

FY2024 Annual Report

Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent

Information and Discussion: April 21, 2024 12:00 PM
Voting: May 19, 2024 12:00 PM



Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent
228 Gougler Avenue • Kent, Ohio 44240
<https://kentuu.org>

Cover Art: "Love is the Spirit of this Church"
FY2024 stewardship logo designed by Saul Flanner.



Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024

Information and Discussion Meeting: April 21, 2024 12:00 PM

Voting Meeting: May 19, 2024 12:00 PM

Table of Contents

Pages 5 - 14

Agenda, pg. 5

Ballot Items

Minutes from the May 28, 2023 Voting Meeting, pg. 6 – 8

Budget Voting Meeting (informational only), pg. 9

FY2024 Operating Budget, pg. 10

FY2024 Slate of Candidates, pg. 11

Bylaws Changes, pg. 12-14

- Article III - Governance – Mission Articulation
 - B 2 – Board of Trustees Elections and Terms of Office
 - B 3 – Board Authority and Responsibility
- Article V -- Ministry – Mission Implementation
 - A 2 – Ministry Executive Team (MET) Authority and Responsibilities
 - B - Committees and Teams Elected by the Congregation
 - D - Board-Appointed Committees and Corresponding Responsibilities

Report from the Board

Page 15 - 17

Moderator: Kara Kramer

Reports from Staff

Pages 18 - 29

Director of Religious Education: Colleen Thoele

Transitional Music Director: Emily Hall

Congregational Administrator: MaryBeth Hannan

Affiliated Community Minister: Rev. Renée Ruchotzke

Commissioned Lay Minister: Kathy Kerns

Program Area Committees' Annual Reports

Pages 30-44

Income Generation

Treasurer: Lois Weir

Year-to-Date Revenue & Expenses

Endowment Committee

Service Auction Team

Worship and Music

Worship Arts Team

Lifespan Learning & Spiritual Development

Religious Education Committee

Community Within

Building & Grounds Coordinator

Membership Team

Ministry Executive Team

Social Justice & Community Outreach

Social Justice and Community Outreach Coordinator

A Look Back – FY2023 Pictures

Pages 45-48



Chalice art designed by Saul Flanner.

Information and Discussion - April 21, 2024
Voting Meeting - May 19, 2024



AGENDA

Chalice Lighting and Welcome

Kara Kramer, Board Moderator

Determination of Quorum

Membership Team

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

Year in Review and Celebration of Our Accomplishments

Moment of Silence in Memory of Our Departed

Update on Transitional Ministry Search

The FY25 Budget

Kay Eckman, Finance Committee Chair

The FY25 Slate of Candidates

Kathy Kerns, Leadership Development Chair

By-Laws Revisions

Call for Delegates to General Assembly

Thank You to Staff and Outgoing Leaders

Closing Words and Extinguishing Chalice



UUCK Annual Meeting Minutes May 28, 2023 **DRAFT**

I. Welcome, Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

Don Gregg offered a welcome. Rev. Steven provided opening words, led the congregation in reciting the congregational covenant, and lit the chalice. The meeting was held in Hobbs Hall.

II. Quorum Determination

The meeting was called to order at 11:25 AM. The Membership Committee established that a quorum was present (this requires a minimum of 25% of Members in good standing to be present).

III. Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes from May 22, 2022

Don Gregg invited members to review the minutes and to vote on accepting the minutes.

Randy Ruchotzke moved and David Smeltzer seconded the motion that we approve the minutes from May 22, 2022 as presented in the annual report. The congregation voted for approval unanimously.

IV. Highlights of the Year

Don Gregg named various highlights of the year:

- Settled into Hobbs Hall
- Restarted Services in the Sanctuary
- Piano gifted
- Solar Gift from the Wilens
- Solar approval to install
- Rebuilt annex deck
- Close the Gap campaign success
- Farm Market to Hobbs during winter
- Race for Justice accomplishments
- UU Youth for Justice Service Mission
- Licensed our kitchen
- Completed the landscaping
- Welcomed new members
- Restarted the choir
- Environmental
 - Collected enough plastic to acquire two benches - assisted two girl scout troops in earning one bench each
 - Environmental Justice Coordinator accomplishments - Andrew
- Return to coffee hour
- 50K gift designated for the Sanctuary
- Filled the B&G coordinator position

V. Bylaws Change(s)

- Add 5th member to the Ministry Executive Team - an active congregation member to be voted in, as specified in the bylaws.
- Change requirements from former Board Moderator to former Board Member to serve on Ministry Executive Team
- Eliminate the Governance Executive Team - with changes to Board size in previous revisions, this is unnecessary
- Change verbiage re: Commissioned Lay Leader to Commission Lay Minister

Bylaws change:

Max Grubb made the motion to accept changes as a single slate; Dave Watt seconded.

Unanimously accepted.

Elaine Bowen made motion to accept the slate of Bylaws changes; Rod Thompson seconded; Bylaws unanimously accepted.

VI. The FY2024 Budget - TABLED

Don Gregg recognized that strong and conflicting thoughts and feelings among the congregation about the proposed 2024 budget necessitate postponing the vote on the current budget proposal. He acknowledged the need to take more time to discuss and identify an acceptable budget, and so the proposed budget for next year was tabled. Don Gregg shared that three meetings had been scheduled for budget discussions among the congregation and members were encouraged all to attend and contribute their perspectives, concerns, and suggestions.

VII. Presentation of the Slate

The slate was presented as shown below. Nominations to the slate from the floor were requested: none were offered.

Board of Trustees		
Kay Eckman	3 years	through June 30, 2026
Ginny Horvath	3 years	through June 30, 2026
David Weaver*	3 years	through June 30, 2026
Financial Secretaries		
Ryan Susman*	3 years	through June 30, 2026
John Brannan (alternate)	1 year	through June 30, 2024
Endowment Committee		
Claudia Miller	3 years	through June 30, 2026
Leadership Development Committee		
Vivien Sandlund	3 years	through June 30, 2026
Board of Trustees		
Heidi Shaffer Bish	1 year	through June 30, 2024
Carol Weigand	1 year	through June 30, 2024

Kara Kramer	2 years	through June 30, 2025
Susanna Smart	2 years	through June 30, 2025
Financial Secretaries		
Saunis Parsons	1 year	through June 30, 2024
Dave Watt	2 years	through June 30, 2025
Endowment Committee		
Bonnie Harper	1 year	through June 30, 2024
Diana Watt	2 years	through June 30, 2025
Leadership Development Committee		
Kathie Slater	1 year	through June 30, 2024
Kathy Kerns	2 years	through June 30, 2025

A motion for a specific and one-time exception to the bylaws was presented for two newer members with less than one year membership (asterisked above):

David Weaver - Candidate for Board Member

Ryan Susman - Candidate for Financial Secretary

The motion to bypass the minimum membership requirements for David Weaver as Board Member and Ryan Susman as Financial Secretary.

Diane Kloss made the motion; Claudia Miller seconded; vote was unanimous.

Vote on the slate of candidates:

Max Grubb made the motion; Shana Jane Steinhouse seconded; Voted unanimously.

VIII. Appreciation of Staff and Outgoing Leaders

Don Gregg acknowledged the contributions of the outgoing volunteer leaders. Appreciation was given to outgoing leaders and Rev Steven acknowledged Don Gregg.

Board members: Liz Bright, Diane Kloss, and Don Gregg

MET: Jennifer May

Leadership Development Committee: Rhonda Richardson

Endowment Committee: Jennifer Gregg

Financial Secretary: John Brannan

Financial Secretary Alternate - Nancy Docherty

Committee of Shared Ministry - Ginny Horvath and MaryAnn Stephens

Rev. Steven offered appreciation for and acknowledged the work of the staff.

IX. Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice

Rev. Steven provided closing words and extinguished the chalice at 12:07 pm.

With Gratitude for All in our Beloved Community,

Co-Secretaries: Susanna Smart and Carol Weigand

Board Breaking News

(Posted in the e-nUUs on 7/12/2023)

The Board is happy to announce that the proposed revised budget for FY2024 was passed by congregational vote at the meeting held on Sunday, July 2, 2023. We are grateful for the love and concern shown by our church family and for the vigorous discussion about the budget.

We greatly appreciate the willingness of Reverend Steven to reduce his ministerial duties to ¾ time and of MaryBeth to reduce her hours from 40 to 35 per week. Their voluntary and generous offer will save the church a substantial amount of money. Smaller reductions from other programs will allow us to trim approximately \$50,000 from the original budget proposal. This will enable us to hire a very strong candidate as Music Director for a one year position. It was emphasized that these changes are experimental and subject to periodic review and alteration.

Prior to voting congregants were told that a Finance Committee has been approved and charged with collaborating with the MET on the creation and oversight of next year's budget. Members are: Brad Cromes, Max Grubb, Kay Eckman, David Smeltzer and David Watt. MaryBeth Hannan, Reverend Steven and Lois Weir will act in an advisory capacity. The Finance Committee will focus on long term financial stability.

In addition a Ministerial Task Force comprised of Christie Anderson, Randy Bish, Kathy Kerns, Lori Mirkin-McGee, Reverend Steven, Renee Ruchotzke and David Weaver has been appointed to assure that ministerial duties are prioritized and fulfilled. An Ad Hoc Team will be established to assist Mary Beth with the same smooth transition. An Agreement Negotiation Task Force comprised of David Weaver, Ginny Horvath and Susanna Smart will rewrite contract agreements for the minister and administrator to address contract changes.

The final order of business on July 2 was the unanimous vote in favor of Kathie Slater as the 5th member of the MET (Ministry Executive Team).

The Board is appreciative of everyone's hard work and enthusiasm as we move forward.

Ballot Item: FY2025 Operating Budget

NOTE: A simple majority 51% affirmative vote of the Active Members in attendance and by absentee ballot is required for this ballot item to be adopted.

Income

Pledged Donations	\$275,000
Service Auction	\$35,000
Draw from Reserves	\$29,218
Non-Pledged Donations	\$17,000
Rental Income	\$15,000
Plate Donations	\$5,000
Grocery Card Sales	\$20,000
Fundraising	\$1,526
Coffee Hour Donations	\$720
Interest	\$50
	\$398,514

Expenses

Worship & Music	\$116,498
Community Within	\$122,709
Lifespan Learning	\$65,759
Income Generation	\$46,886
Social Justice & Community Outreach	\$10,192
UU, Interfaith, & Community Connections	\$36,471

Ballot Item: FY2025 Slate of Candidates

Note: A simple majority 51% affirmative vote of the Active Members in attendance and by absentee ballot is required for this ballot item to be adopted.

The Leadership Development Committee presents the following

Election Slate for Fiscal Year 2025

Board of Trustees

Randy Ruchotzke	3 years, through June 30, 2027
	3 years, through June 30, 2027

Financial Secretaries

Saunis Parsons	3 years, through June 30, 2027
Lois Weir	2 years, through June 30, 2026
John Brannan (Alternate)	3 years, through June 30, 2027

Endowment Committee

David Smeltzer	3 years, through June 30, 2027
----------------	--------------------------------

Leadership Development Committee

Don Gregg	3 years, through June 30, 2027
-----------	--------------------------------

Ministry Executive Team

Kathie Slater	1 year, through June 30, 2025
---------------	-------------------------------

The following individuals will be continuing in their elected terms

Board of Trustees

Kara Kramer	1 year, through June 30, 2025
Susanna Smart	1 year, through June 30, 2025
Kay Eckman	2 years, through June 30, 2026
Ginny Horvath	2 years, through June 30, 2026
David Weaver	2 years, through June 30, 2026

Financial Secretaries

Dave Watt	1 year, through June 30, 2025
-----------	-------------------------------

Endowment Committee

Diana Watt	1 year, through June 30, 2025
Claudia Miller	2 years, through June 30, 2026

Leadership Development Committee

Kathy Kerns	1 year, through June 30, 2025
Vivien Sandlund	2 years, through June 30, 2026

Ballot Item: Bylaw Changes

Note: A simple majority 51% affirmative vote of the Active Members in attendance and by absentee ballot is required for this ballot item to be adopted.

Objectives of these revisions are to:

- Clarify number of Trustees elected annually (since the change from nine-member to seven-member Board)
 - Clarify that limitations on terms of service are consecutive, not total (i.e. a Committee Member might serve two consecutive terms, take a break for a few years, then serve again at a later date).
 - Edit sections that refer to Personnel Coordinator to provide for a Personnel Committee
-

ARTICLE III. GOVERNANCE – MISSION ARTICULATION

....

B. BOARD OF TRUSTEES – COMPOSITION, AUTHORITY, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

....

2. BOARD TRUSTEE ELECTIONS AND TERMS OF OFFICE

- The Board Trustees are elected to serve a three-year term.
 - ~~Three~~**Two** new Trustees will be elected annually. **Every third year, an additional Trustee will be elected, for a total of three in that year.**
 - Trustees are limited to two consecutive Board terms (six years)-, **but may later serve additional terms.**

....

3. BOARD AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

....

In collaboration with the Leadership Development Committee, appoint Active Members to the following Positions and Committees:

.....

- Treasurer
 -
 - For a three-year term, not to exceed two **consecutive** terms, **but may later serve additional terms**
- A Past Board Member to the Ministry Executive Team
 -
 - For a one-year term, not to exceed three **consecutive** terms, **but may later serve additional terms**
 - ...
- Committee on Shared Ministry (CoSM)
 -
 - For a three-year term, not to exceed two **consecutive** terms, **but may later serve additional terms**

ARTICLE V. MINISTRY – MISSION IMPLEMENTATION

A. MINISTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM – COMPOSITION, AUTHORITY, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

.....

2. MINISTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM (MET) AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

.....

The MET shall supervise the day-to-day business of the Church, including:

.....

- In collaboration with the Personnel ~~Coordinator~~ **Committee**, make staffing decisions including hiring and dismissal.
- In collaboration with the Personnel ~~Coordinator~~ **Committee**, make recommendations to the Board to grant Emeritus status for retired professional staff

.....

B. COMMITTEES AND TEAMS ELECTED BY THE CONGREGATION

All Committees elected by the Congregation shall:

- Be comprised of three to five Active Members, to serve a three-year term, not to exceed two **consecutive** terms, **but who may later serve additional terms**

.....

D. BOARD-APPOINTED COMMITTEES AND CORRESPONDING RESPONSIBILITIES

Board-Appointed Committees shall:

- Be comprised of three to five Active Members, **to** serve a three-year term, not to exceed two **consecutive** terms, **but who may later serve additional terms**

FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Board of Trustees

Report from the Board: Kara Kramer, Moderator

Friends,

An unknown philosophizer once said that “living involves tearing up one rough draft after another.” That statement is rather descriptive of our year as a Board, and as a Congregation, as we have walked through a tremendous amount of change in the space of the last nine months.

FY 24 GOALS

We created our goals for the year in what feels like a very different time; however, they remain relevant today, and we have made varying levels of progress on them all.

GOAL #1: Renew our shared ministry. *Establish a discernment process to match individual passions to opportunities to serve. Fill all coordinator positions (Fundraising, Personnel, Volunteer Ministries). Activate key teams (Hobbs Hall Rentals, Adult RE, Pastoral Care, Publicity, Safety). Fully staff all volunteer teams. Engage different teams to serve coffee each Sunday.*

STATUS: This work is ongoing, as we continue to seek individuals to fill leadership roles and participate in our critical volunteer work. Leadership Development was kind enough to undertake a survey related to people and their interests earlier this year, which has helped in matching people to opportunities.

We have not yet filled the vacant Coordinator positions, though many folks have participated in the related volunteer work, and the Personnel Coordinator role has been replaced with a Personnel Committee. If you have interest, skill, and/or passion around event-planning, human resource policy, or finding ways to match people with volunteer opportunities, please reach out to any Leadership Development Committee or Board member for more information on these roles.

As to activation of teams, the **Campus Action Rental Team** successfully completed their charge, creating a series of recommendations to increase rental activity, and numerous volunteers have stepped up to support rentals activity. **Adult RE, Pastoral Care, and Safety Teams** have been established, and are at varying points in progress against their charges. Thank you to the members of all these teams!

As we mentioned in our March Town Hall, our congregants' contributions of time and talent are equally important to contributions of treasure (as any necessary work that is not done by volunteers requires paying a staff member). We appreciate all that each of you do to enable our congregation to thrive. Thanks again to the **LDC** for their tireless work in identifying potential leaders!

GOAL #2: Continue to create and nurture a culture of Right Relationship. *Provide right relationship education. Activate venues for listening and communication. Identify ways to engage young adults and physical neighbors in community.*

STATUS: Candidly, much of the Board work through the first months of the year focused on Goals 1 and 3, so we did not make significant progress against the specifically stated subgoals; however, we have endeavored to increase communication and transparency about “who does what,” decision-making, and the interdependencies within our congregation.

Thank you to the members of the **Committee on Shared Ministry**, who have done more significant work towards monitoring the health of the congregation and facilitating dialog in support of right relationship.

Continuing transparency and open communication will continue to be essential as we move through these transitional times, and engaging young adults and our broader community are preconditions for the future health of our congregation.

GOAL #3: Progress towards Fiscal Health. *Establish a path and undertake necessary work towards a balanced budget, including paying staff a fair wage and returning to honor congregation status with UUA.*

STATUS: Under Kay Eckman's leadership, our new Finance Team was established and undertook the work of auditing expenses, consulting with experts, and developing a FY25 budget proposal that moves us to a smaller draw on reserves vs. FY24.

Thank you to **Kay**, and to those working to close the gap between or pledge income and our operating expenses, including the **Finance Team**, the **Generosity Team**, the **Auction Team**, **Ann VerWiebe**, members of **Campus Action Rental Team**, **Katie Kuras**, and the numerous people who volunteer their time to prepare for or reset after rentals.

We cannot cut our way to a sustainable budget, so we will need to increase our income via increase in pledge donations (largely from new members and friends), fundraising, and maximizing the use of all our campus spaces for rental activity where possible (without compromising their intent as a community resource in service of our mission). We are clearly in a period of growth, and anticipate that the above is very achievable, given our current trajectory!

TRANSITIONS

The Board has necessarily had a significant shift in focus after Rev. Steven's untimely death, and has been focused on triage and discerning transitional ministry next steps since early February. After our March Town Hall about transitional ministry options and related budgetary concerns, we completed and reviewed the results of a congregational survey about preferences. That feedback is informing our transitional ministry search.

As of this writing, the Transitional Ministry Search Team (**Rev. Christie Anderson**, Kara Kramer, **Ginny Horvath**, **Rhonda Richardson**, **Randy Ruchotske**, and **Susanna Smart**) have completed the materials necessary to support our search process. We are parallel pathing the Interim Minister matching process with a concurrent Contract Minister search. If you have ideas about potential candidates, please see any member of the Search Team. We will continue to keep you updated as the search progresses. Thank you to those serving on this Team!

ADDITIONAL RECOGNITION

I'd like to recognize a few of the many additional folks who have contributed to any progress we have made against our goals in FY24. Outgoing Board Members **Heidi Shaffer Bish** and **Carol Weigand** have seen many changes since they began their terms in July 2021. We appreciate their unique perspectives and thank them for three years of service! Continuing Board Members **Kay Eckman**, **Ginny Horvath**, **Susanna Smart**, and **David Weaver** have all taken on leadership roles that align with their areas of expertise, and have helped us move our work forward more capably, efficiently, and thoughtfully. All of these Board members have also been generous with their time, as we moved from meeting once per month to twice, and began the practice of sending prereads to be reviewed in advance.

Secondly, I'd like to thank those who have taken on additional responsibility since Rev. Steven's passing, enabling us to continue to flourish as a community, even as we grieve and look toward an unanticipated future. Those folks include **Rev. Renee Ruchotske**, **Lori Mirkin-McGee**, **David Weaver**, **Rev. Christie Anderson**, **Kathy Kerns**, and **Ginny Horvath**.

The incredible music and RE programs put together under the leadership of **Emily Hall**, **Colleen Thoele**, and **Amanda Rome** are clear contributors to the growth in attendance (and repeat attendance) at church services and events this year, as is the two service model we trialed this winter/spring. Thank you to these leaders and their teams for those contributions.

Finally, our campus, including Hobbs Hall and our historic sanctuary, continues to be an asset to our entire community and will remain so for years to come thanks to the hard work of **Jennifer Gregg**, **Georgia Quinn**, and many others.

We are a growing congregation with exceptional programs, some of the best people I know, and a dedicated and active volunteer base doing great things in our own community and beyond. I'm excited about the vibrant future we look forward to!

Kara Kramer
Board Moderator

**Current
Board
Members**



Kay Eckman



Ginny Horvath
Assistant Moderator



Kara Kramer
Moderator



Susanna Smart
Co-Secretary



Heidi Shaffer-Bish



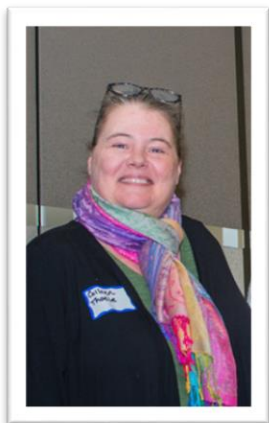
David Weaver



Carol Weigand
Co-Secretary

FY2024 Reports from the Staff

Reports from the Staff: Colleen Thoele, Director of Religious Education



Faith Development

The 2023-2024 religious education program was our second full year of in person programming since returning from lock down and how we have blossomed!

For Summer '23 Sunday morning religious education, we once again used the Soul Matters curriculum "Magic Summer" which focuses on our ability to be helpful in big and small ways. Projects the children worked on included seed pod making/planting, making treats for animals in shelter, Cuyahoga river clean up, water conservation and more.

June also included Hogwarts camp! Many volunteers and leaders returned to create magic and 38 children attended.

Also in June our high school youth embarked on a service trip to Washington DC to spend a week immersed in community outreach through the national foodbank. While in DC our youth group also participated in rally at the Department of Justice in opposition to police brutality. Additionally, they spent significant time simply getting to know and listening to the stories of those who live their lives unhoused in our nations capital. It was truly a life changing experience for our kids and they returned home with tools and education that inform their justice work here in the Kent community through the community meal and free store.

Other Summer highlights included a picnic in the park for families, game nights and potluck dinners.

End of Summer brought our teacher training, registration drive and our 5th annual Children's Meeting. During the children's meeting, the children and youth once again voted on a justice focus for the year. They chose to learn about the intersectionality of racism, poverty, access and global warming. I am very proud of the work our children have done to educate themselves to better understand the many intersecting global issues that work together to maintain oppressive systems. This education generated ideas for action and tools the children could implement to make a difference. The children also chose UNICEF USA as the special offering for January. All year long the children have maintained their previous and ongoing relationships with PC NAACP and Akron PFLAG.

Fall religious education launched in September with all children and youth starting in worship and heading to class after the "Time for all Ages" portion of the service. Sunday morning RE had 5 regular class offerings:

Nursery/preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school and Youth group

On Sunday mornings we continued the use of Soul Matters RE curriculum. Using the Soul Matters themes for all ages created the opportunity for the children and youth to share in the same topics of the entire church community! We learn together. In addition to Soul Matters our middle school class embarked on the "Crossing Paths" curriculum to explore world religions. This popular class encouraged our youth to dive deeper in their understanding of not just



other faiths but also their own and included many field trips to houses of worship to witness the faith practices of our fellow humans. These field trips were an eye-opening and moving experience for our young people.

Once we were off and running, we stayed busy! Highlights of our year of programming included community Trunk-or-Treat, Halloween party/Haunted house, a fairy lanterns workshop, several youth overnights and hosting the first CER Overnight Youth CON in 4 years right here at UUCK! But wait... there's more! We cannot forget our RE pajama party, game nights, blessing of the backpacks, a multi-faith holiday pageant starring 17 of our kiddos, Justice January, Easter egg hunt and a Wolves of North America workshop!

Our youth group (Unitarian Universalist Youth for Justice/UUYJ) remained active and resourceful this year. They embarked on the second year of the community meal that is held on the first Sunday of each month and run by our high school youth in an effort to walk the walk. Their meal has been well attended and continues to grow. They have also been planning their service trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota this Summer where they will build beds for children living on the reservation. To prepare for this work they have spent many hours learning about the Lakota Oglala culture and history. They depart in just 6 weeks to serve the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation and we could not be more proud of them.

It should surprise no one that our UUCK youth were awarded a grant from the Kent Rotary this year! This award was given to our youth to support their community meal and their efforts to improve the lives of food insecure and unhoused human beings in Portage County.

Worship – The Great Worship Experiment of 2024!

As part of my duties, I am pleased to provide a Time for All Ages portion to most services throughout the church year. This year began as always with one service starting at 10:00 AM and religious education classes following the time for all ages and during the remainder of the service. As our church began growing and energy continued to build throughout the Fall, Rev Renee Ruchotzke and I began to “think outside of the box” to brainstorm other ways of worshipping that could at once solve our need for more space and expand our welcome. In consultation with Rev Steven and then adding our transitional music director, Emily Hall, to the team, a two service proposal was created that included a 9:15 AM family-friendly “scruffy” service, 10:00 AM religious education for all ages and an 11:00 AM traditional service. This worship experiment began on February 1st and has been a great success. Everything is Religious Education!

In 2023-2024, Children and youth were ACTIVE in worship! I am proud of the hard work that our children and youth put in to create four of this year's worship services. These services were filled with music, stories, reflection and meaning! The services that I led with them were; “A Journey of Joy! Religious Education Sunday”, 04/16/2023 “Finding Light” on 09/17/2023, “Gratitude on the Go” 11/19/2023, “The Tree That was meant to be” 12/17/2023, and multiple contributions during 1st service from our youth! It truly was joyful seeing the children and youth empowered to take ownership of their stories and share their journey with the congregation.



It was a great shock to lose Rev Steven in the winter of 2024. As I reflect back on this year, I am grateful for the multiple opportunities to co-lead all-ages worship with Rev. Steven and I am honored that he shared the worship ministry with me in this way. I would be remiss if I left out that prior to his passing, Steven's enthusiasm for the two service worship experiment was palpable. He and I had long discussed “family ministry” and how we might better serve the worship needs of our diverse community. He was so excited about the all-ages service that he fully funded the “prayground”. This new and simple space offers quiet tactile

manipulatives and soft floor seating for anyone who wishes to use it. Perhaps more importantly, it signals to families and children that “You belong here”. When we discussed where it should go, Steven insisted that it be in the front of the sanctuary so that children could see and experience worship without being hidden in the back. This gift of the “prayground” would turn out to be his final gift to the congregation. How very fitting considering how his support of our youth never wavered. Thank you Rev. Steven for all that gave to our children, you were loved and you are missed.

Professional Development

It was my pleasure to serve, once again, on the 2023 Central East Region’s Summer Institute religious education team, this time as the DRE/ Chair.

Topics I have studied this year include: the protection of trans children, family ministry, transformative worship, creating safe and intentional religious education experiences for LGBTQIA+ children/youth, anti-racism, intersectionality of racism, poverty, civil rights and global warming, pre and post pandemic children’s mental health, storytelling and community engagement.

Teams that I meet with regularly include: the religious education committee, worship arts team, LREDA (large and cluster), Soul Matters R.E. Labs, UUYJ Advisors meetings, 1st service worship team and weekly professional staff meetings.

Other exciting opportunities include: Once again serving as RE lead for 2024 CER Summer Institute, shared ministries council, participating in the Journey to Belonging class, and continuing collaborative partnerships with Portage County NAACP and Summit County PFLAG.

Final Thoughts

2023-2024 was filled to the brim! AND WE GREW! I am deeply grateful for our volunteers who were able to ride out the ups and downs of figuring out how to “do church” in this new world. Our teacher teams are once again full! This only works if the grown-ups share their time and talents with the young and IT IS HAPPENING! From the depths of my heart, I thank these volunteers for their commitment to our kids.

2023-2024 Religious Education Volunteers

Nursery: Rebekah Swango, Cara Constance, Elisabeth Swango and Joel Slater

Elementary: Sandy Eaglen, Trudy Diehl, Mary Leeson, Keeleigh Finn, Kate Garner and Lindsey Cromes

Middle School: Amanda Rome, Rachelle Garner, Angie Finn, Katie Kuras, Atticus Kaye and Paul Kuras

High School: Renee Ruchotzke and Kevyn Breedon

UU Youth for Justice Advisors: Ellen McWilliams-Woods and Ilona Urbin

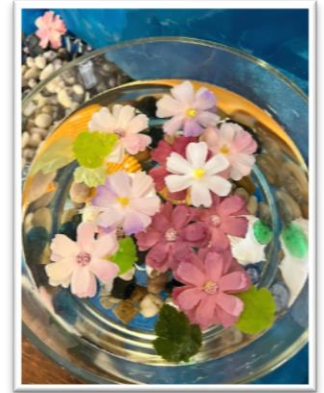
Our Whole Lives facilitators in training for 2024: Connor May and Andi Krebs

Hogwarts Leadership: Valerie Henry, Kat Holtz, Sandy Bowers, Chris Gleason, Keara Gleason and Michelle Bores

RE Committee: Amanda Rome (chair), Dana Wakefield, Stefanie Workman, Wendy Mann and Michelle Bores



I am blessed to work alongside MaryBeth, Emily, Michelle, Brian, Vanessa, Julie and Katie. This year has been filled with joy and sorrow and your staff have been working with great passion and tireless dedication during this transitional time. I am proud to work alongside them and blessed to have them as colleagues. The gifts they bring to our shared ministry are abundant and given with great love.



And finally, to our children, I am so blessed to know you. Time and time again in this last year you have faced hard things with grace and love for one another. The times we are living in are challenging but I see the beacons of light that you are and my heart is reminded that love always wins. You generously share your love and gifts with the congregation, with each other and with the world. I don't know if you know how remarkable that actually is and you make it look so easy. Kiddos, you remind me every day that I am so very grateful to serve this congregation – that I am beyond blessed to journey alongside YOU.

And to all the grown-ups....thank you for supporting the faith formation of our children and youth.

With Gratitude,
Colleen Thoele – Director of Religious Education

Reports from the Staff: Emily Hall, Transitional Music Director

Professional Reflections



I am so happy and grateful to be here with you as part of this Kent UU community. This year in music has been rewarding and energizing and I am moved by the beauty and talent and passion of our people. This past year, the music ministry team has focused on making music participation available to all who are interested and to building back our community ensembles and musicking opportunities. Our community has so much good music to create and share!

As the Transitional Music Director, I spent time getting to know our musical culture here and investigating ways to build, grow, and connect our community. There has been healing work to do and organizational improvements to structure and communication. Some of the tasks that have been entrusted to me in this transitional capacity also include building a healthy culture of musical collaboration and nurturing musical interest and talent in our community. There has also come the realization that the many expectations for this work are not possible in the hours allocated.

I wanted to share a couple of meaningful numbers with you.

Number of people participating in Kent UU musical ensembles in the past year: 45 ensemble participants

Number of music volunteers sharing music for Sunday worship services: 81 music volunteers

Services our Music ministry has planned and provided music for (August 6, 2023-July 28, 2024): 76 services (70 Sunday worship services, 3 vespers, and 3 memorial services)

Here are the goals that I set for our Music Ministry Program this church year:

- To build a collaborative music ministry that is inclusive and uplifts the voices and music of women, the BIPOC community, and the LGBTQIAA+ community.
- To be a stable and reliable source of support for members of the congregation: to be available and to help nourish the musicians in this congregation to participate in the fullness that they desire within our music ministry.
- To build a program that offers every member of our community the opportunity for transformative experience through the worship Arts.

Here are the personal goals I set for this church year:

- To maintain authenticity as a leader and musician.
- Include ease and rest.

Professional Development

Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries Conference: July 12-16, 2023

Music is a creative endeavor and I draw inspiration and energy from the learning I engage in with colleagues and musicians as part of our national professional organization. I am so grateful to have had the chance to participate in the annual conference for the music ministry organization for UUs. As a member of AUUMM, I attended this conference at the beginning of my employment and found the opportunity to immerse myself in UU musical culture invaluable. Connecting with fellow music leaders, including colleagues who are in similar situations of following exceptionally experienced and beloved music directors, provides me with a peer group of support and connects me with other congregational leaders in our region. I attended worship services and sessions with inspiring colleagues, and draw from this inspiration and the library of music that I learned at this conference nearly every week! I hope that professional development funds will allow me to continue these valuable creative connections.

Leadership Workshop 8/12

In mid-August I attended *Leadership Essentials for Inclusive Communities*, a full day training led by UUA staff held here in our Hobbs Hall with many of our staff and community present. We explored communication strategies, ways to encourage shared ministry/open creative interchange, and strategies and factors related to building healthy leadership culture.

Worship for Transformation

I am currently attending group sessions with our Worship Arts team, working through the content of this UUA course offering. We gather to watch videos together and take time to process our learnings and ideas in conversation. I have felt very inspired by engaging with this material together with my colleagues and I have begun implementing learnings in my service design and leading.



Our Music Ministry

Programming and Outreach

Concerts at Kent UU

This past fall we had our inauguration of Hobb's Hall as a Kent concert venue, with our guest performers Kevyn Breedon and Emma's Revolution! This concert is the beginning of what we hope to grow and build into

a space where we can present local and likeminded guest musicians and return our campus to visibility as a performing arts venue in our community.

Music Cafe at Rainbow Weekend

In October, we organized a space to share music by local LGBTQ+ artists as part of our Pride Craft Fair in collaboration with Rainbow Weekend events throughout Kent. We raised money from musician tips donated to Camp Lilac, a summer camp for trans and gender diverse youth.

Gratitude Celebration

This January, I brought an event to our community that I have helped organize for many years. A team of folks from my community and collaborators in our Kent UU community hosted this opportunity to gather together for a potluck and community celebration of gratitude. The evening included a community concert of music, stories, poems, and spiritual practices related to gratitude and shared by attendees. There were spaces to engage in walking a labyrinth, dancing, resting, and co-creating an interactive community mandala. We also raised money which was donated to a local family in need.

Peace in the Middle East

Drawing on my background and skills as a music therapist, I helped organize two community events focused on education around the current conflict in Palestine and Israel. I planned and led music during these events with the goal of holding a container for open-hearted learning and dialogue respectful of the dignity of all.

Two Services

This February after numerous meetings and consultation with church community teams and groups, we launched our two service experiment! It has been inspiring and energizing to try something new and to have the opportunity to collaborate on crafting services in different styles and with different goals in mind. Many musicians have also stepped in to share their music for the new first service and it has been wonderful to work together to build our collection of singable pocket songs.

Musical Opportunities

Kent UU Peace Chorus

Our Peace Chorus has come back together! Our singers have been sharing their voices and spirits joined together to uplift our worship experiences. We started our season with a chili potluck and opportunity to connect and reflect on what we love about creating music together. Some of the highlights from this season include our singers collaborating on a joint choir with Eastshore UU, joining for a community Thanksgiving Service at Kent UCC, and offering their musical leadership for our community Hymn Sing service.

Kent UU Tone Chime Ensemble

I am so happy that our Tone Chime ensemble is back making music together! It has been a joy to learn this instrument and to grow the group of esteemed ringers who bring delight and beauty to the Sundays they share with us. In preparation for restarting the ensemble, we offered a Tone Chime sampler after Sunday service 9/10/23, which was a great opportunity to gauge interest and to build excitement!

Youth Music at Kent UU

The children and youth at Kent UU continue to move us collectively with their talent and depth. Our youth are musically featured in services as soloists, hymn leaders, ensemble members, and accompanists. This past year I enjoyed co-leading music exploration sessions with Vanessa for several Wednesday evening sessions. This time ultimately did not meet the needs of our youth, and we are exploring other options for times that work well for more of our community members. I really enjoy the opportunities that I have to collaborate with the youth- including preparations for the Pageant last December. I am looking forward to more collaboration with our young folks and to supporting the youth in bringing more of their musical ideas and visions into being!

The Tarnished Brass

Our beloved brass quintet has re-emerged and re-dedicated themselves to their pursuit of musical excellence! So far, they have participated in the Christmas and Easter services and are preparing more music for services upcoming this spring. I am deeply grateful for this self-organizing group of talented musicians who are working hard, improving their skills, and contributing to the depth and diversity of music that we offer in our worship services.

Sacred Song Circle

The first musical experience that I had with the Kent UU community was attending the Sacred Song Circle. Saunis Parsons is an amazing leader and singer and an authentic and beautiful person. She leads this group, which includes folks from our broader community, in an experience of music and singing together as a spiritual practice.

Community Sing

I am so grateful to Katie Grigg-Miller for her leadership of the Kent UU Community Sing! Katie's enthusiasm for and engagement with this group have helped it grow to meeting twice monthly, including community members beyond our Sunday worship community.

Drum Circle

Randy Bish has shared a gift with our community in his organizing of a community drum circle, monthly here in Hobbs Hall. Since February, this group has been meeting and connecting our members and the Kent drumming community with a powerful opportunity to drum together.

Dances of Universal Peace

Alicia Patrice, a talented flutist as well as yoga teacher, is bringing Dances of Universal Peace back to our Kent UU community. Many of you know that Luna has led several of these events in the past, and I am delighted to continue this beautiful tradition. Our first event will be Friday, April 26.



Gratitude

Thank you to all of the musicians in our community who have shared their time and talents with us to add depth and beauty to our worship and to our community. I am grateful for all who have volunteered as hymn leaders, soloists, music associates, accompanists, impromptu ensembles, and collaborators. I am moved by your generosity and by your willingness to say yes to the invitation to co-create!

I share my deep gratitude to Vanessa Vesely, our amazing pianist and accompanist. I say both of those things because Vanessa is an accomplished pianist in her own right and also brings the unique and valuable skillset of an accompanist to her work here with us. An accompanist is a collaborator and a good accompanist is flexible, sensitive, intuitive, and an excellent communicator. Vanessa embodies all of this and more and I treasure our collaboration!

I am grateful for Julie Swango and our tech team whose work literally and metaphorically amplifies the work of our music ministry. Having audio and tech expertise available every Sunday, and for other special events, is a tremendous benefit for our community. Our message and music has broader reach because of our live-streaming and recording capabilities and the quality of our music during live in-person services is enhanced by the skill of our team!



The Music Ministry Team formed last fall to help support the work of the Transitional Music Director and the revitalizing of the music ministry program. It is through collaboration and brainstorming with this team that the ideas and vision for this program have moved into reality. I feel supported and nourished by this team and I am grateful for the wisdom and experience that they share with our community through serving with this team. My gratitude and appreciation to these wonderful team members: Jennifer May, Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, Brad Bolton, Diane Cardew, Diana Watt, and Saunis Parsons.

I am very grateful to be part of a staff team of folks who are kind, generous, authentic, and talented. This team is a place where I can both lean into my leadership and where I trust and feel supported by the leadership of other team members. It is

powerful and meaningful to know that the work I do is rooted around a team table and with the accountability and expertise of this staff team.

I also am grateful to the Worship Arts Team and our many guest ministers and leaders for the opportunity to work alongside you in crafting meaningful and potent worship services. It truly is a co-creation and the more I experience, the more I love working through this process together with all of you. Thank you for sharing your time and talent in stewarding and guiding worship!

I am forever deeply grateful to Rev. Steven for his faith in me as a growing leader and for the stability he provided as I joined this community. Our supervisory walks by the river and his openness to talk about anything helped me feel comfortable here and gave me courage to grow.

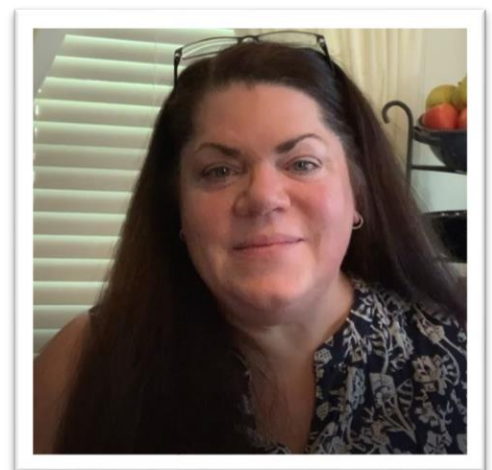
Thank you, everyone, for welcoming me into this community. I feel free and accepted to be myself and have deep gratitude for all of you. There is still good work to be done and beautiful music to create together and I am looking forward to the continuation of this shared time together!

With kindness and gratitude,
Emily:)

Reports from the Staff: MaryBeth Hannan, Congregational Administrator

Reflecting on the past year, our congregation has been navigating the liminal time (post COVID) well despite the fiscal challenges. The shared ministry we have practiced for years has shown its strength. Several of the church's committees and teams have been revived, programming has been much stronger than in the past few years, and several intentional opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and engagement have been offered. Additionally, we have welcomed several new folks and families! These are signs of a strong and growing community.

As we near the end of another fiscal year, once again this congregation is navigating a transition. With the unfortunate and very unexpected passing of Rev. Steven Protzman on January 29, 2024, the leaders of this congregation sprang into action. Our Board, collaborating with other leaders, formulated a path forward. This church is blessed with a



deep well of strong, gifted leaders. Congregational life is a journey filled with change and although it can be challenging at times, it is a form of growth. Looking to the future, the liminal phase continues for this congregation but there are good things on the horizon. New ministry provides new opportunities and new paths to live our mission.

There are so many reasons to appreciate being on this journey with you. I am blessed to work alongside a gifted and dedicated staff team, I appreciate deeply the lay leaders that I work with regularly (your passion for this community elevates your ministries!), and my service here continues to feed my soul. After 22 years in church administration (13 years serving here at UUCK), I can honestly say that I still love what I do and am grateful for my ministry here.

I will share that there are times I feel my ministry (job) is a bit of a mystery to the congregation. For those who do not work directly with me -- church administration...what is it? It varies from church to church based on shared ministry and church size but there is one common thread...church administration mostly happens behind the scenes. This is a ministry that is not “out in front of the congregation” like worship, religious education, or music. My work mostly involves working independently on finances, human resources, and caring for the “business side” of the church. Church...a business? Well, yes...anytime you have financial resources coming in and going out and employ staff there is a business element in what you’re doing. Church administration focuses on that. Below is a snippet of some of what I do with each having several layers of responsibilities:

- Oversee the church office
- Provided support to the ministries and programs of the congregation
- Bookkeeping (receivables and payables)
- Payroll administration
- Provide supervisory support to the Church Sexton, Tech Manager, and Campus Use Manager
- Human resources for onboarding new staff and benefits administration
- Member of the Ministry Executive Team, Website Team, and ex officio member of the Finance Committee

This has been a year of professional change for me; a bit of settling back in to a pared-down ministry. I want to thank those who served on the “Administrator Task Group” who worked with me to lighten the load of my job responsibilities following my voluntary reduction of hours in support of the 2023-2024 fiscal deficit. And much appreciation goes to Bonnie Harper who took over the “weekly e-nUUs” which freed up several hours of my week and to the Board members that took over the “24/7 on call” responsibilities for the Hobbs Hall fire alarm system. (I appreciate not having to take my cell phone to bed and have dedicated time where I am truly off work.)

For six years (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2023), I served on the Board of Directors for the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA). Throughout those years, I served as the membership coordinator, the treasurer, a good officer, and ended my term as the Vice-President of the organization. My service with the AUUA helped grow my knowledge, skills, and passion for my ministry. In order to provide space for healthy leadership transition, for the past year I have not participated as fully in the organization however, I do continue to serve as a good officer and provide support when needed.

Staff professional organizations are a vital resource for keeping a religious professional’s ministry vibrant and growing – they provide connections with peers and the greater UU world. The UU professional organizations (UUMA, LREDA, AUUMM, and AUUA) provide staff with resources, connection, support, and professional development opportunities which in turn help us better serve our congregations.

In the last year, I have participated in the following professional development opportunities through the AUUA and other sources:

- UUA Office of Church Staff Finances
 - Multiple training workshops: Empower -- The New Retirement Program Platform (included introduction to the new company, setting up the church's account and participants, how to interface with the new platform and make retirement contributions on behalf of the church and staff)
- AUUA Professional Days – workshops and meetings
 - The Way Out; workshop led by Mark Bernstien
 - A self-care and meditation workshop led by Pema Tara
 - Returning to Center; a Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (JEDI) workshop led by Wren Bellevance-Grace and Meck Groot (New England UU Regional staff)
 - Organizing Yourself when Working Out of Two Locations; a workshop led by AUUA Board members Janni Kretlow and Karena Stroh
 - Updates from the Offices of Church Staff Finances and UUA Office of Stewardship and Development
 - Dealing with Transition; a workshop led by Rev. Sunshine Wolfe
- AUUA
 - I co-led the workshop, “Where Do I Find It? How to use the AUUA Offerings and Info about the AUUA Good Offices program.”
 - I hosted two “monthly AUUA check ins;” an opportunity for AUUA members to check in virtually with organization leaders and other members
 - AUUA annual in-person Board 2-day retreat (Pittsburgh, PA)
- UUA General Assembly (GA)
 - Banner Parade and Opening Celebration
 - Featured Speaker: Brian Broome
 - Living into Stewardship Now
 - Service of the Living Tradition
 - A Trauma Toolkit for Leaders
 - Deeper than the Skin
 - Ware Lecture: Imani Perry
 - GA Sunday Worship: Ever Willing: Becoming the People Our World Needs
 - AUUA booth host at the GA Exhibit Hall
 - AUUA member dinner: Café Momentum (a non-profit restaurant that is a culinary training facility for at risk youth impacted by the juvenile justice system – I encourage anyone visiting the Pittsburgh area to enjoy a meal at the restaurant.)
 - UUCK lunch gathering
- UU Church of Kent
 - Leadership Essentials; led by Rev. Renee Ruchotzke and Rev. Sunshine Wolfe

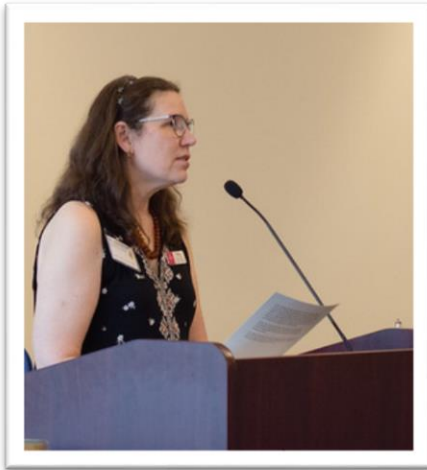
In closing, once again I would like to express my deep appreciation for this community, the staff team, our leaders, and our shared-ministry. Your dedication and numerous contributions to UUCK is what keeps this community thriving.

As this church community currently seeks a new interim or contract minister -- I'm looking forward to how their ministry will have a positive impact on this church and how they will complement our staff team, our church's leadership, and help us live our mission and goals.

In peace,
MaryBeth

Reports from the Volunteer Staff: Rev. Renée Ruchotzke, Affiliated Community Minister

April 2024



I am grateful for and proud of the way our leaders and community have stepped up this year. In response to a challenging budget cycle last year, our board responded with getting our finance committee back in action, and strategic planning around communication. As we worked through growing pains of living into Hobbs Hall, the challenges of renovating and returning to worship in the church sanctuary (where we no longer fit!), and patience of experimenting with different Sunday schedules, the congregation experienced some conflict, which was challenging, and reminded us of the importance of inclusive information-gathering, clear covenantal communication, and giving our leaders grace as they face complicated decisions.

Then, after the unexpected and tragic death of Rev. Steven, we all had to make huge adjustments while in deep shock and grief. My own adjustment was to bring much more of my ministerial training, experience and presence to the life of our congregation, while at the same time, navigating healthy boundaries around my role as affiliated community minister.

As most of you know, I have been working for the UUA since 2010, right after this congregation ordained me. My training is as a “parish minister,” but my call to ministry is one of leadership and organizational development, faith formation, and institutional vitality. Half of my time with the UUA is serving as Primary Contact (Similar to Rev. Sunshine’s role with us) with congregations in Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, Ithaca, and Binghamton, NY. The other half is creating, curating and project managing the UUA website’s robust online resources for lay leaders: [LeaderLab](#) and the [UU Institute](#). I feel blessed to be able do this work.

This year I have become much more active at the UUCK. I was part of the transitional music director search committee and currently serve on the music committee. Last fall, when we had the challenge of wanting to worship in the sanctuary but not having enough space, I was part of the team (along with Rev. Steven, Colleen, and Emily) who proposed and planned an all-ages second service option with all ages RE (including adult discussion groups) between the two services.

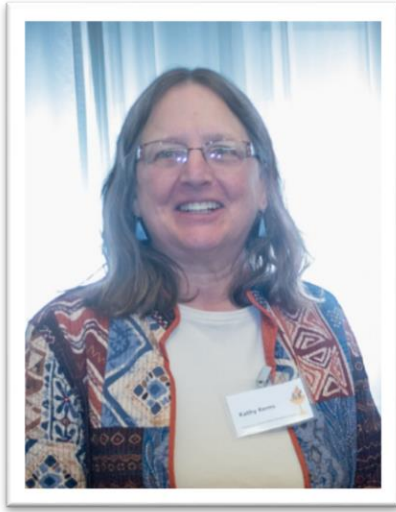
Since Rev. Steven’s death, I have been preaching a little more often and have joined the Worship Arts Team, and I have been part of the ministry team who have been filling the less-visible parts of the parish ministry role (along with our other affiliated community minister, Rev. Christie Anderson, commissioned lay ministers Lori McGee and Kathy Kerns, and also Randy Bish and David Weaver, both of whom were trained and ordained in other faith traditions). I have been providing support to our membership team, to the website and communications teams, and to the Committee on Shared Ministry.

Once we hire our new minister, I will work with them to transition these areas back to the parish minister role, and support them as our spiritual leader, just as I did with Rev. Steven.

Rev. Renee Ruchotzke



Reports from the Volunteer Staff: Kathy Kerns, Commissioned Lay Minister



This past year I have concentrated my efforts in the areas of worship and church leadership.

Worship: I had been assisting Rev. Steven in leading the Worship team. In his absence, I have been organizing the team and convening meetings. It is a joy to work with this dedicated group who contribute so much to our worship ministry. It is truly a group effort. They are the ones who work to make sure we have high quality worship services every week, even when they are not in the pulpit.

I have also led or co-led a few services in the past year. I am also participating in pulpit exchanges with two congregations.

Along with the rest of the worship team, I have been taking a class on worship. It has been a very enriching experience.

Leadership: I am currently chairing the Leadership Development Team which also includes Vivien Sandlund, Don Gregg, and Liz Bright. Our group is responsible for recruiting people for congregation leadership positions that are either elected by the congregation or appointed by the board. We also encourage and assist individuals who want to become more involved in the congregation. We are always open to having conversation with members, feel free to contact any of us if you want to know more about how to connect and be involved in church ministries. We have also developed a volunteer form, and we provide church committees with names of folks who are interested in their church ministry.

We also encourage people to seek leadership training. Several of our members attended a regional leadership training held at our church in August, and we administer a Leadership Development Fund which supports attendance at training events and General Assembly. Members are welcome to apply for these funds. If you would like to be a congregational representative at this year's online only General Assembly, please contact Kara Kramer to request an appointment, and you are welcome to contact our team to request funding.

In addition, I have participated in a small group that includes current and former ministers in our congregation. We have convened twice in the past year, at times of ministerial transitions, to discuss and offer recommendations to the congregation regarding how we might meet ministerial needs in Steven's absence. We are lucky as a congregation to have such a talented group with ministerial skills who are involved and committed members of the church.

On a personal note, this has been a challenging year for me, with the unexpected death of my husband in November. I have been touched and humbled by the support I have received from this congregation over the last few months: the meals and help with my husband's service, the cards and checking in, the hugs and words of support. Thank you, to all of you, for all of it. It is difficult to convey just how much this has meant to me. I also have not always been my best self the last few months, as I have struggled to work through my emotions. I am so grateful to those who have loved me anyway, providing me grace. Thank you. It has been a joy to serve this alive, spirit filled congregation.

In gratitude and faith,

Kathy

FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Income Generation

Report from the Treasurer: Lois Weir

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve the congregation as treasurer of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent during another year of challenge and change. My second three-year term is nearly over, and I am pleased to announce that Ryan Susman will take my place starting at the beginning of FY2025. I am confident he will serve you well as treasurer in the coming years. We continue to grow into our new campus, and Hobbs Hall is serving us well, providing a light and airy space to gather for worship, fellowship, and special events. Membership and active participation in the life of the church is also growing. This is reflected in the large number of new pledges that we received in this year's fund drive. Even though we lost some long-time pledges, the pledge drive realized an overall increase in pledged income over last year's level. Even though we are reeling from the loss of Reverend Steven, our congregation continues to pledge its support (in time, talent, and treasure) to our beloved Church.



In the past year, we've realized new income from rentals in Hobbs Hall and other spaces on our campus. Thanks to the hard work of our Campus Use Manager, Katie Kuras, we've already exceeded the annual rental income budgeted for FY24, with three months remaining in the fiscal year. Pledge donations have been coming in a bit behind schedule, but I am confident that we will be on track by the end of June. November's online auction was successful, and I expect our upcoming live auction on May 4 to be a success as well. As far as expenses go, we are running just a bit below our budgeted projections, and I anticipate that they will end up below budget at the end of the fiscal year. We had planned to draw about \$50,000 from the Hobbs bequest to balance this year's budget. We have already borrowed about half that amount, but I am very hopeful that that we won't have to borrow much more before the end of the fiscal year.

Fiscal Year 2025, which runs from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, presents challenges similar to those we faced this year. It is unclear exactly how much we will need to spend to fill our ministerial needs, but the Finance Committee and the Board have made some assumptions on which to craft the budget. FY2025 is yet another year in which our staff will not receive pay increases sufficient to align them with the UUA-recommended compensation levels. In addition, they will see further cuts to their professional expense budgets. If you get an opportunity, please thank them. They are feeling the pain of our budget situation more than many of us. I would like to thank our Generosity Team for running a successful fund drive. Thanks to all of you who pledged, we anticipate about \$275,000 in pledged income for FY2024. This is more than a 6% increase over last year's pledges!

So please keep doing what you have been doing. The church is growing in every way. Our finances will catch up with this growth eventually. Thanks again to all of you for your contributions of time, talent and treasure. You make this community thrive. And two final reminders – don't forget to fulfill your FY2024 pledge by June 30 and, if you haven't already pledged, or you think you might want to increase your pledge, it's not too late. Just drop a note to our Church Administrator at churchoffice@kentuu.org and let her know. We'll be adjusting the final FY25 budget at the end of June to reflect any new pledges.

A few more words of gratitude are in order before I close. Thanks to all of you who helped raise funds, small and large, by organizing or supporting activities that help our congregation financially. Thanks to the Generosity Team, led this year by Sandy Eaglen and Andrew Rome, who were so successful in increasing our pledged income for FY2025. Thanks to the Auction team, led by Trudy Diehl, for organizing two auction events – a live auction in the spring and a silent auction in the fall, and for conducting a bonus rummage sale last July. I would also like to recognize and thank the folks who are key our ability to effectively monitor and administer our fiscal needs. They include our Financial Secretaries and their assistants, and the Endowment Committee. I am very grateful for our current Finance Committee, led by Kay Eckman, which is now meeting regularly to do long-range planning to get the Church on a path to financial stability in the coming years. And thanks to our Administrator, MaryBeth Hannan, and the rest of our staff. They are the glue that keeps this place together.

Thanks to you all.

In Peace,
Lois Weir



	Fiscal Year to Date 7/1/23-3/31/24	Annual Fiscal Budget 7/1/23-6/30/24	Percent of Annual Budget	
Budgeted Income				
Offerings				
Pledge donations	\$ 178,164.67	\$ 258,563.00		
Non-Pledge Donations	\$ 9,843.00	\$ 16,000.00		
Plate Offerings	\$ 3,026.16	\$ 3,600.00		
Total Offerings	\$ 191,033.83	\$ 278,163.00	69%	
Other Income				
Coffee Hour Donations	\$ 456.75	\$ 400.00		
Bank Interest	\$ 38.09	\$ 52.00		
Total Fundraisers	\$ 1,504.18	\$ 3,700.00		
Total Grocery Card Income	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00		
Total Rental Income	\$ 16,444.00	\$ 15,000.00		
Service Auction	\$ 11,892.87	\$ 22,000.00		
Total Other Income	\$ 30,335.89	\$ 43,652.00	69%	
Reserved Income for Operations				
Reserved Gifts for Operations	\$ -	\$ -		
Fellowship Hall Reserves	\$ -	\$ -		
Eugene P Wenninger Legacy	\$ -	\$ -		
Transfers from Contingency Fund	\$ -	\$ -		
Total Reserved Income for Operations	\$ -	\$ -		
Trans from Savings / Investment	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 49,408.00	51%	
Total Budgeted Income	\$ 246,369.72	\$ 371,223.00	66%	
Program Budget Operating Expenses				
Worship & Music				
Total Music	\$ 1,438.56	\$ 1,500.00		
Worship Arts Team	\$ 699.65	\$ 750.00		
Worship Supplies	\$ 935.19	\$ 500.00		
*Program Budget for Worship & Music	\$ 79,984.43	\$ 107,450.06		
Total Worship & Music	\$ 83,057.83	\$ 110,600.06	75%	
Community Within				
Board of Trustee expenses	\$ -	\$ -		
Care Team	\$ -	\$ -		
Childcare for Meetings	\$ -	\$ 300.00		
Committee on Ministry	\$ -	\$ 250.00		
Fellowship & Coffee Hour	\$ 115.49	\$ 800.00		
Lay Leader Development	\$ 90.00	\$ 750.00		
Total Membership & Directory	\$ 504.00	\$ 1,500.00		
Personnel Expenses	\$ 6.15	\$ 50.00		
*Program Budget for Community Within	\$ 84,983.46	\$ 114,165.69		
Total Community Within	\$ 85,699.10	\$ 117,815.69	73%	
Lifespan Learning				
Adult RE	\$ 332.40	\$ 350.00		
Total Children's RE Program	\$ 2,051.17	\$ 2,575.00		
*Program Budget for Lifespan Learning	\$ 44,991.24	\$ 60,440.66		
Total Lifespan Learning	\$ 47,374.81	\$ 63,365.66	75%	
UU & Interfaith Ministries				
UUA Annual Program Fund	\$ 10,800.00	\$ 12,000.00		
Publicity	\$ 105.00	\$ 500.00		
*Program Budget for UU & Interfaith	\$ 17,496.59	\$ 23,504.70		
Total UU & Interfaith Ministries	\$ 28,401.59	\$ 36,004.70	79%	
Income Generation				
Rental expenses	\$ 111.74	\$ 100.00		
EasyTithe Processing Fee	\$ 532.69	\$ 360.00		
Fundraising expenses	\$ 46.11	\$ 250.00		
PayPal Processing Fee	\$ 1,124.05	\$ 1,000.00		
Service Auction Expenses	\$ 75.00	\$ 750.00		
Stewardship Committee	\$ 47.51	\$ 100.00		
*Program Budget for Income Generation	\$ 17,496.59	\$ 23,504.70		
Total Income Generation	\$ 19,433.69	\$ 26,064.70	75%	
Outreach Ministries				
UUYJ Community Meal Support	\$ 49.94	\$ 2,000.00		
Racial Justice	\$ -	\$ 600.00		
Total Social Justice	\$ 130.00	\$ 300.00		
*Program Budget for Outreach	\$ 4,999.03	\$ 6,715.63		
Total Outreach Ministries	\$ 5,178.97	\$ 9,615.63	54%	
Anticipated Uncollected Pledges	\$ 180.00	\$ 7,756.89		
Total Program Budget Operating Expenses	\$ 269,325.99	\$ 371,223.33	73%	
				Other Income
				Capital Campaign
				Cap Campaign donations received
				Trans from Cap Acct for expense
				Total Capital Campaign
				Designated Monies
				Total Endowment
				Total Grocery Card sales
				Hogwarts
				Income Received in Prior Year
				MDF donations and transfers
				Memorial donations
				Misc. Non-budgeted income
				Total RE Program donations
				Social Justice
				Fair Trade Sales
				Special Collection donations
				Total Social Justice
				Sunday Flowers
				Prior Year Carry-over income
				Total Other Income
				\$ 104,239.43
				Other Expense
				Mortgage Expense
				Total Capital Campaign
				Designated funds expenses
				Total Grocery Cards transfers & exp.
				Hogwarts transfers
				Library expenses
				Major Improvements expenses
				MDF transfers
				Memorial Fund Expenses
				Misc. Non-GF expense
				Music non-budgeted
				Outreach expenses
				Prior-year Monies carried over
				Prior Year expenses
				Religious Education Other
				Social Justice expenses
				Fair Trade expenses
				Race for Justice Team expenses
				Social Justice Committee Exp
				Special Collection expenses
				Social Justice expenses - Other
				Total Social Justice expenses
				Sunday Flowers expenses
				Transfer from Savings
				Total Non-Budgeted Expenses
				\$ 185,672.82

*Note: Facility operations and staff compensation expenses have been allocated to the UU Church of Kent Program Areas based on a percentage of staff time spent supporting our programs, ministries, committees,

GENERAL CHECKING		HTB MM SAVINGS ACCT.	
General Funds for Operations	-8,232.08	Aesthetics - savings	
Capital Campaign monies		Art in the Sanctuary	655.00
Bell Tower Restoration	20,502.21	Chancel Decorations fund	522.69
Furnishings Budget		Total Aesthetics - savings	1,177.69
Kitchen	749.78	Contingency Fund	0.40
Other Furnishings	2,009.39	Endowment Fund monies	
Total Furnishings Budget	2,759.17	Heritage Program	1,250.00
Hobbs Hall Gift	6,795.95	Simple Gifts	704.76
Kitchen appliances and cabinets	215.31	Total Endowment Fund monies	1,954.76
Signage Project	-750.00	Grant Fund (UUCK)	10,000.00
Solar Fund - Hobbs Hall	28.94	Green Sanctuary savings	566.14
Undesignated Capital Campaign	1,806.06	Library savings	174.56
Capital Campaign monies - Other	0.31	HTB MM SAVINGS ACCT. - Other	948.56
Total Capital Campaign monies	31,367.95	Total HTB MM SAVINGS ACCT.	14,822.11
Coffee Hour monies	1,601.32		
Designated Monies		OTHER ACCOUNTS	
Music Copyright Licensing	500.00	HTB Capital Campaign Account	\$ 3,778.86
Advertising	7.99	Vanguard	\$ 155,275.56
B&G funds	14,584.54	Grocery Card Checking Account	\$ 11.06
Care Team	100.00	Hogwarts Checking Account	\$ 1,313.47
Computer fund	1,000.00	Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$ 2,677.69
Guest at Your Table	250.38		
Race 4 Justice Task Group	338.04	Real Estate Assets	\$ 907,700.00
Rentals			
Rental Security Deposit	1,477.50	Grocery Card Inventory	\$ 255.00
Total Rentals	1,477.50		
Total Designated Monies	18,258.45	Major Liabilities	
Green Sanctuary monies	16.00	Debt Service (mortgage)	\$ 149,325.20
Grocery Card Fund			
Acme grocery cards	2,194.72		
Giant Eagle grocery cards	4,142.00		
Meijer grocery cards	1,693.81		
Total Grocery Card Fund	8,030.53		
Library monies	184.80		
Memorial Fund monies			
Designated memorials	700.00		
Harry Noden Memorial Music Fund	2,232.10		
Jack Graham Memorial	1,373.43		
Memorials - undesignated	2,226.14		
Total Memorial Fund monies	6,531.67		
Music Fund			
Music - undesignated	438.50		
Total Music Fund	438.50		
Prepaid Pledge Monies			
FY2025 Prepaid Pledges	2,950.00		
Total Prepaid Pledge Monies	2,950.00		
Religious Education			
Children's RE Program	836.91		
Coming of Age monies	212.74		
OWL monies	394.80		
Youth Con Registrations	500.00		
Youth Group monies			
UUYJ Community Meal	1,357.95		
Youth Group Fund	519.87		
Youth Service Trip	739.55		
Total Youth Group monies	2,617.37		
Total Religious Education	4,561.82		
Reserves for Operations			
Minister/Staff Sabbatical Fund	4,650.77		
Total Reserves for Operations	4,650.77		
Social Justice			
Fair Trade Sales	1,190.32		
Social Justice Fund			
Hot Meal Program	702.52		
Social Justice Fund - Other	194.88		
Total Social Justice Fund	897.40		
Special Collection monies	2,479.00		
Total Social Justice	4,566.72		
GENERAL CHECKING - Other	-191.09		
Total GENERAL CHECKING	74,725.36		

Report from the Endowment Committee

April 2024

Our team convened in July 2023 shortly after spirited budget discussions including expressions of concern over monies that had been labeled “endowment,” namely the significant amount of money remaining from Olive Hobbs’ unrestricted bequest after the construction of Hobbs Hall. The controversy centered around using the Hobbs legacy gift to supplement the operating budget. In order to pay for increased costs (care and upkeep of Hobbs Hall, valued programming and staffing expense), the congregation voted to again⁺⁺ borrow funds from this “endowment” account. This was not without controversy, as borrowing from this limited source of money for operating costs is not sustainable.

In this context, our team recognized the need to address these concerns. We decided to redirect our efforts to change the focus of the Endowment Committee, both in name and purpose. Since the funds in the “endowment” account were not actually being managed as an endowment, and to depict a more relevant role for this committee, we have proposed changing the name to The Legacy Giving Team. We are drafting a Policy for this change that will reflect the goal of encouraging “legacy,” or planned, gifts to the church through financial contributions of any size. We intend to clarify how legacy gifts will be accepted, named, and designated to best honor the wishes of the donor. It is our objective that this will ultimately minimize future controversy about the use of legacy funds.

The new team’s focus will be three-fold:

1. Education – offer workshops to educate the congregation about the various types of gifts they could make to the church
2. Assistance – help congregants find the best path for them to follow in making legacy contributions to the church
3. Celebration– acknowledge and celebrate legacy giving contributions

Other Endowment Committee functions named in the ByLaws will be addressed in collaboration with the Finance Committee. Once our drafted Policy is finalized, we will seek Board of Trustee approval for the proposed Policy and any needed ByLaw changes.

The Legacy Giving Team plans to resume this work as the church’s ministerial situation stabilizes and the budget is set for 2024-25.

Bonnie Harper
 Claudia Miller
 Diana Watt

⁺⁺2024 is the second year in which money has been “borrowed” from the Hobbs fund. No repayment of money “borrowed” last year has been made to date.

Excerpt from the Vanguard funds:

Legacy Monies	balance 2.29.2024	3.31.2024 Dividends	balance 3.31.2024						
Hobbs Bequest	\$92,135.87	\$355.13	\$92,491.01	1.12.2024	\$25000	budgeted withdrawal for FY2024 operations			
Undesignated Endowment	\$10,585.60	\$40.80	\$10,626.41						
Wenninger Bequest	\$11,461.36	\$44.18	\$11,505.53						
Total Legacy Monies			\$114,622.95						

Report from the Service Auction Team: Trudy Diehl

The auction team is working strong to continue to fundraise for our church through fun and community building auction activities. Our team committed to raising \$25,000 during fiscal year 2024. During the budgeting process, the projected expenses were put at \$750. The auction team started off the fiscal year with a very successful Silent Auction held November 12-19, 2023.

During the recent Feb 21 auction team meeting, our current church Treasurer Lois provided updated information that this event raised \$11,671 with \$75 expenses. Our next fundraising event (Live Auction and Dinner) is scheduled for May 4, 2024. Though we are anticipating going over our FY expense budget, we are also anticipating exceeding our FY revenue budget as well with this event.

The auction team has also been challenged to use this event to promote a fund-a-need drive to help raise funds to pay for the bell tower repairs. The Auction Team has decided not to put on a rummage sale this year and work on identifying other leaders to head this project in the future.

www.togetherauction.com/kentuu



FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Worship and Music

Report from the Worship Arts Team: Kathy Kerns, Chair

This past year has been one of challenge and growth for the worship arts team:

1. The year began with Rev. Steven shifting to three quarters time, which meant the worship team was responsible for covering more Sunday morning services. The team stepped up further following Steven's death. Although we have had some outsiders in the pulpit, members of the team have been generously sharing their time and talent to provide services in the absence of a minister.
2. By August, it was clear that our Sunday morning attendance was on the rise. The team had extra meetings in the late Summer and Fall regarding how to make sure we were providing a welcoming Sunday morning experience. After meeting with some representatives from RE and membership and staff, it was decided to stay in Hobbs Hall in Fall and seek input from the broader congregation on how they wanted us to address the problem (where to worship— Hobbs vs. sanctuary— and whether to have one or two services). After discussion of congregational input it was decided to have one service in the sanctuary with overflow space. Unfortunately this did not seem like a comfortable solution, based on December attendance.
3. RE Director Colleen Theole, Music Director Emily Hall, and Affiliated Minister Renee Ruchotzke developed a plan for adding a second service, in consultation with Rev. Steven. They proposed an early service that would be family friendly, both shorter and with more ritual and music. Many groups around the church provided input to their team, and the new services began in February. They will continue through May. The organizing team plans to obtain congregational feedback on the new service in mid April.
4. We will be returning to a single service, in Hobb Hall, over the summer. The team has planned services for most of the summer. We are grateful that several members not on our team have offered services. We hope to be working with a new full time minister in August.
5. The worship team has been taking a UUA course on Transforming Worship. We have been watching the course together and discussing the ideas. We hope to incorporate our learnings into worship.

I am very grateful to the team for their careful consideration and extra time they have devoted to our worship ministry over the last year. If you have any input on worship you would like to provide the team, you are welcome to email our group at wat@kentuu.org

Kathy Kerns, on behalf of the Worship Arts Team



FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Lifespan Learning

Report from the Children's Religious Education Committee: Amanda Rome, Chair

The current members of the Religious Education Committee (REC) are: Amanda Rome, Dana Wakefield, Stefanie Workman, Michelle Bores and Wendy Mann.

Our committee collaborates with our Director of Religious Education, (DRE) Colleen Thoele to provide religious explorations for our children and youth.

Highlights of our year include:

- Supporting the monthly youth-led Community Meals
- Supporting the Middle School led Free Store
- Assisting with the 2023 summer programming
- Covering for Colleen on her Sundays off
- Organizing the church Halloween Haunted House and party
- Supporting Youth Service Trip and Youth Group efforts
- Organizing the Easter Sunday Easter Egg Hunt
- Assisting with Nursery care and RE Classes
- Coordinating the RE Sunday Services
- Providing gifts to our graduating High School Senior
- Coordinating purchase of holiday gifts for 10 children in Foster Care through Caring For Kids
- Collecting donations for gift cards for young adults (first four years after graduation) and mailing cards to their current addresses
- Assisting with activities and food for teacher ingatherings in Fall and Spring

A highlight of this year has been the recruitment of several new teachers to teach our Sunday Religious Exploration classes and the transition back to two services with an all ages services and Pray Space for kids. Much of the transition to two services was spearheaded by our Director of Religious Education with the committee supporting and providing feedback for this transition.

As we move into the next fiscal year, we are eager to build the program and opportunities for children and youth. We hope to prioritize planning for a play space outside and finding funding for that space. We are so pleased to have a thriving program with much participation and interest.

Respectfully submitted
Amanda Rome – Chair





FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Community Within

Report from the Building and Grounds Coordinator: Jennifer Gregg

Building and Grounds Report 2024

Jennifer Gregg continues to serve as our Building and Grounds Coordinator.

She is often assisted by her husband Don and daughter Morgan with this duty, as well as several volunteer friends and members of the UUCK.

Hobbs Hall continues to be an amazing space that is utilized by the UUCK and the community.

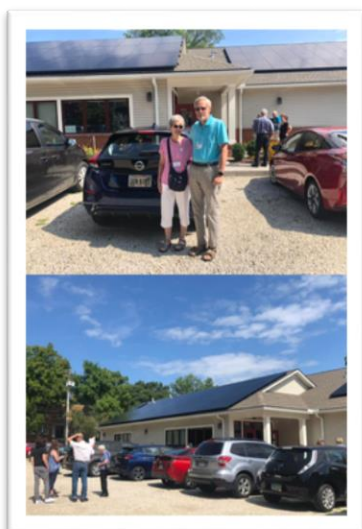
The HVAC system continues to control our Hall's climate well. HVAC check up and filter changes will be done this Spring by Crown Heating and Cooling. An estimate for adding ductwork in the Utility room done by Crown will be obtained. We were able to get through another Winter without incident in the utility room by being diligent in watching the weather and leaving utility and bathroom doors open for air circulation.

The utility room was reorganized to make room for the solar equipment. Some consumables and cleaning supplies have been moved to the Annex basement. There is now a metal cabinet in the utility room for chemical cleaning supplies. We are fully utilizing the shelving over the laundry area to store kitchen and laundry items. a small shelf for detergent and laundry related items has been placed between the machines. The cleaning cart and vacuum cleaner also reside in the utility room.

Hobbs Hall restrooms now have foot controlled lidded containers for disposal of sanitary products as well as generously sized trash cans.

The Hallway art display system is in place and ready for use.

Our classroom decor has been personalized by our RE team and the children. The middle/high schoolers have a cabinet and shelves in place well stocked with items for their free store operated during their monthly community dinner.



Our kitchen's commercial license has been maintained. We have several vendors using that space for their commercial food businesses. Those vendors and our volunteers keep our kitchen clean and well maintained. The dishwashing sink had some drain repairs in Summer of 2023. The grease trap is monitored monthly by the B&G coordinator. The rear kitchen exterior door now has a security camera.

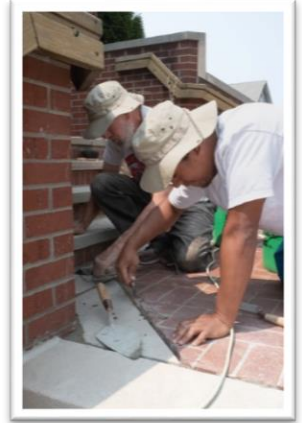
Hobbs Hall now has a full solar array on the roof. This system supplies for a large portion of the Hall's energy needs. (actual amounts vary month to month.)

The vinyl siding on Hobbs sustained some minor damage this spring from high winds. Repairs to that area will take place in the next few months.

Our Annex continues to serve as our command center. The kitchenette in the annex received a new faucet last Summer. The annex now hosts 2 security cameras that monitor the north side of our church, the rear parking lot, the Hobbs

patio area, play area and drainage pond. Planned work on the annex for this year is a new South exterior door, a new faucet for the bathroom, exterior paint and siding repairs, roof and chimney inspection, and repairs to the front porch.

Our church building has been the recipient of much attention. The sanctuary was renewed with new plaster, paint and light fixture ceiling medallions. Together with a good washing of windows and light fixtures and scrubbing of the carpet the it has become a very attractive and welcoming space. A new handrail to the west side of the chancel will be added in April.



The front exterior entry steps underwent significant masonry repairs in Summer of 2023. The front entryway, Founders lounge and greeters room has had some plaster and drywall repairs, a fresh coat of paint and some new decor. The rear entry of Fessenden kitchen received a new roof and some painting. A new gutter and drainage system was installed just outside the door.

The fire escape steps have had the edges of each step painted to improve safety and visibility. The entrance has been designated as an emergency exit entrance to increase safety and minimize disruptions to services.

Our church furnaces continue to provide us warmth through the cold months. The ducts were professionally cleaned last fall. The furnaces will be checked and filters changed by the B&G coordinator before we turn them back on in the Fall. The furnaces are turned off completely during the Summer months to conserve gas.



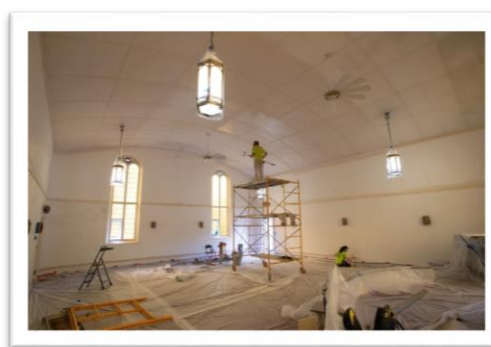
The church roof was inspected in 2023. The Bell Tower roof was replaced in Summer 2023. Work on masonry repairs to the Bell tower are currently underway. Once these repairs are completed, the structural engineer will advise us about any further repairs that may be needed.

The mason will be adding chimney cleanout doors on our north and west chimneys. These chimneys exhaust our furnaces and need periodic cleaning and inspections.

Our campus will soon be receiving new signs. I am hoping to install discreet cameras to those signs to watch the street fronts of our church and Hall.

Our Landscape team led by Master Gardener Georgia Quinn and her team of Master Gardeners continue to care for our grounds. These volunteers provide us with a service that would otherwise cost over \$10,000.

Building and Grounds continues to need volunteers to help care for our campus. Anyone interested in helping out should contact Jennifer Gregg at buildingandgrounds@kentuu.org



Report from the Membership Team:

April 2024

Committee Members Include: Virginia Horvath, Claudia Miller, Randy Bish, Mary Leeson
Marion Yeagler has stepped back from monthly meetings but assists as much as possible.
Diane Kloss resigned from the committee in October, after many years of valuable service.
Randy Bish joined the committee in March, and we welcome his fresh perspectives.
Rev. Renee Ruchotzke serves as our ministry liaison.

Our ongoing tasks include: Welcome visitors on Sunday morning; Contact visitors who turn in green cards; Assure Greeters for Sunday morning; Update Breeze; Publicize events hosted by the Membership Committee; and Help integrate visitors into our congregation through informal conversations on Sunday mornings, social events, and the Journey of Belonging Series of Classes.

Diane Kloss, assisted by the entire committee, hosted a Picnic and Pool party for Newcomers on Aug. 26, 2023. 24 people were invited and 9 were able to attend.

We set the schedule for the Journey of Belonging Classes and updated it throughout the year.

Oct. 4, 2023 Faith Journeys - led by Rev. Renee Ruchotzke

Nov. 8, 2023 Theology - led by Rev. Christie Anderson

Feb.25, 2024 Social Justice - led by Vivien Sandlund we hosted a church potluck prior

March 12, 2024 Membership/Stewardship - led by the Membership C. and Kay Eckman

April 16, 2024 Lifespan RE - led by Colleen Thoele, Amanda Rome, and Randy Bish

We sent personal invitations for membership to visitors and friends who were contemplating membership. On October 29, 2023 we welcomed 7 new members to our congregation.

The number of members certified with the UUA for the current year is 172.

Our current work, spearheaded by Rev. Renee, is formalizing our policies and procedures.



Report from the Ministry Executive Team (MET):

Per the ByLaws, the members of the Ministry Executive Team (MET) are the Treasurer; a Board appointed past Board Member; a Member-At-Large, elected by the Congregation; the Congregational Administrator and the Minister. Our 2023-2024 MET members are: Lois Weir, Treasurer; Diana Watt, Past Board member; MaryBeth Hannan, Congregational Administrator; Kathie Slater, Member-At-Large, elected by the Congregation; and Rev. Steven Protzman (until his passing in January, 2024)

The MET continues to devote its attention to the day-to-day management and administration of the Church's ministries as charged by our governance structure. This management and administration is within the policies approved by the Board of Trustees.

MET responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with and providing support to the Church's Program Coordinators. Where a program coordinator position is vacant, the MET handles necessary responsibilities for that position.
- Overseeing the ministries of the congregation, in collaboration with the Council on Shared Ministry.
- In the current absence of a Personnel Coordinator, working with the Board of Trustees in making staffing decisions.
- Identifying needs which should be addressed by existing committees, or propose the formation of a new task force or team. The MET also helps provide guidance to committees and task forces in creating policies.
- Examining communication processes, both internal and external.
- Fiscal responsibilities such as collaborating with the Finance Committee to draft the annual budget for Board endorsement and Congregational approval. Review and approve unbudgeted expenses, not to exceed an annual total of one percent of the current fiscal year budget. Ensuring an annual Stewardship Campaign is held.

The MET reports monthly to the Board of Trustees. Currently, the MET meets at least once each month, and adds additional meetings as needed depending on issues and items that require attention.

A typical MET meeting agenda is lengthy, as it contains excerpts from relevant requests and reports along with items which are carried over month to month, until resolution is complete. For example, a sample from the MET's most recent agenda (as of this writing) included some of the following items:

- Church Library Ministry, filling leadership positions
- Review of submitted fund-raising proposals
- Updates on any church rentals and pledge campaign
- Follow-up on working status of EV charging station
- Update on Bell Tower repair and estimates, per Buildings & Grounds Chair
- Endorsement of proposed grant for inclusive playground
- Review status of installing new signage for church
- Steps related to revival of a church Safety Team
- Checking on items tabled by either the Board or MET for current relevance

This is the first year the MET has operated as a five-person team, per the approved ByLaw change last May. We can report that the new composition has worked exceedingly well, and there is a good balance of voices at the table in considering items at hand, while still allowing for efficient decision making and positive camaraderie.

FY2024 Annual Program Area Reports: Social Justice & Community Outreach

Report from the Social Justice & Community Outreach Coordinator: Vivien Sandlund

Church members and friends continued to work actively for social justice in the past year. Our members and friends engaged in the following activities:

The church installed solar panels on Hobbs Hall that are now providing power to the church and are reducing the cost of electricity. The panels were made available through the work of the UUCK Solar Committee and by a generous gift from church members Kathy and Bill Wilen. Many members and friends of the church contributed to the cost of going solar.

The church presented the second Ted and Swanny Voneida Social Justice Award to Kathy and Bill Wilen for their lifelong work for democracy and environmental justice and to Mary Ann Kasper for her many years of work in founding and growing the Socially Responsible Sweatshop.

Swanny Voneida organized an educational program for children and adults titled “Gray Wolves in Continental North America, the Fall and Rise of a Member of Creation.” The speakers were environmentalists Todd and Ann Cartner who work to educate people about the lives of gray wolves and efforts to save them.

The Race4Justice team sponsored a Living the Pledge workshop for church members and friends and for community people. The topic of the workshop was “Speaking up to Racist Comments and Behavior.”

The Social Justice Council partnered with the Church Ministry Team to sponsor a series of educational programs for church members and friends titled “Peace in the Middle East.” The program has focused on the war in Gaza and has presented different perspectives on the conflict. The first guest speaker was Rabbi Joshua Brown of Temple Israel in Akron. The series is ongoing. Organizers hope to bring in as a speaker Steve Sosebee, founder and head of the Palestine Children’s Relief Fund and founder of the new organization Heal Palestine.

Volunteers from our church have continued to prepare and serve lunches four Saturdays per year at Trinity Lutheran Church as part of the Lord’s Lunch program sponsored by area congregations.

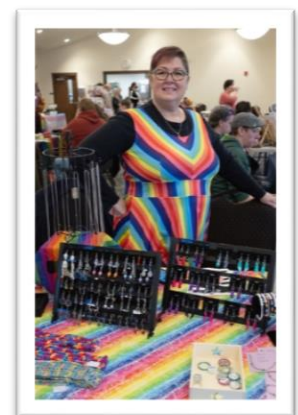
Our church youth, the UU Youth for Justice, have sponsored a free community meal on the first Sunday of each month.

Our church middle schoolers have collected donations to give away at their free store during the monthly community meals.

The UU Youth for Justice traveled in the summer of 2023 to Washington, DC where they learned about homelessness, served meals in food pantries, and volunteered in community centers.

The UU Youth for Justice will travel this summer to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to learn from and volunteer with people of the Oglala Lakota Nation. They continue to raise funds for this trip.

The church hosted the first Pride Vendor Fair in Hobbs Hall during Kent’s Rainbow Weekend.



Our church members and friends have made regular food donations through the church to Kent Social Services. Church member Elaine Bowen has regularly brought donations to Kent Social Services and has informed church members and friends of items needed by KSS. She has also informed church members and friends of monthly pop-up food pantries in Portage County sponsored by the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank.

Church members have continued to collect plastics to be recycled.

The church has hosted signature collection events as part of the effort to place a proposed state constitutional amendment on the November ballot. The amendment if adopted will create a citizen redistricting commission to draw fair election maps and end gerrymandering in Ohio elections.

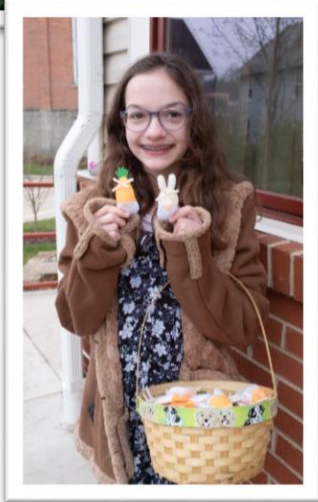
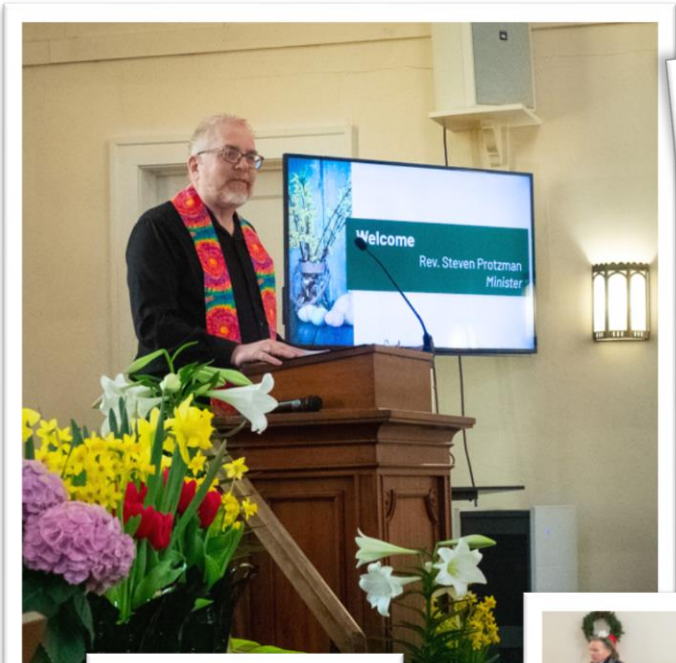
The congregation took special collections each month during the past year for the following organizations: Ohioans for Reproductive Freedom, the Immigrant Worker Project, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, UU Youth for Justice, Equality Ohio, Kent Social Services, UUCK Minister's Discretionary Fund, UNICEF USA (chosen by children in church RE program), American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, Portage Animal Protective League, and Indigenous Environmental Network. Special collections in May and June will go to Everytown for Gun Safety and to Freedom House.

We encourage folks to get involved in our church social justice activism in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted by Vivien Sandlund, Coordinator of Social Justice



Looking Back









Photos by Brad Bolton and
the members and friends of our church.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent
228 Gougler Avenue · Kent, Ohio 44240
<https://kentuu.org>