

2025-2026
Annual
Giving
Campaign

FIRST
RELIGIOUS
SOCIETY,
UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST

Newburyport,
Massachusetts

ANNUAL REPORT

Church Year 2024-2025

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WARRANT – ANNUAL MEETING OF FRSUU TO BE HELD JUNE 8, 2025

The Proprietors of the Pleasant Street Church and the members of the First Religious Society, Unitarian Universalist in Newburyport, MA are hereby notified to convene for a meeting in person in the Sanctuary and via Zoom on Sunday, June 8, 2025, at 10:30am. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Sunday Worship Service and, as indicated in the bylaws as amended, the congregation will there and then act upon the following articles.

- Article 1:** To act on the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting and the Special Congregational Meetings held on September 22, 2024, and March 16, 2025.
- Article 2:** To act on the reports of the Staff, Officers, Committees, and Workgroups included in the 2025 Annual Report.
- Article 3:** To act on the recommendation of the Governance Committee for the election of Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment.
- Article 4:** To ask the congregation to amend Article VII, Section 4 of the Bylaws to redefine the level of contract expenditure at which a vote of the Society, i.e. the gathered congregation is required.
- Article 5:** To ask the congregation to affirm the Parish Board continue exploration of purposes and best language to recommend a Land Acknowledgement to bring to the Congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in 2026.
- Article 6:** To request that the congregation support the Board's recommendation to replace the HVAC system in the Lower Meetinghouse at a cost of up to \$160,000.
- Article 7:** To act on the FY2025-2026 budget as recommended by the Parish Board.

We the undersigned hereby certify that we have notified the Pleasant Street Church and the members of the First Religious Society, Unitarian Universalist in Newburyport, MA to meet at the time and place, and for the purpose set forth in the Warrant by posting the same in the church eight (8) days (including two Sundays) before the day of the meeting.

Tina Benik
Lori Clark
Kathy Desilets
Vern Ellis

Laurie Evans-Daly
Minnie Flanagan
Bob Higgins
Tom Himmel

Sarina Khan Reddy
Liss Larsen
Andy Lobb
Jim Supple

Renee Wolf Foster

A copy of the warrant attest:



Kathleen Desilets, Parish Clerk

Motions & Additional Information on the Articles

Article 1: To act on the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting, the Special Congregational Meeting held on September 22, 2024, and the Special Congregational Meeting held on March 16, 2025.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve the notes of the 2024 Annual Meeting of FRSUU, and the notes of the Special Congregational Meetings held on September 22, 2024, and March 16, 2025.*

Explanation: Meeting notes are approved by the group that held the meeting in which actions taken to affirm that the actions were properly recorded and are included in the Annual Report. Each year, the minutes of the previous Annual Meeting are approved at the Annual Meeting. This year, Special Meetings of the congregation were held on September 22, 2024, and March 16, 2025.

Article 2: To act on the reports of the staff, officers, committees, and workgroups included in the Annual Report.

Motion: *I move that the reports of officers, ministers, lay leaders, staff, committees, workgroups, and other groups as presented in the Annual Report for 2024-25 be received and entered into the record.*

Explanation: These documents are included in the Annual Report and describe activities and actions taken this year and initial plans for the coming year. Taken together the reports present a robust picture of the current operations, actions, and status of the church.

Article 3: To act on the recommendation of the Governance Committee for the election of officers, chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment.

Motion: *I move that the congregation elect the slate of officers, chairpersons, and Trustees presented in the Annual Report.*

Explanation: An annotated copy of the slate of nominees, as recommended, is included in the Annual Report, and was sent to members in advance of the meeting.

Article 4: To amend Article VII, Section 4 of the Bylaws to redefine the level of contract expenditure at which a vote of the Society, i.e. the gathered congregation, is required.

Motion: *I move that Article VII, Section 4 of the Bylaws be revised to read "No contract involving any expenditure exceeding \$20,000 shall be made without a vote of the Society."*

Explanation: Current amount requiring a congregational vote is \$7,000. The proposal is to increase to \$20,000 to account for inflation and to improve efficiency.

Article 5: To ask the congregation to affirm the Parish Board continue exploration of purposes and best language to recommend a Land Acknowledgement to bring to the Congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in 2026.

Motion: *I move the Congregation affirm that the Parish Board continue exploration of purposes and best language to recommend a Land Acknowledgement to bring to the Congregation for approval at the 2026 Annual Meeting.*

Explanation: Linda Lu Burciaga displayed at the recent Congregational-Parish Board meeting a framed poster by Lance Hidy using a beautiful feather design by noted Indigenous artist Sierra Henries. This poster serves the Burciagas as a daily reminder that "we are on Indigenous lands." Yes, acknowledgment of this fact is important

but, even more so, we would be basing our reminder on learning the Indigenous history of those who loved, respected, and cared for this special land that we now inhabit. Thus it is proposed that we spend a year of discernment, honoring those who came before us and who live among us today. A weekly “land acknowledgment” during each worship service would then have even greater meaning and value. It is the intention that we bring to the Congregation a Land Acknowledgment for approval at the Annual Meeting in 2026.

Article 6: To request that the congregation support the Board’s recommendation to replace the HVAC system in the Lower Meetinghouse at a cost of up to \$160,000.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve the recommendation of the Board to replace the HVAC system in the Lower Meetinghouse with a heat pump system at a cost not to exceed \$160,000.*

Explanation: The air conditioners for the Lower Meetinghouse are beyond their service life and last summer experienced periodic failures. The service company recommended replacement of the air conditioners. Research was done on options, and the lowest net cost and highest efficiency option found was a new heat pump system. The heat pump system can be installed this summer, is eligible for MassSave rebates, and reduces our dependency on fossil fuels. The project will remove the existing air conditioners, upgrade air handlers and controls, replace the fence in the back of the church, and integrate the system with the fire control system.

Article 7: To act on the FY2025-2026 budget as recommended by the Parish Board.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve the Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) budget as presented in the Annual Report.*

Explanation: The budget documents, as approved by the Finance Committee and the Parish Board, are included in the Annual Report and were sent to members in advance of the meeting. The expense budget has been reorganized for this year to reflect proposed expenses by FRS programs.

Nominations for the Parish Board, Officers, and Trustees of the Endowment

Nominees for the Parish Board, Officers, and Trustees of the Endowment for the 2025-2026 church year are highlighted in gray below. Parish Board members are typically elected to three-year terms. Officers, which include the Finance Chair, Governance Chair, Stewardship Chair, Endowment Treasurer, Finance Treasurer, Parish Clerk, Moderator, and Auditor are elected to one-year terms. Trustees of the Endowment are typically elected to three-year terms.

	Name	Nominee or Incumbent (1)	Term Length (Years)	Entering What Year of Term?
Parish Board				
Parish Board	Bob Higgins	I	3	2
Parish Board	Tom Himmel	N	3	1
Parish Board	Julie Menin	N	3	1
Parish Board	Lori Clark	I	3	3
Parish Board	Sarina Khan Reddy	I	3	2
Parish Board	Liss Larsen	I	3	3
Parish Board	Jeff Bard	N	3	1
Parish Board	TBD (2)		1	
Trustees of the Endowment				
Trustee	Barbara Garnis (3)	I	2	2
Trustee	Natalie Hildt Treat	I	3	2
Trustee	Kim Kenly	I	3	1
Officers				
Parish Clerk	Kathy Desilets	I	1	5
Governance Chair	Leslie Lawrence	N	1	1
Stewardship Chair	Renee Wolf Foster	I	1	2
Finance Chair	Jim Supple	I	1	2
Finance Treasurer	Andy Lobb	I	1	2
Others				
Endowment Treasurer	Jim Major	N	1	1
Moderator	Lea Pearson	I	1	8
Auditor	TBD		1	
(1) Incumbents served on the Board the previous consecutive year, even if in a different elected role. Nominees are new to the Parish Board this year but may have served previous terms.				
(2) This was previously the youth member slot.				
(3) Barbara Garnis is filling two years of a three-year term.				

Nominee Profiles

Jeff Bard (Parish Board)

Jeff, who grew up in Adams, MA, attended Boston College and stayed to work in the Boston area at various ad agencies and his own company, Bard Integrated Marketing. Jeff lived in Quincy and has lived in Rowley for over 30 years. Raised Catholic, in 2006 he decided to go “church shopping” and found FRS. As someone who never engaged in Catholic church activities beyond Sunday service, at FRS he embraced the community and got involved. Some of Jeff’s participation included the Governance Committee, Community Outreach Group (formerly Community Human Services), Parish Board (serving as Vice-Chair and Chair), directing the Stir the Pot initiative for two years, Kelleher Gardens Playground fundraising, Chief Steward of two annual pledge drives, and the first Chair of Worship Associates. He also was part of the Ministerial and Music Search Committees that recommended Rev. Rebecca and Nick Place. Now retired, Jeff enjoys camping, hiking, protecting the piping plovers on Plum Island, jazz, playing with his dog Millie, and traveling with his wife Ginger.

Leslie Lawrence (Governance Committee Chair)

Leslie grew up in the Plandome Unitarian Universalist Church in Long Island, NY. She fell away from active church participation in early adulthood, but was drawn back to church after 9/11, in search of a community and spiritual home. Coming from different spiritual backgrounds, Leslie and her then partner (now husband), Stan Barrett, explored several UU congregations in the area before settling on FRS, which provided the right combination of community, social justice, and spiritual connection. Stan and Leslie became members of FRS soon after and were married in the church by Rev. Babcock in 2005. Stan, an ordained minister and hospice chaplain, became an affiliate minister of FRS a few years later. Over the past 20+ years, Leslie has served the church in many capacities: as member and then Chair of the Parish Board, Co-chair of the Human Resources Subcommittee (past 13 years), and member of the search committees hiring the Director of Church Music (Justin Murphy-Mancini) and our new Assistant Minister, Rev. Laurel. Leslie recently retired as Executive Vice President of Emmaus Inc, a non-profit agency providing emergency shelter, affordable housing, and support services to homeless and near homeless households in Greater Haverhill and the Merrimack Valley. “With my retirement I have additional time and energy to offer and look forward to supporting the Governance Committee, the Parish Board and the Congregation at large in helping to make our community’s vision for our next 100 years a reality.”

Julie Menin (Parish Board)

Julie Forney Menin landed at FRS 21 years ago when she was looking for a community in Newburyport for herself and her two children. She taught Young Church and served on the Religious Education Committee until her children completed the OWL program at which point she joined the Hospitality Committee as a way for an introvert to feel more comfortable at coffee hour. And she’s never looked back. Julie was on the Parish Board during the dreaded steeple renovation and “Harold Babcock announces his retirement” era. She also served on the search committee for our interim minister and is currently a member of the Human Resources Subcommittee, the Facilities Team, the Leading Edge Team and the Anti-Racism Initiative (which she currently co-chairs with Susan Fasoli), the Justice Action Council, and the Adult Education Committee. Julie has been a Newburyport resident for 31 years and retired two years ago after a long career with a biotech firm in Ipswich. She enjoys traveling (ask her about New Zealand!), being outdoors, African drumming, conversing in mediocre French, and tending her beloved dahlias.

Jim Major (Treasurer of the Endowment)

Jim and his wife, Tamara, moved to Newburyport in 2019 after his retirement and recently joined FRS in April 2025 after attending services on a regular basis since October 2024. They have also attended the New to UU classes and participated in a Chalice Circle. Jim was a member of the UU Area Church First Parish, Sherborn, MA during the 80s, where he served on the Board of Directors, was a member of the Search Committee for a new

minister, and taught Sunday school. Jim received his master's degree in social work from Boston University where he majored in community organization and nonprofit management. He was the Executive Director of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of MetroBoston and the Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools, an association of state approved private schools serving students with special needs. Jim's work in nonprofit management has included experience working with investment advisors to safeguard and grow endowment funds. He also currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Merrimac Heights Academy in Merrimac and the League School for Autism in Walpole. Jim and Tamara enjoy spending time with their three children and four grandchildren, exploring the North Shore and volunteering.

Minutes of FRS Annual Congregational Meeting, June 9, 2024

Present: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Minister; Justin Murphy-Mancini, online facilitator including online check-in and management of participation; Diane Carroll, in person member check-in; Lea Pearson, moderator; Stephen-Wolf Foster, head usher; other ushers.

A quorum of the congregation was determined by Diane Carroll and Justin Murphy-Mancini. This meeting was held both in person and on Zoom and was integrated into the worship service with the intention of reminding us that the work of decision-making for the church is sacred work. Members were notified as required in the bylaws. Copies of the Warrant and other materials were also available. Rev. Rebecca gave the Call to Worship, welcomed all those who were present, and explained that the Annual Meeting will be integrated into the worship service.

Call to Order: Lea Pearson called the meeting to order, welcomed all present, explained the process of the meeting, and then moved to the first item of the Warrant.

Article 1: To act on the minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting, the Special Congregational Meeting held on March 10, 2024, and the Special Congregational Meeting held on December 4, 2022.

MOTION: Minnie Flanagan moved that the congregation approve the notes of the 2023 Annual Meeting, the Special Congregational Meeting held on March 10, 2024, and the Special Congregational Meeting held on December 4, 2022. Tina Benik seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Article 2: To act on the reports of the Staff, Officers, Committees, and Workgroups included in the Annual Report.

MOTION: Lori Clark moved that the reports of Staff, Officers, Committees, and Workgroups, as presented in the Annual Report 2023-2024, be received and entered into the record. Renee Wolf Foster seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Article 3: To act on the recommendation of the Board to make an exception to the bylaws provision that Board Members must take a year off after serving three (3) full years, to allow Tina Benik to serve an additional year and to serve as Board Chair.

MOTION: Tom Himmel moved that Article VI: Section 3 of the bylaws be suspended for one year. Liss Larsen seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Article 4: To act on the recommendation of the Governance Committee for the election of Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment.

MOTION: Tom Himmel moved that the congregation elect the slate of Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment presented in the Annual Report. Lori Clark seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Remembrances: Rev. Rebecca led a ceremony to mourn the loss and celebrate the lives of members who have died since the 2023 Annual Meeting, including the following:

Pat Hurzeler – 11/5/2023
Ned McClung – 12/24/2023
Rev. Helen Murgida – 2/28/2024
Aster Shepherd – 3/15/2024
Judy Shivik – 4/17/2024

She reminded us that we also hold in our hearts the names and legacies of all members and friends and families of those members and friends who have gone before us.

Welcome to New Members: Rev. Rebecca recognized the following new members who have joined FRSUU since our 2023 Annual Meeting:

Dd Allen
Andrew Boger
Carol Gamble
Kristen Giessler
Pam Lessar
Karen Letourneau
Deb Maas
Cailin McFarland
August Mead
Katie Mead
Mary Lou Monteiro
David Pillemer
Jane Pillemer
William Raschke
Katherine Roth Huse
Teddy Speck
Rebekah Stafford
Sharon Tillman
Mary Valle

Article 6: To act on the recommendation of the Anti-Racism Team and the Board to adopt the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism. The 8th Principle states:

"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

MOTION: Jim Supple moved that the congregation adopt the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism as recommended by the Anti-Racism Initiative Team and the Board. Minnie Flanagan seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, which indicated strong congregational support, the motion was approved by the gathered meeting with one opposing vote.

Article 7: To act on the FY2025 budget as recommended by the Parish Board.

MOTION: Renee Wolf Foster moved that the congregation approve the Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) expenditure budget as presented in the Annual Report. Jim Supple seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Article 8: To note and acknowledge that the year ahead will be the 300th anniversary of the establishment of this congregation, to be celebrated during the calendar year January 1 - December 31, 2025.

MOTION: Annie Maurer moved that we, the membership of the First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist, formally recognize the coming church year as the beginning of the 300th anniversary of the establishing of this congregation, to be celebrated January 1 - December 31, 2025. Kathy Desilets seconded. After an explanation and the opportunity for questions and comments, the motion was approved.

Lea Pearson invited a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim Supple so moved and the motion was seconded and adopted with enthusiasm. The meeting adjourned at 1:15pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk

Notes of FRS Special Congregational Meeting, September 22, 2024

The meeting took place in the Sanctuary in person and on Zoom.

Purpose: To authorize the Parish Board to contract for repair of the steeple lights and supportive infrastructure.

Present: Lea Pearson, moderator; Rev. Rebecca Bryan, spiritual leader; Tina Benik, Board Chair; and a quorum of voting members of the congregation as required for this meeting.

A quorum having been established, Lea Pearson called the meeting to order at 11:30am. She asked all present to consider our connection with the church and with the steeple lights.

After an assurance that online participants could hear, Lea read the question to be considered, Article 1 on the Warrant. *"To act on the recommendation of the Parish Board that the congregation authorize the Parish Board to enter such contract or contracts as are advisable or required to replace the steeple lighting and to make advisable or necessary repairs to steeple windows. Total expenses for such repairs are not to exceed \$75,000."*

ACTION: Bob Higgins moved that Article I be approved allowing the Parish Board to take the action described. The motion was seconded.

Forrest Speck explained the role of the steeple as an icon of the city and of the church. He explained that an inspection of the lighting system and the windows showed that both needed attention. The Grants Team has requested funds from two local foundations that have a history of providing funding to the church.

Discussion established that our lights should not present a significant threat to migrating birds and that, while we are optimistic that grant money will be received, if these funds are not available to complete the needed work over the fall, other steps would need to be taken (e.g. loans from either the endowment or another lender). This work during the fall will make the lights available in time for the winter holidays.

ACTION: Bob Higgins moved that Article I be approved allowing the Parish Board to take the action described. The motion was seconded. The motion passed on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm by general consent of those present.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk

Notes of FRS Special Congregational Meeting, March 16, 2025

The meeting took place in the Sanctuary in person and on Zoom.

Purpose: To authorize spending for a feasibility study of the restoration of Parish Hall. The congregation was notified of the meeting and its intent as required by the bylaws.

Present: Lea Pearson, moderator; Nick Place, Zoom facilitation; Diane Carroll, participant check-in; Stephen-Wolf Foster, head usher; Rev. Rebecca Bryan, spiritual leader; Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk.

Call to Order: Lea Pearson called the meeting to order at 11:15am, after confirming with Stephen-Wolf Foster and Nick Place that a quorum (106) was in attendance. She reminded the congregation that we have just one item to vote on—authorizing funds for the initial planning work for the Parish Hall restoration. As such, we will be entertaining ONLY questions and comments about the funding, NOT about the plans for the building, or our vision, or desires, or architectural details.

Lea read Article I and Lark Madden made the following motion:

Motion: I move that the congregation authorize the Parish Board to enter into such contract or contracts with architectural/engineering firm(s) as are needed to conduct a feasibility study and to develop preliminary design proposals and cost estimates for restoration of the Parish Hall to meet the needs of the congregation and the community at a cost not to exceed \$60,000.

Bob Higgins seconded the motion. Lark Madden read the explanation included in the warrant and added that funds are available from the Futures fund and from other fundraising.

He also explained in response to questions:

- The 8th Principle was part of the exploration of available firms for this project. Two out of three identified were owned by women.
- The study will take about 12 weeks after a firm is chosen. The overall project of determining the future of the Parish Hall will involve many steps and the time this will take has not been determined at this time.
- The proposed work will strengthen our connections with the community, make a space for children to learn, and make our values visible.
- The committee leading the project is actively exploring the engagement of legal counsel for the project. Lisa Mead, who is an attorney, is involved in this consideration.
- A page on the website will be available to describe steps in the process.

The floor was open for comments which were strongly positive.

Vote: After determining that no questions or comments remained, Lea reread the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion was carried.

Lea thanked all those who worked on this project, especially Lark Madden and Tom Himmel and the Parish Board, and asked people to stand to be recognized for their work.

Rev. Rebecca offered a blessing after which a motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and carried. Meeting adjourned at 12:10pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk

REPORTS FROM THE PARISH BOARD, STANDING COMMITTEES, AND TRUSTEES OF THE ENDOWMENT

Parish Board

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Parish Board is the governing board of the First Religious Society. It is charged with maintaining the well-being of FRSUU's church community, its buildings and grounds, and its resources. Its purpose is to lead the Church towards fulfillment of the congregation's stated mission (from the Parish Board Manual).

Names of people involved:

Tina Benik (Chair), Rev. Rebecca Bryan (ex-officio), Lori Clark, Kathy Desilets (Parish Clerk), Vern Ellis (Chair, Fourth Century Team), Laurie Evans-Daly, Minnie Flanagan, Bob Higgins (Vice-Chair), Tom Himmel (Governance Chair), Liss Larsen, Andy Lobb (Finance Treasurer), Sarina Khan Reddy, Jim Supple (Finance Chair), Renee Wolf Foster (Stewardship Chair).

Chair or chairs:

Tina Benik, Chair; Bob Higgins, Vice Chair

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Monthly, third Wednesday of most months, from 6-8pm

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Parish Board supports the Values and Mission of FRSUU by endeavoring to ensure that its actions further these beliefs and goals. As we engaged in decision making, we worked to view our efforts through these prisms to hold ourselves accountable. We continued to work to strengthen authentic connection between the Parish Board and the congregation with ongoing informational meetings and open discussion, as well as periodic Parish Board letters to the Congregation.

One of the ways that the Parish Board supported and enhanced FRS values this year was by how it conducted its own business. The Parish Board developed and adopted a new Parish Board Covenant that clearly spells out our aspirational goals that guide how we conduct business with each other and how we all endeavor to care for one another. We remind ourselves of this covenant at each meeting.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The 2024-2025 church year was notable by the number of ongoing major initiatives and activities that the PB was either directly involved in, or that it was called on to review, understand, and approve. Some of these included the approval of the repair of the steeple lights; the preparations for, and beginning celebration of, our 300th Anniversary Year; the furtherance of our planning, dreaming, and working on the next phase in the life of Parish Hall and the formation of a related Capital Campaign Team (this included getting congregational approval to hire an architect to help FRSUU determine the possible scope of the future Parish Hall project); supporting a modified and streamlined Annual Campaign; working to advance the review and recommendation for a new HVAC solution for the Lower Meetinghouse; and authorizing a team to draft and enact various aspects of a Safety Policy.

The Parish Board also participated in submitting a grant application to support the congregation and Rev. Rebecca during her planned sabbatical starting in June 2026. This exercise called on us to start to get to a deeper understanding (which will be ongoing) of what FRSUU means when we talk about a "Shared Ministry."

Another area that the Parish Board focused on, and continues to work on, is determining and implementing

what “governance” looks like under FRSUU’s policy-based governance. While this structure has been in place for some time, as we embarked on numerous, and often significant and layered, initiatives, we found ourselves having to remind ourselves to follow processes that had been already established but had perhaps not been consistently used.

Finally, the second part of our church year was certainly impacted by the external environment and the additional “call” that it put on Rev. Rebecca and our congregation to “live” our Values and “Be the Light.”

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

To ensure that the groundwork that has been laid for a number of different initiatives described above continues to advance and develop, and that our (PB, various teams and committees, and congregation) dreaming and planning and hard work come to fruition. And further, that we do our work in such a manner that our community of members and friends feels connected to one another and that we are there for one another.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The continued active engagement and commitment of the entire church community, including the extraordinary work of our various committees and teams, as well as the leadership and guidance from our senior minister and the contributions of our other extremely talented church staff.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

The Parish Board is working to incorporate on an ongoing basis the 8th Principle in its work by considering the 8th Principle’s goals/values/impact during the decision-making part of the process of the Board’s work and also at the inception of the various activities when teams/committees/purpose of work is being formulated.

Respectfully submitted, Tina C. Benik, Parish Board Chair, Tiben1989@gmail.com

Annual Giving Campaign

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Annual Giving Campaign is our church’s primary means of funding its operations, accounting for nearly 67% of total FRS income. The Campaign began at the end of last calendar year (2024) with the establishment of a Steering Committee that developed this year’s campaign theme, which is “Be the Light, Make Love Real.” We also incorporated themes from the 300th Anniversary focusing on how FRS has a long history of members and leaders being the light and showing up. We also decided to have Florence and John Mercer, long-time members, be the Honorary Chairs for the Campaign.

Working with the Finance Committee, a goal of \$590,000 was established, a 2.6% increase over last year’s goal.

Names of people involved:

Honorary Chairs: Florence and John Mercer

Steering Committee: Tina Benik, Bart Bracken, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Diane Carroll, Vern Ellis, Bob Higgins, Lark Madden, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, Renee Wolf Foster.

Stewards: Tina Benik, Joe Brouillet, Lori Clark, Anne Comeau, Sue Creed, Nancy Crochiere, Kathleen Desilets, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Ann Haaser, Cecilia Healy, Art Henshaw, Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Alan Jette, Lisa Johnson, Jim Kerkam, Doug Latham, Andy Lobb, Rebecca Lobb, Annie Madden, Lark Madden, Hugh Martinez, Susan Ricker, Pat Skibbee, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, Staycee Surette-Leighton, Natalie Treat, Bettina Turner, Eileen Vargas-Costello, Anne Verret-Speck, Alec White, Ray Wilson, and Renee Wolf Foster.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Our theme “Be the Light, Make Love Real” is a statement of our core values and a call to loving action. We determined that there is no better time to show how we can answer this call in our daily lives. We also decided to include a survey with our campaign that would allow members and supporters to identify how they would like to support FRS through volunteer activities. This information would serve future efforts to recruit volunteers and more effectively engage members.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We were fortunate that the campaign went smoothly. As of May 20, we exceeded our \$590,000 goal with pledges totaling \$591,311. We anticipate additional pledges to come in over the next few weeks.

Initially, we were successful in recruiting 35 Stewards, which allowed us to personally outreach to our members as well as individuals who are engaged with FRS but not technically members. We held a successful training with the Stewards on February 1 which included an evening of fellowship. Stewards are the backbone of the Campaign. They were provided detailed information on the people assigned to them which they used to do initial outreach. They then received weekly updates as to the pledge status of each of their people.

The Campaign officially kicked off on March 2 with testimonials reflecting on the lives of Florence and John Mercer including stories of their many decades as members and leaders of FRS followed by an Ice Cream Social. An enjoyable Lead Donor event was held on March 8.

The marketing of the campaign was ongoing with articles, videos, and testimonials throughout March, April, and May. Kate Lamie, Diane Carroll, and Nick Place provided critical support in developing and then getting the information out to the membership and supporters.

In April, we successfully recruited several members to establish a Match Pool allowing us to match all new pledges or pledge increases. The Match Pool was widely communicated, including email to all members and supporters.

Diane Carroll was the primary administrator of the Campaign, collecting all the pledges and answering questions that Stewards were not able to answer themselves. Bart Bracken supported data management, Steward support, and communications. A Core Team comprised of Jim Supple, Diane Carroll, Tina Benik, Rev. Rebecca, and Bart Bracken provided day-to-day oversight of the Campaign.

The entire FRS community celebrated our successful Campaign on June 1 with a pizza party after the service. A party is planned for the Stewards in June as well to thank them for all the work they did.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

We have developed a solid database as well as a process that facilitates efficient communication between members, supporters, staff, the Ministers, Stewards, and others. We will continue to refine the processes and databases for future campaigns amongst other programs. One of the successes of this campaign was the engagement of new members, which is likely due to the training provided by Rev. Laurel. We will make sure that new members understand the importance of pledging.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The next Annual Giving Campaign will be for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. We were highly successful in increasing the number of Stewards this year, and we hope to engage even more of our church community's members to play an active role in the campaign next year. To be successful, we need to continuously promote the importance of pledging to support our community.

Respectfully submitted, Bart Bracken, Member of Steering Committee

Capital Campaign Planning Committee

During fiscal 2024, the Parish Board authorized the formation of a planning group to begin the process of evaluation and study of a Capital Campaign for FRS. Members of the group were selected and approached by Rev. Rebecca for this work.

Currently the committee is made up of Rev. Rebecca, Tina Benik, Verne Ellis, Joanna Fernandes, Barbara Garnis, Doug Latham, Lisa Mead, Jim Supple, and Lark Madden (chair).

The committee used data from the Congregational Insight process, and information from meetings with community leaders to prioritize developing plans for the restoration of the Parish Hall.

As we focused on the Parish Hall, we established certain “must have” basic building elements such as sprinklers, an up-to-date HVAC system, a two-story lift, and new roof. The combined costs of these elements served as a feasibility test for the overall project. Additional expenses will surely be associated with electrical upgrades, painting, windows, and other building components. However, the committee was confident that the initial basic costs were within the range of the funding capacity of the congregation combined with other outside sources.

Meeting bi-weekly, the committee solicited proposals from three architectural firms, ultimately selecting Placework from Portsmouth, NH.

After receiving both Parish Board and congregational approval to move forward with the architect and receiving authority to expend up to \$60,000 for architectural and engineering advice, a contract was signed with Placework in mid-May of 2025.

Placework had an initial meeting with the committee on Friday, May 16. The contract provides for three phases of work which when completed will provide, in the first phase, for an “existing conditions” analysis, code compliance evaluation, and project scope analysis. This phase is slated to be completed in June. The second phase will include design alternatives and budget development with an outside cost estimator and conceptual drawings. The contract anticipates a congregational meeting in September to present these alternatives. The Capital Campaign Planning team expects to request formal approval for the Capital Campaign at that meeting. The third phase of the contract provides for final conceptual drawings and a site plan for the project.

Respectfully submitted, Lark Madden, Capital Campaign Planning Committee Chair

Finance Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Finance Committee serves as an advisory body to the Parish Board on issues related to the church’s fiscal health. Its responsibilities are to:

- Assist in preparing and periodically reviewing the church’s budget and other financial reports.
- Empower the senior minister and the staff with the financial reporting, policies, and support necessary to run the day-to-day programs and operations.
- Partner with the Trustees of the Endowment to plan for the church’s long-term, sustained fiscal health.
- Advise the Board on financial policies and procedures that support the church’s work.
- Work on projects that the Parish Board deems vital to the church’s financial management.

Names of people involved:

Joe Brouillet, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Art Henshaw, Tom Himmel, Kim Kenly, Betsy Latham, Andy Lobb, Lark Madden, Jim Supple, Renee Wolf Foster

Chair or chairs:

Jim Supple, Finance Chair

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Monthly, in the week prior to the Parish Board meeting

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

This church year the Finance Committee has worked to make the financial operations of FRSUU more accessible to all members and supporters and to align the reporting tools, policies, and procedures with the core mission of the church.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget that is attached with this Annual Report has been redesigned to both improve the transparency of FRSUU's finances and to support the core programs of the church. We have also worked alongside the Capital Campaign, Grants, and Facilities Teams to develop specific solutions and recommend financing options for several critical needs that arose during the current church year.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

The Finance Committee intends to continue to support the work of transparency and accessibility in the financial operations of our church. We anticipate that this will include further budgeting and reporting tool refinements as well as the development of new policies and procedures that provide support to the staff, Parish Board, and the congregation.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The ongoing engagement of the congregation in the fiscal health of our church so that we are able to sustain the staffing and programming that we all value.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

This year, and hopefully in the years to come, the Finance Committee has sought to improve the openness and visibility of our financial decision making. The 8th Principle calls us to dismantle systems of oppression within ourselves and our institutions. The more open, democratic, and long range our finances become, the more we are able to see and understand how best to eliminate any and all inequities within our church.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Supple, Finance Chair, jim@greatmarsh.com

Finance Treasurer

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To review expenditures and disbursements, as well as authorize checks prepared by the bookkeeper.

Names of people involved:

Diane Carroll, Church Administrator/Bookkeeper; Andrew J. Lobb, Treasurer

Chair or chairs:

Andrew J. Lobb, Treasurer

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Once per week on Thursday afternoons

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Journey together in love, Authentic Connection, and Wonder.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Efficiently transitioned from the outgoing Finance Treasurer.
- Attended Parish Board and Finance Committee meetings.
- Reviewed expenses and signed checks weekly, including disbursements from segregated funds.

What is your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Assess the feasibility of automating specific payment processes.
- Investigate methods to reduce the frequency of check issuance, which is labor-intensive, while maintaining timely payments to vendors.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- A thorough understanding of FRSUU payment policies that dictate the timeliness of payments.
- Prompt review and approval of FRSUU checks.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Consider opportunities for diversifying our vendors as we work towards fostering a culture of inclusion.

Respectfully submitted, Andrew J. Lobb, Treasurer, ajlobb@gmail.com

Auditor**What Is the Mission or Purpose of Your Group?**

To conduct a review of the financial records and internal financial controls to ensure compliance with the Parish Board policies and acceptable accounting practices.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

I conducted several reviews of the accounting procedures, documents, and controls for the fiscal year. The reviews were conducted to ensure that the financial records were correct and in accordance with best accounting practices. Specifically, I reviewed the approval and payment procedures, vendor contracts, insurance coverages, and endowment payments. I found no discrepancies in these areas.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue to perform the internal auditing duties as outlined in the Parish Board Manual.

This audit would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of Diane Carroll and Tim Fountain.

Respectfully submitted, Joe Brouillet, Auditor

Governance Committee**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

The Governance Committee (GC) is responsible for ongoing review and recommendations to enhance excellence in governance and congregational leadership. It does this by overseeing the nominations process for the Parish Board and Officers, acting as a resource to the Parish Board on Parish Board effectiveness and leadership development, and supporting the Parish Board to implement policy-based governance through the development of Board policies.

Names of people involved:

Lori Clark, Kathy Desilets, Bob Higgins, Rebekah Stafford, Tom Himmel

Chair or chairs:

Tom Himmel

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Monthly, usually the 2nd Sunday of the month in person, occasionally via Zoom

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

We worked to build good connection between members of this committee to facilitate our work; helped (courageously) to identify procedures for Board committees to improve effectiveness via strong Connection to Transform things at FRS - aiming to do all our work with a spirit of love. We interpreted requirements of the Bylaws and Policies in a manner and spirit consistent with FRS Mission and values.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Conducted Parish Board orientation for two new Board members in August.
- In concert with the Executive Committee, drafted "Operating Process & Procedures" for two Board-chartered committees (Facilities and Grants Teams); submitted to PB for approval.
- Drafted the Warrants for, and helped prepare for, two Special Congregational Meetings as well as the Annual Meeting.
- Took initial steps toward work on developing "job descriptions" for the three Standing Committees.
- Organized a meeting to discuss identifying and developing candidates for lay leadership roles (two Governance Committee members participated).
- Evaluated and responded to *ad hoc* questions on how to handle several topics in a manner consistent with FRSUU Bylaws and Policies.
- Identified and recruited nominees for open elected Board and Officer positions, and for the Governance Committee.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Assist transition to a new chairperson and bring new member(s) onto this committee.
- A goal for this past year in which we made only a start: In conjunction with Parish Board leadership and the Minister (as CEO), consider what may be opportunities to improve Board effectiveness and a leadership model which enhances overall FRSUU effectiveness of committees and task forces.
- Continue to work on defining clear and current responsibilities for Committees and appropriate formation and operating procedures for each.
- Help convey the importance of inclusive lay leadership and help generate enthusiasm for more FRS members to be involved in the governance process in varying ways, including youth and young adults.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Continued support from FRS leadership to assist to identify good candidates for Board and Officer positions.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We have been mindful of the Principle in thinking about lay leadership and identification of candidates for various positions. That said, this would benefit from more conscious attention to the 8th Principle.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Himmel, Chair, thimmel43@mac.com

Facilities Committee**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

The Facilities Committee is charged with overseeing the FRSUU buildings and infrastructure, and planning and prioritizing improvements and/or maintenance to ensure that our campus is accessible in the present and sustainable for the future. By necessity, the Facilities Committee has also been involved in a variety of day-to-day facilities related projects, many of which will be covered by a new position on staff in the 2025-2026 church year.

Names of people involved:

Ed Budelmann, Scott Clark, Bill Clary, Jim Kidd, Doug Latham, Annie Madden, John McIlveen, Julie Menin, Forrest Speck

Chair or chairs:

Bill Zarakas

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

First Wednesday morning of each month, plus ad hoc meetings as needed.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Our facilities, notably the Sanctuary, are central to the FRSUU mission; that is, they provide the physical space where we come together to worship, for community and for governance, and where we will move together into the future. Our facilities also provide the forum where we can experience authentic connection. The members of the Facilities Committee are also filled with wonder, or more accurately, we wonder where the funds will come from to do all the wonderful things that our congregation would like to do with our facilities.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The agenda and action for the Facilities Committee was dominated by near term practicalities and emergencies during the 2024-2025 church year. Specifically, we were faced with facility-related emergencies; that is, situations in which parts of our facilities either failed or were in imminent threat of failing. Three major efforts during the 2024-2025 church year are worth noting.

First, the FRSUU Meetinghouse roof was experiencing distress and leaking, requiring a full replacement. The Facilities Committee specified (in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation of Historic Buildings), competitively bid, retained (following a congregational vote) and oversaw a contractor to replace the Meetinghouse roof. This project was completed in early 2025. The Committee worked with the Grants Team to procure funding through the City of Newburyport Community Preservation Act, which granted funds to pay for roof replacement and reinforcement of structural beams.

Second, the lighting for the Meetinghouse steeple failed during the past church year. It goes without saying that our steeple being lit at night is a major part of the Newburyport skyline and a source of pride for the congregation. The Facilities Committee worked with the steeple contractor (involved in the major steeple overhaul project) to replace the steeple lights. Steeple lighting installation is expected to be completed in the next month. The new light fixtures were specified by the Facilities Committee in collaboration with the Green Team and with consideration to the Dark Sky initiative (to minimize the impact of artificial lights on birds and insects). The Grants Team was involved once again with procuring funding for this project.

Third, the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) for the Lower Meetinghouse, specifically the space cooling (or air conditioning) component, experienced periodic failures and is beyond end-of-life (i.e., old, in poor condition, and expected to fail). The Facilities Committee researched, analyzed, and then specified and bid the replacement of the air conditioning system for the Lower Meetinghouse. This involved a deep dive into the integration of component parts (notably compressors, air handlers, and heating coils). It also involved the integration of the current space cooling and space heating (currently served by a natural gas-fired furnace)

systems. After meeting with multiple vendors, the Committee concluded that a heat pump system, with an operating range sufficient for our climate, is the most efficient option and, because such systems are eligible for a sizable Mass Save rebate (as well as possible federal rebates), this system is the most cost effective as well. The heat pump will provide both air conditioning (cooling) and heating for the Lower Meetinghouse. The gas fired furnace will remain in place and be used to heat the Sanctuary. The Facilities Committee collaborated with the Green Team in this effort to ensure that options considered included their views on minimizing the FRSUU carbon footprint. The Committee Recommendation will be presented to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Responding to emergencies occupied most of the Committee's time in the 2024-2025 church year. We are hopeful that such emergency footing has subsided as we enter the 2025-2026 church year, and that the Committee can adopt a more proactive posture. Specifically, we will be taking a long-term view of the FRSUU facilities and developing a prioritized timeline of maintenance and improvement projects. We will also be working with the Finance Committee to determine ongoing annual funding requirements and availability, and work with other committees to ensure that their priorities are appropriately considered and included.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Success in the 2025-2026 church year will require collaboration with various FRSUU committees and the Parish Board in order for the Facilities Committee to be able to develop the above referenced prioritized timeline of maintenance and improvements projects. (It will also require that emergencies be kept at bay.)

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We will be actively working on integrating the 8th Principle into our bidding process. We will need to determine how to balance commitment to the 8th Principle with the practical requirement and/or working preference for working with (generally) local vendors that can service specific facility components on an ongoing basis (e.g., annual maintenance contracts and short notice site visits).

Respectfully submitted, Bill Zarakas, billzarakas@gmail.com

Fourth Century Vision Team

The FRSUU Parish Board charged the Fourth Century Vision Team with the development of a timeline and action plan for the Church Year 2024–2025 which outlines the committee's plans and associated lay leadership related to its areas of focus:

- Budget for and celebration plans for the church's 300th Anniversary in 2025.
- The target fundraising range and associated components for a Capital Campaign are based on the lessons learned from the Congregational Insight Workshops and the findings of the Facilities, Grants, and Green Teams.
- Timeline for launching a Capital Campaign.
- Budget for planning and preparation for a Capital Campaign.

Team Leaders

Congregational Insight – Barbara Garnis

Facilities and Green Team – Doug Latham and Bill Zarakas

Planned Giving – Tina Benik

Stewardship – Renee Wolf Foster

Capital Campaign – Lark Madden

Grant Development – Forrest Speck and Ed Budelmann

Accomplishments in the 2024–2025 church year:

This year, the Fourth Century Vision team has:

- Assisted the 300th Anniversary team in rolling out their events.
- Assisted the Community Insight survey.
- Assisted the Grants Team which applied for several grants.
- Aided in finalizing the Gift Acceptance Policy and put it into action.
- Assisted the Capital Campaign Committee to develop:
 - The congregation's goals utilizing the Congregational Insight data including the facilities, Parish Hall, and community programs.
 - The outside sources that will support the goals: Sacred Places grant, community grants, environmental grants.
 - The goals that will be the fundraising focus.
 - The presentation to the Board and congregation about the Capital Campaign and the selected architectural firm.
 - The rollout of the campaign in the fall of 2025.

Respectfully submitted, Vernon Ellis, Fourth Century Vision Team, vellis@ellisdesign.net

Gift Acceptance Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Gift Acceptance Committee is a Parish Board chartered committee that was formed to carry out the Gift Acceptance Policy. The Gift Acceptance Policy was adopted by the Parish Board in January of 2024. It sets out the policy of the FRSUU Parish Board concerning the acceptance of charitable gifts and provides guidance to donors when making certain types of gifts to FRSUU.

Names of people involved:

Tina Benik, Greg Benik, Joseph Brouillet, Lark Madden

Chair or chairs:

Tina Benik

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

As needed

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

It is the hope and belief of the Parish Board, and also of the Gift Acceptance Committee, that the gifts that are enabled by the Gift Acceptance Policy will help FRSUU to support and make real our Mission and Values today and in the future.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The Gift Acceptance Committee ("GAC") dealt with its first official gift under the new Gift Acceptance Policy with the extremely generous donation from Barbara Owen of her house and its contents. The GAC followed the Policy in terms of assessing the house (and its contents) under the Policy and whether they met the requirements and strictures of the Policy, which they did.

Per Barbara Owen's wishes, the house was to be sold, and the proceeds utilized according to her will. Once the

Gift Acceptance Committee determined that the gift was appropriate per the Policy, and once the mechanisms to sell the house had been recommended to the Parish Board and approved, the formal work of the GAC ended. The current status of the house is that it is under contract to be sold. The sale is expected to close in June 2025.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

The Gift Acceptance Committee plans to formalize additional practices and procedures to help carry out the Gift Acceptance Policy. In addition, it would like to ensure that the Congregation is aware of the Policy and that the Gift Acceptance Committee is available to address questions regarding the Policy.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We will need additional volunteers and the continued support of the Parish Board.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

As the GAC considered certain professional hiring choices, it ensured that it had a diverse (as in gender) group from which to choose among.

Please note that there are plans in this upcoming church year to establish a Planned Giving Program and Committee which will focus on communicating and growing that program.

Respectfully submitted, Tina Benik, Chair, Tiben1989@gmail.com

Grants Team

Forrest Speck, Ed Budelmann, Sue Creed, Andy Lobb, Nick Place, and Ghlee Woodworth

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Parish Board established the Grants Team in January 2024. The purpose is:

To develop additional financial revenue from foundations, governmental entities, and others to support the Mission, Values and Ends of the First Religious Society. Such efforts will support and complement not supplant nor compete with other efforts of the Board, the Standing Committees, Ministries, and the Endowment Committee.

1. To build a team knowledgeable of the grant submission processes and of the financial needs of the church.
2. To submit grant requests authorized by the Senior Minister and/or the Parish Board.
3. To capture our shared learnings in a centrally accessible manner to facilitate knowledge transfer and sustainability.
4. To propose and seek Parish Board approval of policies and procedures relative to the grant process.
5. To request authorization for newly emerging potential grant opportunities from the Senior Minister if consistent with the above.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- To research and qualify potential funding sources for FRSUU.
- To submit grant requests supporting the timelines and priorities of the FRSUU Ministries and Committees, especially the Capital Campaign, compliant with FRSUU Values (e.g., reduce the carbon footprint of FRSUU).
- To work with the Board, Endowment Committee, and respective entities to explore the feasibility of establishing a "Preservation Endowment" for our historic buildings.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

During the 2024-2025 church year, the Grants Team applied for six grants. FRSUU was awarded one grant from the Hale Foundation in the amount of \$50,000 to replace steeple lighting. Three grant applications were rejected. Two grant proposals, one in the amount of \$20,000, are currently under review (award notifications anticipated in mid-June and late August 2025) by grant makers. Additional details are available in the Grant Team's 4th Quarter 2025 report.

Request for Support:

For anyone who does not wish to attend regular meetings but is willing to work on specific tasks, opportunities to assist are available. Skill sets needed to support the GT on a flexible, task-specific basis include research, planning, budgeting, writing, proofreading, legal, accounting (to assure grant compliance once received), database management, etc. If you have the desire to help as a GT Associate, please contact Forrest Speck.

Respectfully submitted, Forrest Speck, forrest.speck@gmail.com

Human Resources Subcommittee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The HR Subcommittee is appointed by the Parish Board annually. It acts in an advisory capacity to Parish Board and FRS staff on issues related to FRS personnel and employee benefits. In this role, subcommittee members annually review the salary and benefit packages for staff positions to ensure that these meet the UUA's fair compensation guidelines. The HRS presents its recommendations on staff compensation for the next church year to the Parish Board in December/January to inform development of the annual giving campaign budget. From time to time, the Parish Board charges the HRS with additional projects such as recommendations regarding employee benefits, updating the Employee Manual, and drafting language for the Governance policies related to the care of staff.

Names of people involved:

Rebecca Brodish, Leslie Lawrence, Hugh Martinez, Julie Forney Menin, and Bob Higgins. Rev. Rebecca and Board leaders attend meetings based on the topics discussed.

Chair or chairs:

The HRS is co-chaired by a member of the Parish Board and another subcommittee member. The co-chairs for the 2024-25 church year were Leslie Lawrence and Bob Higgins.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

First Wednesday of the month from 6-7pm during the church year. Meetings are typically held on Zoom.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

In our role as an advisory group to the Parish Board and FRS leadership on issues related to personnel, employee benefits, and the care of staff, the Human Resources Subcommittee strives to ensure that our salary structure and employee policies reflect FRSUU's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The goal is to ensure a welcoming environment that allows staff to feel safe and supported in sharing their perspectives and bringing their true authentic self to their work and our community at large.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- HRS conducted an annual salary review based on the UUA's new fair compensation guidance and updated recommendations based on changing staff structure during the previous church year and projected staff changes in the 2025-2026 church year.
- Recommendations on salary structure and annual increases were presented to the Parish Board at

the January 2025 meeting.

- HRS reviews the Employee Manual every two years to ensure it remains current and accurate. The HRS began this review at the end of the 2024-2025 church year and will be making substantial revisions due to changes in staffing patterns and responsibilities.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- To continue to act in an advisory capacity to Parish Board and FRS staff on issues related to FRS personnel and employee benefits.
- Finalize revisions to the Employee Manual to present to the Parish Board at the beginning of the 2025-2026 church year for approval.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Input from the Parish Board, Reverend Rebecca, key staff, and lay leaders of committees regarding challenges they face and ways in which the HRS can assist and support them.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work and programs?

The Human Resources Subcommittee will keep the 8th Principle front and center in its work in the coming year updating FRS Employee Manual and practices.

Respectfully submitted, Leslie Lawrence, Co-Chair, Human Resources Subcommittee,
leslie.lawrence55@gmail.com

Stewardship Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

According to our By-laws, the Stewardship Committee has three components: the Annual Campaign, Planned Giving, and Fundraising, which are dedicated to supporting the church's financial well-being. "To be a steward of something means to conserve it; to give it attention and care, to cherish it, to be its guardian, to protect and sustain it and to keep it safe." That is our mission.

Names of people involved:

There are separate steering committees for the Annual Campaign and Planned Giving. The Fundraising Planning Committee (currently referred to as the Stewardship Committee) includes Tina Benik, Joe Brouillet, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Barbara Garnis, Rev. Laurel Gray, Bob Higgins, Michelle Kimball, Betsy Latham, Doug Latham, Paula Renda, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, Staycee Surette-Leighton, Stephen-Wolf Foster, and Renee Wolf Foster. There are also dozens of church members who volunteer at fundraising events, and we are so grateful to all of them.

Chair or chairs:

Renee Wolf Foster

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

The first Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm on Zoom

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Committee tangentially touches on our mission and values by creating and sustaining fellowship among our members and friends.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

This year Stewardship has been involved in:

- Designing and selling T-shirts and hats with a new logo featuring our steeple and the words “Be the Light,” which we sold at events throughout the year.
- Participating in Yankee Homecoming and bringing back the Book Sale, our most successful event next to the Auction.
- Selling apparel and refreshments during Newburyport’s Classic Car Show.
- Supporting the Fall Festival after the first service of the new church year.
- Organizing the Fall Auction at the Newburyport Community Center, which raised \$27,000.
- Managing the 3rd Annual Cookie Walk during one of Newburyport’s downtown invitation nights.
- Supporting the Annual Giving Campaign’s Steering Committee. This year’s honorary Co-chairs, John and Florence Mercer, and more than 30 Stewards helped the campaign meet its \$590,000 goal.
- Establishing a new annual raffle (“The Road Trip Raffle”) that focused on local travel and activities.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

The Annual Campaign and Planned Giving steering committees will continue to manage those activities.

The fundraising planning committee has been renamed the **FUNraising Team**, in order to differentiate it from the overarching Stewardship Committee. We need to attract more volunteers and supporters. Being known as the Stewardship Committee hasn’t helped that effort, as it’s not a good descriptor for what we do. We’ll be focusing on inviting members to participate in planning events, which will include more fellowship opportunities.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Increased awareness of how vital fundraising is to every program the church offers and supports – and how much FUN it can be.
- More people who are interested in suggesting, planning, and/or organizing events.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

At this time, we haven’t done enough. We will strive to do more.

Respectfully submitted, Renee Wolf Foster, Stewardship Committee Chair, rwolffoster@gmail.com

Hospitality Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Provide setup and service for coffee hour. Occasionally help with other events.

Names of people involved:

Vicki Dyer, Betsy Latham, Karen Letourneau, Annie Maurer, Julie Menin, Florence Mercer, Mary Sortal, Amy Tauchert, and Liz Wisniewski

Chair or chairs:

Nick Place

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

As needed

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Hospitality Committee is currently more of an interest group. We also have formed a collaboration with the

Program Council to bring more groups into the running of coffee hour.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Create more interest in the Hospitality Committee and other groups to run coffee hour. Expand our numbers and include more diverse representation.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Outreach help from current members and current staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Place, Director of Church Music and Interim Facilities and Special Events Manager,

Nick.Place@frsuu.org

Safety Task Force

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To create a safer environment for the FRSUU community by improving safety awareness, identifying and addressing potential hazards and risks, promoting safe practices, and ensuring compliance with accepted safety standards and regulations.

Names of people involved:

Rev. Laurel Gray, Bob Higgins, Nick Place. Contributors include head usher Stephen-Wolf Foster and Mara Flynn, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry.

Chair or chairs:

Bob Higgins

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Second Wednesday of each month

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Safety Task Force is committed to providing a safe environment for all our members and friends, staff and the greater community to come together to practice Authentic Connection, explore our Spirituality, and Journey Together in Love.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Initiated the formation of the Safety Task Force, identified members and contributors, and established its mission.
- Collected and reviewed safety plans from UU and other faith-based organizations to build our knowledge base and inform our own documentation and plans.
- Identified preliminary short-, medium-, and long-term priorities and goals.
- Initiated process of reviewing and revising the outdated Policies and Procedures manual for Young Church.
- Updated first aid equipment and contracted with a vendor to regularly check supplies and replace/replenish as needed.
- Provided CPR/defibrillator training for approximately a dozen members and staff.
- Created an evacuation plan and map for building emergencies (requires further revision and review).
- Established a fragrance-free zone in the Sanctuary to address concerns of those with allergies or sensitivities and requested that all participating in services and other church events refrain from wearing

perfume/cologne and other strongly scented personal products. Additionally, we switched to low- or no-fragrance cleaning products in our buildings.

- Worked with a national organization to provide online “Stand Up Against Street Harassment Training” for FRSUU members, friends, and staff.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Working with the Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry, build on the progress of the first year to take a broader look at overall safety, including but not limited to:
 - building accessibility
 - building security and procedures
 - emergency protocols and procedures
 - digital security and privacy
- Conduct a review and publish evacuation plan, map, and procedures.
- Complete the review and revision of the Policies and Procedures manual for Young Church.
- Identify training needs and opportunities to address areas of concern.
- Establish a focus on building access and safety, including lighting, walkways, stairs, snow and ice removal, and other barriers.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We have an ambitious agenda that will require working with other church committees and groups, bringing in the expertise and guidance of other members and staff, and greater leadership from the chair to move forward.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We seek to provide a safe, inclusive environment for all community members by eliminating physical and other barriers to participation in all activities in our Beloved Community.

Respectfully submitted, Bob Higgins, Safety Task Force chair, bobhiggins@gmail.com

Trustees of the Endowment

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Trustees of the Endowment are called by the congregation to be the fiduciary manager of all permanent funds now held or hereafter acquired by the Society, and such other funds as may be turned over to them by a vote of the Parish Board or Society. In this role the Trustees will act to secure the financial wellbeing of the Society both in the present and the future. They will report directly to the Society; however, they will be available as needed to the Parish Board for strategic guidance in assisting the Board in their charge of the conduct of the Society’s business affairs. As fiduciary managers they shall make decisions that are consistent with the requirements of the statutes and case law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that govern trusts.

The trustees shall have the duty to manage all funds and securities coming into their hands as such Trustees, with power to invest, re-invest and do all things necessary to the proper management of said funds, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the power to make assignments and transfers without specific vote of the Society.

Names of people involved:

Tim Fountain, Chair; Kim Kenly, Treasurer, Barbara Garnis, Tina Benik, Natalie Treat

Chair or chairs:

Tim Fountain

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Quarterly, at an acceptable time to the members and our financial managers, Pathstone.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Authentic Connection, Come as you are, Journey together in love, Act with courage.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Disbursed funds to the general operating account, community accounts, and capital/maintenance accounts in accordance with policy.
- Held quarterly meetings with financial advisor Pathstone Financial.
- Implemented an electronic funds transfer process to streamline disbursements.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Increase the total Endowment value to \$2.5MM; Operations - \$1.25MM; Buildings - \$0.8MM; and Community - \$0.45MM.
- Responsibly onboard a substantial new gift to the church.
- Evaluate the most effective ways to support capital projects, while maintaining our fiduciary duty to grow the endowment.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Assistance from the Parish Board and congregation to maintain the growth of the endowment by limiting disbursements to interest income only.
- Continued support and participation in the Planned Giving program.

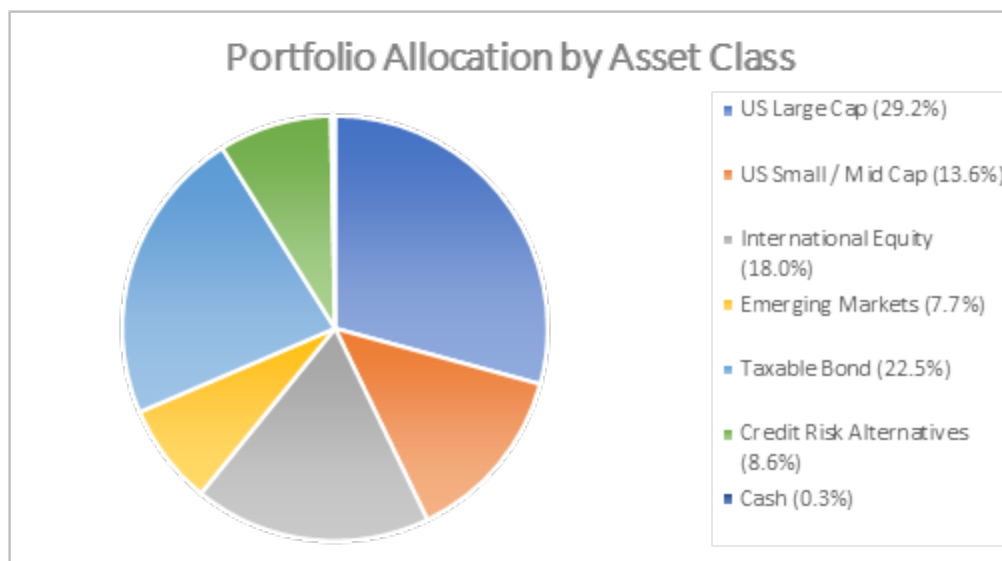
How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

The Trustees collaborate with their financial advisors (Pathstone) to implement an investment policy that includes Environmental, Social, and Governance criteria.

First Religious Society of Newburyport Performance Report - As of April 30, 2025

The First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist of Newburyport maintains an endowment for the immediate needs and long-term health of the church. Below please find a summary of the endowment's overall performance for the 2024 fiscal year:

Endowment	Value
Beginning Balance (07/01/24)	\$1,782,278
Change in Market Value	\$64,916
Distributions	-\$71,228
Ending Balance (04/30/25)	\$1,775,966



Respectfully submitted, Tim Fountain, Trustees of the Endowment Chair, tsfountain@gmail.com

Sabbatical Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

In the spring of 2025, the FRSUU Parish Board formed a Sabbatical Team to support the advent of Rev. Rebecca's planned sabbatical which will start in June 2026. The Sabbatical Team is newly formed and has met twice. While the overall role of the Team has been identified, that is, to support Rev. Rebecca and the congregation during the time leading up to Rev. Rebecca's sabbatical, and during the sabbatical itself, the specifics of the Team's charge are being developed and refined by the Team. The Team will remain engaged and communicative with the congregation throughout the upcoming 2025-2026 church year.

Names of people involved:

Tina Benik, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Holly Cashman, Steve Costello, Nancy Crochiere, Jim Supple

REPORTS FROM THE MINISTER AND AFFILIATED MINISTERS

Minister's Report

Dear FRS members,

It is hard to believe that we are halfway through our 300th anniversary year. What a wonderful year it has been. Even amidst all that is happening in our country, we have found ways to celebrate and remember all that has come before us.

We have invested in documenting the stories of the people who founded our beloved church in 1725, and all the myriad of people who have shared in ensuring that our liberal religious values have been a mainstay in public discourse and the moral compass of individual and collective lives over the past three hundred years.

Many thanks to Laurie Evans-Daly and Annie Maurer who co-chaired our 300th Anniversary Team. This team, along with the support and help of many people, compiled and produced a commemorative review of our history in the book *300 Years of Love, Truth, and Service*. We also honored the history of our early members through the research and sermon delivery of Ghlee Woodworth. The Anniversary Team had a strikingly beautiful copper replica of the weathercock made into lapel pins. And, thanks to the leadership of Sarah Spalding and Rebecca Brodish, on May 18 the team hosted a hugely successful, congregation-wide 300th anniversary garden

party at the Museum of Old Newbury.

We hung our 300th anniversary banners on the front of the church building and in the Sanctuary, reminding the community at large and ourselves of the legacy of this beloved church in Newburyport and the region.

I was also honored to publish a book of my sermons, *Guided by Love: A Minister's Thoughts on Love, Hope, and Justice*. I am deeply grateful to Diane Forman and Diane Carroll for their hard work and dedication in helping to make this possible. We are proud to have another way to amplify our Unitarian Universalist values and messages at such a crucial time in the history of our country and the world.

As our annual ministry theme conveyed: The time for truth is now.

Over the course of this church year, we mourned the deaths and celebrated the lives of five longtime church members, including:

Barbara Owen (10/14/2024)
Maxine Steeves (11/13/2024)
Jay McCarthy (1/18/2025)

Nathan Wilbur (2/4/2025)
Ted Bailey (5/18/2025)
Roberta Coffey (5/23/25)

We are deeply grateful to Barbara Owen, Director of Church Music (1964-2002), and Maxine Steeves, wife of the late Bertrand Steeves, Minister Emeritus. Their lives and respective ministries exemplified our commitments to community, justice, and music.

We will be forever indebted to Barbara Owen for bequeathing her home to FRS upon her death. This is the largest gift ever given to the church in its 300-year history.

Our annual appeal surpassed its goal and raised nearly \$600,000. We are grateful to everyone who participated and helped ensure that we continue its theme: *Be the Light and Make Love Real*.

We welcomed Rev. Laurel Gray, our first Assistant Minister of Congregational Life, and Nick Place, our new Director of Church Music, both of whom started with us in August 2024. Our shared ministry with members and friends, ministers and staff, resulted in a year of beautiful worship and music, vibrant programming, and significant community engagement with issues of justice and peace.

Thanks to the Grants and the Facilities Teams, the church roof was replaced last summer. This work was completed with financial support from the City of Newburyport Preservation Fund.

FRS members also authorized the Parish Board to contract for repair of the steeple lights and supportive infrastructure. The lights have been ordered, and installation will take place in the near future. This work has been made possible by a grant from the Hale Foundation.

Work with Placework, the architect for the renovation of Parish Hall, began.

We also joyfully welcomed the following new members:

Betsy Beach
John Bowditch
Christine Brandel
Roberta Colasanti
Trisha Flanagan
Ben Fundis
Rebecca Fundis
Charlie Himmel

Everett Himmel
Sandy Jenkins
Jim Kerkam
Tina Kerkam
Laura Lease
Tom Lochhaas
Deb Maas
Jim Major

Tamara Major
John McIlveen
Nina Morrison
Matthew Murgida
Manny Muros
Aspen Surette
Staycee Surette
Megan Whyman

It is my honor and joy to serve as your minister.

With love and gratitude, Reverend Rebecca Bryan, Senior Minister, RevRebecca.Bryan@frsuu.org

Assistant Minister for Congregational Life

What is the mission or purpose of your role?

The purpose of the Assistant Minister for Congregational Life role is to support programs, adult education, and membership at FRS to further the congregational mission and the values of Unitarian Universalism.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

My work as Assistant Minister is fully informed by our mission and values. In providing programming and avenues to membership, we are inviting people into courageous, loving community, and that is itself an act of transformation.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Below is a list of the programming that happened this church year. Though I worked with almost all of these groups to support their efforts, and led some things myself, none of this would be possible without our team of staff, volunteers, and everyone who showed up to participate.

Programming & Adult Education:

Ongoing programs:

- Maker Mondays: 1st & 3rd Mondays 11am-1pm
- Big Questions: 1st Thursdays 6-7:30pm (started in April)
- Mysticism Group (Rev. Jane)
- Wednesday Morning Meditation (Woman)
- Short Stories Group (Tom Himmel)
- Book Group (Tom Himmel)
- Monday Night Meditation (Joyce Haydock)
- Tuesday Poetry Group (Rev. Jane)
- ROMEO
- Ladies Who Lunch
- Exploring Elderhood

September-December:

- Passion Action Fair
- Banned Books Justice Sunday
- New to UU class
- Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Holiday gift exchange
- Holiday Tea
- Auction
- Cookie Walk
- Indigenous People's Day event in town
- Jeanne Geiger Walk for Domestic Violence
- Manny Muros – Unlocking the Mind
- CPR & AED training

January-June:

- Men's group brunch for women
- Post Inauguration (maker Monday, Tues worship, Wed meditation)

- New to UU class
- Chalice Circles (spring term)
- Congregational read – *Caste*
- Coming of Age
- Mother's Day Walk for Peace
- Led Meeting the Moment w. Marianne Vesey (two rounds)
- Road Trip Raffle (Stewardship)
- Commerce Cottages
- Virtual coffee hour
- Valentine's flowers
- New Member reception
- Right to Be Active Bystander training (191 people registered)
- 300th Events:
 - Kickoff Sunday/Banner unveiling
 - Clock unveiling
 - Minister's portraits in tiny gallery
 - Garden Party May 18
 - Birthday Party June 8
 - Bed race (summer – during Yankee Homecoming)
- Paula Cole Jones workshops (May 6, 13)
- Know Your Rights training w. ACLU
- Poster making party (April 30)
- Pride parade & booths (May 31)

Membership:

- I reintroduced blue visitor cards in the pews and have tracked each one filled out, followed up with the person, and connected them with whatever programs or groups interested them. Diane Forman and Woman Cooper also acted as "coffee buddies" taking newcomers out for coffee or tea to meet one-on-one. These efforts seemed to be quite successful and helped newcomers feel welcome and connected.
- We changed the gifts we give out during the New Member service to focus on books that will help deepen their relationship to Unitarian Universalism. We also now provide a certificate of membership with each person's name to mark the occasion.
- I taught a new three-part class on the basics of Unitarian Universalism in the fall and spring, with a total of about 30 people participating. I will offer the same again next year, which is open to anyone who would like to participate.

Worship & Young Church:

- 9/8 Co-led Flower Communion on Opening Sunday with Rev. Rebecca
- 9/15 Participated in Young Church
- 9/29 Preached
- 10/6 Participated in Jenne Geiger Walk followed by Passion Action Fair
- 10/13 Preached for Indigenous People's Day
- 11/3 Participated in blessing of animals
- 11/10 Participated in Young Church
- Helped organize and spoke at election week services
- 11/20 Helped lead New Member ritual

- 11/17 Planned Transgender Day of Remembrance Service with Welcoming Committee, which included a naming ceremony for two transgender members
- 12/15 Supported Young Church Christmas Pageant
- 12/22 Participated in Candlelight Service
- 12/23 Co-led Serenity in the Sanctuary Service with Rev. Jane
- 12/24 Participated in Christmas Eve Service
- 1/5 Provided Children's Message for 300th Anniversary Kickoff Service
- 1/26 Planned Service with Bethany Groff as guest speaker
- 3/2 Participated in Campaign Kickoff Service
- 3/16 Co-Preached with Rev. Rebecca about what gives us hope
- 3/20 Co-led Spring Equinox service with Rev. Rebecca
- 4/6 Planned service with Rumni Saha as guest preacher
- 4/13 Planned service with Art Nava as guest preacher; taught Young Church class about God
- 4/17 Co-led Maundy Thursday service with Rev. Rebecca
- 4/20 Participated in Easter service
- 5/4 Planned and led service with Coming of Age group
- 5/18 Shared reflection during Young Church Service
- 6/8 Participated in Annual Meeting and final service of the year, followed by 300th Birthday Party

Partnerships:

- I've served on the Safety Task Force this year and we've made many practical changes to support the congregation's safety from CPR/AED training, to designating an evacuation meeting place, and reviewing our policies to establish what kind of work needs to be done. See their report for more details.
- I've spent the year working with the 300th Planning Team to plan events and make sure things run smoothly. See their report for more details.
- I gathered the Ushers & Greeters to start meeting quarterly to review what was needed and how to plan for Sunday mornings and bring in new volunteers more effectively. I've also been disseminating safety related information to the Ushers & Greeters, so they have the information they need.
- I've been working with the Stewardship team all year, supporting all their wonderful efforts.
- I reconvened a Membership Committee to look at how we can make joining FRS a more seamless and welcoming experience. We've been thinking through everything from how we engage newcomers on a Sunday morning, to use of Realm (our church directory software), and how we can engage people online.
- I also created an Adult Education Committee to help brainstorm programming, give me insights about how things have worked in the past, and generally act as a sounding board.
- In the fall, I worked with the Welcoming Committee to plan their Transgender Day of Remembrance worship service, Justice Sunday, and vigil at Market Square.
- I acted as a sounding board and support for our Director of Youth and Children's Ministry, Mara Flynn, to provide comprehensive, engaging, and loving programming for our young people.
- I taught our Coming of Age class to our teens this year alongside Mara and August. The goal was to help them discern their core values and develop skills for attuning to their own wisdom. Together we planned a beautiful and celebratory Coming of Age worship service.
- I work with the Justice Action Council alongside Rev. Rebecca to support our various social justice groups

and promote collaboration.

- I participated in the UUMA New England region retreat that featured workshops on burnout with Amelia Negowski and anti-racism work through Theater of the Oppressed with Rev. Julica Hermann de la Fuente. I will also be attending Ministry Days and General Assembly in June.
- I've been working with the Newburyport Chamber of Commerce and Nick Place to get our Commerce Cottage up and running for use by both FRS groups and to provide a venue for the Mirzayee women to sell their handmade goods.
- I worked with our Communications Specialist – first Kate Lamie and now Elisa Scully – to brainstorm ways to more effectively communicate events, programs, and information with the congregation. This included changes to the Steeple, creating new a-frame signs for the sidewalk, creating seasonal program booklets, and supporting the transition from Kate to Elisa.

Thank you to all the teams, committees, staff, and volunteers I've had the joy of working with this year – I so appreciate all your hard work, kindness, and thoughtful engagement!

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

So much of this year was about getting to know the congregation, both its individual members/friends/staff and the institution as a whole. My goal was to support all the programming that was already happening, including all the good work Mara was doing with our kids and teens, and see what was missing. My hope is that next year, I'll be able to focus more on experimenting with new programs and partnerships.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Anything I offer is only successful if there's participation and engagement from the congregation. That means being in close enough dialogue with the congregation that I know what people need and can act accordingly. I often remind colleagues that ministry is a team sport, but the same goes for the congregation – ministry is something we do together. Thank you to all of you for helping make FRS the vibrant, loving place that it is.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Rev. Rebecca and I are considering Paula Cole Jones's question of how we can offer programming that is intentionally multicultural, so that will guide some of what we try next year. I'm always conscious of how the values of Unitarian Universalism call us towards justice and provide the grounding to engage in the difficult and liberating work of anti-racism together.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Laurel Gray, Assistant Minister for Congregational Life, revlaurel.gray@frsuu.org

Community Minister Affiliated: Rev. Stan Barrett

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To support the overall ministry of FRSUU as a Community Minister Affiliated.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Through occasional preaching, pastoral care, and participation in education/spirituality offerings of FRS, I hope to support and challenge us all to be more authentically welcoming of the fullness of our own humanity as well as that of others. This will necessarily involve and foster a deeper connection and journey with each other, open us to love and wonder, and require as much courage as we can summon from within and among us. I hope to do my part in helping us engage the potential of our diverse congregational and community spirituality, in order to play our part in bringing about hoped-and prayed-for transformation.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Led worship on February 16, 2025, focusing on “deep democracy” and how we might approach understanding and communicating with fellow citizens who profoundly differ with us on political and cultural issues.

Participated in two groups of sessions – fall 2024, and winter/spring 2025 – organized by fellow Affiliate Minister Jane Tuohy, on “mysticism.” These offerings have evolved over the last couple of years into supportive gatherings in which participants can explore their own spirituality, as well as learn about (and even get a “taste” of) various forms of and approaches to inner or mystical experience.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continue to support the ministry of FRSUU within the congregation and in the larger community.
- Support and co-operate with Rev. Rebecca in her central leadership role.
- Plan and preside at one Sunday morning service during the year and provide support in other services as requested by Rev. Rebecca.
- Provide support, as needed, for activities which can benefit from my knowledge of and experience with the Qur’an and Islamic spirituality.

What will you need to be successful in the 2024-2025 church year?

As far as I can see, nothing beyond the usual support I receive from Rev. Rebecca, Rev. Laurel, other staff, and the congregation.

How will your group consider the 8th Principle in your work and programs next year?

Primarily through my awareness of the intersection of religious diversity with cultural and racial diversity, and how that impacts my preaching and teaching.

Respectfully submitted, Stanton H. Barrett III, Community Minister Affiliated, stan.barrett1@verizon.net

Community Minister Affiliated: Rev. Jane Tuohy

My ministry over the last church year focused on worship, pastoral care, and adult faith formation.

WORSHIP

Summer Services, July 2024: Doug Latham was in charge of summer services, and I was his backup. Doug was called upon to serve as Executive Director at a camp he has worked at for years. This called him away for much of the month of July. I provided background support for July service leaders and led one service myself.

Election Week, November 2024: As an affiliate minister, I sometimes have the privilege of “filling in” during busy times when additional worship services are desired or our congregation is in need. The election week in November 2024 was such a time. I organized interfaith services for the night before election, election night, and the night after the election. These services were open to the Greater Newburyport community. They provided an important opportunity to be together and in community during a very stressful time. Rev. Rebecca was involved as was Rev. Laurel. Again, I outreached to community leaders. It was gratifying to have members of the larger community participate.

Serenity in the Sanctuary: This church year we held Serenity in the Sanctuary services for the five days before Christmas and the holidays. These were interfaith services designed to provide people with sanctuary from the commercialism and stress of the holidays. Interfaith religious leaders joined in offering services.

Mother’s Day Service: For the second year in a row, I led the FRS regular Sunday service on Mother’s Day as Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Laurel were with the FRS walk team in Dorchester for the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute’s Mother’s Day Walk for Peace.

Community Outreach: With support from Nancy Kidd, I led the Anna Jaques Hospital Bereavement Support

Group. This group is attended by FRS members as well as members of the larger community. At the request of participants, the group will change from meeting monthly to meeting every other week. In addition to providing support for Anna Jaques patient family members, I believe it is an excellent opportunity to forge partnerships with key hospital personnel. An example of this kind of partnership is a call I received last April asking if we could hold a service for members of the Emergency Room staff and the Birthing Center. They had lost a six-week-old baby who died in the operating room.

I believe Anna Jaques Hospital staff can and should be key community partners for FRS. We often intersect at times of trauma and the more we know one another, the more we can establish trust and role clarity.

Mild Cognitive Impairment Group: This is a monthly support group for individuals who are suffering from Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). The prompt to start this group came from an FRS member who has been living with MCI for some time. It is very moving to watch and listen as members of the group wait patiently for a group member who is speaking to find a word or come up with ideas for things they could do together given their current limitations. Mostly, I think this group will help break down some of the stigma and embarrassment that aging members of our congregation may feel as they realize that their memories are starting to show signs of impairment. Many thanks to Nancy Kidd and Linda Harding for their steadfast support for this group.

Date of Meeting: First Monday of the Month, Lower Meetinghouse Classroom A

Leaders: Nancy Kidd, Linda Harding, Rev. Jane Tuohy

Tuesday Poetry Group. This group was started 12 years ago by former staff member Julie Parker Amery.

Date and Time of Meeting: This group meets every Tuesday morning from 11am to 12pm on Zoom.

Who is involved? While group participation varies, we are often graced with the presence of James Funston, Lindsay Cavanagh, Carol Cowie, Deanna D'Angelo, Stacey Surette, Nadia Gardner, Betje Noack, Zara Raab, and Carol Kilty.

The group has been steadfast in meeting, switching to zoom during COVID. This group provides an opportunity for FRS friends and family to connect over a shared love of poetry. The group does not write poetry. Rather, I select a poem which is read multiple times with prompts. Group members can share to the extent that they feel comfortable doing so. It is an online option for community building and using poetry to tap into our deeper selves. There is a strong sense of comradery and appreciation among group members, some of whom have disabilities that would not allow them to participate in person.

Goals for church year 2025-2026:

Worship: Continue to create opportunities for prayer and worship outside of Sunday morning. In May we started a weekly **Centering Prayer group**. Centering Prayer is an ancient form of prayer, similar to Lectio Divina, with origins going back to the 14th Century Cloud of Unknowing. Contemporary Christian Mystic Father Thomas Merton was responsible for reintroducing Centering Prayer in the West.

This practice group will be led by Rev. Jane Tuohy and Dr. Cynthia Tolbert. Dr. Tolbert has studied Centering Prayer under Father Thomas Keating and led such prayer groups at other churches.

The group meets Wednesday mornings at 10am in Lower Meetinghouse Room A.

Continuum of Spiritual Care: the Mild Cognitive Impairment Group and the Alzheimer's Caretakers Group, under the leadership of Nancy Kidd, are teaching us where additional forms of support may be useful for members of the FRS community as we adapt to support our sisters and brothers who are struggling with memory issues. I hope we can partner up with the appropriate groups within FRS as we identify spiritual support needs of this aging congregation.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Jane Tuohy, Affiliate Minister

REPORTS FROM STAFF

Church Administrator

What is the mission or purpose of your role?

To support church operations, finance (bookkeeping), programming, and VME; to support congregants and staff; to be a point-of-contact for congregants and the greater Newburyport community.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

My role as Church Administrator connects to and supports all of FRS's values and all parts of our mission.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year:

300th Anniversary: provided editing and proofreading of 300th anniversary book; sold books and weathercock pins during office hours.

Administration/Operations: source of institutional knowledge, including processes and procedures, for new staff this year. Administrator of Realm database, QuickBooks Online, Church Mutual portal, Constant Contact, Microsoft 365, Adobe, Comcast phone system portal, Zoom, Venmo, Square, Stripe. Worked with IT contractor on IT needs for incoming staff. Managed business office. Coordinated distribution of Market Basket gift cards to area residents in need.

Annual Campaign: member of Annual Campaign Core and Steering Committees, reviewed/edited campaign materials, updated/maintained Online Pledge Form and Pledge page on the FRSUU website, processed all pledge and pledge increase forms from congregants, worked with Bart Bracken to track campaign data, followed up with congregants, produced campaign progress thermometers.

Annual Report/Annual Meeting: compiled/formatted warrant and related meeting documents, produced email communications about the meeting; supported production and provided editing/proofreading of report; managed member check-in at Annual Meeting.

Communications/Marketing: reviewed/edited weekly Steeple newsletter and other communications; produced Between Us emails, Sunday Service reminders, and other communications as needed; produced weekly notice for *The Daily News* Friday religion page; produced Wayside Pulpit posters; learning how to use Canva for marketing materials and logos.

Finance/Bookkeeping: managed pledge payments/donations, accounts payable, weekly bank deposits, online banking, church credit card account; transitioned to QuickBooks Online; managed electronic storage of deposits, accounts payable, and other finance-related documents; issued pledge statements and 2024 giving statements; managed Sunday Shared Collection analysis and distributions; supported congregants setting up recurring online pledge payments; maintained Online Giving Form and donation fund list; provided relevant financial data to staff and congregants as requested.

Fundraising (auction/raffle/misc.): edited/printed promotional materials, processed auction bids and payments at the auction, provided credit card processing support, provided analysis of income and expenses post-event, provided day-of support at other events.

Membership: processed new member forms and visitor cards, began electronic storage of new member forms, produced nametags for congregants as requested.

Memorial Services: produced Orders of Service; coordinated service-related tasks such as flowers, seating, reserved parking; produced invoices for memorial service fees; created Zoom meetings for services.

Music Ministry: produced Candlelight program and Wilson Concert Series programs; managed Wilson Series

mailing list and promotional postal mailing.

Rentals/Room Reservations/Church Calendar: processed reservations/meeting requests, supported installation of new calendar system, updated rental contract template, updated online Room Reservation Form, prepared rental contracts for external renters.

Rev. Rebecca's Sermon Book: editing/proofreading of sermons, compiled complete sermon book file for the printer, provided final proofreading of book file, supported planning for book launch and reception along with day-of support, sold books during office hours.

Website: maintained webpages: Parish Board, Staff, Employment, Worship/Sermons, and others as needed; posted documents: sermon transcriptions and links to printable sermons, Orders of Service, hymns, lyrics, Parish Board meeting minutes, and other documents; updated/edited other content.

Worship: produced weekly Orders of Service and other printed/online materials, coordinated Sunday flower arrangements and steeple lighting sponsorships, produced printable sermons, ordered candles and related supplies.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year:

In addition to the ongoing support I provide to congregants and other staff, I plan to support financial reporting, become proficient in QuickBooks Online, improve Canva skills, continue looking for efficiencies and documenting processes, and review/clean out old files.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

I look forward to having our new Communications Specialist in place. I am grateful for our amazing staff and congregation, and I look forward to another great year at FRSUU!

Respectfully submitted, Diane Carroll, Church Administrator, diane.carroll@frsuu.org

Director of Church Music

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Our mission is to provide music ministry to the congregation on Sunday mornings, and also during special events and Candlelight Service.

Names of people involved:

Nick Place, Music department, and FRSUU Choir

Wilson Committee – Lea Pearson, Diane Foreman, Johnathon Pape, Nadia Gardner

Candlelight Committee – Diane Stowe-Cohn, Betsy Latham, Ray Wilson

Choral Librarian – Betsy Latham

Chair or chairs:

Nick Place – Director

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates

Choir rehearsal: Thursdays, 7-8:30pm

Candlelight rehearsals: end of October through late December, Sundays, 1-3pm

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

MUSIC and CHOIR

The choir embodies all aspects of the mission and values. Each member comes as they are: in great or slightly

poor vocal health; in all range of mental health and focus; with opinions and skills unique to each person. We journey together in love as we support each other literally while singing together or otherwise when creating music together. It takes courage for a person to get up each day and lend their voice to a choir and sing without inhibition to make the best music they can. We transform our world in song by singing varied messages of love, hope, peace, courage, truth and do so with authentic connection to the text knowing that a congregant may need to hear our message because they're looking for something to hold on to. Courageous actions within the choir include offering strong opinions on style and text as well as some singers offering to sing solos on Sunday mornings. Love is the center of all music. One must care for each note sung. Spirituality comes in many ways in a choir. It might be through a sacred text set to music, or it might be a feeling that arrives when the choir makes a new magnificent sound together for the first time. Wonder comes when diving into a new pieces of music. There are numerous ways to make that piece happen.

Music in general is chosen with the intention of including a diverse representation of lyricists and composers. Substitute musicians for Nick are chosen to include a diverse representation of musicians in culture, style, and demographic.

WILSON SERIES

We had a successful four concert series of chamber music. Former DCM Justin Murphy-Mancini also gave an organ concert to celebrate the history of FRSUU music, Barbara Owen, and his CD release.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The choir learned and performed one Anthem for each Sunday service they were present. They also incorporated a new musical element, "Sanctuary," into each service. The choir's styles expanded this year through the introduction of more pop styles and occasionally singing background vocals for various soloists. A capella singing success increased throughout the year. We put on a wonderful Candlelight performance. We also performed a new piece of music with lyrics by FRS member Betsy Woodman and music by Chris Plante dedicated to the 300th anniversary of the congregation.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

I hope to continue to expand the choir's styles of singing and increase the number of singers we have. Outreach will be a big goal this year through programs like Sing Out and other outreach avenues.

I intend to engage in more arranging and composition, which is historically inherent in church music directors. I will initially engage both Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Laurel in collaborating with lyrics. I have already begun one project with Rev. Laurel.

I also will engage the congregation in writing hymns. Beginning in August or early September, I will reach out to the congregation to solicit two-line poems based on each month's theme. I will compile these lyrics and compose hymns for the church.

Further engagement with local musicians and music festivals to bring more performances to our spaces.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The continued support of the congregation, church staff, and choir members themselves. I will also attend the AUUMM conference in July in Atlanta, GA to further my knowledge of choral repertoire, styles, cultural music, as well as conducting techniques and rehearsal management.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We do our best to incorporate diverse styles along with performing pieces written by composers and lyricists from diverse backgrounds.

Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

Mission or purpose statement:

Grades K-12 gather to participate in engaging curriculum that draws on worship themes, UU Principles & rituals, the FRS Vision, Mission and Ends, and grounded in UU Religious Education goals: *"UU religious education is goal-oriented in one way: We seek an outcome of respectful, responsible, life-loving kids who know they are valued for all of who they are and are ready to show others the same deep acceptance."* - UUA

FRS Young Church and Youth Group builds joyful and meaningful connection with all ages, our faith and our community. Our youth and children's programming fosters respect for ourselves and others, a deepening awareness of our interconnectedness, and social justice engagement as an expression of our spirituality and love.

Names of people involved:

Mara Flynn, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry, Rev. Laurel Gray, August Mead (young adult volunteer)

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Young Church Program – We registered over 50 children in Pre K-11th grade and ran programming that connected to and supported all our Vision, Mission and Ends.

1. Youth Group/Coming of Age:

- a. Over the summer of 2024, staff and volunteers worked to renovate, furnish, and decorate the Youth Room in Parish Hall.
- b. Rev. Laurel Gray and Mara Flynn facilitated Youth Group bi-monthly meetings. In addition to creating a covenant and engaging in trust building activities, our youth participated in Rev. Laurel's Coming of Age program, "Coming of Age: Finding Your Spiritual Center." This program culminated with a Coming-of-Age Service developed and led by our youth.
- c. We also hosted a Youth Group sleepover in the Sanctuary.

2. Little Free Diverse Library/8th Principle: Families and congregants donated books for our LFDL, supporting our mission to circulate books in our community that amplify and empower diverse voices, books written about/by black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ authors.

- a. Banned Books Week: Mara Flynn, Rev. Laurel Gray, August Mead, and Rebecca Lobb co-led Justice Sunday, sharing information about censorship and how to counter it.

3. Professional Development/8th Principle:

- a. Mara Flynn participated in "Embrace Race for UU Families," a six-week pilot program for UU educators and leaders to support their efforts to nurture anti-racist children and caregivers in their congregations.

4. Congregational Group Collaborations:

- a. FRS Green Team – TFAA in the Earth Day service.
- b. Welcoming Committee – Young Church collaborated to participate in Newburyport's Pride Parade.

5. Multigenerational Worship: Organized and led multigenerational worship services (the Annual Christmas Pageant and Young Church Sunday, as well as the Coming-of-Age Service) and Time for All

Ages throughout the church year.

6. **Young Church Singers:** Children rehearsed and performed songs in the Candlelight and Easter services.
7. **Worked with staff to identify and secure new members.**
8. **Deepened connections with families:**
 - a. Encouraged deeper congregational participation; two parents joined the Governance Committee and the Program Council.
 - b. Young Church hosted a successful “All Ages” Coffee Hour.
 - c. Removed barriers to deepen family participation, offering childcare during the FRS Auction, a Special Congregational Meeting, Rev. Rebecca’s book launch, and the Annual Meeting Service.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Our Youth and Young Church programming will continue to build joyful and meaningful connections with all ages, our faith, and our community.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Host two all-ages after church activities, facilitated by Mara Flynn and Rev. Laurel.
2. Continue to build back our Youth Group program.
3. Continue to build relationships with youth, children, and families, listening to what helps deepen their connection to and participation with our church community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Continued communication and collaboration with staff and congregants. Continued relationship building with children, youth, and families and a commitment to centering their voices, ideas, and desires around creating deeper engagement with our faith community.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your programming?

Throughout the year, our youth and children’s programming explores themes of anti-racism, allyship, systemic oppression, and climate justice through age-appropriate books, curriculum, and activities.

Respectfully submitted, Mara Flynn, Director of Youth and Children’s Ministry, Mara.flynn@frsuu.org

Communications Specialist

What is the mission or purpose of your role?

To promote the church’s mission, programs, and events to members, visitors, and the broader community in an efficient and effective manner consistent with our mission and values.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

FRS communications are designed to be authentic and inclusive, reflecting a diversity of voices and interests. We especially seek to share with our congregation information about opportunities to actively live out our values.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Kate Lamie held this role for the majority of the 2024-2025 church year. I joined FRS in a transitional contract role in late March, when I took over responsibility for laying out the weekly Steeple newsletter. I am excited to be moving into the full Communications Specialist role later this summer.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Develop and maintain a thorough knowledge of the church's communication outlets and needs.
- Design and create the weekly Steeple newsletter to inform members about church happenings.
- Make website updates and improvements in collaboration with the Church Administrator.
- Design posters for special events to be used within the church and in community locations.
- Design special communications that go out to the congregation as requested.
- Review and revise the job responsibilities of the Communications Specialist in collaboration with the minister as church needs emerge and evolve.
- Engage in ongoing professional training in the technical skills needed to succeed in this role.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

As someone new to FRS and greater Newburyport, I will appreciate hearing from members with suggestions about how best to share our messages with the local community. I also invite members to reach out to me if you ever find our communications to be confusing or inaccessible, so that I can address any issues promptly.

How does your role consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

In all church communications, we intentionally employ language and imagery that reflect and celebrate the diversity of our community.

Respectfully submitted, Elisa Scully, Communications Specialist, elisa.scully@frsuo.org

Sexton

What is the mission or purpose of your role?

To maintain the buildings and grounds and provide support to staff and congregants.

Tell us how your role is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Authentic Connection, Courageous Action, Love, Spirituality, and Wonder

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Maintaining the lawn and gardens, cleaning out and painting Parish Hall, cleaning out and painting offices for new staff, keeping grounds clean, helping people feel good about the beauty of the building, trying to save the church money when making decisions.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Maintaining the buildings and grounds, working with the Facilities Team.

Respectfully submitted, Don Rogers, Sexton, donny.rogers@frsuo.org

CARE MINISTRY

Dementia Caregivers Support Group (DCSG)

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To provide support and education to caregivers whose family members or friends are experiencing the myriad issues and challenges associated with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

Names of people involved:

Nancy Kidd, Linda Harding, and Richard George, in collaboration with Rev. Rebecca

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The value our caregiver group most readily supports relates to creating AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS. Caregivers who are constantly in the position of giving their time, energy, and love to friends or family who have a dementia diagnosis come to group to be heard, to be seen, and to have their feelings validated by fellow attendees and facilitators. As an ongoing drop-in group, we are OPEN AND WELCOMING of anyone who shows up to COME AS YOU ARE. The most valuable contribution the group makes to the church and wider community is in many ways a simple one: space. DCSG offers a quiet, safe place for sharing personal caregiving stories, ones that make us laugh and ones that make us cry. The WONDER of it all lies within the many great ACTS OF COURAGE, and LOVE performed hour after hour, day after day. As group leaders, we listen with empathy and compassion. We respond with love.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Our plan is to continue to offer DCSG next year, hopefully growing its attendance and potentially broadening its scope to include caregivers of all kinds. A greater goal might be to develop programming that would lead to FRS becoming a more dementia-sensitive community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The Dementia Caregivers Support Group will thrive on the continued administrative and logistical support of the church staff. A collaborative effort to raise awareness and educate the FRS community about dementia would naturally complement our program as well.

How will your group consider the 8th Principle in your work and programs next year?

TBD. Perhaps there is a way to address the 8th Principle through education regarding how differently people with dementia are treated by the medical community and other institutional settings depending on their race, ethnicity, and gender identities. More broadly, it would be interesting to look into the different degrees of stigma borne by people with dementia across those three groups.

Respectfully submitted, Linda Harding, lharding6@comcast.net and Nancy Kidd, nankdd@gmail.com

Mild Cognitive Impairment Support Group

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To provide support, education, and offer connection to those who are coping with dementia.

Names of people involved:

Varies, 4-10 people monthly

Chair or chairs:

Nancy Kidd, LICSW; Rev. Jane Tuohy; Linda Harding

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Authentic Connection, Love, Spirituality, Come as you are, Act with courage.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

This group has only met twice so far – much conversation and connection.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

To offer a safe and anonymous space for those with this diagnosis to connect with each other.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We are open to the entire Newburyport community, as well as church members.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy L. Kidd, LICSW, nankdd@gmail.com

Memorial Services Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To support grieving families and provide a friendly and caring connection to the church as they plan and hold memorial services for loved ones. Different team members help with service planning, serve as liaisons to the families, provide office and technical support, serve as ushers at services, and participate in services.

Names of people involved:

Rev. Rebecca, Jeff Bard, Bart Bracken, Joe Brouillet, Linda Buddenhagen, Will Buddenhagen, Diane Carroll, Barbara Garnis, Florence Mercer, John Mercer, Nick Place

Chair or chairs:

Rev. Rebecca

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

In supporting grieving families, the team connected to and supported Authentic Connection, Love, Spirituality, and Journey together in love.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Two memorial services were held for FRSUU members, and four memorial services were held for family members or residents of greater Newburyport.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue to provide support to families in planning memorial services for members and friends.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Continued involvement and availability of congregants to provide this important ministry for church families and area residents.

Respectfully submitted, Diane Carroll, Church Administrator, diane.carroll@frsuu.org

Parish Friends

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Parish Friends network supports our church community members and friends in times of challenge, crises, transition, and special needs. We traditionally deliver meals, provide rides to church functions and medical appointments, write cards to parishioners, perform local errands, provide emergency childcare, and assist with light chores, including occasional pet care.

To request support for yourself or others, contact Parish Friends through a call to the church office or email to parishfriends@frsuu.org. You can also reach out directly to Susan Ricker at smricker@aol.com.

Names of people involved:

We have over 70 participants. The roster is kept current in the FRS Directory, as Parish Friends - All. We welcome and encourage new volunteers for Parish Friends.

Chair or chairs:

Susan Ricker

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

As needed, no specific meeting time

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Our activities support FRS values of Authentic Connection, Love, and Wonder, and certainly supported much of the FRS mission, most notably to “Come as you are” and “Journey together in love.”

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Parish Friends remained very active throughout the church year. Many heartfelt thanks to all who have remained ready to connect and serve. The Parish Friends network supports our church community members and friends in times of challenge, crises, transition, and special needs. Over this past year, our connections included:

- Picking up prescriptions
- Assisting with grocery shopping and other errands
- Providing meals following a medical event or family loss
- Light gardening
- Rides to church functions and medical appointments
- Dog walking
- Light home repairs
- Electronic device assistance
- Sitter for an elderly person

The Parish Friends actively supported church-wide initiatives, including:

- Participating in the Passion Action Fair
- Delivering baked goods during their Holiday Pie Project
- Assisting Reverend Laurel with the assembly of bouquets and delivering on Valentine’s Day

Thank you to those who were open to the support offered by Parish Friends, including those who do not typically find themselves relying on “help.” This is a partnership that exists between parishioners, and both parts of that partnership are strengthened.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Meet more often, especially for each of the functional service areas.
- Expand offered services, including more emergency gardening and snow removal.
- Create and strengthen connections with Young Church families.

- Improve communication with the church community.
- Continue to recruit more members, including active connection with new FRSUU members.
- Identify software or apps for coordinating volunteers.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Our success in 2025-2026 will be helped by a kickoff organizational meeting when we return to church in the fall. Availability of accessible meeting space will also be helpful. Improved placement of Parish Friends notices in the Steeple.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We will include this question in our fall planning meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Ricker, smricker@aol.com

Pastoral Care Associates

Mission

As an extension of Rev. Rebecca's ministry, the mission of the Pastoral Care Associates is to provide lay-led care for FRS members. Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) visit members in hospitals, homes, rehabilitation centers, and other care facilities under the guidance of Rev. Rebecca and in consultation with other team members. PCAs offer support groups including Caregivers Support Group, Grief Support Group (held at Anna Jaques Hospital) and for those with mild cognitive impairment. PCAs offer support and listening to members who are grieving the loss of a loved one, facing difficult decisions, or caring for loved ones. PCAs work in close collaboration with the Parish Friends, often with both groups offering support to an individual or family.

This year the group went through a several month period of hiatus from formal meetings of PCAs in order to reconsider how to best meet the changing needs of the congregation. We honored and thanked several long-term members who moved on from this ministry including Betsy Hazen, Tom Himmel, and Linda Harding and welcomed three new members: Jean Lanham, Karen Letourneau, and Andy Lobb.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Rebecca, Nancy Kidd, Hugh Martinez, Susan Ricker, Bettina Turner

WORSHIP AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

Chalice Circles Steering Committee

Mission or purpose statement:

Chalice Circles Steering Committee (CCSC) coordinates Chalice Circles (CC) to help people think about their spiritual lives and build community by sharing their thoughts and experiences with each other. CC also provides a foundation of practice in using a covenant (including confidentiality) and deep/compassionate listening in the context of a small group ministry.

Names of people involved:

CCSC: Ted Stedman, Linda Tulley, Beth Munro

FRS Liaison: Rev. Laurel Gray

CC Leaders: Mark Hodgson, Jim Lacey, Liss Larsen, James Funston, Mary Sortal, Ted Stedman

How the CC program connected to and supported our Mission and Values:

Chalice Circles offer a small group ministry opportunity to explore a deeper connection to the values espoused above. Session topics, including those based on Rev. Rebecca's monthly sermon themes, elicit personal

reflections on people's values and life experiences. Circles delve into spiritual beliefs, experiences, and values resulting in a greater awareness of who and what we are as individuals and in a greater whole. Participants tend to develop close relationships with each other, finding a caring and supportive community within our larger congregation.

Based on deep listening, the initial climate of respect in CC additionally becomes a journey of loving kindness and truly authentic connections. Sharing one's deepest thoughts and feelings is an act of courage, and the level of trust that develops is transformative.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Tested a method of scheduling that included more input from potential participants.
- Offered an in-depth, relevant Training/Refresher for Leaders in a hybrid Zoom format.
- Ran three in-person CC and one Zoom CC, serving 30 FRS members and friends.
- Continued to expand the session topic library.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Consider the feasibility of two 10-session cycles of CC (Fall and Spring). Offer in-person and Zoom CC, with a continued emphasis on encouraging FRS newcomers to participate, and Gift of Service activities that are inclusive and flexible. Develop a session topic addressing the 8th Principle and one referencing Forrest Church's *Cathedral of the World*.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- A budget of approximately \$125
- Continuing support with: listings in The Steeple/Order of Service, room reservations, Zoom links for hybrid meetings of CCSC and leaders, and for Zoom Circles
- Assistance updating the CC page in the FRS website
- Rev. Laurel Gray as our FRS liaison

Respectfully submitted, Beth Munro

Adult Education Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The mission of this group is to plan, schedule, and facilitate meaningful education experiences for the adults of this congregation and the wider community.

Names of people involved:

Joanna Fernandes, Ted Stedman, Mary McDonald, Julie Menin, Rev. Jane Tuohy, Rev. Laurel Gray

Chair or chairs:

Rev. Laurel Gray

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Bi-monthly meetings scheduled by consensus of committee members.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Adult education programs are planned to support the mission of the church and to lean into particular values, i.e. Mysticism leans into Spirituality and Wonder, Walk for Peace and Meeting the Moment lean into Courageous Action, Chalice Circles, ROMEO, and Ladies Who Lunch build Authentic Connection.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Ongoing classes have been well attended, and people have responded positively to these offerings:

- Post-Inauguration (Maker Monday, Tuesday worship, Wednesday meditation)
- New to UU class
- Chalice Circles (spring term)
- Congregational read – *Caste*
- Coming of Age
- Mother’s Day Walk for Peace
- Meeting the Moment w. Marianne Vesey (two rounds)

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continuing the programs that have already been successful.
- Introducing programs that will help our congregation and community stay abreast of ongoing political changes and social justice issues.
- Introducing programming that supports the needs of our growing congregation and the demographics it presents.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

It’s important to have people willing to run/teach programs, lead time for gathering interest, and space to accommodate groups.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Readings and speakers are deliberated upon with consideration to exploring and supporting the 8th Principle.

Respectfully submitted, Mary McDonald, Adult Ed Committee Member, marywilliammmcdonald@gmail.com

Ushers & Greeters

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To be a welcoming and helpful presence for all worship services.

Names of people involved:

Stephen-Wolf Foster, Rev. Laurel Gray, Jeff Bard, Rev. Stan Barrett, Tina Benik, Bart Bracken, Christine Brandel, Joe Brouillet, Lori Clark, Woman Cooper, Stephen Costello, Kathleen Desilets, Dottie DiChiara, Vern Ellis, Laurie Evans-Daly, Sue Fasoli, Joanna Fernandes, Minnie Flanagan, Diane Forman, Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Michelle Kimball, Doug Latham, Andy Lobb, Nancy McCarthy, Florence Mercer, Melissa Mills, Kathleen Moore, David Owen, Dawn Pelletier, Katherine Roth Huse, Robert Stables, Jim Supple, Eileen Vargas-Costello, Alec White, Liz Wisniewski, Renee Wolf Foster, Anita Wright

Chair or chairs:

Stephen-Wolf Foster is the Lead Usher

Rev. Laurel Gray led group meetings

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Every two months on Zoom, date and time determined by consensus

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The primary role of ushers and greeters is to welcome everyone at the doors on Sunday mornings and provide guidance to anyone with questions, which is an embodiment of “Come as you are” and “Journey together in love.”

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We began having meetings every other month this year to assess how the roles of Ushers and Greeters were working, how many people we really need on a given Sunday, rotating the role of weekly signups, training backups to act as Lead Usher, establishing a policy of two ushers helping count the offertory collection, and new safety procedures (i.e. evacuation location, what to do if ICE shows up, CPR/AED training, locations of fire blankets and first aid kits).

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

We've been hearing concern from the congregation about safety, given the political climate. I (Rev. Laurel) have been working with Rev. Rebecca and the Safety Task Force to consider what kinds of training, procedures, and volunteers we need in place.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

It would be wonderful to engage new people to act as Ushers and Greeters. It's a wonderful way to be of service and create a joyful, welcoming atmosphere at FRS.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We've been working on a more shared leadership model, where the tasks of lead usher are rotated between members of the group. We're also thinking about all that's happening in our country around immigration and trying to make sure Sunday mornings are safe for everyone, including immigrants.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Laurel Gray, Assistant Minister for Congregational Life, revlaurel.gray@frsuu.org

Mysticism Circles Group

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Mystic Circles are gatherings for individuals within the FRS community and beyond who wish to explore mysticism and the many pathways to numinous experience. These are experiential sessions that very often include spiritual practices. The religious and spiritual diversity of group participants is deeply valued. Group members have multiple opportunities to clarify their own core religious and spiritual beliefs and to be in dialogue with others whose beliefs may vary from their own. Emphasis is on peer sharing, spiritual learning and development, and building deep bonds of trust in sacred circles.

Names of people involved:

FRS Liaison: Rev. Jane Tuohy

Participants: Johnathon Pape, Joanna Fernandes, Mary Valle, Stan Barrett, Joyce Haydock, Ted Stedman, Carolyn Colman, Anna Cantelmo, Sarah McSweeney Chamberlin, Anne Comeau, Mary Margaret Halsey, Jessica Bennet

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Mystic Circles offer participants the opportunity to go deep in exploring their own spirituality and beliefs and in sharing their own numinous experiences. The only "requirement" for participation is an open mind and a willingness to be in mystery.

Mystic Circles has evolved over four cycles into a peer-led spiritual practice group. There are deep bonds of trust that foster and support the courage both to examine one's own beliefs and to share spiritually at deep levels.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Provided multiple opportunities for group members to become clearer about their own beliefs.
- Created opportunities for group members to teach and learn new subjects.
- Explored multiple pathways into the realm of mysticism.

- Supported leadership of group members who had not previously stepped up into spiritual leadership.
- Successfully maximized the religious and spiritual diversity of participants.
- Extended FRS hospitality to members of the community who have not previously been to FRS.
- Created opportunities for spiritual retreat in June 2025.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- **Go deep!** Help group members further develop the skills needed for skillful interfaith dialogue.
- Offer more worship services. We start with Centering Prayer on May 28. This will be a weekly worship practice.
- Offer to other church and spiritual communities serving Greater Newburyport area.
- Out into the world - incorporate visits to sacred sites as part of "curriculum."

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continuing support with: listings in The Steeple/Order of Service, room reservations, Zoom links for hybrid meetings of CCSC and leaders, and for Zoom Circles.
- Create a Mystic Circles section for FRS website.
- Rev. Jane Tuohy as our FRS liaison.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Jane Tuohy

Monday Night Meditation

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To support anyone interested in finding a group to support their efforts to meditate. Very beneficial for those wanting a spiritual practice rather than a dogmatic one.

Names of people involved:

Many different people, usually 12 to 16 people between in-person and Zoom

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Mondays at 6:30pm in person and on Zoom

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The program supports Authentic Connection, Love, Spirituality, Come as you are, Journey together in love, Act with courage, and Transform our world. Especially focusing on eventual world peace and inner peace.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We have several new members including one psychologist, two persons working in the hospice field, and one who is new to the area and is recovering from surgery. People say they love the readings/lessons I read and add to before and after our meditation session.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue increasing/maintaining a vibrant group who support each other and hopefully begin advertising in *The Daily News* to reach out to more individuals/youth who are still lonely and feeling isolated after the Covid lockdown. After 13 to 14 years (started the group in late 2010), I would love to find someone who is ready, able, and willing to lead if I am sick or on vacation. Over the summer I would like to provide one or two four-to-six-hour retreats on a Saturday. We have about a half dozen folks very interested in this. We did several successful retreats prior to the COVID lockdown but haven't done any since things have been vastly improved.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Continued use of the Lower Meetinghouse Main Room has been a gift that is so needed and appreciated! If the group continues to grow, the Lower Meetinghouse works well.

Respectfully submitted, Joyce Haydock, joycehaydock@outlook.com

Wednesday Guided Meditation**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

A weekly 30-minute meditation session to assist participants in learning relaxation techniques, centering, and how to anchor oneself.

Chair or chairs

Woman

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Wednesdays at 10am on Zoom

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Authentic Connection, Wonder, Journey together in love

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Increase in participants. Feedback is that participants are using the techniques in their everyday life.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue offering support and guidance, offering a safe and loving space.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Hold hope and passion.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness, to seek truth and act for justice; care for each other.

Respectfully submitted, Woman Cooper, Susanc0805@gmail.com

Worship Associates**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

The Worship Associate team provides meaningful leadership and support for Sunday worship services and other special services in support of Rev. Rebecca, Rev. Laurel, and guest speakers.

Names of people involved:

Steve Costello, Joanna Fernandes, Charlie Himmel, Sarina Khan Reddy, Doug Latham, Johnathon Pape, David Turner, and Eileen Vargas-Costello

Chair or chairs:

Doug Latham

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

We meet as a team for a half-day retreat in the early fall and four other evenings during the course of the

church year. Individual members of the team will typically join the bi-weekly worship planning meetings held on Wednesday mornings from 10:30am to noon when they are in the rotation to serve as Worship Associate for a Sunday in the active planning cycle.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

As a team, we gather for occasional meetings to both plan our support for worship services and strengthen our understanding of how to actively participate in worship leadership. Both our practical and spiritual support of worship services are in direct service to FRSUU mission and values.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We have had full participation by all members of the Worship Associate team in sharing the responsibility for serving during Sunday services. As part of our commitment to growing our own understanding of worship leadership, we have used our meetings in part to view and discuss part of a series of UUA learning modules on worship planning.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

We hope to continue expanding our understanding of what it means to be worship leaders and how we can constructively contribute to worship planning and services.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The team always relies on the dedication of its membership. As with every church year, a new cohort of Worship Associates will join the team, and we will say goodbye to some departing members. We expect this transition will be smooth, and we will bring yet another group of dedicated Worship Associates up to speed.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

As worship leaders, we welcome all comers to join with us on Sunday mornings and special worship occasions. We speak with hearts open to the possibilities of living into all our UU principles.

Respectfully submitted, Doug Latham, chair, dnlatham0129@gmail.com

FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

300th Anniversary Planning Team

The 300th Anniversary Planning Team was created to plan events for the 300th anniversary of our congregation.

The committee has two co-chairs and works closely with Rev. Laurel. Other groups and individuals have worked with the committee on various projects including the afternoon tea in May and creating a case for the remnants of the original weathercock. Laurie Evans-Daly and Annie Maurer are the co-chairs.

Throughout the year, we have generally met every two weeks on Thursday afternoons.

We have supported our Values, Mission and Ends by encouraging our community to journey together as we celebrate our past and look forward to our future.

In the 2024-2025 church year a number of events were planned. We started with an opening ceremony in January and banners celebrating our 300th anniversary were hung in the church and outside. A sermon on the history of our town was followed by a coffee hour featuring authentic 18th-century treats. The portraits of our ministers were brought out and hung in the Tiny Gallery. A major task was the creation of a book commemorating our community and history that included articles by a number of parishioners. A commemorative pin shaped like our weathercock was created and sold. In May, the church gathered for an afternoon tea at the Museum of Old Newbury during which the weathercock was made available for viewing. On

June 8, we will have a church birthday party and will serve cake in the courtyard to our congregation and passersby. In late June, we will march in the city's parade celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War and the founding of our country.

Next year we will be wrapping up our celebration. Over the summer, FRSUU will take part in the Yankee Homecoming bed race. A play, written by a church member, will be performed. A final service will close out our anniversary year. We will continue to need the participation of the congregation in events. Rev. Laurel has been invaluable in helping and guiding us and we will continue to rely on her working with us.

The celebration of our 300th year has created reflection and conversations about coming to terms with the history of our church in relation to the money that flowed into Newburyport from the triangle trade and the treatment of African Americans by our congregation.

Respectfully submitted, Annie Maurer

Membership Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Membership Committee works with the Assistant Minister to make FRS accessible and engaging to newcomers.

Names of people involved:

Rev. Laurel Gray, Jeff Bard, Anne Comeau, Woman Cooper, Diane Forman, Ben Fundis, Michelle Kimball, Liss Larsen, Susan Ricker

Chair or chairs:

Rev. Laurel Gray

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Meets about every two months on Zoom at date and time group chooses

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Membership is largely focused on the "Come as you are" and "Journey together in love" parts of our mission, as our focus is how we engage with newcomers.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

This is a new committee, so reforming was our first achievement. We did a lot of assessing what membership infrastructure already existed and what needed to be implemented. This year Rev. Laurel brought back the blue visitor cards for visitors to fill out on Sunday mornings. Those folks were added to Realm and our email lists, got nametags, and direct outreach from Rev. Laurel. Diane Forman and Woman Cooper acted as "coffee buddies," meeting with newcomers over tea or coffee so they could talk to a longtime member one-on-one. We re-established the visitor table in the vestibule and hosted a special reception for new members after the New Member Sunday service in the spring.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue to provide clear ways for newcomers to find their way into community, consider membership, and formally join the congregation. Ongoing things to work on are: promotional/information materials, engaging people who attend online, and how we use our church database. We've also been considering offering membership meetups: easy fun gatherings to support fellowship among new members and longtime members.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

The continued connections existing members make with newcomers!

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

I think we need to give more thought to how people of color experience entering into this congregation and how we can specifically support that experience.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Laurel Gray, Assistant Minister, revlaurel.gray@frsuu.org

Exploring Elderhood Together

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Exploring Elderhood Together provides members and friends, ages 60 and older, with an opportunity to explore what it means to age in the 2020s. Our mission is to reflect on and discuss topics of interest and, through sharing our own lived experience, to build a greater sense of belonging within our community.

Names of people involved:

Steering Committee: Mark Hodgson, Alexandra Mezey, Mary Lou Monteiro, Jean Noonan, Rev. Rebecca Bryan.

We appreciate the help of church staff: Donny Rogers, Diane Carroll, Kate Lamie (and temporary Steeple staff) and Nick Place for setup, AV equipment, and publicity assistance, and Rev. Rebecca for guidance, leadership, and interest in our planning and presentations.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

The Steering Committee has met monthly on Wednesdays, 3:30-5pm this year. This could change next year. The programs are held on the third Thursday of each month, 1-2:30pm.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Exploring Elderhood Together embodies the values and mission of FRSUU. We connect authentically, welcome all, share ideas from our life journeys as we explore what aging means in the 2020s, present programs that include spiritual as well as practical aspects of aging, and hope to act with courage and transform the world's awareness of ageist beliefs and practices.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We planned and sponsored the following programs:

- Random Acts of Connection – presented by George Gray of the “Happy to Chat” bench program, on what we might learn from connecting with strangers.
- Follow-up program on connecting with each other, facilitated by Rev. Rebecca.
- Having Family Conversations about End-of-Life Issues, presented by Nancy Kidd, LICSW and Marijane Helbick, LISW.
- Brain Health Through Movement, presented by Ree Coleman, Kundalini Yoga Teacher.
- Protect Yourself from Fraud and Identity Theft, presented by AARP speaker Phil Abraham.
- A New Ritual for Elders: a short presentation on sharing stories about meaningful objects from our lives with others, followed by sharing our stories, facilitated by Marylou Monteiro.
- An Experiential Program to Support Vision, Movement and Balance, presented by Ree Coleman.
- Take Your Seat, a functional movement program presented by Nancy McCarthy, fitness professional and SEAT instructor.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

In these turbulent times, connection seems to be more important than ever. Providing time for meaningful

connection is an important aspect that we want to remember in planning our programs. We hope to continue to plan and present programs with timely and interesting content and formats that reflect the needs and interests of our elder participants while supporting the FRSUU mission and values.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We value and need input from participants and the church community in general to help us plan programs that meet current needs, interests, and values.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

This is a new consideration for our planning. We will try to explore ways to encourage multicultural participation and/or input of participants, presenters, and with our Steering Committee, and continue to bring awareness to ageism, racism, and other oppressions when we gather.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Noonan, Steering Committee Member, noonan.jean@comcast.net

Friday Book Group

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Friday Book Group is a welcoming and valuable FRSUU resource in providing opportunity for both personal growth and relationship building. We read both fiction and nonfiction books chosen by the group, which will stretch our intellect, promote interaction, possibly challenge our belief systems, and increase our compassion for differing perspectives.

Names of people involved:

Open to all, no set membership; Choice of reading sometimes influences who attends.

Chair or chairs:

Current Coordinator: Tom Himmel

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Meets weekly on Fridays at 10am

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

All interested are welcome to “come as they are”: we are not a closed group or a “club.” Through our reading and discussion, we forge Connection and strive to Journey together in Love. Not infrequently our reading sheds light on current events and society, changes our thinking and can thus move us to act in courage — and transform ourselves if not our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Read works of fiction and non-fiction, notably *Huckleberry Finn & James* (as a pair), *Golden Age of American Essay*, *Nostromo*, *The Iliad*, *The Years*.
- Works read led to highly-engaged group discussion, sometimes ranging widely to other topics of interest.
- Met weekly in hybrid mode (in-person and via Zoom); group included a mix of FRS members and non-members; some have attended who were out of the area. Online participants have at times outnumbered those in the room.
- We continued with a “facilitated” mode for most meetings in order to ensure all get an equal chance to participate — this has made for very successful integration of online participants with those in person.
- Continued democratic (group decides!) process for choosing each new work.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Communicate the openness of the Book Group and engage new attendees.
- Continue to do hybrid meetings in a manner that works for those who must or prefer to connect online.
- Continue to choose a mix of works that provide varied reading/discussion opportunities.
- Maintain a core of participants who are committed to the ongoing life of the group.
- Be open to different points of view whether in terms of literary matters or social issues.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Better communicate about the Book Group to the wider FRS community and help to engage new participants.
- Maintain successful hybrid meeting technology and process which is essential for this group — this requires willingness of some participants to be familiar with setting up the needed equipment.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

There has been little discussion of this, though the group would be open to consider this topic. One way it could be approached would be to discuss specifically how the 8th Principle might influence our choice of reading or how it might apply to topics that arise from the reading.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Himmel, thimmel43@mac.com

Program Council**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

The role of the Program Council is to provide a venue for all church groups to share new initiatives, activities, projects, and opportunities for participation within our church community.

Names of people involved:

Representatives from all groups are encouraged to attend. Meetings are held quarterly. Rev. Rebecca and/or Rev. Laurel attend as well to provide updates on church happenings and get feedback from lay leaders on upcoming initiatives.

Chair or chairs:

Barbara Garnis, Annie Maurer, Leslie Lawrence

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

This year, in-person meetings were held on December 2, February 10, and May 5.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Program Council supports the carrying forward of FRSUU's VME by providing opportunities for authentic connection between and among individual members and the groups that have drawn them to our church community. The Council meetings are used to encourage broader engagement in the church's social justice efforts and other programming that supports all of the values outlined above.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- On October 6, the Annual Passion Action Fair was held. The Program Council encourages all groups to person a table at coffee hour to provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to learn about groups and join if they are interested.
- The focus for this year's first Program Council meeting on December 2 was to present the history and

revisit the Council's mission. A particular issue raised by members was to establish a system to effectively coordinate church programming with groups to avoid conflicts in timing of key events.

- At the February meeting, the agenda included a presentation on the Leading Edge Team presented by Sue Fasoli. Tina Benick, Board Chair, updated the members on the Capital Campaign.
- A major accomplishment for this year was to establish a system to coordinate group programs with the church-wide and staff programming. At the May meeting a process of calendaring was implemented. The calendar included church-wide, staff, and group programs for the 2025-26 church year. The calendar will be made available to the congregation and will be reviewed and updated at the September Program Council meeting.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- To continue to act as a supportive coordinating body to educate and engage groups in church-wide priorities and share their efforts with lay leaders within the FRSUU community.
- Provide opportunities for groups to outreach to new people within the FRSUU community to share their vision and mission and encourage engagement.
- Specific goals and Program Council activities for the 2025-26 church year will be established at its first meeting in September 2025.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Input from the Parish Board, Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Laurel, key staff, and lay leaders of committees regarding challenges they face and ways in which the Program Council can assist and support them.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work and programs?

The Program Council supports efforts of the Anti-Racism Initiative to increase member engagement in anti-racism and anti-oppression initiatives and provides opportunities to educate lay leaders from other groups about the 8th Principle and how their group can use the 8th Principle to guide their own actions to achieve our Values, Mission and Ends.

The Chairs of Program Council want to thank Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Laurel for their continued support.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Garnis, barbaragarnis@comcast.net, Annie Maurer, anniemaurer174@gmail.com, and Leslie Lawrence, leslie.lawrence55@gmail.com

Retired Old Men Eating Out (ROMEIO)

Retired Old Men Eating Out (ROMEIO) is not a club. There are no dues, no membership requirements, and no officers. Ed Budelmann is the clerk. The group meets for spontaneous social interaction at noon on the second Wednesday of each month, twelve months of the year. A volunteer chooses a restaurant and makes a reservation every month. There are no restrictions on location. The check is divided equally among those present. Email invitations are sent to those who have asked for them about two weeks in advance of meetings. We average about a dozen in attendance.

Respectfully submitted, Ed Budelmann, ebudelmann@gmail.com

Short Story Group

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The FRS Short Story Group meets twice per month for the purpose of reading and discussing short stories.

Names of people involved:

No set members, all are welcome.

Chair or chairs:

Current Coordinator: Tom Himmel

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

First and third Tuesdays of each month, at noon, in person

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values

We have a fairly regular group of attendees who can come as they are, i.e. whether they have read the story or not — and have liked it or not. There is a fairly consistent group of attendees at every meeting; this has enabled the building of relationships (Connection). New people are welcome to join at any time. We offer caring conversation on various matters; people often share experiences from their own lives related to themes in the reading.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Connect those with a love of reading and discussing; group continued to meet regularly (in person) throughout the year. While occasional people come and go, we have added a couple who now attend regularly and have added to the group.
- Welcome diversity: mix of people with backgrounds in literature and those who simply like to read; some are (or were) non-FRS members.
- Share what the given readings mean to each of us and learn from each other.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Select as a group a new source of readings when we finish the current anthology, one that meets the interests of the group going forward.
- Encourage broader participation by continuing to communicate about the group and its being open to all who are interested.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

Continue to have a core group of people who participate regularly at in-person meetings, which the group seems to prefer. There has been no specific need or interest expressed in doing hybrid meetings; doing so might present a challenge with set-up.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Unknown at this time. Given the adoption of the 8th Principle, it might be helpful for some guidelines to be considered for FRSUU groups, perhaps via the Board or the Program Council.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Himmel, thimmel43@mac.com

INCLUSION MINISTRY

Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry (AIM)

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To center accessibility and inclusion for all our attendees.

Names of people involved:

Lea Pearson, Lance Hidy

Chair or chairs:

None so far

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

None currently

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Our AIM mission embodies every aspect of the FRS mission statement. All of our actions begin with Authentic Connection, end with Love, and model Courageous Action.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We held an information session at our Justice Sunday on June 1, 2025, about Universal Design. The purpose was to educate source groups and ministries on how to communicate in ways that are universally accessible.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

To reinvigorate AIM. We are in a leadership vacuum after the passing of Rev. Helen Murgida.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

More people involved, and someone to step up as a leader. More engaged relationship with the Facilities Team. More understanding from the church community that AIM is not just about disability awareness. It's about the spectrum of abilities for all of us in **everything** we do.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We are all part of a continuum of accessibility, normalization, and ability. So the work we do relates to all communities.

Respectfully submitted, Lea Pearson, Volunteer

Welcoming Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Welcoming Committee assists the parish in upholding its pledge to be a part of the UUA Welcoming Congregation program, an effort whereby congregations seek to understand current issues, needs, and areas of concern for the LGBTQ+ community, so they feel fully welcomed, centered, and embraced in UU congregations. The Welcoming Committee offers opportunities for learning, growth, and inclusion while fulfilling the UUA's Five Practices of Welcome required to maintain a Welcoming Congregation designation.

Names of people involved:

In alphabetical order by first name, the 2024-2025 members include: August Mead, Charlie Himmel, Erin

Hutchinson-Himmel, Everett Himmel, Holly Cashman, Nancy Crochiere, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Woman Cooper

Chair or chairs:

Chair-type duties were shared among August Mead, Erin Hutchinson-Himmel, and Holly Cashman.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

We usually met on the second Thursday of the month at 6:30pm, but sometimes we met other days/times depending on people's schedules.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Welcoming Committee supports several of our Values, including Authentic Connection, Courageous Action, Love, Spirituality, Wonder; and our Mission includes Come as you are, Journey together in love, Act with courage, and Transform our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Coordinated a Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil in Market Square on November 17, 2024.
- Organized two worship services uplifting LGBTQ+ lives: the first one, on November 17, 2024, was about Transgender Truths in the face of the onslaught of transphobia and use of the trans community as a political wedge issue; the second one, on June 1, 2025, was all about Drag (educating about the history of drag, a drag queen's lived experience, and the current moral panic about drag).
- Hosted a Justice Sunday on November 17, 2024, about Transgender Day of Remembrance.
- Had a representative from the Welcoming Committee participate in the Justice Action Council and, when possible, the Program Council.
- Attended a webinar on "Bathrooms, Sports Teams, and Moral Panics: Trans Rights Now!" on February 25, 2025, and shared the opportunity with the congregation.
- Attended the online Bystander Training on April 28, 2025.
- Increased community awareness of LGBTQ+ Days of Observance and calls to action through notices in the Order of Service and on the FRSUU Facebook page.
- Collaborated with Newburyport Pride and the City of Newburyport on the second annual Newburyport Transgender Day of Visibility Flag Raising at Newburyport City Hall on March 31, 2025. Rev. Rebecca gave a wonderful blessing and Holly read an incredibly moving call to action from an anonymous transgender individual from Newburyport.
- Collaborated with the Newburyport Pride Board to feature our June 1 Welcoming Worship Service in the Newburyport Pride programming.
- FRS is again a "bronze level" sponsor of Newburyport Pride!
- FRS again had a group of people take part in the Newburyport Pride parade on May 31, 2025.
- FRS had a booth/table at the Newburyport Pride Festival on May 31, 2025.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- To continue to integrate the mission and spirit of the UUA's Welcoming Congregations Program into congregational life at FRS, creating a welcoming community for current and prospective members.
- To continue to create opportunities for the congregation to deepen their understanding of LGBTQ+ people and to deepen our commitment to action to undo prejudice against LGBTQ+ people in our congregation and our community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continued support from the FRSUU congregation and interest in/willingness to participate in the activities required for recertification as a Welcoming Congregation.

- Energy and capacity to offer a variety of programming – this year has been exhausting and overwhelming; we wanted to do more but also needed to focus on taking care of ourselves and each other.
- Involve more people who are interested in participating in the Welcoming Committee and committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Have a member who can regularly attend the Program Council meetings and Justice Action Council meetings to build bridges with other groups.
- Find a monthly meeting time that consistently works for our committee members.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

In our work as a committee, we are always cognizant of the intersection of oppressions, including homophobia, transphobia, and racism. We are aware that the LGBTQ+ community, although often imagined as white and wealthy, has always included Black and Brown people, economically disadvantaged people, people with disabilities, and people who hold other marginalized identities.

Respectfully submitted, Holly Cashman, Co-chair, cashman.holly@gmail.com

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Afghan Resettlement Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Support the integration of the Mirzayee family into the community; they were evacuated from Afghanistan for their safety more than three years ago.

Mohammad, the father, served for many years as the leader of the Afghan Security Force, assisting the U.S. military in protecting the embassy. In August 2021 without warning, the family was faced with the decision to leave all they had and knew and flee the country, with the assistance of the U.S military, to safety in the United States, or to stay in their homeland and face the very real threat of arrest and/or death. After several uncertain months, they arrived in Newburyport. Their resilience and forward-looking attitude, along with our support, have resulted in an ever-brighter future for them.

Names of people involved:

Sarina Khan Reddy, Kathy Strubel, Peg Nicol, Bettina Turner, Mary Sortal, Lee McLaughlin

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Last Thursday of the month at noon

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

We have built an Authentic Connection through the Courageous Action of settling and integrating this family into our community. It has been a remarkably wonderful yet difficult journey. The concept of our Afghan Resettlement Project as well as the subsequent planning and implementation is the very embodiment of our Mission and Values. It is the “walk the walk” of everything we stand for.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- We have visited several colleges that support the long-term goals of the graduating seniors and applied for scholarships and financial aid for them as well.
- Assisted two of the high school girls in obtaining weekend jobs. They save their earnings to be used for college.

- We (Kathy) found a way to pay for these two girls to take a driver's ed course over the summer.
- Masiha and Masihullah participated and excelled in their school's Clipper Readathon. Their enthusiasm and excitement for reading is heartening. Masiha's vibrant artwork was selected for display in the Newburyport Public Schools Youth Art project. Masihullah is a valuable player on his Newburyport youth soccer team. They are both thriving in the first grade and receive glowing reports from their teachers.
- All children are learning social skills that have helped them integrate into their school lives and are beginning to develop friendships with their peers.
- Samira won her 5th grade "Math Madness" contest, first as the girls' champion, and then going up against the boys' champion; after besting him by one point, she won it all! She's also going to volleyball camp on Monday evenings and wants to sign up for flag football. Her teacher describes her as a "joy" and is "so proud" of her. She's a leader in her class.
- Currently, Yaser participates in three soccer leagues: Newburyport Town Travel Team and two club soccer teams that he was invited to join. He received scholarships to both club teams. He also was the winner of a wrestling prize.
- Shabir also played varsity soccer this year and JV wrestling.
- Mohammad's brother, Noor Aqah, his wife and child arrived in Newburyport a little over a year ago. They were sponsored by Catholic Charities of Boston who provided little financial assistance for resettlement. What we helped Mohammad's family to do in 18 months, Noor Aqah's family needed to do in a few months with much less support: find a job, find housing, obtain a driver's license; all while learning English. With Sarina's advocacy he was able to secure enough financial assistance to secure an apartment. Their little family has required much medical and emotional support. A small army from our original volunteer group has helped with the other needs. They are now thriving.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Academic success – Soma and Huma will be starting at North Shore Community College in the fall.
- Job/career opportunities and financial independence:
 - Continue to expand Zarifa's sewing business
 - Mohammad – completion of MassHire Auto Mechanic Certification Program (September)
 - Shabir – facilitate summer job placement at Sheppard's Auto Body
 - Soma, Huma, and Shoba – assist in summer job placement
- Huma, Shoba, and Shabir – Assist with registration and preparation for learner's permits and completion of driver's ed course.
- Ongoing work with family toward independence for their health care: making appointments, registering at appointments, providing medical staff with health history and current issues, and follow up care.
- Continue to develop financial, educational and social independence so they have the ability to pay rent independently. Work with The Resettlement Partnership to work towards long-term secure housing.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We will need support for continued fundraising efforts for the next two church years. We would like to share the progress being made and plan for the Mirzayee family to become economically independent. Currently, the Mirzayee family rents one-half of a house from David Hall on Cottage Court in Newburyport. In year one (November 2023 to October 2024), the family contributed 35% of the rent and utilities. During this current year (November 2024 to October 2025), the contribution increased to 45%. A gradual increase will occur in each of the coming three years until they are paying 100%.

Our continued, but diminished, financial support will provide an achievable path forward to the family's financial independence. We hope you will consider continuing your support with another donation.

We would like to plan a fund raiser of some sort in the Parish Hall; we will need to brainstorm ideas.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Supporting a family of Afghan refugees requires us to continuously check our cultural biases and understand the systemic obstacles that they are facing.

Respectfully submitted, Sarina Khan Reddy, sarinakhanreddy@gmail.com

Anti-Racism Initiative

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Our mission is to explore how the UUA's 8th Principle (stated below) may deepen our pursuit of the FRS Vision, Mission and Ends and work with Rev. Rebecca, the Parish Board, and the FRS community to more fully integrate the 8th Principle into congregational life.

8th Principle: *We covenant to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.*

Names of people involved:

Susan Fasoli, Eileen Vargas-Costello, Julie Menin, Sandra Thaxter, Karen Latourneau, Kathy Roth Huse, Jim Supple, Sharon Tillman

Chair or chairs:

Susan Fasoli

Julie Menin – co-chair beginning May 2025

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

3rd Monday of each month from 2:30-3:30pm

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

We value authentic connection, courageous action, and journeying together in love as we work to transform our world. Our Anti-Racism team supports the FRS Mission and Values by:

- Welcoming people in all their diversity and creating belonging for one another.
- Working in partnership, as individuals and as a congregation, to advance justice and put courageous love in service to our community and our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Four ARI members joined the Leading Edge Team, which engaged in a series of half-day workshops with Paula Cole Jones, co-author of the 8th Principle titled "*A Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge*" throughout the church year.
- Co-led the MLK service and introduced the congregation-wide read of the book *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson during the January 2025 Justice Sunday.
- Successfully planned and implemented a six-session congregation-wide reading and discussion group for *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson in February and March 2025.
- Initiated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy/statement to guide practices by the Parish Board and Committees re: hiring, contracting, and creating a safe and welcoming FRS community.
- Distributed a monthly "Anti-racism Initiative News" email to individuals who have signed on to the distribution list, with information about our ARI team meetings and upcoming community events focused on racial justice.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- Increase member engagement in anti-racism and anti-oppression initiatives through a variety of workshops and racial/social justice events at FRS and in neighboring communities.
- Involve the FRS members, Parish Board, and social action groups in discussions about ways in which the 8th Principle may guide actions taken to achieve our Vision, Mission and Ends.
- Strengthen relationships with other predominantly white UU congregations about what changes they have made or are contemplating making to realize their commitment to dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our congregation.
- Build partnerships with diverse community groups and organizations engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression work.
- Utilize tools and strategies learned through participation in Paula Cole Jones' workshops to develop a "community of communities" culture and work toward "journeying toward spiritual wholeness" and Beloved Community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continued support and commitment from the Parish Board and Rev. Rebecca.
- Interest and commitment from the congregation.
- Strengthened connections with community partners engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression initiatives.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

- The 8th Principle is central to all actions and programs of the Anti-racism Initiative. We look forward to engaging FRS members in this work during the coming year, as highlighted above.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Fasoli, susanfasoli@gmail.com and Julie Forney Menin, jafm22@gmail.com

Leading Edge Team (LET)**What is the mission or purpose of your group?**

This year's mission of the Leading Edge Team was to support implementation of the 8th Principle by participating in educational workshops with Paula Cole Jones called "A Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge."

Names of people involved:

Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Susan Fasoli, Eileen Vargas-Costello, Julie Forney Menin, Art Henshaw, Sarina Khan-Reddy, Hugh Martinez, August Mead, Rebecca Lobb, Sharon Tillman

Chair or chairs:

Leadership was shared by team members.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

2nd Tuesday of each month from 2-3pm

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

The Leading Edge Team values authentic connection, courageous action, and journeying together in love as we work to transform our world. We do this by:

- Welcoming people in all their diversity and creating belonging for one another.
- Working in partnership, as individuals, committees, and the congregation to advance justice and

put courageous love in service to our community and our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- Attended five half-day workshops with Paula Cole Jones, co-author of the 8th Principle, titled *A Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge*. The workshops included thought partners from other UU congregations across the country and involved education and group discussions about ways that UUs think of and engage in community and congregational life.
- Collaborated with the Anti-Racism Initiative, Parish Board and Rev. Rebecca to bring Paula Cole Jones' two-part workshop, *Building a Culture of Inclusion*, to the FRS community on May 6 and 13, 2025. This workshop introduced the Community of Communities paradigm to participants and provided tools to gauge how well our community groups have been able to address and implement 8th Principle.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Our vision is to utilize tools and strategies learned during Paula Cole Jones' workshops to develop a "community of communities" culture and explore how/why the Leading Edge Team's work is central to "journeying toward spiritual wholeness" and building a diverse, Beloved Community.

Short Term Goals:

- Reach out to FRS Community groups to establish initial Leading Edge Team collaborators.
- Create what information we will share with our FRS congregation about our Leading Edge Team – determine format, where we will share this, and timeline.
- Assure that the Board and entire congregation are aware of the Leading Edge Team and see this as OUR collective work.

Longer Range Goals:

- Establish communication guidelines to facilitate conversations within groups as they relate to the 8th Principle.
- Establish a process for how we will move forward to create new group/community collaborations and conversations, involving all in determining goals for action-oriented community work related to the 8th Principle.
- Use the traction we have at FRSUU to make this work our own, recognizing our interdependence as we forge our own path in this work and continue to learn with and from others.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Continued support and commitment from the Parish Board and Rev. Rebecca.
- Interest and commitment from the congregation.
- Strengthened connections with community partners engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression initiatives.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

The 8th Principle is central to all actions and programs of the Leading Edge Team. We look forward to engaging FRS members in this work during the coming year, as highlighted above.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Fasoli, susanfasoli@gmail.com and Julie Forney Menin, jafm22@gmail.com

Community Outreach Group

Mission Statement

The Outreach Group provides a wide range of programs for local families and individuals who are struggling and

in need of assistance. The group also supports organizations that serve families and individuals in need of assistance.

Names of persons involved:

Linda Buddenhagen, Jeff Bard, Nancy Crochiere, Barbara Garnis, Jennifer Gillette, Ann Haaser, Sue Gately, Nancy McCarthy, Annie Maurer, Barbara Budelmann, Ann Power, Monique Greilich, Staycee Surette-Leighton, Faith Sherlock

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

- 2024-2025 Sunday Shared Collection – After soliciting suggestions from the congregation, the following organizations were selected by the Community Outreach Group:
 - September: Jeanne Geiger Center
 - October: Greater Newbury Elder Pet Fund
 - November: Essex County Habitat for Humanity
 - December: Fuel Assistance
 - January: Community Service Camperships
 - February: MA Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence
 - March: United Teen Equality Center (UTEC)
 - April: Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices
 - May: Emmaus, Inc.
 - June: LGBT Asylum Task Force
 - July/August: Community Action
- In September, we participated in the Action Passion Fair and recruited three new members to the Community Outreach Group.
- In October, 12 FRS walkers participated in the Jeannie Geiger Center annual Walk Against Violence. The walkers raised \$2,100.
- In November, we sponsored a personal care and food drive for Newbury Food Pantry.
- In November, we published an article in the Steeple informing people how they could sign up to be an “Elf” to buy presents for children at Emmaus, Youth Services, and Jeanne Geiger.
- In December, we held our annual Joy of Giving at Kelleher Gardens. Children living at Kelleher Gardens were able to select and wrap presents for their parents and caretakers. Children ages 3-18 look forward to this event each year. This program is made possible because of the many new/used gifts donated by FRS members.
- In December, we held a Holiday Tea for members of the congregation and their invited guests. Twenty-five individuals enjoyed the festive event.
- In February, we sponsored an additional Food Drive for Newbury Food Pantry. Each year, the number of community members needing food assistance has increased, so we collected this year in both November and February for the Food Pantry.
- In May, we recruited walkers and donations for the Louis D. Brown Walk for Peace. Twenty Members of the FRS congregation participated in the walk.
- In May, we sponsored a Diaper Drive for Emmaus Family Shelter.
- Each quarter we assist Among Friends, a program sponsored by St. Paul’s Church. We cook and prepare take-out meals for over 100 individuals.
- For the year, 15 applications to the Swasey Children’s Fund were made and approved. A total of \$18,014 was disbursed.

At the June 2025 meeting, the Goals and Objectives for FY 2025-2026 will be discussed.

Members of the Community Outreach Group would like to thank members and friends of FRS for your

generosity throughout the year. Because of your support, we can provide the above programs to those in the community in need of assistance.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara E. Garnis, barbaragarnis@comcast.net

FRS Green Team



GREEN TEAM
FIRST RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Vision: Earth, well cared for, providing a sustainable climate and environment for all life.

Mission: To apply our energy, activism, and optimism to engage the congregation and the wider community – to learn and work together toward a healthy future for life on earth, by addressing climate change, declining biodiversity, overconsumption, and other environmental challenges.

Names of people involved:

Annie Madden (chair); Core Team: Bill Clary, Lucie Gallagher, Susan Gately, Art Henshaw, Lance Hidy, Doug Latham, Patricia Skibbee, Sandra Thaxter, and David Turner. Over 25 others following us.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Second Wednesday of the month, 7pm, often on Zoom, occasionally in person

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

Again this year, we met monthly with plenty of activity between meetings on multiple environmental initiatives to address climate change and biodiversity loss, among other issues. More than two years of extensive investigation and research by Green Team members led to concrete recommendations for a new heat pump solution to the failing traditional air conditioning system in the Lower Meetinghouse. These recommendations were shared and reviewed with the Facilities Team and the Parish Board throughout the year and will be brought to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. The lead on this project is now in the hands of the Facilities Team, and we are glad that three active members of the Green Team are represented there. (Connection, Journey, Courageous Action, Transform our World).

Many of our values were represented by our Earth Day Service and afternoon event featuring Scott and Amy Weidensaul. They spoke on the compelling nature of birds, and how getting outdoors with birds and nature can connect people with nature conservation and environmental activism. The afternoon event brought in over 150 participants from all over the region. (Connection, Action, Spirituality, Wonder).

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

The Green Team evidenced our joyful approach to our meetings with several potlucks throughout the year on September 24, January 25, and April 25.

We updated the Net-Zero Policy and submitted it again to the Parish Board in the fall and again in the spring. Tina Benik confirmed that consideration of this policy is in their queue. This policy is important for guidance, especially as we move to a Parish Hall project. Our advocacy for net-zero solutions to our campus sorted out to near term Lower Meetinghouse issues with the failed AC units, and longer-term focus on a future Parish Hall project just now coming into view.

In January, we held a potluck and a very well attended presentation on household plastics, with speakers Molly Ettenborough of Newburyport's Department of Recycling, Energy, and Sustainability, and Andrea LaCroix.

Also in January, with funding from Rev. Rebecca's Minister's Fund, an environmentally-themed reading list, *Earth's Heroes*, curated and designed by Lance Hidy, was printed for distribution at the church and to local environmental groups.

An earlier FRSUU project funded by Green Team members, and the Minister's Fund—the booklet by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *How the Myth of Human Exceptionalism Cut Us Off From Nature*—continues to be given away free from displays at the Tannery, and in the Mass Audubon Joppa Visitor's Center, at a rate of about thirty-five per month, or 420 annually, as long as the supply lasts.

In April we again shared a potluck and then viewed Doug Tallamy's informative and inspiring video "What's the Rush" about the threats to biodiversity and how simple measures that everyone can do in their own back yards and front porches can make a difference. Tallamy's work was eye-opening to many who watched the video.

Spring meetings were filled with preparing for our Earth Day Service and afternoon community-wide presentation: "Birds – The Gateway to Conservation Action," as noted above. The team compiled a list of 81 environmental groups that have a presence in our region, from major groups like the Sierra Club and Mass Audubon, to tiny town-based groups for native plant gardening. This three-page resource list, designed by Lance Hidy, was handed out to all attendees at the afternoon event to encourage networking. A lively reception followed the event, with attendees from all over the region.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Our plans for 2025-2026 will be discussed at our upcoming May meeting. We hope to focus more directly on issues of environmental justice, collaboration with other justice ministries in the church, and on the urgency of environmental action given the lack of attention and negative policies of the new federal administration. One activity under consideration is to choose an environmental book for our group to read and discuss—possibly involving others from outside the Green Team.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We welcome others to join our core team or become regular participants. We also will continue to partner with community environmental groups to amplify our work. We appreciate the support of our ministers, staff, and congregation for all our programs and initiatives.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

Though our team works to care for issues that affect all living things and people locally and across the globe, and though we value practices from Indigenous and other sources of wisdom for caring for the Earth, we will endeavor to add even more attention to diverse voices and practices going forward. Possible authors we can focus on, perhaps with a Team or broader common read, might be either of two African American environmentalists from New England, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Leah Penniman. Some in the Green Team are reading Penniman's book of interviews, *Black Earth Wisdom: Soulful Conversations with Black Environmentalists*—a possible title for broader discussion within the congregation next year, bridging the 8th principle with the 7th, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

Respectfully submitted, Annie Madden, Green Team Chair, madden.anne.b@gmail.com

Immigration Justice Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The mission of the newly formed Immigration Justice team is to support immigrants in our state and country by

working to make sure their legal protections are strengthened and that they feel welcome.

Names of people involved:

The working team is made up of five parishioners and we are in contact with about a dozen others who have expressed an interest in supporting us.

Chair or chairs:

Annie Maurer

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

We do not yet have an established meeting time or date but have generally met every couple of weeks.

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

By trying to transform our work by making it more equitable and by engaging in courageous action.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

We have only been meeting since April of this year. We are currently in talks with ECCO about scheduling a time to meet with our legislators to encourage them to support the various immigration bills currently in the state legislature. We are also investigating a program in which individuals sponsor detained undocumented people to facilitate their movement out of detention.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

Next year we hope to work closely with the immigrant advocacy organizations working in our area and the UU Mass Action Immigration Team. We hope to engage more members of our community in supporting immigrants in our state in the various ways that may arise over the coming year. Beyond setting up a meeting with our legislators, we have also discussed the possibility of meeting with our local police chief and sheriff.

What will you need to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

We will need the consistent engagement of our team and support from the congregation if we are to achieve our plans.

How does your group consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

We support the work of the anti-racism team and also see areas where our groups could collaborate, as many of the immigration discussions and actions taken by our government are tainted by racism.

Respectfully submitted, Annie Maurer

FRS Habitat for Humanity

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Build affordable owner-occupied housing well-integrated into ordinary neighborhoods.

Names of people involved:

Howard Mandeville, Rick Anderson

Chair or chairs:

Howard Mandeville and Rick Anderson

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

Third Saturday of each month volunteering at build sites

Tell us how your program is connected to and supports our Mission and Values:

With guidance, build affordable homes.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Built 10 homes in Hamilton, MA.

Respectfully submitted, Howard Mandeville, Co-chair, howard.mandeville@gmail.com

FRS Walk Team - Louis D. Brown Peace Institute Mother's Day Walk for Peace

Mission or purpose statement:

To support the work of the Peace Institute to bring healing to individuals and a community deeply affected by gun violence.

Names of people involved:

Ann Haaser organized, 30 people walked, many more donated.

Tell us how your program connected to and supported our Mission and Values:

We traveled to an historically underserved community and walked shoulder-to-shoulder with people who don't look like us, beginning a relationship of Authentic Connection. Love, one of the Peace Institute's seven principles of peace, is reflected in our own values and brings our two communities together.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2024-2025 church year?

Raised \$4,105 in direct donations (as of this writing).

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2025-2026 church year?

- To increase our fundraising total.
- To have a team that takes on individual components of the organizing.
- To increase our commitment to this Walk
- To deepen our relationship with the Peace Institute and the community it serves
- To bring more awareness to the FRS community of the enduring effects of trauma on an individual and a community and how healing is a violence-prevention initiative.

What is needed to be successful in the 2025-2026 church year?

- More messaging to the congregation regarding the Walk, specifically how the Walk reflects our congregational commitment to our Mission, Vision and Ends and UU Principles.
- Increased participation of families and other groups within the congregation.
- Focus on the Peace Institute's work and the Walk within a church service.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Haaser, ahaaser@comcast.net

FY26 BUDGET WORKSHEET

Proposed 2025-2026 FRSUU Budget

Income

Contributions

Total Annual Campaign	590,685
Prior year pledges	7,000
Annual Campaign Expense	(3,000)
Mid-Year Pledges	2,000
Reserve for unpaid pledges	(11,364)
Total pledged income	585,321
Sunday Collection	36,000
Community Contributions	5,000
Other non-pledge	7,000
Processing fees donated	1,000
Total Special Collections	7,800
Total contributions	642,121

Total Steeple Income	94,902
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Total Building Rental	32,500
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Fundraising Income

Net Auction	22,000
Net Cookie Walk	1,650
Net Raffle	9,000
Net Yankee Homecoming	5,500
Net Miscellaneous Fundraisers	5,000
Total Fundraising Income	43,150

Total Income from Endowment	55,968
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Miscellaneous Income	1,000
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Total Income	869,642
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Expenses

Staffing

Total Employee Salaries	483,288
Total Employee Benefits	86,736
Total Contract Personnel	101,400
Staff Professional Support	23,900
Workers compensation insurance	2,000
Total Staffing	697,324

Facilities

Meetinghouse	
Total utilities	22,460
Repairs & maintenance	10,000
Total Meetinghouse	32,460
Parish Hall	
Total utilities	10,400
Repairs & maintenance	2,000
Total Parish Hall	12,400
Shared Facilities Expense	
Equipment maintenance	4,000
Building & maintenance supplies	2,000
Insurance	19,000
Rent and Parking	6,500
Total other shared facilities expenses	3,000
Total Shared Facilities Expense	34,500
Transfer for Capital Improvements	-
Capital Reserve Provision**	-
Total Facilities	79,360

Program Specific Support

Total Worship	2,000
Total Music	7,450
Total Young Church	3,000
Total Membership & Faith Formation	1,600
Total Communication & Publicity	4,000
Total General & Administrative	23,200
Total Social Justice & Community	18,000
UUA Dues	30,000
Total Operating Expenses	865,934

NET INCOME**3,708**

*Suspension of this provision until the income from the
the endowment reflects the impact of the 2025 capital infusion.