Pipeline. For Samhain we told ghost stories. This year's Winter Solstice broke attendance records (about 100); the story of the Raven was a big hit. For Imbolc, the women planned their own Croning Ceremony to celebrate entering the Wisdom Years. 26 people had a lot of fun at the family Spring Equinox pot-luck and do-it-ourselves celebration. Both the leather rattle-making and the native flute-making workshops were at capacity. Members led drumming at Schenectady High's after school program. The 2015-16 Whirling Rainbow Lodge finished its full year meeting together and Earth Circles is planning to start a new lodge this fall. A Peacemaker Talking Circle started in February; it is going well and we have a waiting list for a second group in the fall. Earth Circles networks with Green Sanctuary; the Mohawk, the Onondaga and Seneca; as well as other small bands and spiritual groups of various traditions; Prairyerth UU and FUUSA. We are grateful for our time with Rev. O'Neall and are looking forward to working with the incoming settled ministers. The Earth Circles Steering Committee is Patti Gile, Anne Horgen, and Melinda Perrin with the help of many.

## ***EBWA (Evening Branch Women's Alliance)***

*Carol Furman, Treasurer*

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Meetings of the Evening Branch of the Women's Alliance (EBWA) are open to ALL women, whether or not they are UUSS members. Founded over 30 years ago by and for women who want to meet in the evening, the group convenes monthly for fun and friendship, as well as a catered vegetarian meal followed by a program. Each spring interested women each spring suggest programs for the following year. Many women especially enjoy the networking, where each woman can share something of interest with the group. This programming and the sense of support women get from the group continues to attract new women to the church. Because of the significant support component, EBWA is strictly a women's group. No men are allowed, in contrast to the daytime Women's Alliance.

There have been many fascinating programs this past year. Some highlights have ranged from a Sabbatical in Tel Aviv to Mushing in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Moths and their Habitat, and Nanotechnology.

Although next year's program list is not finalized at the time of this writing, some of the topics under consideration include such wide-ranging issues as Flamenco Guitar music, Gold Star Mothers, Clowns on Rounds, the opiate epidemic, and a book about the first headmistress of the Albany Academy for Girls.

Since EBWA is not a fundraising organization, we charge just enough (\$15) to pay for a catered vegetarian meal, offer a small honorarium to the speaker(s), and pay for dishwashing. Any woman attending just the program pays \$3. We are pleased to serve fair trade coffee purchased from the UUSS Social Action Council.

The steering committee meets about once a month and always welcomes new faces. Women who have attended steering committee meetings have been heard to say that they are even more fun than regular meetings.

You can find further information about EBWA and our scheduled programs, as well as a write-up on the current upcoming program, on the UUSS website at [uuschenectady.org](http://uuschenectady.org). Also, there is information and a calendar on the bulletin board near the back door of the church, opposite the kitchen door. Our organizational structure is informal (no officers) and the steering committee is always open to new women and fresh ideas. Currently the steering committee consists of Judy Clough, Carol Fischer, Carol Furman, Vita Interrante, Carol Kobuskie, Kay MacLaury, Kendra Pratt, Peg Reich, and Jane Robbins.

## *Family Promise*

*Mary O’Keeffe and Lee Danielson, Coordinators*

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In 2015, our congregation selected Family Promise, an interfaith hospitality network for homeless families, as one of two Living Our UU Principles all-congregation service projects. The overall goal of the program is to transition families into housing so that they can become more stable and independent. Since 2015 UUSS has been hosting homeless families for a week at a time in Waters House 4-5 times a year. We have hosted families five times this past year, in August, September, and November of 2016 and in January and April in 2017. Beyond host weeks, UUSS members have also been providing violin lessons and GED math tutoring to Family Promise guests.

Mary O’Keeffe and Lee Danielson have conducted training sessions as needed in this past year, and the number of trained volunteers has increased from 48 to 75! UUSS Volunteers have set up Waters House before the families arrive, prepared dinners and stayed overnight with the guest families, and prepared Waters House for Religious Education after the guests leave.

The coordinators felt that having air conditioners in Waters House would be very desirable for any guests staying during the summer, so we sent out a request and received three donated air conditioners. Buildings and Grounds installed them in the three rooms on the second floor that are commonly used by the guests for sleeping. Everyone will be more comfortable in the summer!

The Waters House kitchen has two new storage drawers that were constructed and installed by Mark Vermilyea. Thank you, Mark! These drawers will help keep the silverware and cooking utensils organized and more easily available to the families and the volunteers.

Currently we are investigating the possible use of air beds in addition to the current cots, in order to provide more comfortable sleeping for families and volunteers.

The Family Promise program at UUSS continues to be successful and a positive experience for volunteers, with good participation from UUSS members and friends, as well as occasionally other congregations. We are always looking for new volunteers, so contact Mary or Lee if you would like to participate in this program! And thank you to the many people who have volunteered so far — it is truly a congregation-wide effort.



## ***Finance Committee***

*Donald Whisenhunt, Chair*

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The Finance Advisory Committee meets monthly with a mission to provide fiscal oversight for the church operations. We report and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees and prepare an Annual Budget. Based on the budget we make recommendations to the Board and Stewardship for what the annual pledge drive goal should be. The Board approves the proposed budget and it is presented to the congregation at the Spring Annual Meeting.

The Finance Committee is pleased to report that we ended last year (FY 2015-2016) with a positive cash balance that increased our operating surplus to \$37,099. This indicates that we are in a much stronger financial position that we have been in the past. For example, we ended FY 2013-14 with an overall debt of ~\$11,000. This improved cash position is due to the generosity of our members, more conservative budgeting and managing expenses by our staff. While it is difficult to forecast this year's (FY 2016-2017) cash balance, it is likely to be very close to our budgeted amount of \$700.

Establishing and maintaining an adequate cash reserve is necessary for our financial health and provides flexibility to meet unexpected expenses or loss of revenue. I would like to thank Mike MacLaury, the previous chair of the Finance Committee, for all his hard work that has improved the financial health of the congregation.

We budget our sources of income (pledges, Sunday collection, fundraising events, facility rental and non-pledge contributions) based on history and prudent estimates. Expense budget items include health insurance and relocation cost for our new settled minister(s), utilities and maintenance needs, support for leadership development, and fair compensation for our staff.

In FY 2017-18 we will receive \$61,676 from the Trust Committee as a grant to the general budget. This is an increase over last year (5.5%) and represents 11% of our income.

The Pool/Entrance Renovation expenses have all been accounted for and all pledges have either been paid or written off (the amount of pledge written off was very small).

Members of the Finance Advisory Committee who regularly attend (you are all welcome to attend anytime): Val Catlin, Francisco Gomez-Dossi, Dan Leonard, Pat Lillquist (Treasurer), Bob Ringlee, Jackie Foster, Donald Whisenhunt (Chair), Mike MacLaury (past-chair) and Rev. Margret A. O'Neill.

## *Governance Task Force / Advisory Committee*

*Christy Multer, Coordinator*

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The visible results of work by the Governance Task Force (GTF) increased significantly during 2016-17. Work during 2014-15 and 2015-16 was less visible but essential since it was necessary to build understanding and consent among UUSS members and groups for the cultural shift to policy-based governance. Building upon this foundation, the GTF sped up its work during 2016-17 so that governance change could take effect by the end of Rev. Margret A. O’Neill’s three-year interim ministry with us.

Members of the GTF continued to make hour-long presentations at each month’s Board of Trustees meeting and to present the Board with draft policies for their consideration, editing, and approval. An official “Board Policy Book” has grown out of this effort and is now posted on a new “Our Governance” page of the church website.

The Policy Book will naturally continue to grow and be updated as the Board; staff and congregation members use the policies and discover places where changes or additional policies are needed. Several less formal “Handbooks” are also being developed, which will each summarize the procedures used at UUSS to address a specific subject. The first of these is the Employee Handbook, which is now complete and also available on the website.

Another major effort during 2016-17 was revising the Bylaws, which had not been overhauled since 2006. A short-term Bylaws Task Force (Christy Multer, Paul Newsome, Rev. Margret O’Neill, John Reschovsky, and Mindy Whisenhunt) was formed to accomplish this. On April 9, 2017, after two previous public meetings and discussions, congregation members adopted the new Bylaws by a vote of 97 to 3. The new Bylaws are simpler than the old ones and only about two-thirds as long. The biggest change is that instead of 46 elected positions, the new Bylaws require only seven elected members, who will comprise the Board of Trustees.

The formal transition to policy-based governance will occur on July 1 2017 when the revised Bylaws take effect. This means that a number of existing groups at UUSS will take on new names and/or modified roles, as described in the new Bylaws or the Board Policy Book. For instance, the GTF will become the Governance Advisory Committee, reporting to the Board.

The GTF is currently four people — Holly Hawkes, Dan Leonard, Christy Multer, and Rev. Margret A. O’Neill.

## *Green Sanctuary & Climate Justice*

*Nancy Peterson Chair*

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The mission of the Green Sanctuary Committee is to provide opportunities for our congregation to practice environmental stewardship, as we affirm in our Bond of Union. Our core team at our monthly planning meetings includes Crys Hamelink, Janet Hollocher, Catherine Miller, Nancy Peterson, Juliana Post-Good, Paula Shaw, and Dick Westergard.

We continued many of our traditions, including the Locavore Lunch in September, the Sunday environmental information tables, the calendar collection for SICM, the winter outing as part of the Church Winter Camp-in. When Paula accepted a position on the interfaith Impact Board (the progressive religious community's voice for justice and human rights in New York State for more than two decades,) she also took strong leadership of our Climate Justice Advocacy Team, resulting in frequent advocacy issues on our information table, and increased participation in local activism. We encouraged people to participate in the March for Science and the People's Climate March in April, and helped organize car pools. We also signed members up to advocate for Climate Justice at Interfaith Impact's Lobby Day in May. Our Education and Information Team, under the leadership of Crys Hamelink, organized Climate Justice Sunday on Jan. 29 in conjunction with Rev. Margret, with Rev. Fred Small leading the Sunday service in the morning and a Climate Justice Workshop in the afternoon. Both were very well-attended by UUSS members as well as by many guests from the community and First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany – 70 people participated in the "Spiritual Nurture for Climate Activism" workshop. Again this year we presented the Northwest Earth Institute discussion course, "Change Is Our Choice." We participated in the Hudson Mohawk UU joint service by presenting a Climate Justice information table. We're looking forward to our year-end celebrate summer outing with our fellow Greenies from the other HUUU congregations in early June.

We have gained a lot from our three years with Rev. Margret. Her leadership in activism has helped us move in the direction of advocacy. We look forward to continuing this trend with a new settled ministry.

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## ***Membership Team***

*Nancy Bogdanowicz, Kathy Fernandez Co-Leaders*

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*Team Members: Nancy Bogdanowicz (co-leader), Kathy Fernandez (co-leader), Mark DeCicco, Crys Hamelink, Stephen Healey, Lisa Jordan, Gerry Schuth.*

The Membership Team roles and responsibilities are:

- Welcome newcomers
- Assist prospective members in joining
- Involve new members in our community
- Recognize the dedication of continuing members
- Host receptions to honor new and longtime members

The Membership Team organizes the Sunday Welcome Table and Fireside Chats. Twice a year, we teach the four week Getting to Know UU classes, participate in the Membership classes, and New Member Sundays. We have a Milestone Sunday to honor our 25 and 50 year members. Last spring we had a New Member Party at the Whisenhunts' home. In the 2016-17 church year, we will have welcomed 30 new members to our congregation.

Our Team appreciates the many valued individuals who assist at the Welcome Table, lead Fireside Chats and host receptions.

New this year was the hiring of Kristin Cleveland as Congregational Life Coordinator. She manages our records and database, registration of classes, assists in classes and does follow up with newcomers. She is fulfilling many aspects of Membership, which as a small team, we were unable to do. She has proven to be a valuable addition to our team.

We have missed working with Trish Williams and Carol Fuller, since they resigned from our team.

## *Music Program*

*Gareth Griffiths, Music Director*

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Even after more than two decades as the Society's Music Director I can honestly say the position still brings me great satisfaction and pleasure and energizes me on many levels! I continue to be so grateful for the many volunteers who make my job so enjoyable but also for the special warmth with which the congregation greets all of those who contribute musically to our services.

Thanks first of all to the Junior and Society choirs for their dedication and accomplishments this year and to our fine accompanist Graham Wolfe. This past year we welcomed several new members to the adult choir. Several members of the congregation shared their talents with us on Sunday mornings: Paula Shaw, violin and viola; Bill Flanagan, banjo and dulcimer; Pete Gernert-Dott, bass; Quinton Cain, percussion, Jamecyn Morey, violin; David Bebe, cello; Kim Kilby, guitar; Hazel and Maia Regan, Jr. choir soloists, and Will Whisenhunt, tenor.

We welcomed several new guest musicians this year: Brian Melick, percussion; Joshua Nelson, saxophone; David Gleason, jazz pianist; David Roth, folksinger; Tom Wadsworth, guitar, and Sam Zucchini, drums.

Singular praise goes to the Music Team for their commitment and hard work. This is a team of high-energy individuals and so it should not be a surprise that they sponsor the Society's two major fundraisers – Yuletide Revels and Cupid's Cabaret. The most successful Revels yet was held this past December. Sarah Bilofsky and Christine Bernard co-chair the Music Team.

It has been a distinct pleasure collaborating with Margret this past year on services. I am grateful for her wisdom and experience and to all the staff for their support of the Music program.

***Music Team***  
*Christine Bernard & Sarah Bilofsky, Co-Chairs*

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The Music Program Team is committed to enriching the UUSS community through music, maintaining its vital role in services and other events. We believe that music can deepen the spiritual experience, build community and strengthen our connection to the values and beliefs we share as a congregation.

In recent years, the team has also taken on producing the congregation's two largest special events, Yuletide Revels and Cupid's Cabaret. Both events showcase the many talents of our members while raising significant funds for the church. In December of 2016, Yuletide Revels was our most successful to date, involving more than 100 members and generating over \$14,000 to benefit UUSS.

The Music Program Team also supports the music director in creating the music budget, special music performances and seeking new musicians to perform in services. We serve as ambassadors, encouraging new and existing UUSS members to share their musical talents, whether performing in a service, joining a choir or participating in a special event.

We welcome all UUSS members who share a love and appreciation for music in our congregational life.

Members: Christine Bernard, Dan Bernard, Sarah Bilofsky, Jeff Brink, Sue Brunelle, Pete Gernert-Dott, Tamara Geveci, Gary Griffiths, Lisa Levalsami, Rosie Lewis, Christy Multer, Juliana Post-Good, Robyn Salvin, George Shaw, Paula Shaw, Mark Vermilyea

## ***Partner Church Team***

*Dan Leonard, Chair*

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The Partner Church Committee continues to foster the strong and lasting bond between our society and the Stony Hill Church of Marosvásárhely, Transylvania, Romania. Our Partner bond was formed in the early 2000's and continues to grow with each year.

The highlight of the Partner Church year for 2016 was our July youth trip to Transylvania. Eight youth and 4 adults visited Transylvania (which is in Romania) to foster deeper understandings of our shared historical Unitarian roots as well as to enhance mutual understanding between co-religionists. The group participated in a Sunday service on July 10<sup>th</sup>, visited Kolozsvár, the city where the Transylvanian Unitarian Church has its headquarters, high school, and the church which houses the rock that the founder of Unitarianism, Francis David, spoke from when he “converted the whole town’s population to Unitarianism.” They spent eight days with ethnically Hungarian brother and sister Unitarians including two nights with families for the youth. At a four day camp, our youth, who are in the habit of conducting youth led vesper services, invited the Hungarian youth to participate and were pleased with the turn out. Games, discussions, horse cart rides, a service project and creating crafts all helped to create bonds which we expect to continue via electronic media. We were overwhelmed by the hospitality of our hosts and by all the planning they did that made the trip such a success. The youth conducted a church service at UUSS during October to share their experiences and insights.

- Submitted by Lois Porter and Dan Leonard

## *Philosophy Discussion Group*

*Michael Foster, Coordinator*

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The Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady Philosophy Group has been active and serving the congregation and the community for more than 40 years. It is currently comprised of about 25 members. In addition to UUSS members it includes persons from the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, area churches and the Humanist Society.

Books chosen by the group, read and discussed in the past year were about how smart animals are, about the nature of the brain and about the claim that historically "the moral arc" is bending toward justice. We read both classical and contemporary philosophical works.

We meet every Wednesday in the UUSS Emerson Room from 10:00 - 11:30am. We meet during the summer months with a different topic each week selected by members who volunteer to provide materials and lead the discussion. We promote sociability by having pot luck luncheons and a summer picnic.

Our mission is to seek enlightenment and enjoyment as we hope to reach a deeper understanding of all that life has to offer.



## ***Religious Education Team***

*Carol Conyers, Chair*

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### **2016-2017 Highlights in this 3rd year of interim ministry and changing governance:**

- We created and implemented policies and procedures for the vital aspects of the RE Program to better support children and youth, volunteer teachers, engaged parents, the RET, a newly staffed Congregational Life Coordinator (CLC), a fully empowered Director of Lifetime Religious Education (DLRE), and prospective UUSS members and families. This work will culminate soon with a draft RE Manual or Handbook. And, with better workflow and communications within RET, and the use of subteams, RET is more effective, meetings are shorter, and it is easier and more fun for new team members to become involved and highly productive.
- We created subteams to better support the RE Program: OWL Coordination; RE Liason; Policy; Adult Faith Development; and Sunday Supervisor; and an RE Fund Taskforce
- We conveyed RET concerns to the GTF and integrated the evolving governance changes. RET participated in the opportunities afforded to ask questions and offer comments on the new bylaws and the Board's draft Policy Book, and we hosted Board and GTF members at RET meetings to foster enhanced mutual understanding during this transitional period

*Continued.....*

## ***Religious Education Team*** *(Continued)*

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With the move away from the old bylaws, RET was able to increase the number of RET members from 8 to 9. The RET is a distinguished group and it continued to be an honor to work with them during another dynamic and transformational year. Mati Greco-Hackett began a new term July 1, 2016. Glen D'Arcy and Erin Piotrowski began new terms in 2017. All other members will continue in the coming year: Danielle Regan (Secretary); Donna Newsome (Finance, Adult Faith); Ed Kautz (at large); and Jacob Feinland (Youth Rep).

**Goals for the coming year** are to continue work on the above, foster the process for establishing Team Handbooks, propose criteria and goals for use of the RE Fund, and enhance the support that is available to RE teachers and parents.

## ***Social Action Council***

*Robin Schnell, Chair*

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One of SAC's tasks is to oversee Social Action collections that happen once or twice a month. To date we have collected over \$13,000 for SICM, Schenectady Home Furnishings, Center for Community Justice, our Partner Church, Family Promise, Salvation Army Soup Kitchen, Jubilee, NY Interfaith Power & Light, Planned Parenthood, and Miracle on Craig St., along with 4 more groups yet to be recipients. On a small scale, we collect and deliver personal care products, including diapers to the SICM pantry, Bethesda House and the Center for Community Justice Re-entry program. Family Promise is one of our most volunteer-intensive projects, but we are proud to participate as we continue to educate new volunteers and work in the community with other Capital District congregations to host homeless families for 3 weeks per year. Our table at the back of the Great Hall and Coffee, Crullers & Conversation has enabled the congregation to sign petitions, pick up postcards to mail to legislators, and get educated about social actions that they can take as individuals. We have also been a part of the Task Force on Race via a book discussion of William Barber's *Third Reconstruction*. and showing the videos: "13th" and "Race: The Power of an Illusion." Our "Black Lives Matter" banner is an indication to the broader community of where we stand on racial justice.

## *Soup Kitchen*

*Kendra Pratt, Coordinator*

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The Salvation Army Soup Kitchen provides breakfasts and lunches for families in need who have nowhere else to go for meals. The UUSS Soup Kitchen crew prepared and served 10 luncheons during the 2016-2017 service year. UUSS has participated actively in this program since 1983.

In the 2016-2017 year UUSS volunteers put in over 236 hours and served 1,334 meals at the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen. There are a number of people experiencing food insecurity each month with the number of lunch guests ranging from 100 to 150 depending on the time of the month.

The meal we supply consists of a bowl of chili soup, a choice of cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a fruit cup, juice and cookies. The Salvation Army sometimes supplies fruit, juice, coffee, tea, paper products and occasionally fresh fruit and luscious desserts. We are among the few volunteer organizations that continue to provide luncheons during the summer months.

In past years funding for the Soup Kitchen Project came from the Women's Alliance grant, the Men's Lunch Group; three fundraisers; Luncheon Fundraisers and a Place for Folk fundraisers. This year the Social Action Committee supported the Soup Kitchen Project with a Third Sunday collection. This collection was so successful that it has covered the ten luncheons for one fiscal year and additional fundraising was not necessary. Five dollars of the money donated feeds four hungry Schenectadians.

In January the Soup Kitchen committee put on a "Thank You-Luncheon" for the Congregation for their generous support of this outreach project to the hungry of our community.

The Congregational Life Fair attracted a dozen interested volunteers. Those who volunteer at the Soup Kitchen are filled with warm hearts after feeding their guests. We appreciate the hours of work by many volunteers who have served in this program, some new and some for many years.

## *Stewardship Team*

*Mark Hyland, Chair*

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Our 2017 Pledge Drive theme, “Bending toward Justice, Acting in Love,” captures well the mood and attitude of this bold and outward-facing congregation as it continues on its upward trajectory. We remembered what Barack Obama told us: “The moral arc of the universe may bend toward justice, but it does not bend on its own.” This bending process will require effort and it will require money. But through the Stewardship Campaign, USS members showed that we are truly willing to “put our money where our mouths are!”

The campaign began, as in the past, with a leadership event thanking our major donors. This year, for the first time, we also invited those who had indicated they were Fair Share pledgers, based on the UUA chart, meaning they gave a substantial amount as compared to their means. The event, a champagne brunch, was held in our own decorated dining room; and everyone had fun.

The leadership event also featured our first-ever Stewardship video, which was also shown the next day at the Canvass Sunday worship service. The video allowed some of us to explain why this church means so much to us. We are very grateful to Kurt Warner for the professional videography skills he brought to the project. If you haven't seen the video yet (or just want to see it again), it is available on the UU Schenectady website and Facebook page.

This was the third year in a row that we used the Visiting Steward model for collecting pledge cards. This process of members and Visiting Stewards having (usually) short conversations with one another has proven to be enjoyable and popular. We have observed that these interactions actually strengthen the congregation by creating “cross links” between more and more people. Some folks have even told us that they have made new friends. Thank you Visiting Stewards! We depend on you, and we hope you had fun.

The Stewardship Team accepted the Board of Trustees' goal of raising \$450,000 in pledges. As of April 21st, the team estimates that by the conclusion of the drive we will have \$444,000 in pledges. The projected total, though slightly below our goal, is approximately a five percent increase over last year. Of the 200 pledges received to date, 99 are higher than last year, 78 are the same as last year, and 22 have decreased. The average pledge is \$2,011 as compared to \$1,800 last year.

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***Stewardship Team***  
*Mark Hyland, Chair*

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Thank you to all who have pledged!

If you're looking for a way to serve the church, the Stewardship team needs more members. Join us! We do vital work and we have fun. This is a good time to join since there are experienced folks to show you the ropes. Just talk to any member of the team listed below.

The Stewardship team especially thanks departing member Rev. Margret O'Neall for the deep knowledge, experience, and insight she brought to our team for three years. She instructed and inspired us. More than that, she joined in the mundane tasks too, like stuffing envelopes. She showed her respect for all in many meaningful ways, such as signing each piece of correspondence by hand. And she helped us laugh. We will miss her.

Submitted on behalf of the Stewardship Team: Crys Hamelink, Pat Lillquist, Susan Marino, Christy Multer, Paul Newsome, Rev. Margret A. O'Neall, Heide Westergard, and Mark Hyland, chair.

***Bending toward Justice, Acting in Love***

Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady  
*2017 Stewardship Drive*



## *Treasurer's Report*

*Pat Lillquist*

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The theme for the upcoming church year is "Bending toward Justice, Acting in Love." Bryant McGill stated that enthusiasm is the energy and force that builds literal momentum of the human soul and mind. I believe our church finances for the past year and plans for 2017-2018 reflect a sense of enthusiasm and momentum felt church-wide.

The proposed 2017-18 budget represents the product of many minds, from members of committees such as Finance, Stewardship, Trusts, various Councils and other committees, the Board of Trustees and Rev. O'Neill. Also thank you to our former bookkeeper Carolyn Sabol, who continues to consult with us, to our new bookkeeper Terri DeGregorio and to our office administrator Susan Marino for ensuring smooth operations, especially as UUSS is poised for the future, with updated Bylaws, robust governance, and a new model of ministry for UUSS co-ministers.

Our future is also connected to our past. Let's review where UUSS is financially right now. As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, UUSS has \$2,298,123 in assets, of which \$1,896,578 is in our Trust Funds, some of which are restricted in use. There is also \$74,733 in the Building Fund. Major liabilities for UUSS include \$100,269 in annual pledge receivables, and \$51,718 in various administrative non-operating funds.

The table on page 39 summarizes our actual and projected budget as of March 31<sup>st</sup>. The table shows our actual total income is \$7,874 ahead of what was projected. In addition, current year pledges are \$9,719 lower than what was projected for the current period. We are grateful to those of you who are faithful with your pledges and contributions, the largest component of our budget. This past year we continued a practice in which people who were behind in pledges were sent a letter. This likely led to more than \$11,146 over what was expected for prior year pledge fulfillment. UUSS is currently operating at a negative net income of -\$6,479. The 2016-17 Trust Fund grant allocation of \$61,676 will help in managing our cash flow as we await pledge contributions to come in. In addition, there is currently nearly \$29,000 in net operating reserves carried on the balance sheet to offset the negative net income shown in the current operating budget. The table also shows that while expenses are slightly higher than budgeted, total income is also higher than budgeted in a comparable amount.

***Treasurer's Report***  
*(Continued)*

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<b>UUSS Operating Budget Summary (July 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017)</b>			
	<b><i>Budgeted</i></b>	<b><i>Actual</i></b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Income	\$375,569	\$383,443	\$7,874
Current year pledges	\$341,650	\$331,931	\$(9,719)
Prior year pledges	\$4,022	\$15,168	\$11,146
Expenses	\$383,750	\$389,922	\$6,172
Net income	(\$8,181)	(\$6,479)	\$1,702

For the last two years, UUSS has closed its books at the end of June with a positive balance. This had not been the case for several years prior to the last two. Again this year, we are also on a trajectory to close the books with an operating reserve. Last year I noted that technically two points cannot be considered a trend, and I then asked if these past two years were flukes. I cannot prove it, but given the prevailing enthusiasm in the church I want to say NO. Building on current enthusiasm and momentum, let us continue to use our resources, time and talent to act in love for justice in the upcoming church year. As Barack Obama said, paraphrasing Martin Luther King (and Theodore Parker), "the arc of the moral universe may bend toward justice but it doesn't bend on its own."



## ***Trusts Committee***

*Richard Baertsch, Chair*

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The Trusts Advisory Committee is charged with managing and investing the congregation's Trust Funds, which are the result of past gifts and bequests to the congregation. Current members of the Trusts Committee are Richard Baertsch, Deb Best, Fred Boreali, Bob Miller, and Maxine Johnson. UUSS Treasurer Pat Lillquist also serves as a non-voting member. Pat and Rev. Margret O'Neall regularly attend our meetings.

Some of the Trust Funds have been funded by gifts or bequests where the donors have expressed a preference for limiting the rate of distributions to income or gains from the investment of the donated funds, thus maintaining the inflation adjusted principal in perpetuity. The Trusts Committee has designated these funds as "Endowment Funds" and the remaining funds as "Non-Endowment Funds."

The Trusts Committee is responsible for managing the Trust Funds in accordance with their donors' wishes, both with regard to the rate of distribution, maintenance of principal and, importantly, the range of church activities for which the funds can be used. The overarching objective is to prudently balance the needs of both current and future members of UUSS.

Trust Fund assets values increased in the past year. As of February 29<sup>th</sup> our fiscal year 2016-17 investment gain to date was +7.0 percent and calendar year to date gain is +4.2 percent. These returns reflect the general performance in the markets.

Monies from the nine Trust Funds we manage plus the Building Fund (which is controlled by the Board of Trustees not the Trusts Committee) are invested in a common portfolio of stocks and bonds. Currently about 65% of the portfolio is invested in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund. The remainder is managed by the Trusts Committee in a diversified portfolio of mutual funds and exchange traded funds. Our goal is to provide the highest possible level of support to congregational activities while preserving the purchasing power of the funds after inflation. (See specifics in the chart on page 41.)

The Trusts Committee continues to maintain its outsourcing management of a significant portion (approximately 65% \$1.3M of \$2.0M) of its assets to the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF). Trusts will continue to evaluate the performance of these assets and make adjustments in keeping with its responsibilities to the Society and the State. This year's review indicated that UUCEF

***Trusts Committee***  
*(Continued)*

performance closely matches our locally managed portfolio and has satisfactory return relative to acceptable risk. UUCEF continues its investment policy of socially responsible investing, in keeping with Society goals.

The Trusts Committee is working to obtain professional investment advisory services for the remainder of Trusts assets not invested in UUCEF or the Community Loan Fund. The Trust Committee expects to have a plan for investing these assets by the summer of 2017. Committee members welcome questions and suggestions about our procedures and performance.

<b>UUSS TRUST FUNDS (total managed = \$2.0M as of February 28, 2017)</b>		
	<b>Balance as of 12-31-2016</b>	<b>Allocation for FY 2017-18</b>
Aninger Fund	\$74,623	\$3,528
General	\$417,972	\$18,262
Kleinhandler	\$104,037	\$4,881
Koenig Fund	\$12,180	\$561
Social Justice	\$9,482	\$252 (See Note 1)
Allen Fund	\$105,755	\$4,974
Legacy Fund	\$934,442	\$42,414
Staley Music	\$10,744	\$517
RE Fund	\$179,319	\$8,616
Board Building	\$90,091	(See Note 2)
<p>Note 1: Approximately half of Ann Donnelly's bequest in the Social Justice Fund is under the control of the minister without restrictions.</p> <p>Note 2: The Building Fund is under control of the Board of Trustees but is pooled with the Trust Funds for investment purposes.</p>		

## ***UUSS-BUGS***

*Lisa Angle and MaryAnne Mangano, Coordinators*

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UUSS-BUGs (UUSS Beverage servers, Ushers, and Greeters) assist at our Sunday services. Currently there are about 60 active BUGs who serve beverages, usher and greet people on Sundays. We are always looking for new people to add to our list. This is a great opportunity for new members to meet other members and have others get to know you.

Over the last couple years we made a number of changes in the UUSS-BUG procedures, moving to email for communications and providing staffing for services year-round.

We also use our bulletin board, which is in the long hallway. The current schedule is posted there along with descriptions of the tasks and instructions. We use this bulletin board for sign-ups 4 times a year. About a month before a new schedule needs to be done, we post a blank schedule so that volunteers can sign up for the specific dates and the jobs they want. After about 2 weeks, we contact our UUSS BUGs list by email and complete the schedule. It is then emailed to each participant.

Once the schedule is set up, the process is basically self-executing. If someone is unable to carry out an assignment, they are asked to contact someone else on the list and arrange a trade. These changes have made it easier for people to volunteer and for us to maintain a schedule.

A new volunteer signup sheet is also available for people who might like to help out. If you put your name on this list, we will get in touch with you. We will tell you about the jobs, what you need to do and pair you with an experienced BUG for a future Sunday. Please let us know if you are interested.

Thank you everyone who participated in UUSS BUGs this year! You contributed to the overall fine quality of the services.

***UU Wellspring***  
*Rosy Bishop, Coordinator*

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UU Wellspring is a 10-month course in spiritual deepening for Unitarian Universalists. The goal is to understand Unitarian Universalist history and theology, to realize a deeper connection to our inner wisdom, and consider how we live out our values in the world. This course invites participants to explore their relationship with the UU faith and ultimately leads to engaged membership at UUSS. In addition to the entry course, Wellspring-Sources, 3 advanced curricula are available: Deep Questions, Spiritual Practice, and Faithful Action. In 2016-17, 8 people participated in Wellspring-Sources, and 5 participated in Wellspring-Spiritual Practices. Since 2010, 50 people have graduated from Wellspring-Sources and 25 have continued on to advanced curriculums. In 2017-18 we plan to offer the foundation course and an advanced curriculum. For more information, contact Rosy Bishop: [rosybishop23@gmail.com](mailto:rosybishop23@gmail.com).

# *Women's Daytime Alliance*

*Pat Lambert, President*

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## **Women's Alliance**

The Women's Alliance aims to enrich the lives of members of the congregation by providing opportunities to develop warm connections and friendships. It has a long and rich history of members who've made important contributions to our church and our community. Men and women are welcome to attend any of our luncheons and/or programs which are announced in Circuits, the Order of Service and on the Church Website.

## **SCHEDULE FOR THE DAYTIME ALLIANCE 2016-2017**

The Daytime Women's Alliance held monthly meetings with excellent luncheon menus at the Turf Tavern and in the UUSS Dining Room. This year's programs:

**September** John Reschovsky; Biking for Girls

**October** Sara Foss: Writing Opinion for a Large Audience

**November** Diane Wilkinson: Young Women at Schenectady High

**December** Nathan Mandsager and Rebecca Paavola: Moving from Poverty

**January** Alliance Membership Meeting

**March** Marsha Mortimer: History of African Americans in Schenectady

**April** George Shaw: The Geology of the Grand Canyon

**May** Drew Hamelink: The Art of Bonsai

**June** Women's Alliance Afternoon Tea

The Alliance continued its tradition of charitable contributions through Special Appeals. Some of the organizations which received money this year were:

*UUSS Youth Group, Eyes Wide Open, SCAP, Schenectady Home Furnishings, Moon Catchers, Center for Community Justice, Homeward Bound, Planned Parenthood, SICM Lunch Program.*

## **Officers & Committee Chairs**

Patricia Lambert, President

Barbara McLaughlin, Vice President

Nancy Bogdanowicz, Secretary

Sandra Reschovsky, Treasurer

Jill McGrath, Program Chair

Mariko Baertsch, Membership Chair

Crys Hamelink, Special Appeals Chair



1221 WENDELL AVENUE, SCHENECTADY, NY 12308  
(518) 374-4446 ext. 4      [uuschenectady.org](http://uuschenectady.org)  
[admin@uuschenectady.org](mailto:admin@uuschenectady.org)

**The Reverend Dr. Margret A. O'Neill, Minister**  
[minister@uuschenectady.org](mailto:minister@uuschenectady.org)