

2026-2027
Annual
Giving
Campaign



FIRST
RELIGIOUS
SOCIETY,
UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST

Newburyport,
Massachusetts

ANNUAL REPORT

CHURCH YEAR 2026-2027

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WARRANT – ANNUAL MEETING OF FRSUU TO BE HELD JUNE 7, 2026

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 7, 2026, 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 2025 Annual Meeting.
- Article 2:** To act on the 2026 Annual Report.
- Article 3:** To act on the recommendation of the Governance Committee for the election of Officers, Chairpersons, Board Members, and Trustees of the Endowment.
- Article 4:** To act on the FY2027 budget as recommended by the Parish Board
- Article 5:** To ask the congregation to affirm the Parish Board's support for a revised \$1.5 million Capital Campaign plan for improvements to Parish Hall and repairs to the Meetinghouse. This includes the creation of a \$100,000 working capital fund which will be borrowed from the church endowment as a line of credit to be used for initial costs such as architectural and related professional work and infrastructure repairs and upgrades. All expenditures will be subject to Parish Board approval, and borrowings from the fund will be repaid from proceeds of the Capital Campaign within three years of incurrence.

We the undersigned 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.

Jeff Bard	Tom Himmel	Andy Lobb	Renee Wolf Foster
Lori Clark	Sarina Khan Reddy	Julie Menin	
Kathy Desilets	Leslie Lawrence	Rebekah Stafford	
Bob Higgins	Liss Larsen	Jim Supple	

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 2025 Annual Meeting.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve the notes of the 2025 Annual Meeting of FRSUU.*

Explanation: The Annual Meeting notes are an official record of the actions taken by the congregation. Approval of these minutes affirms that these actions were accurately reported.

Article 2: To act on the 2026 Annual Report.

Motion: *I move that the 2026 Annual Report be received and entered into the record.*

Explanation: The Annual Report describes actions this year and initial plans for the coming year by the ministers, staff, Board officers, committees, work groups, and other groups that carry out the work of the church. Together, these reports present and preserve 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 Board members, officers, chairpersons, and Trustees presented in the Annual Report.*

Explanation: The slate of individuals recommended for elected roles in the congregation is included in the Annual Report and was sent to members in advance of the meeting.

Article 4: Act on the FY2026-2027 budget as recommended by the Parish Board.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve the Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027) budget as presented in the Annual report.*

Explanation: The budget documents, as approved, are included in the Annual Report and were sent to members in advance of the meeting. See the budget section at the end of the report for the budget explanation.

Article 5: To ask the congregation to affirm the Parish Board's support for a revised \$1.5 million Capital Campaign plan for improvements to Parish Hall and repairs to the Meetinghouse. This includes the creation of a \$100,000 working capital fund which will be borrowed from the church endowment as a line of credit to be used for initial costs such as architectural and related professional work and infrastructure repairs and upgrades. All expenditures will be subject to Parish Board approval, and borrowings from the fund will be repaid from proceeds of the Capital Campaign within three years of incurrence.

Motion: *I move that the congregation approve a Capital Campaign with a target of \$1.5 million for improvements to Parish Hall and repairs to the Meetinghouse. This includes creation of a \$100,000 line of credit which will be borrowed from FRSUU reserves or against the endowment; all expenditures will be subject to Parish Board approval and borrowings from the line of credit will be repaid from the Capital Campaign within three years.*

Explanation: The Capital Campaign Team worked during 2025/2026 to engage both an architect and a construction cost estimator to create a preliminary design and a preliminary cost range for renovating the Parish Hall. The renovation reflected all the priorities of the congregation as indicated in the Insight process. The team also contacted early potential donors to determine FRSUU financial capacity to support the project. The original cost estimate exceeded \$3 million, which is more than the Capital Campaign Team believes is available from

FRSUU at this time. The Capital Campaign team believes that FRSUU should use a phased approach to the project with the initial phase to be a \$1.5 million campaign focused on upgrading critical Parish Hall building systems and exterior envelope. This approach would also result in upgrading the kitchen and first floor of the building. The second phase would address the needs of the second floor. In order to proceed in this phased approach, FRSUU will need to engage the architect and other professionals to provide a satisfactory design, related construction drawings, and other relevant services. Payment for these services will need to be made prior to collecting donations from participating congregants and other supporters of the campaign. Proceeds from the campaign will repay any borrowings from a working capital line of credit, which will be borrowed from the church endowment. Please see the more comprehensive Capital Campaign report in the 2026 Annual Report.

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

Nominees for the Parish Board, Officers, and Trustees of the Endowment for the 2026-2027 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. Delegates are elected to represent the congregation at the UUA General Assembly.

Position	Name	Nominee (N) or Incumbent (I) ¹	Term Length (Years)	Entering What Year of Term?
Parish Board				
Parish Board	Bob Higgins	I	3	3
Parish Board	Tom Himmel	I	3	2
Parish Board	Julie Menin	I	3	2
Parish Board	Ann Haaser	N	3	1
Parish Board	Sarina Khan Reddy	I	3	3
Parish Board	Leslie Lawrence	I	3	1
Parish Board	Jeff Bard	I	3	2
Parish Board – Young Church/Young Adult ⁽²⁾	Natalie Treat	N	1	1
Trustees of the Endowment				
Trustee	Sharon Tillman	N	3	1
Trustee ⁽³⁾	Anne Comeau	N	3	3
Trustee	Kim Kenly	I	3	2
Parish Clerk	Kathy Desilets	I	1	6
Governance Chair	Lori Clark	N	1	1
Stewardship Chair	Renee Wolf Foster	I	1	3
Finance Chair	Lark Madden	N	1	1
Finance Treasurer	Andy Lobb	I	1	3
Endowment Treasurer	Jim Major	I	1	2
Others				
Moderator	Lea Pearson	I	1	9
Auditor	Joe Brouillet	N	1	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) Anne Comeau is filling the last year of a three-year term.				

Nominee Profiles

Ann Haaser (Parish Board)

Ann Haaser has been an active member of the FRSUU congregation for a number of years, including being a member of the Community Outreach and Justice Action committees among others. In the past she has coordinated FRSUU participation in the Mother's Day Walk for Peace and the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center Walk Against Domestic Violence. As an active advocate for gun safety in Massachusetts and beyond, she volunteers with the MA Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and Grassroots4GVP, as well as various community-based organizations doing the healing and prevention work of gun violence prevention. She is on the board of the Roxbury Presbyterian Church Social Impact Center and the Interfaith Committee of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, and acts as a liaison between FRSUU and the MA Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence (of which the church is a member). Ann lives in Newburyport with her husband and two dogs and spends a good bit of time traveling to the great city of Chicago to visit her two sons and grandson!

Natalie Treat (Parish Board)

Natalie has been an active member of FRSUU since she and her family joined in 2018. She has served as an usher, helped facilitate the mission-vision work in 2019, and is a steward for the Annual Giving Campaign. Natalie joins the Parish Board following one year on the Trustees of the Endowment. Professionally, she has spent her career in public policy and communications in the energy sector, currently serving as Senior Director of Policy and Engagement at the Alliance for Climate Transition. Natalie is experienced in non-profit administration, stakeholder engagement, meeting facilitation, fundraising, and communications. She holds a Master's in Communication Management from Emerson College and a B.A. in Environment and Public Policy from Connecticut College. Natalie lives in Salisbury with her husband, Tom, and daughter, Julia, age 11.

Sharon Tillman (Trustee of the Endowment)

Sharon Tillman has been a member of FRSUU since June 2023. She is an active member of the FRSUU Anti-Racism Initiative. She currently serves on the Interim Minister Search Committee. Prior to coming to FRSUU, Sharon was a long-time member of the Riverside Church in New York, where she served for three years as President and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. During her tenure the endowment grew from \$66 million to \$116 million. While there she helped to reengineer the volunteer governance structure and authored Riverside's first set of by-laws. Sharon has also worked as a manuscript editor for the book *Body Soul: Conversations with Your Physician and Pastor*.

Anne Comeau (Trustee of the Endowment)

Anne Comeau has been a member of the FRSUU since the early 1990s. She and her husband, Ned McClung, raised their family in our church, participating in the usual parent pathways and some volunteer building. Their family has so enjoyed the ongoing support of this beloved community, including the celebration of Ned's life two years ago and now the marriages of their two daughters, Miriam and Natalie, in our beautiful light-filled sanctuary. Professionally, Anne is the Deputy Director of the New England Newborn Screening Program and Professor of Pediatrics at UMassChan Medical School where she leads the program's molecular genetics efforts. She prefers counting babies to counting budget dollars, but she does both.

Lori Clark (Governance Chair)

Lori Clark has been a member of FRSUU since 2017 and has served on the Governance Committee since 2022 and the Parish Board since 2023. She is a founding partner of ClarkDeragon Law, PLLC, where she represents and advises businesses on employment matters. Lori lives in Newburyport with her husband, Tom, who sings in the

FRSUU choir, and their beloved Golden Retriever, Charlie. Outside of work and church, she enjoys running and walking Charlie on the rail trail, singing him show tunes along the way.

Lark Madden (Finance Committee Chair)

Lark Madden joined FRSUU with his wife, Annie, in the late 1980s. He has served as FRSUU Trustee, Head of Stewardship, and member of the Parish Board. Previously, he was Finance Committee Chair for six years. He organizes Jazz Vespers. He co-lead two prior FRSUU capital campaigns (for the organ and steeple) and is currently chair of the ongoing capital campaign for restoration of the Parish Hall. An alum of Tufts University and the UNH business school, Lark has spent 40 years in various commercial lending and private fund management positions in Boston. He has served on several local non-profit boards. He is currently President of Roof Overhead (equitable housing) which is part of the YWCA in Newburyport and is on the Board of Agassiz Village, a camp in Maine for underserved urban kids. He and Annie live in West Newbury where they raised two sons, Sam and Will, who are now in their 40s. Annie and he have two granddaughters, seven and nine.

Joe Brouillet (Auditor)

Joe Brouillet was born in Concord, NH and raised as a Catholic. As a young man Joe left the Catholic Church and became familiar with the Unitarian faith while serving as a volunteer at Ferry Beach. After exploring different UU churches in Portsmouth, NH and Boston, MA, he found his spiritual home at FRSUU. He attended Bentley School of Accounting & Finance in Boston, MA. Professionally, Joe served as CEO of Wilcom Products, a manufacturer of telecommunications test equipment. He also worked at Russound/FMP, a company that manufactures residential audio/video systems. He was VP of the company, retiring in 2011. Joe has participated in the following church committees: Community Outreach, Finance, Stewardship, Human Resources, Men's Group, and Auditor. He enjoys reading, playing bridge and cribbage, golfing, traveling, sports events, and especially spending time with family. He and his wife, Barbara Garnis, have lived in Newburyport since 2004. The FRSUU community has been and continues to be an important part of Joe's life.

Minutes of FRSUU Annual Congregational Meeting - June 8, 2025

This meeting was held both in person and on Zoom and was integrated into the worship service. Members were notified as required in the bylaws. Copies of the Warrant and other materials were also available on the day of the meeting.

Present: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, worship leader; Diane Carroll, voting member check-in; Lea Pearson, moderator; Stephen-Wolf Foster, head usher; and other ushers. Diane and the ushers determined that a quorum of membership of the congregation was present as defined in the bylaws.

Rev. Laurel called the congregation to Worship and welcomed all who were present.

Call to Order: Following the start of the Worship Service, moderator Lea Pearson called the meeting to order, welcomed all present, and explained the process that will be followed throughout the meeting. Each item will be introduced and voted on, then after other elements of the service, the next item will be introduced and voted on.

Prior to the consideration of the Articles for approval, Massachusetts State Senator Bruce Tarr read a proclamation congratulating FRSUU on its 300th anniversary and the contributions the church has made to the community.

Alyssa Manypenny, an architect hired by the church, gave a presentation about her plan to study Parish Hall's current condition and design improvements to better serve the church and community. Barbara Garnis also explained that in the Congregational Interest Survey, conducted to enable the church to identify plans for the 400th anniversary, Parish Hall was identified as a top priority.

Following these items, consideration was turned to the Articles.

Article 1: To act on the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting and of the Special Congregational meetings held on September 22, 2024, and March 16, 2005.

Motion: Vern Ellis moved that the congregation approve the notes of the 2024 Annual Meeting and the other meetings listed in the Warrant. Various members of the congregation seconded the motion which was approved without objection.

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 officers, ministers, lay leaders, staff, committees, workgroups, and other groups as presented in the Annual Report 2024-2025 be received and entered into the record. Seconds came from various members of the congregation, and the motion was passed without objection.

Article 3: To act on the recommendations of the Governance Committee for the election of Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment.

Motion: Tina Benik moved that the congregation elect Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees of the Endowment recommended by the Governance Committee. Seconds came from various members of the congregation, and the motion passed without objection.

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: Bob Higgins moved that Article II, 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.” Seconds came from various members of the congregation and after discussion, the motion was passed without objection.

Article 5: To ask the congregation to 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 Annual Meeting in 2026.

Motion: Minnie Flanagan moved that the congregation affirm that the Parish Board continues exploration of purposes and best language to recommend a Land Acknowledgement to bring to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in 2026. Seconds came from various members of the congregation and after discussion, the motion was passed without objection.

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

Motion: Tom Himmel moved that the congregation approve the recommendation of the Board to replace the HVAC system in the Lower Meeting House with a heat pump system at a cost not to exceed \$160,000. After discussion, the motion was passed without objection.

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

Motion: Andy Lobb moved that the congregation approve the Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026) budget as presented in the Annual Report. The motion was passed without objection.

As is traditional, Reverend Rebecca offered a blessing for members who have passed away since the last annual meeting and read their names.

Barbara Owen (10/14/2024), Director of Church Music (1964-2002)

Maxine Steeves (11/13/2024)

Jay McCarthy (1/18/2025)

Nathan Wilbur (2/4/2025)

Ted Bailey (5/18/2025)

Roberta Coffey (5/23/2025)

The meeting was adjourned by mutual consent at 11:40 PM and all left to enjoy the annual picnic.

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, Unitarian Universalist. It is charged with setting policy for the church and working with the minister and staff to follow those policies in maintaining the well-being of the 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:

Bob Higgins (Chair), Rev. Rebecca Bryan (ex-officio), Jeff Bard, Lori Clark, Kathy Desilets (Parish Clerk), Tom Himmel (Vice Chair), Liss Larsen, Leslie Lawrence (Governance Chair), Andy Lobb (Finance Treasurer), Julie Menin, Sarina Khan Reddy, Rebekah Stafford, Jim Supple (Finance Chair), Renee Wolf Foster (Stewardship Chair).

Chair or Chairs: Bob Higgins, Chair; Tom Himmel, Vice Chair

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Regular meetings monthly, third Wednesday, from 6-8pm. Supplemental meetings as needed.

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

The Parish Board endeavors to Act with Courage when faced with difficult decisions and circumstances. It supports the minister and staff in pursuing our mission to Journey Together in Love and Transform Our World. And it supports authentic communication through quarterly congregational meetings and regular newsletters.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

This was a challenging year for FRSUU. In September Senior Minister Rev. Rebecca Bryan stunned the congregation by announcing she would be leaving at the end of this, her eighth year as settled minister. This forced changes in goals and plans for the church year as we began planning for a transition to an interim minister. It also surfaced a lot of emotions within the church: feelings of sadness, grief, fear, and gratitude but also of anger and betrayal.

Additionally, the board was presented with a challenging financial picture. The church faced a significant shortfall as it planned for 2026-27. Among the contributing factors (some of which also affected the current year's performance vs. the budget): payment of Rev. Rebecca's deferred sabbatical while also paying an interim minister; cancellation of our rental contract by DISH, which is exiting the 5G market; a significant jump in health insurance costs due to rising rates and increased participation by the staff; inflation and generally higher costs; and costly repairs and upgrades to our buildings and infrastructure.

Staffing was the final challenge facing the board. In March, Assistant Minister Rev. Laurel Gray announced in she would be leaving FRSUU at the end of the church year, and that month Communications Specialist Elisa Scully resigned. Ongoing budget challenges and general uncertainty about the future contributed to the staff disruption.

All that said, accomplishments included:

- Helping guide the congregation as it faced the uncertainty of the future through congregational meetings and communications with topics including:

- the role of the interim minister and how they will help us move forward;
 - the interim minister's role in guiding us through the search and selection processes for a settled minister;
 - how our UUA representatives and the UUA Transitions Office will help us navigate the road ahead; in the process the church developed a relationship with the UUA staff that was previously lacking.
- Infrastructure improvements and repairs, including installation of a new energy-efficient HVAC system for the Lower Meetinghouse, offset by a significant rebate from National Grid.
 - Working with the Grants Team to develop and secure current and future funding sources, most prominently a \$117,000 Community Preservations Act grant to install and repair fire-suppression systems in both Parish Hall and the Meetinghouse.
 - Assembling a Structure & Staffing team to perform and deliver detailed analysis of our staff operations as well as research on UU churches of similar size with a goal of better informing future staffing decisions.
 - Selecting an experienced, diverse Interim Minister search committee to choose the leader who will help guide us through the next two years and support us in the crucial process of calling a settled minister in two years.
 - Engaging the full board in budget planning and working with the Finance Committee and the Annual Campaign team to develop an ambitious but realistic budget for 2026-27 that will support our staff and programs while meeting our fiduciary duties.
 - Working with the Capital Campaign team to engage the congregation in exploring options for a campaign with the goal of addressing the many challenges of our facilities, particularly the long-overlooked Parish Hall.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

It will be up to the incoming Parish Board and its chair to set specific goals for the coming year. An obvious priority, however, is effecting a positive transition to the incoming interim minister and helping bring our beloved community together after a trying church year. It is well known that any change is difficult, and this is a monumental change for FRSUU. The board will be ready to support the interim minister as they get to know the staff, church leadership, the congregation, and our community. And we will work to engage the congregation as we embark on these changes.

We also hope to bring more engagement from our members in church governance and programming. Whether it is serving on committees, participating in social action, or fellowship activities, we need to find ways to expand and diversify the pool of participants.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

The Parish Board will need the support and patience of the entire congregation to come together and move forward. It will need to involve the congregation through the transition process and provide strong leadership and communication. It will also need to reach out and take advantage of the remarkable array of talents among our members to support and augment the work of our relatively small staff. And it will need ideas and initiatives for raising money beyond our traditional methods to pay for and hopefully build on our terrific staff, extensive array of programs, and aging campus.

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

As a board we are committed to supporting anti-racism action within the church and the broader community, and we work to include members of under-represented communities when hiring contractors. A couple of examples highlight this commitment. Our Capital Campaign planning committee hired a women-owned architectural firm in its planning for a renovated Parish Hall. And a diverse, experienced, and talented team was selected for the important work of the Interim Minister Search Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Higgins, Parish Board chair, bobhiggins@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 more than two-thirds of total FRSUU income. The campaign began at the end of last calendar year (2025) with the establishment of a Steering Committee. They developed the campaign theme, "Rooted in Community: the abundance of our lives together." They also recruited campaign chairs reflecting that theme: all the adult members of the Speck family.

Working with the Finance Committee, the Steering Committee established the goal of \$660,000, an 11.7% increase over last year's goal.

Names of people involved:

Co-Chairs: Forrest Speck, Anne Verret-Speck, Elizabeth Speck Shepard, Skyler Shepard, Edward Speck, and Cailin McFarland.

Steering Committee: Tina Benik, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Diane Carroll, Vern Ellis, Bob Higgins, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, Anne Verret-Speck (as of Feb.), Renee Wolf Foster.

Stewards: Tina Benik, Joe Brouillet, Lori Clark, Anne Comeau, Eileen Costello, Sue Creed, Kathy Desilets, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Chris Fraser, Becca Fundis, Cecilia Healy, Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Phil Hurzeler, Alan Jette, Jim Kerkam, Doug Latham, Andy Lobb, Rebecca Lobb, Annie Madden, Lark Madden, Jim Major, Hugh Martinez, Nancy McCarthy, Julie Menin, Susan Ricker, Pat Skibbee, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, Natalie Treat, David Turner, Anne Verret-Speck, Alec White.

Steward Captains: Tina Benik, Vern Ellis, Tom Himmel, Jim Supple

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

Because our core values and mission can only be accomplished with the involvement of our entire FRSUU community, the Steering Committee chose the theme "Rooted in Community: the abundance of our lives together" to remind FRSUU members and friends of how much our lives are enhanced by the impact of ourselves as a community with a heritage that has nurtured us and which we pass on to the next generation.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Our campaign goal was a challenging one, as we realized at the start, due to the extraordinary circumstances facing us in this year of transition. We are pleased that so many were willing to raise their pledges by 12% or even more. As of May 27, however, we achieved 95.7% of our \$660,000 goal, including the especially generous help of a group who donated to a match fund of \$20,000 that encouraged others to pledge or to increase their earlier pledges. The total amount pledged was \$631,416. We still hope for some additional pledges to come in over the next few weeks.

The campaign relies on stewards, and we were happy to have 34 of them, including a few new members and a few simply new to the task. This year, we went back to an earlier model of appointing four “captains.” These were all stewards themselves, who also took on responsibility for reaching out to and coordinating several other stewards reporting to them. This allowed us to give support to the individual stewards and to keep better track of progress throughout the campaign.

The campaign focused on four weeks in March, each Sunday service of which included two testimonials by members of FRSUU, including three from one or more of the chairs. One service was followed by an Ice Cream Social. Prior to March, there was a potluck supper with the stewards, chairs, and Steering Committee and two steward training sessions via Zoom. The official campaign kick-off included a letter, brochure, and pledge card mailed out on March 2; an introductory video presentation from the Chairs, emailed on March 6; a dinner gathering that evening to honor lead donors; and the Sunday service on March 8.

Diane Carroll provided critical support in developing and then getting the information out to the membership and supporters. She was the primary administrator of the Campaign, collecting all the pledges and reporting them to the Steering Committee, as well as dealing with those who prefer to pledge over the phone or in person. We are so grateful!

In addition, we would like to thank Don Rogers and Nick Place for all their logistical support.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

This year’s process was greatly enhanced by the database work of Bart Bracken last year. It improved even more with Diane’s help in making sure information kept moving both ways to and from stewards and donors. We plan to build on this process next year. We also intend to make sure that new members understand the importance of pledging, as we move into a few years of interim ministry.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, we hope to engage even more of our church’s community members to play an active role. To be successful, we need to continuously look for new energy and ideas, while also making effective use of institutional memory.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Verret-Speck, Co-Chair

Capital Campaign Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Capital Campaign Team (“CCT”) was created by the Parish Board in calendar year 2024 to respond to the desires of the congregation as indicated in the Congregational Insight process regarding the restoration of the Parish Hall.

Names of people Involved:

Tina Benik, Ed Budelmann, Vern Ellis, Joanna Fernandes, Barbara Garnis, Doug Latham, Lark Madden (chair), Lisa Mead (resigned), Jim Supple (resigned), Reverend Rebecca.

Chair or Chairs: Lark Madden

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Each week, Friday, 8am, hybrid

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

The CCT was authorized by the Parish Board and the congregation to engage an architectural firm to develop a preliminary design for the Parish Hall that met both the priorities identified in the Insight Process, and a congregational survey establishing building rehabilitation preferences. A contract was signed between FRSUU and Placework, an architectural firm located in Portsmouth, NH, in mid-May of 2025. Placework was selected through an open competitive process that incorporated the UUA Eighth Principle. The firm is women-owned and highly qualified in historic rehabilitation. The congregation authorized the CCT to spend \$60,000 on this work and related supporting cost evaluation. The CCT also engaged Elaine Construction (using the same process and principles) to provide preliminary cost estimates for the proposed design. The two contracts and the work of the two firms were completed at a cost within the allocated funds.

The CCT and Placework worked together to originate a preliminary building design for the Parish Hall focused on “connection to community.” The design is supportive of the idea that building connections to the larger Newburyport community is an essential function of the project and meets the mission and values of FRSUU. We would like to encourage engagement of youth and younger families by having a much-improved space for program delivery and services, not just to our own congregation, but also to like-minded organizations in our area. Our campaign theme is “Building Community.”

From our capital campaign brochure:

“The Vision - To preserve, renovate and improve our congregational and community campus in order to enhance our ability to serve. It is not really about the buildings, although the buildings are our legacy and we are responsible for their care. It’s about being a welcoming and engaging place for learning, worshipping, organizing projects and serving others.”

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

The preliminary design completed by Placework presented a code compliant and comprehensive rehabilitation of the Parish Hall, including ADA compliant bathrooms, a lift, a commercial level kitchen, a multi-use meeting space on the second floor with a separate bathroom and separate access, meeting rooms on both floors, and all new basic systems such as HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and building envelope improvements. The preliminary cost estimate for this comprehensive plan was provided by Elaine Construction and included a significant amount of professional “soft costs” as well as a large contingency reserve. The total estimate was \$3.2 million. The CCT presented its preliminary results to the Parish Board in October of 2025 and updated the Board on our work in March of 2025. The CCT also presented to the Congregation in January of 2026. The CCT provides the Parish Board with minutes of its meetings and is in frequent contact with Board leadership.

During the past year the CCT’s mission was expanded by the Parish Board to include raising capital for certain delayed maintenance items associated with the Meetinghouse. This additional work expanded the needed funding to \$3.5 million.

The CCT then was authorized by the Parish Board to make an evaluation as to the feasibility of the proposed project. The CCT contacted and met with “early participants” to determine the level of potential financial support for the project. Results indicate that a two-stage approach may be necessary to complete the entire project, and that a smaller amount of capital could be raised from the congregation and local endowments and institutions. The team believes that a campaign goal of \$1.5 million is feasible and prudent at this time. This approach will primarily focus on the Parish Hall first floor and kitchen renovations and critical system upgrades with an eye towards creating space that could generate revenue for FRSUU in the form of short-term rentals for local organizations that might utilize the kitchen as well as a renovated meeting area. Included in this campaign goal, certain of the high-priority Meeting House repairs would also be funded.

Parallel to the CCT's work described above, the team has been engaged with the Grants Team led by Ed Budelmann to support FRSUU grant applications relating to the Parish Hall and submitted in the recent past. These grants include a \$117,000 grant from the Newburyport CPA for the installation of sprinklers in the Parish Hall and a separate grant application to the National Fund for Sacred Spaces ("NFSP") for \$20,000 to complete a comprehensive "conditions assessment" of the building. This assessment is prerequisite to other larger grants from NFSP that would support the capital campaign. If selected by NFSP, FRSUU would receive additional funding (up to a maximum of \$500,000) and campaign-related training and support from the NFSP. If the NFSP were to award a significant grant to FRSUU, the CCT goals could be adjusted, and the timing of the process would be extended. The approval timeline for the National Fund process is such that FRSUU and the CCT will not know whether we have been invited into the program until June 2026. There are several subsequent milestones required for the NFSP process.

Completion of the conditions assessment and the installation of the sprinklers are both required components of any work FRSUU would undertake in the project. This means that the \$137,000 raised by the Grants Team reduces the funding burden on the congregation.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

The CCT's goal is to receive National Fund monies to enable completion of the conditions assessment and, with that information in hand, in cooperation with the congregation, and Placework, to reduce and revise the scope of the project to meet our funding capacity. The CCT will seek to receive Board and congregational approval to continue our work with Placework on a scaled back project and to work with the Grants Team to pursue the National Fund relationship. If the National Fund process yields additional funding capacity the CCT will potentially bring a more extensive proposal forward for consideration by the Parish Board and Congregation.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

The CCT will need Parish Board and congregational engagement, support, and approval to be successful. If FRSUU is not selected by NFSP then there is likely to be an additional funding requirement to move forward with Placework on the revised design over the next several months.

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

We have utilized the tenets of the 8th Principle in our design process (accessibility, environmental) and in creating our vision; in the way we operate as a team and encourage full participation and active listening to each other; in respectful debate about conflicting ideas, and in our finding and engaging professionals to support our team's work and outside work on the project. We have invited members of the congregation and community into our process and meetings to listen to their concerns and aspirations.

Respectfully submitted, Lark Madden, larkmadden@gmail.com

Finance Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Finance Committee is responsible for advising the Parish Board and congregation on the fiscal management of the Society's business operations and assisting the staff in the preparation of the annual budget for approval by the Parish Board before its presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Names of people involved:

Rev. Rebecca Bryan (ex officio), Joe Brouillet, Art Henshaw, Tom Himmel, Betsy Latham, Lark Madden, Renee Wolf Foster, Sarah Cecil, Jim Major, Jim Supple (Chair).

Update for Fiscal 2025-2026:

The Finance Committee, and the Society in general, were hit with some significant headwinds for the financial outlook of the church. DISH unexpectedly withdrew from the mobile phone service business and ceased paying in November, UUA health insurance costs jumped dramatically for the calendar year 2026, and repair and maintenance costs for both the Parish Hall and Meetinghouse far exceeded their budget targets. While revenues remain close to plan, expenses have exceeded plan. The result is a projected deficit for the fiscal year of between \$35,000 and \$40,000. While the church has sufficient reserves to cover these cost overruns, it is the view of the Finance Committee that the Society's budget now has a system imbalance that needs to be addressed in the current year to bring our budget back into balance.

Recommendations for Fiscal 2026-2027 church year:

- The Finance Committee has worked to address the unique budgetary challenge for the coming fiscal year. For the first time in recent memory the Finance Committee developed several budget options for consideration by the Parish Board, all of which would result in a projected deficit for fiscal 2026-2027. While operating in a deficit position is not something the Committee would normally recommend, the unique nature of our current transition warrants this approach to support the church's existing operating structure and make the necessary investment to run our church effectively.
- The Finance Committee strongly urges the membership to adopt a budget that supports hiring a Business Manager. The church operated without this role for the last 2.5 years and it has resulted in inefficient operations. Far too many day-to-day functions have been spread across several volunteers that can be better coordinated and managed more consistently. Functions such as payroll, budget reconciliation, and facilities oversight should not be handled directly by volunteers but by a staff position that reports to the minister.
- In the year ahead, the entire church community needs to look at the long-term fiscal health of FRSUU. Rising costs for many of the elements of church operations are not being matched by sufficient revenue growth. From benefits costs to utilities costs to the cost of maintaining our historic buildings, the church cannot match the rate of increases solely based on our current income structure which is primarily dependent on our pledges. New revenue streams must be developed to maintain our desired structure.

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

Finance Treasurer

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To oversee expenditures and disbursements, authorize checks prepared by the Bookkeeper, and ensure they reflect the congregation's intent.

Names of people involved: Diane Carroll, Church Administrator/Bookkeeper, Andrew J. Lobb, Treasurer

Chair or Chairs: Andrew J. Lobb, FRSUU Finance Treasurer

Meeting times, days, and dates: Once per week, typically, on Thursday afternoon.

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

We support the congregation by maintaining a fiscally responsible system that promotes long-term financial sustainability.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Participated in Parish Board and Finance Committee meetings.
- Reviewed expenses and signed checks weekly, including disbursements from segregated funds.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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 payment to vendors.
- Support the review of Membership data accuracy to help guide UUA staffing, compensation, and projected annual support recommendations.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

- A thorough understanding of FRSUU payment policies that dictate the timeliness of payments.
- Prompt review and approval of FRSUU checks.
- Work with the Interim Minister to create structures that strengthen financial oversight and use UUA benchmarks to keep compensation and staffing aligned.

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

Explore ways to diversify our vendors as part of fostering a more inclusive culture.

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

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:

Tina Benik, Lori Clark, Kathy Desilets, Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Leslie Lawrence, and Rebekah Stafford

Chair or Chairs: Leslie Lawrence

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 FRSUU - 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 FRSUU mission and values.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Recruited /engaged two new members of the Governance Committee; Leslie Lawrence as the new Chair and Tina Benk.
- In concert with the Executive Committee, monitored the implementation of the “Operating Process & Procedures” for two Board-chartered committees (Facilities and Grants Teams) and identified areas of needed operational improvements.
- Worked with the Church Administrator to identify and track the location of key church documents and which staff and lay leaders have or should have access to them. This included a discussion of the need for a member only section on the website to allow posting and easy access to more sensitive documents by FRSUU members.
- Worked with the Parish Board to recruit a Young Church parent to fill an open Youth position on the Parish Board.
- Drafted the Warrant for, and helped prepare for, the Annual Meeting.
- 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 2026-2027 church year?

- To continue the work initiated this year on mapping the location and access to key church documents.
- To support the Parish Board and the Interim Minister in examining 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 FRSUU members to be involved in the governance process in varying ways, including youth and young adults.
- Develop an effective leadership development strategy utilizing member engagement with interest groups and other church activities to identify a new generation of FRSUU leaders and encourage their movement into church wide leadership positions.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

Continued support from FRSUU leadership to assist with identifying 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 by Leslie Lawrence, Chair, leslie.lawrence55@gmail.com

Facilities Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Facilities Team 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 Team has also been involved in a variety of day-to-day facilities-related projects in concert with Reverend Laurel, who went above and beyond to make sure our facilities remain functional.

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 Team 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 2025-2026 church year?

The agenda and action for the Facilities Team was dominated by near term practicalities and emergencies during the 2025-2026 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. A number of efforts during the 2025-2026 church year are worth noting.

First, the FRSUU Lower Meetinghouse air conditioning units, which had been failing, were replaced with heat pumps. Special recognition is due to Bill Clary for serving as the project manager, working with the various vendors to get the old system removed and the new system installed. It was a challenging process, particularly because the new system experienced an ongoing series of issues that the vendors did not fully resolve until a few months ago. Still under consideration is whether we should add backup gas heat into the system for those extremely cold winter days when heat pump efficiency is reduced and may not be adequate, even with fully functioning units, to heat the LMH. It is important to note that MassSave rebates funded most of the project, and the Finance Team, particularly Jim Supple, was instrumental in making the necessary filings to receive the rebates.

Second, there was an unfortunate failure during a winter storm when the cellar door of Parish Hall blew open and a pipe froze. In working to resolve the issue, it was determined that the main water shutoff for the city water line to Parish Hall is corroded beyond use. In fact, the entire service line is extremely delicate. Members of the Facilities Team have been working on potential solutions, including conversations with the city, to devise a plan for rectifying this issue.

Third, and related to the second item above, members of the Team, particularly Jim Kidd and Ed Budelmann, have been working on plans to install a sprinkler system in Parish Hall. This system will significantly improve our risk profile, as a fire in Parish Hall would almost certainly involve the Meetinghouse as well. Fortunately, the Grants Team has successfully applied to the city for funding under the Community Preservation Act, so we have funding coming for the project.

Fourth, the vendor maintaining our fire alarm system in the Meetinghouse informed us that the control panel is on the brink of failure. Again, with Jim Kidd's expert work, we have a proposal to replace the fire control panel, and with the Grants Team's efforts, additional funding via the CPA to pay for the work.

The fifth major project was replacing some live knob and tube wiring in Parish Hall. This issue came to the fore due to a risk assessment survey our insurance carrier required us to complete prior to renewing our policy this calendar year. Having discovered the issue, we were required to replace the wiring. Reverend Laurel was the main point of contact for the electricians doing the work. It is worth noting that insurance carriers are becoming more engaged in risk management, and we can expect their assessments of our risk exposures to become routine.

Sixth, an emergency erupted when a pinhole leak occurred in the upper Meetinghouse sprinkler system. Repairs were made and a preventative maintenance plan is under development.

Seventh, the Facilities Team commenced work on a needs list from a "walk around" to observe and document conditions inside and outside the buildings. Needs were also submitted by the Green Team and the AIM Ministry. A consolidated list was provided to the Parish Board, which will help FRSUU to plan, prioritize, and budget future facility requirements.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

Responding to emergencies occupied most of the Team's time in the 2025-2026 church year. We are hopeful that such emergency footing has subsided as we enter the 2026-2027 church year, and that the Team can adopt a more proactive posture. Specifically, we hope to develop a model of proactive project prioritization and initiation based on the list of maintenance and improvement projects we developed this year. We will also continue 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 2026-2027 church year?

Success in the 2026-2027 church year will require collaboration with various FRSUU committees and the Parish Board in order for the Facilities Team to be able to pursue the above referenced and 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, The Facilities Team, Bill Zarakas, Chairman, billzarakas@gmail.com

Grants Team (GT)

Names of people involved:

Forrest Speck, Ed Budelmann, Sue Creed, Kathy Desilets, 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 End Points of the First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist, Newburyport. 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 from the Senior Minister for newly emerging potential grant opportunities if consistent with the above.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

During the FRSUU FY 2026 Church Year, the Grants Team applied for two grants. FRSUU has been awarded one grant from the City of Newburyport Hale in the amount of \$117,000 to replace the obsolete fire detection panel in the Meetinghouse and to install an integrated fire detection and suppression (sprinkler) system in Parish Hall.

A second grant has been awarded for \$20,000 from the National Fund for Sacred Places (NFSP), to conduct a Building Conditions Assessment on Parish Hall. This was secured in coordination with the Capital Campaign Team utilizing the services of our approved architect, Placework. The work will take eight weeks and be completed by September 1, 2026. This study will help secure more grant funds to support the rehabilitation of Parish Hall.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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., spending grant funds consistent with the 8th Principle and reducing the carbon footprint of FRSUU).
- To work with the Board, Trustees of the Endowment, and respective entities to explore the feasibility of establishing a “Preservation Endowment” for our historic buildings.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

The Grants Team can always use some more hands on the oars. Anyone who does not wish to attend regular meetings but is willing to work on specific tasks opportunities as available which can be completed flexibly. Skill sets needed to support the FRSUU Grants Program include research, planning, budgeting, writing, proofreading, legal, accounting (to assure grant compliance once received), and others. If you have the desire to help as a Grants Team Associate, please contact ebudelmanna@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted, Ed Budelmann, ebudelmanna@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 FRSUU staff on issues related to FRSUU 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:

Joe Brouillet, Kathy Desilets, Minnie Flanagan, Tom Himmel, Leslie Lawrence, Hugh Martinez, and Julie Menin. 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 2025-2026 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 FRSUU 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 when 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 2025-2026 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 2026-2027 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 few years to ensure it remains current and accurate. The HRS began this review at the end of the 2024-2025 church year and completed updating the manual in November 2025. Most revisions made were related to changes in staffing patterns and responsibilities. The revised manual was approved by the Parish Board at their December 2025 meeting.
- At the Parish Board's request, the HRS has been looking at possible alternatives to the UUA Health Care Plan and alternative payment structures (such as Cafeteria Plans) given the sharp increases in this year's health care costs. This work is still ongoing.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- To continue to act in an advisory capacity to Parish Board and FRSUU staff on issues related to FRSUU personnel and employee benefits.
- Finish review of Health Care Plan alternatives and submit any recommendation to the Parish Board for discussion.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

Input from the Parish Board, the Interim Minister, 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 when updating salary recommendation and personnel 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 Giving 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."

We have dubbed the Fundraising Committee the "FUNraising Team," to attract more interest and to create more opportunities for fellowship.

Names of people Involved:

There are separate steering committees for the Annual Giving Campaign and Planned Giving. The FUNraising Team includes Tina Benik, Joe Brouillet, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Chris Fraser, Rev. Laurel Gray, Bob Higgins, Betsy Latham, Doug Latham, Nick Place, Paula Renda, Forrest Speck, Jim Supple, 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 Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm on Zoom.

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

The Committee supports our mission and values by fostering authentic connection and sustaining fellowship among our members and friends.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

This year Stewardship's FUNraising Team has been involved in:

- Participating in Yankee Homecoming and bringing back the book sale, our most successful event next to the auction.
- Supporting the Fall Festival after the first service of the new church year.
- Organizing the Fall Auction at the Newburyport Community Center, which raised \$30,800.
- Managing the 4th Annual Cookie Walk during one of Newburyport's downtown invitation nights, which raised \$2,000.
- Supporting the Annual Giving Campaign's Steering Committee. This year's chairs, the Speck family, and 36 stewards are helping the campaign (still in progress at this time) achieve its \$660,000 goal.

- Co-hosting a Trivia Night fellowship event with the Men's Group that drew 50 people.
- Re-designing the Spring Raffle to offer several donated experiences, thereby decreasing expenses.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

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

The **FUNraising Team** will continue to focus on engaging more members in planning fundraising and fellowship events. We currently plan to hold a church-wide bazaar/yard sale in the fall, and to resurrect the popular FRSUU Variety Show in the winter along with our other fundraising and fellowship events.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 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

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:

Barbara Garnis, Bob Higgins, Kim Kenly, Jim Major (Treasurer), and Natalie Treat

Chair or Chairs: Kim Kenly and Bob Higgins

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Meet quarterly at an acceptable time for the Trustees and our financial manager, Pathstone.

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

The Trustees are responsible, as fiduciaries, to grow the funds under management in a prudent way, such that distributions can support the Mission and Values of the Society.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Distributed funds to the general operating account, community accounts, and capital maintenance accounts in accordance with policy.
- Held quarterly meetings with our financial advisor, Pathstone.
- Undertook an extensive evaluation of the portfolio holdings resulting in creating a portfolio with a higher likelihood of achieving our long-term performance goal of 70% global equities and 30% fixed income.
- Received two gifts totaling \$410,336 which have been invested in the portfolio.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- Increase the total Endowment value to \$2,625,000 after distributing \$72,688 to the General Operating account and community services.
- Onboard new gifts in accordance with policy.
- 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 2026-2027 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 Principal in your work?

The Trustees collaborate with our financial advisor to implement an investment policy that includes environmental, social, and governance criteria.

REPORTS FROM THE MINISTER AND AFFILIATED MINISTERS

Minister's Report

Dear Members,

It is with great joy and sadness that I say my final goodbye with this final annual report. Please know that this is an amazing church. Our shared ministry has been one of transformation; and, yes, change.

We came together at a time when society and churches were experiencing a lot of pressure. There were political conflicts, increasing demands on people's times, and decreasing resources available to support the increasing needs. Together we weathered the pandemic and came out even stronger than before. We welcomed the Afghans to our Parish Hall, where they lived for 2.5 years, and we continue to support them in their growing independence.

Though this year of transition has been difficult at times; it has also been special. We persevered through additional unexpected changes as well as the normal stages of grief. Please remember that the depth of love and care we shared made the emotional aspects of the leave-taking understandably difficult at times. I believe wholeheartedly that the beautiful outcomes of our shared ministry are what will endure.

In that spirit I wish you all love, beauty, radical hospitality, creativity, care, and an ongoing commitment to love, peace, and justice.

The FRSUU will thrive in the years to come. You are a special congregation with a long history of being a beacon for liberal religion in the region. I look forward to all that is to come for you and will always cheer you on.

Thank you for our eight wonderful years together.

With love and gratitude, always,

Rev. Rebecca

Assistant Minister for Congregational Life Report

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The Assistant Minister's stated role is to oversee and support Adult Education, Programming, Membership, and Facilities. This includes oversight of both Young Church and church communications.

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

The entirety of my work is in support of our Mission, Values, and Unitarian Universalism. For me, operating from an ethic of love means acting with integrity and being accountable to my impact on others. That has meant being willing to make changes that center the needs of the people who are most affected and engaging with a spirit of exploration and curiosity, instead of assuming I already know the right answer, or that my voice is most important.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

My role this year has been something of a catch-all, which really underscored the strangeness of FRSUU's current staffing setup and the lack of appropriate administrative infrastructure. Much of my time and attention was taken up by facilities and building needs, as well as providing support to staff, and communicating with the UUA about the ministerial transition.

Last year, we built a good membership process, and I continued that this year. Nearly 100 percent of the people who took my UU Basics/New to UU class became formal members and got engaged, if they weren't already. Given the issue of understaffing, focusing on increasing membership growth without addressing infrastructure seemed unwise to me.

Similarly, FRSUU already had so much programming for adults, that adding anything additional felt unwise and unhelpful, so my priority was consistency and supporting what already existed (including newer things like Maker Monday and Big Questions). This also included running the Justice Action Council and some of our social justice initiatives like Justice Sundays, though justice work was not officially in my portfolio.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of work I did that was in addition to last year's list:

Social Justice:

- Maintaining, developing, and submitting "Take Action for Justice" items in Steeple.
- Planning, logistics, and publicity for City Councilor debate including running tech setup.
- Planning, logistics, and publicity for Janet Applefield talk.
- Planning, logistics, and publicity for Rev. Liz Walker book talk.
- Support for planning, logistics, and publicity for Thanksgiving turkey drive.
- Worked with Welcoming Committee to discern what members needed and the decision to put the committee on hiatus for now.
- Oversaw all Justice Sundays, including creating the material and presenting in October.

- Oversaw and helped coordinate *On Tyranny* read.

Staffing:

- Manage staff vacation schedule and communications about holidays.
- Manage staff meeting agendas, run meetings when necessary, including staff retreat.
- Creation of staff job descriptions, accurate time reporting, and current employment documents in partnership with Board members and staff.
- Ongoing supervision and support of staff, both formally with those who report to me, and informally with those who did not report to me.

Worship:

- Responsible for creating all worship folders and template documents for year.
- Participated in leading Flower Communion, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Candlelight, Christmas Eve, and New Member services.

Adult Ed & Programs:

- Took on running Chalice Circles this year.
- Provided support during planning and running of fall auction, including being responsible for food during event.
- Continued support for all ongoing programs, as well as a few new initiatives from congregants.

Membership:

- Ran two sessions of three-part UU Basics/New to UU class with great success.
- In the future, I recommend pushing the second New Member Sunday to later in the spring, closer to the annual meeting; desire to participate in this class is much lower in February, I think largely because of winter.
- The membership committee did not meet regularly this year, as we had a good strategy down; in the beginning of the year, we considered doing a printed yearbook/directory as part of the 300th, but we didn't have the volunteer power for the project.
- Oversaw ushers and greeters; sent out monthly sign-ups for volunteers.

Facilities:

- Completed building insurance inspection surveys that were new this year and required both a full professional electrical inspection and an in-person inspection with an agent; did audit with volunteers before inspection and organized volunteers to assist. This resulted in hiring an electrician to remove all knob and tube wiring from Parish Hall.
- Transitioned facilities files to Sharepoint.
- Managed consistent ongoing issues with heat pumps and scheduling repairs with technicians; this was a weekly occurrence October-January. This included getting quotes on the cost to connect the heat pumps with the old system and a lot of work figuring out what had happened in the process of this project.
- Managed all repair scheduling with trades people (i.e. repair of sanctuary ceiling, leaking pipes in bathroom, etc.)
- Worked with Grants Team on application for fire suppression grant for Parish Hall, as well as grant application for the Sacred Spaces fund. This also included working with Hiller on the need to replace the fire alarm panel in the MH as well as replacing leaking sprinkler pipes in LMH right side bathroom.
- Worked with Facilities Team to clarify their role as a committee, the work that needed to be done in both the Meetinghouse and Parish Hall, prioritizing that work, and budgeting. I do want to be clear

that I enjoyed my work with the Facilities Team and my departure has nothing to do with the building or facilities part of my role; I do think FRSUU needs to return to having some kind of business and facilities role, but administrative work is very much part of congregational ministry.

- Worked with leadership about the potential facilities position; did outreach and did not find applicants interested; it was never clear what the purpose of this position was and so little was allocated in the budget for building repairs and maintenance (despite consistent expenses over the last five years) that the funds needed to be spent on hiring skilled trades people, not a contracted staff person.

Communications:

- Oversaw creation of new Arts & Culture newsletter with Elisa (our previous Communications Specialist) in addition to weekly Steeple and posters/A-frame signs for major events.
- Created new FRSUU Instagram account; did not have time to invest much in this.
- Creation of comprehensive “Committees, Teams, and Groups” document with Elisa.
- Managed hiring and training of new Communications Specialist, Maddie, after Elisa’s departure.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

My hope is that FRSUU will enter the interim years with a spirit of curiosity, an openness to discomfort, and an ethic of love that reminds you why you’re doing the work of community building. Being human is messy and being human together requires a willingness to be honest about what we need, our experiences, and what we have to offer. I hope you’ll let things be messy and human and that you’ll keep choosing to care for each other and this congregation. Communities that engage in honest, caring reflection and make change with integrity are much more desirable than those that prioritize comfort and appearances, even though that might feel like a risk or a paradox.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

The unfortunate truth is that doing good ministry next year, and this year, meant me having to leave FRSUU.

For the congregation as a whole to be successful, I think there needs to be a deeper exploration of what “success” means and how to build an infrastructure that matches the stated mission. How we do things in congregational life is just as important as what we “accomplish,” because centering our ethics and our humanity in how we work is a direct challenge to the culture of white supremacy and exploitation that defines our country. Justice work isn’t just protesting, it’s also the quieter work of empowering those whose experiences have been overlooked and reconsidering things like resource allocation and labor.

Part of this will mean looking at how to appropriately staff a congregation of this size and right-sizing expectations, given the staff that you actually have. Much of my role became administrative and staffing support, because that was such a gap and so necessary for church functioning. On paper I was supposed to be adding more programs, and in reality, the church needed me not to do that. In particular, I think too much has landed on Diane as Church Administrator, and her competence and responsibility have meant the problem has gone un-addressed. I’m also aware that the Young Church program has doubled in the last five years, but the resources allocated to staffing it have decreased. Meanwhile, there is no staffing allocated to young adults, emerging adults, and middle adults who don’t have children. I experienced an over-focus on “growing membership” without doing the deeper work of providing space for people who aren’t already present. Doing so requires expanding FRSUU’s understanding of who belongs and who is welcome. I think the congregation has a lot of potential here, especially with the combined skills of Mara Flynn and Nick Place.

How do you consider the 8th Principle in your work or programming?

*“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.**”*

I think about the 8th Principle in terms of the hallmarks of white supremacy culture and how to operate in contradiction to those hallmarks, which is fundamentally about being accountable to impact and action, not appearances.

For example, perfection is one of the hallmarks, so whenever I experience myself or others chasing perfection, I redirect towards integrity. I remember that perfection is both coercive and deceptive, because it often hides what’s true and requires hidden labor from those without power. This Annual Report is a good example. FRSUU does not currently have the staffing to produce an Annual Report that is perfect or even produced by staff, so I’ve been encouraging the staff to accept that it’s okay if the Annual Report is done differently, is missing pieces, and has typos. That’s a more accurate representation of the current state of things than a perfect document that seemed to appear out of nowhere. It’s also impossible to answer these questions honestly without causing discomfort, and so I remember that the right to comfort is also a hallmark of white supremacy culture.

Similarly, in response to systems of hierarchy, I focus on centering those most affected and the voices that are being overshadowed. In practice that looks like asking questions such as “what do the children say they need and what actually meets those needs?” over questions like “how do older adults think kids’ programs are supposed to look?” Or “what actually serves the needs of queer and trans folks in the congregation?” instead of “how do we get more people to join the Welcoming Committee?” This means being willing to make and support decisions that on the surface seem paradoxical. And this is not theoretical, it’s not something that happens just in conversation – it’s tangible action like my offering a Justice Sunday program on repentance and relational repair in place of the Welcoming Committee, so that the labor and risk moved from those most affected to someone with more protection.

I think doing the work of the 8th Principle requires showing up with curiosity and an openness to both discomfort and change. It requires the humility to accept that none of us alone have the right answer, so collaboration is the place of liberation.

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 and participation in education/spirituality offerings of FRSUU, 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 2025-2026 church year?

Led worship on February 16, 2026, using the recent book by James Davison Hunter, *Democracy and Solidarity*, to help us think about and understand our brokenness as a nation, as a basis for moving forward with real but realistic hope.

Continued to participate through fall and winter/spring sessions in gatherings—organized by fellow Affiliate Minister Jane Tuohy—which we call Mystic Circles. These meetings—with participants going and coming over these 3+ years, but with a core of FRSUU members and non-members—are largely participant-led, under the able overall leadership and organization of Rev. Jane. Those who attend have the chance to share their own spirituality, as well as learn about (and get a “taste” of) various forms of and approaches to inner or spiritual experience.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- Continue to support the ministry of FRSUU within the congregation and in the larger community.
- Support the congregation, its leadership, and our Interim Minister, in the upcoming time of transition, assessment, and growth.
- Plan and preside at one Sunday morning service during the year.
- 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 2026-2027 church year?

As far as I can see, nothing beyond the usual support I have always received from this congregation and its staff.

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

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Contemplative Services: I have organized contemplative services for years now around the December holidays. In 2025, we also held extra services before, during, and after the presidential election.

Centering Prayer: I have organized a Centering Prayer group which meets weekly and is most often led by Cynthia Tolbert. This is part of a hope of mine of increasing worship opportunities beyond Sunday and offering at least one Christian contemplative practice.

Mystic Circles: Mystic Circles is in its fifth season. Mystic Circles offers FRSUU members and friends opportunities to explore mysticism and engage in contemplative practices from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions.

Names of people Involved:

Rev. Stan Barrett, Jessica Brown, Roberta Colasanti, Anne Comeau, Kathy Desilets, John Gibson, Joyce Haydock, Michael Marden, Sarah McSweeney, Trena Slovenski, Ted Stedman, Cynthia Tolbert

Chair or Chairs: Rev. Jane Tuohy

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: We meet in the fall every other Tuesday night from 6:30-8pm and in the spring also on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8pm.

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

Worship and contemplative services are designed to support spiritual growth and development for FRSUU members and friends. I believe there is a great hunger in our congregation for more and deeper spirituality. Because we come from many different spiritual and religious backgrounds, and as UUs we draw from the great religions of the world, I think it benefits our congregation to be exposed to spiritual traditions and practices which can support our growth and development.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

I believe the services which I organized before, during, and after the presidential election provided much needed refuge during a period of high stress for many of our congregants. The Serenity in the Sanctuary series, offered in December, also provides refuge from the commercialism and hectic pace of the holidays.

Centering Prayer could become a viable spiritual path for members seeking spiritual traditions that bring them closer to the Divine.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

I would like to work with the new interim minister to integrate contemplative services into the regular worship schedule and work with whoever is going to take over adult faith formation to develop some new offerings that take people beyond introduction to Unitarian Universalism, which is very important, but I hope we don't stop there.

Additionally, I provide chaplaincy services one morning a week at the ICE Detention Center in Burlington, MA. The individuals served there are mostly immigrants from Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and various African countries. This is part of an interfaith ministry of presence organized by the Mass Council of Churches.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

I would like support in educating the congregation about spiritual practices which can help them navigate aging. Ours is not a young congregation. I think we could do more to help people address the very real spiritual challenges which come with their own aging and supporting aging beloveds.

Additionally, I would like to request a small budget of \$1,200 to bring to FRSUU professional spiritual musicians who could introduce our members and friends to other contemplative practices such as kirtan.

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

Our sources of study in Mystic Circles include diverse mystics from around the world, from ancient times to now. We are actively reaching out to our sisters and brothers in the North Shore Insight Meditation Center. I am planning to work with Joanna Fernandes to support her interfaith efforts.

While these activities do not directly "eliminate systemic racism," they do bring FRSUU members and friends out into the wider world of interfaith connection and celebration.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Jane Tuohy, Affiliate Minister, jane.tuohy@frsuu.org

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 FRSUU values and all parts of our mission.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year:

Administration/Operations:

- Source of institutional knowledge, including processes and procedures.
- Administrator of Realm database, QuickBooks Online, Church Mutual, Constant Contact, Microsoft 365, Adobe, Comcast, Zoom, Venmo, Square, Stripe.
- Worked with IT contractor on IT needs for incoming staff.
- Produced/collected data for annual UUA certification.
- Managed business office.
- Developed and executed a list of tasks pertaining to Rev. Rebecca's departure.
- Coordinated distribution of Market Basket gift cards to area residents in need.
- Supported facilities as needed.
- Worked with Board member Lori Clark to update my job description which was very outdated.

Annual Campaign:

- Member of Annual Campaign Steering Committee.
- Reviewed/edited campaign materials.
- Campaign administration:
 - Processed all pledge and pledge increase forms from congregants.
 - Tracked campaign data and provided updates to the committee and congregants.
 - Followed up with congregants as needed.
- Updated/maintained Online Pledge Form and Pledge page on the FRSUU website.
- Produced tree leaves and campaign thermometers.

Annual Report/Annual Meeting:

- Provided institutional knowledge of the report process.
- Supported production of report.
- Provided proofreading and final editing.
- Monitored member registrations.
- 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.
- Occasionally used Canva for marketing materials and logos.

Finance/Bookkeeping:

- Managed pledge payments/donations, accounts payable, weekly bank deposits, online banking.
- Managed church credit card.
- Managed electronic storage of all finance-related documents.
- Generated pledge statements and annual 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.
- Updated check reimbursement request form.
- Instituted new cash counting process.

Fundraising (auction/raffle/misc.):

- Edited/printed promotional materials.
- Processed auction bids and payments post-auction.
- Provided credit card processing support.
- Provided analysis of income and expenses post-event.
- Provided occasional day-of support.

Membership:

- Processed new member forms and visitor cards.
- Created nametags for congregants.
- Updated the new member application form.

Memorial Services:

- Produced Orders of Service.
- Coordinated service-related tasks such as flowers, seating, reserved parking.
- Prepared invoices for memorial service fees.
- Created Zoom meetings for services.

Music Ministry:

- Produced Candlelight program and coordinated printing.
- Designed and implemented new vertical format for Wilson Concert Series programs.

Rentals/Room Reservations/Church Calendar:

- Processed reservations/meeting requests.
- Updated rental contract template.
- Maintained online Room Reservation Form.
- Prepared rental contracts for external renters.

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 booklets and other printed/online materials.
- Designed new vertical Order of Service template for Music Sunday and other services.
- Coordinated Sunday flower arrangements and steeple lighting sponsorships.

- Edited and produced printable sermons.
- Ordered candles and related supplies.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year:

- Support financial reporting.
- Continue to provide institutional knowledge especially during the transition with the new interim minister.
- Work toward proficiency in QuickBooks Online.
- Look for process efficiencies and continue documenting processes.
- Review/clean out old files.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

- A slower pace at FRSUU, so that I have time to breathe, to think, to analyze, to strategize, and to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Administrative support so that my knowledge and talents can be better utilized and maximized in supporting the finance and operations of the church.
- A designated person (ideally on the staff) to be my back-up on key components of my job.
- Clarity around my role and “right-sizing” of my position for one person.
- Additional staff to fill the gaps that are currently being filled by existing staff and congregants.
- Consideration of staff resources in planning—worship and otherwise—to enable more efficient use of staff time. There has been a pattern of last-minute changes requiring reworking and/or reformatting Orders of Service, Candlelight program, and other documents that have already been prepared.
- An environment that allows staff “to feel safe and supported when sharing their perspectives and bringing their true authentic self to their work and our community at large.” Being our true authentic selves includes being able to share perspectives that disagree with decisions that affect us and our ability to do our jobs properly. When we are allowed to express the full range of human emotion, in an honest and respectful way, we can engage our full selves in the work we do. If we cannot be honest and truthful—about the negative as well as the positive—we cannot be our true authentic selves.

This has been a challenging and exhausting church year that often felt like a roller coaster ride. A substantial amount of brain energy was required every day to navigate the challenges, stay focused, manage the work properly, and maintain (or try to maintain) the quality of work that I expect of myself.

I am grateful to Rev. Laurel for her steadfast support and her presence in the office. She has been a wonderful colleague and mentor; her leadership inspired and empowered me. I will miss her (and Henry, too!). I thank all the caring congregants who checked in with me this year just to see how I was doing. Thank you, also, to the congregants who stepped up to help this spring with specific tasks, or who have supported me and my work this year (and in past years). Finally, I am so grateful to be part of our amazing staff team and this wonderful church community.

I look forward to working with the new interim minister, embracing the opportunities that come with change, and moving forward in this new chapter of 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 during special events, special services, and Candlelight Service.

Names of people Involved:

Nick Place, Music department, and FRSUU Choir

Wilson Committee: Lea Pearson, Diane Foreman, Pam Lessard, Nadia Gardner

Candlelight Committee: Diane Stowe-Cohn, Betsy Latham, Ray Wilson, Sarah Cecil, Bettina Turner

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 Oct through late December, Sundays, 1-3pm

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

MUSIC and CHOIR

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 ranges of mental health and focus; with opinions and skills unique to each person. We journey together in love as we support each other 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 in that moment. 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 piece of music. There are innumerable 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 musician in culture, style, and demographic.

WILSON SERIES:

We had a successful four-concert series of chamber and solo music. Groups this year: Palaver Strings, Portsmouth Brass Quintet, Kalliope Reed Quintet, and Organist Kevin Neel.

SING OUT:

This community singing event debuted in 2025. The intention of these events is to invite the public to come learn a song, create community and fellowship, and “perform” a single song at the end of the rehearsal. Church and community members have enjoyed their time in this low-pressure musical environment. One event had around 80 people in attendance. This is also a fundraiser with a \$5 door charge. We have scheduled four Sing Outs for the 2026-27 church year.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 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 continued use of more pop styles and occasionally singing background vocals for various soloists. A capella singing continued success increased throughout the year. We put on a wonderful Candlelight performance premiering a commissioned work written by Mark A. Miller titled “Make Music on the Air” which was commissioned by former DCM Justin Murphy-Mancini and was paid for by the Barbara Owen Estate. We also debuted a Music Sunday service which incorporated many choral pieces and poems into a service with the theme of “Love at the Center.” We have scheduled another Music Sunday for March 2027.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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 begin a weekly Group Voice and Musicianship class. This class will serve both as a fellowship event and potential choir member recruitment tool. The class will be a safe space for “non-singers” to become familiar with their own voices, learn about making music together, and learning the basics of reading music.

I also hope to assist Mara Flynn with expanding our children’s music program. Currently she only has time available to rehearse the children for Candlelight and Easter. I believe it is essential that her role is expanded both as a draw to families interested in joining our church and to re-grow the children’s choir program which was lost due to the COVID pandemic.

I intend to engage in more arranging and composition, which is historically inherent in church music directors. I have composed a choir piece which will become a hymn. The lyrics for this piece were co-written by Rev. Laurel Gray and me. This will be a gift that Rev. Laurel leaves for our congregation after she departs for her new position in Reading.

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

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

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

This year the working relationship with Rev. Rebecca became challenging. I had many plans to expand recruitment and generally expand the music program, however there were many surprise tasks that fell to the staff, and I was charged with running more social media, communications, advertising, and the Guided by Love podcast. This year work tasks tended to be more reactionary than proactive.

I look forward to building a relationship with the interim minister beginning in August, and I look forward to continuing to build relations amongst the staff. Rev. Laurel will be sorely missed.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Place, Director of Church Music and Special Events Manager, nick.place@frsuu.org

Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

Mission or purpose statement:

The purpose of the Director of Youth and Children's Ministry role is to create, implement, and manage programs for families and children in grades Pre K-12 at FRSUU to further the congregational mission and the values of Unitarian Universalism. FRSUU Young Church and Youth Group build joyful and meaningful connections 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, Assistant Minister

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

Youth and Children's Ministry connects to and supports our Mission and Values in every way: with flexible curriculum created to foster respect for ourselves and others, a deepening awareness of our interconnectedness, social emotional learning and social justice engagement as an expression of our spirituality and love; with intergenerational worship and fellowship and service opportunities. One need only peruse the collection of books in the nursery library to see the diversity represented and celebrated in our program, centered in love.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Young Church:

- Created curriculum and led weekly Young Church sessions on Sunday mornings, September-May. While weekly attendance varies, this was our largest program year since I began this role in 2019, with 70 children enrolled in PreK-12th grade at the end of the 2025-20226 church year.
- Published weekly newsletter for Young Church and Youth Group families, September-May (over 100 subscribers).
- Organized service field trip for Young Church and Youth Group families to sing carols at AdviniaCare Newburyport nursing home (12/7/25).
- Newburyport Downtown Trick or Treat (10/24).
- Provided Auction daycare/pajama party (11/7).
- Provided daycare during Annual Meeting (6/7).

Youth Group:

- Created curriculum and led monthly Youth Group Meetings, September-May.
- Organized service field trip to the Guinea Pig Sanctuary in Salisbury, MA (2/5/26).
- Organized and chaperoned Youth Group field trip to UU Youth Con in Nashua, NH (3/14/26).
- Organized and chaperoned Youth Group Church Sleepover; youth painted a banner for the Louis D. Brown "Walk for Peace" (3/21/26).

Worship:

- Led Time for All Ages on 9/14, 11/2, 12/24, 1/18, 2/8, 4/12, and 5/3.
- Young Church Singers: Directed children's choir rehearsals and performances for Candlelight and Easter services.
- Organized and led multigenerational services: Annual Christmas Pageant and Young Church Sunday.

Intergenerational Fellowship:

- Organized and hosted a Family Game Night on 10/3, providing a chance for parents to connect with Rev. Rebecca, Rev. Laurel, and me in the wake of Rev. Rebecca's announcement that she would be leaving at the end of the church year.
- Piloted two Intergenerational Fellowship events following Sunday service on 11/9 and 3/29.
- Organized a Family Night on 6/5 to give families an opportunity to connect with Rev. Laurel in the wake of her announcement that she is also leaving at the end of the church year.

Professional:

- Worked with Rev. Laurel and board member Lori Clark to create an up-to-date job description and contract.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

This has been an incredibly difficult and complicated church year. Thinking ahead to the next church year, we will need to rebuild trust in church leadership and support the interim process as the congregation learns to engage in productive conflict, honesty, repair, and healing.

As far as RE programming, I am interested in exploring the emergent model of "Whole Church RE... where faith formation is a shared congregational culture, encouraging spiritual deepening, ethical reflection, and justice work across every age group – one in which actions, not just intentions, align with values. This includes how power is shared, how decisions are made, and how justice work is resourced....

The goal of Whole Church RE is to create vibrant and thriving UU congregations and communities with love – and faith development – "at the center."

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/whole-church-re-model-unitarian-universalism>

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

This question makes me wonder about the meaning of "success" in this context. Some ideas of success are tied to internalized systems of white supremacist culture, patriarchy, and capitalism. Success in white supremacy culture often upholds unstated norms of productivity, such as perfectionism, urgency, and quantity over quality, reinforcing a singular "right way" of operating, often devaluing collaborative, relationship-based or process-oriented approaches. Other characteristics worth considering are a fear of open conflict, and a right to comfort, preserving the psychological comfort of those in power and scapegoating people who cause discomfort.

The antidotes to this kind of binary thinking include:

- Embracing Process: Valuing the "how" as much as the "what"
- Shifting to Qualitative Metrics: Focusing on relationship-building and community impact rather than just measurable results.
- Encouraging Learning: Accepting mistakes and allowing for, and learning from, imperfections. For more information on this line of thinking, here is a link to [White Supremacy Culture Characteristics](#)

developed by Tema Okun, whose work is influential in the DEI field, about the ways these characteristics may manifest in organizations and institutions, often unconsciously.

I think that success in the 2026-2027 church year would look like a process of honest reflection and learning as an institution.

A familiar narrative I have heard since I started in my role at FRSUU almost seven years ago, from older congregants and leadership, is nostalgia for a time, many years ago, when there had been a thriving children's and youth program, accompanied by a seeming desperation to increase numbers or a resignation that these programs were no longer worth investing in.

This was a challenging environment to begin my role in the fall of 2019, just months before the Covid shutdown. In the wake of Covid, Sharon Broll, an 8 hour per week paid RE Assistant was let go, the Teen and Children's Choir Director resigned, dedicated classroom space in Parish Hall was no longer available, and our original nursery became an office space.

Despite these obstacles, and while RE programs are dwindling nationally, our Youth and Children's programming has grown. From 33 registered students in 2023, we now have 70 registered students as of May 2026. I am sometimes met with what feels like skepticism about these numbers, because many of those families come sporadically, though average weekly attendance numbers have also grown.

More importantly, our current programming has fostered an engaged and loving community of children, youth, and families, many who do attend with great regularity, and feel that they are part of this congregation. They are joining as members, becoming more involved, and forming relationships with each other and with other friends and members in our congregation.

To be honest, I feel that I have been very successful in working to co-create a beloved, all ages community at FRSUU, as a part-time employee (while also employed at other organizations) and with limited resources.

I would love to see our congregation embrace the importance and value of this work. I am convinced that family centered practice, and the Whole Church RE model would help to bridge generational divides, attract new members, and deepen our relationships as a community.

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

The 8th Principle, which aligns with recent 2024 UUA Article II revision which resulted in the UU Shared Values <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/blog/8thprinciple> is a guiding principle in Youth and Children's programming. With age-appropriate anti-racist curriculum, and a teaching style grounded in restorative justice practice, our programming strives to support the ongoing work to "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Respectfully submitted, Mara Flynn, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

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:

FRSUU 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 2025-2026 church year?

Elisa Scully held this role for most of the 2025-2026 church year. I joined FRSUU in a transitional contract role in late March, when I took over responsibility for laying out the weekly Steeple newsletter. I am hopeful to be moving into the full Communications Specialist role later this summer.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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.
- Engage in ongoing professional training in the technical skills needed to succeed in this role.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

As someone new to FRSUU, 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, Maddie Shea, Communications Specialist, maddie.shea@frsuu.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 2025-2026 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 2026-2027 church year?

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

Respectfully submitted, Don Rogers, Sexton, donny.rogers@frsuu.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 the late 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 2026-2027 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 FRSUU becoming a more dementia-sensitive community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 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 FRSUU 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. Currently six participants.

Chair or Chairs: Nancy Kidd, LISCW; Rev. Jane Tuohy; Linda Harding

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Scheduled meetings twice a month (the second and fourth Monday of the month).

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 2025-2026 church year?

Our Mild Cognitive Impairment group has had a very robust year. The group was initially suggested by a member of our congregation who had been diagnosed with MCI and was hoping to talk with others with the same diagnosis. After a few meetings, the group asked if we could meet more than once a month since, for some, "the window was closing." This year has been a resounding success, providing space and anonymity for those folks who are walking a similar path. We also have members who are not part of our UU community.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

To offer a safe and anonymous space for those with this diagnosis to connect with each other. Two of our group have since moved to Avita but sometimes still come to the group! Most of the group members have caregivers that attend our monthly Caregivers Group.

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, Joe Brouillet, Linda Buddenhagen, Will Buddenhagen, Diane Carroll, Barbara Garnis, Florence 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 2025-2026 church year?

Two memorial services and a graveside service were held for FRSUU members, and two memorial services were held for family members or residents of greater Newburyport.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 church year?

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

The following members passed away during this church year:

Audrey Cass (4/21/2026)
Richard George (12/8/2025)
Eugene Hirtle (2/1/2026)
Jennifer Johnson Wellman (1/5/2026)
Peggy Mays (7/30/2025)
Manfred Raschke (3/8/2026)
Kem Widmer (4/12/2026)

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 basic chores, including light laundry and 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 online FRSUU Directory, within Groups as Parish Friends - All. We welcome and encourage new volunteers to Parish Friends.

Chair or Chairs: Susan Ricker

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: As needed; no specific meeting time. We do aim for a meeting of all Parish Friends one evening each fall and spring, typically via Zoom.

We introduced "Third Thursdays" as a monthly in-person gathering of interested Parish Friends, and the curious. The agenda is fluid and participation is optional. This was in response to some articulating the value of strengthening connections. We typically check in, exchange ideas, problem solve and discuss parishioners that might be in need of support. We have also begun writing cards during these gatherings. These will continue through the summer, on third Thursday mornings at 9:30am in the Lower Meetinghouse.

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

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

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Parish Friends remained very active throughout the church year. Many heartfelt thanks to all who have remained ready to connect and serve. Parish Friends is a great option for new members to FRSUU to connect with others. We welcomed several new members this year, including a young church family.

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
- Performing some basic gardening
- Providing rides to church functions and medical appointments
- Performing some light home repairs
- Coaching on some electronic device use

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

- Participating in the Passion Action Fair
- Donating to holiday turkey drive
- Delivering baked goods during their Holiday Pie Project
- Organized Care Ministries Potluck

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 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 church year?

Success in 2026-27 will be helped by a kickoff organizational meeting upon return to church in the fall. Availability of accessible meeting space will also be helpful. Improved placement of Parish Friends notices in the Steeple.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Ricker, for Parish Friends, smricker@aol.com

Pastoral Care Associates

Mission:

As an extension of Rev. Rebecca’s ministry, the primary mission of the Pastoral Care Associates is to provide lay-led care for FRSUU members.

Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) Activities:

- Visit members in hospitals, homes, rehabilitation centers, and other care facilities under the guidance of Rev. Rebecca and in consultation with other team members.
- Offer support and listening to members who are grieving the loss of a loved one, facing difficult decisions, or caring for loved ones.

- Work with several support groups including the Caregiver Support Group, the Grief Support Group (held at Anna Jaques Hospital), and a group for people experiencing mild cognitive impairment.
- Attend monthly Exploring Elderhood Together sessions at FRSUU.
- Work in close collaboration with the Parish Friends, often with both groups extending support to an individual or family.
- Support Sunday worship services by assisting with our weekly Joys & Sorrows observances.
- Offer coverage on pastoral matters during the summer or at times when the minister is unavailable.

The PCA group meets monthly. This year we welcomed our newest member Megan Wilson and wished long-term member Bettina Turner well as she took a hiatus from most PCA activities. In recognition of the ministerial changes happening at FRSUU, the group also published a notice of PCA availability in the Steeple, along with PCA contact information. PCAs participated in the annual FRSUU Care Community potluck event, as well as the annual luncheon for FRSUU members and friends at Atria/Merrimack in Newburyport.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Rebecca, Hugh Martinez (Chair), Nancy Kidd, Susan Ricker, Karen Letourneau, Andy Lobb, Jean Lanham, and Megan Wilson.

WORSHIP AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

Mystic Circles

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Mystic Circles is in its fifth season. The purpose of this group is to bring together individuals who are interested in understanding mysticism and exploring mystical practices to bring themselves into union with the holy. I see this as part of faith formation as well as offering alternative options to Sunday service for worship.

Names of people involved:

Rev. Jane Tuohy, Rev. Stan Barrett, Jessica Brown, Anne Comeau, John Gibson, Joyce Haydock, Michael Marden, Sarah McSweeney, Trena Solvenski, Mary Valle

Chair or Chairs: Rev. Jane Tuohy

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Every second Tuesday evening in the fall and spring semesters.

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

Spirituality, Authentic Connection, Love, and Wonder. We explore practices from the Mystical traditions of all the world's great religions.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Support and maintain a core group of participants and successfully integrate new participants. Expose many for the first time to understanding core concepts of mysticism. Keep open a sense of mystery. Provide options for whom our traditional Sunday services are...well, too traditional.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

Work with Nick Place to bring Kirtan to FRSUU. Work with new interim minister to include Mysticism in adult faith formation offerings. Integrate more with Contemplative Services.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

I would like to have a budget of \$1,200 to pay musicians and Kirtan professionals to come to FRSUU for an experience which would be open to the whole community.

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

We bring diverse wisdom teachers from many different cultures, traditions, races, and spiritual experiences into our sessions.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Jane Tuohy, Affiliate Minister, jane.tuohy@frsuu.org

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

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

Names of people involved: Varies week to week.

Chair or Chairs: Woman Cooper

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, Journey together in love, Spiritual journeys

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Increase in new participants. Regular long-term participants state they are going deeper in their practice.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

To continue offering a safe loving space.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

Hope and passion.

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

Affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness, seek truth, and act for justice.

Respectfully submitted, Woman Cooper, Susanc0805@gmail.com

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

The Worship Associates 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:

Sarina Khan Reddy, Chair (stepping down at end of 2026); DD Allen; Sue Creed; Joanna Fernandes; Charlie Himmel; Doug Latham; David Turner; Ray Wilson

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 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 2025-2026 church year?

We have had full participation from all members of the Worship Associates team in sharing the responsibility for serving during Sunday services. Working smoothly through a year of change.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 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. We need someone to volunteer to be the chair, and we need to recruit two new members. Sandra Thaxter has committed to being one of the new members.

Feedback from the whole team:

- My understanding of the institute of worship associates was done by Reverend Rebecca, modeled after other UUs who have used the same structure to support incorporating the congregants more closely into the development, commitment to, and production of the services, elevating the overall experience of the weekly services for all involved.
- This year, Rev. Rebecca led the Worship Associates, with the experienced management of Sarina, who organized meetings, the calendar, and content. All these logistics felt to be on a trajectory of journey of faith by each of the Worship Associates.
- Worship associates are a wonderful blend of men and women, spanning all ages from youth through retired, some new to the experience entirely, and others who have been highly committed volunteers over a long period of time. It was an excellent opportunity to share the work of the church, understand its workings, and gain an appreciation for all the sophisticated elements that go into the development and execution of the services on a week to week, month to month, and annual planning basis.
- An interim minister may decide whether to continue with the Worship Associate structure or not. All of us would hope and encourage that they continue to do so, especially as it relates to the overall health of the congregation. The Worship Associates reach out to the congregants to answer questions for new members, support the minister in any aspects of the service as needed, and have an elevated experience of worship itself.

- Importantly, the Worship Associate experience offers the opportunity to be both of and in the community, giving back and receiving in the best of all possible ways. We learn and connect with each other in a manner that is otherwise difficult to achieve.
- The role of the Worship Associate is a vital connection between the congregation and the clergy during worship. Worship Associates help give voice to the shared spirit, values, and concerns of the parish community, bringing a lay perspective that complements the minister's leadership. Through readings, reflections, prayers, storytelling, and participation in the creation of services, they help shape worship into something deeply personal, inclusive, and grounded in the lived experiences of the congregation.
- A Worship Associate does more than assist with the flow of a service. They help create an atmosphere of warmth, meaning, and authenticity. By standing alongside the clergy, they represent the collective heart of the community—reminding everyone that worship is not something delivered to a congregation, but something created together.
- In many ways, Worship Associates serve as bridges: listening to the joys, struggles, hopes, and questions within the congregation and helping those realities find expression in worship. Their presence helps ensure that services reflect not only theological ideas, but also the human experiences and diverse voices of the people gathered together.
- At its best, the partnership between clergy and Worship Associates models collaboration, shared ministry, and mutual care. It reflects the Unitarian Universalist belief that wisdom and spiritual insight arise not from a single voice alone, but from community, relationship, and shared participation in the life of the church.

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

Share a multitude of spiritual traditions and religions throughout the calendar year.

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

FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

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:

Alex Mezey, Mary Lou Monteiro, Mark Hodgson, Jean Noonan, Rev. Rebecca Bryan made up the steering committee. Programs drew an average of 15-20 participants consisting of FRSUU members and friends.

Chair or Chairs:

We share responsibilities and don't have a formal chair; however, Jean Noonan is the contact person.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

The Steering Committee has met on the second Wednesday of each month, 3-4:30pm. The programs have been 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 all the Values. 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 2025-2026 church year?

We planned for, presented, and/or sponsored the following programs:

October: "Let's Talk About Posture," presented by Jackie Orent-Nathan, a nurse practitioner who specializes in the neuroscience of posture, balance, and movement.

November: "Let's Talk About Aging – Honestly," an interactive discussion facilitated by Nancy Kidd and Marijane Helbick about the joys and challenges of aging.

December/January (postponed from December to January due to illness): "Aging Well Spiritually," presented by Rev. Jane Tuohy.

February: "Nutritional Needs as we Age," presented by nutritionist Nina Caron.

March: "The Gift of Listening," offered and presented by Rev. Rebecca.

April: "Exploring Choices in After-Death Care," presented by Patti Muldoon, Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts.

May: "Helping Your Doctor Help You," presented by NP and FRSUU member Karen LeTourneau, on medical self-advocacy.

June: "Poetry of Aging," a discussion of some favorite poems presented by steering committee.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

We plan to continue offering monthly programs and are always open to requests from participants. We hope to provide a place for interaction among participants with the program topics and presenters and to foster a feeling of community. We hope to have a few more members on the steering committee.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

We would like a few more members on the steering committee and input from the community on needs and interests for future programming. This is important for the program to continue. We'd like to know what the community is looking for in the way of compelling issues and topics. Also, continued staff support for this program.

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

We have asked our May presenter to include how racism plays a role in medical settings and self-advocacy. We will include some poems by people of color in our June program. We hope to do this more in our future planning.

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 opportunities 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” including some who are not members of FRSUU: we are not a closed group let alone a club. Through our reading and discussion, we have built strong connections and the real sense of being a group with common cares and interests and strive to Journey together through the paths our reading and discussions take us. Not infrequently our reading sheds light on current events and society, changes our thinking, and can thus move us to consider how we can transform ourselves if not our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Read works of fiction and non-fiction, notably Flights, This Strange Eventful History, David Copperfield, The Land in Winter, and have just begun The Great War and Modern Memory.
- Works read led to highly engaged group discussion, sometimes ranging widely to other topics of interest. When people did not care for a given book or a part thereof, they freely shared that view.
- Met weekly in hybrid mode (in person and via Zoom); group included a mix of FRSUU 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 - a voting process that is more akin to an elimination tournament!

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 church year?

- Better communicate about the Book Group to the wider FRSUU 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

Mission of Program Council:

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.

Membership:

Representatives from all groups are encouraged to attend. Rev. Rebecca and/or Rev. Laurel attended to provide updates on church happenings and receive feedback from lay leaders on upcoming initiatives.

Chairs: Barbara Garnis, Leslie Lawrence, Annie Maurer

Meeting Times: This year, an in-person meeting was held on September 8. A decision was made to hold the next meeting on September 2026 with arrival of the interim minister.

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.

Some of the Accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year:

- In September, the Program Council organized the Annual Action Fair. All groups were encouraged to person a table to provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to learn about groups and join if interested.
- A booklet identifying the mission and contact persons for all groups was published.
- At the September meeting the calendar identifying events for the year, prepared by groups and staff, was made available. Monthly calendars were worked on by all groups at the May 2025 meeting.
- At the September meeting, a discussion was held on the importance of groups exploring new initiatives and considering collaborating with existing groups.

Goals for 2026-2027:

- Meet with the interim minister to discuss the current status of the Program Council and explore the role of the Council within the organization going forward.
- Schedule a Program Council meeting to share the discussion held with the Interim Minister and thoughts/ideas from the membership.

What Will We Need to be Successful?

- Clearly define the mission of the Program Council to membership. Mission officially adopted by the membership.

- Support from the interim minister and FRSUU Board.

Members of the Program Council express their belief in the need for the Program Council and provide a commitment to participating.

Respectfully submitted, Chairs: Barbara Garnis, Leslie Lawrence, and Annie Maurer

Retired Old Men Eating Out (ROMEO)

Retired Old Men Eating Out (ROMEO) 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. Each month a volunteer chooses a restaurant and makes a reservation. 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 ebudelm@gmail.com

Short Story Group

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The FRSUU 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). We don't have "members" as such; 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 2025-2026 church year?

- Connect those with a love of reading and discussing; group continued to meet regularly (in person) throughout the year.
- Welcome diversity: mix of people with backgrounds in literature who are familiar with given authors, and those who simply like to read. Some attendees are (or were) non-FRSUU members.
- We have added at least three new attendees this year!
- We have just selected as a group a new source of readings—a new anthology—to replace one we have finished, one that meets the interests of the group going forward: 100 Years of the Best American Short Stories.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- The new anthology contains 40 stories, so should take us through the full year and beyond.
- 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 2026-2027 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; people appear to enjoy doing these meetings in person.

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

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. Pending that, we can plan to set aside time at an upcoming meeting, e.g. the start of the church year in September, to have some explicit discussion around this.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Himmel, thimmel43@mac.com

INCLUSION MINISTRY

Welcoming Committee

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The purpose of the Welcoming Committee has been to assist FRSUU in upholding its pledge to be part of the UUA's Welcoming Congregation program, which is an effort whereby congregations seek to understand current issues, needs, and areas of concern for the LGBTQ+ community in order to make LGBTQ+ members and friends feel fully welcomed and included in the congregation. The Welcoming Committee has aimed to offer opportunities for learning and growth while fulfilling the UUA's Five Practices of Welcome that are required to maintain the Welcoming Congregation designation.

Names of people Involved / Chair or chairs / Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

The Welcoming Committee was put on pause this year, so no one has been involved in the Welcoming Committee, there were no chairs, and there have been no meetings. Early in the church year, after an incident involving an attempted collaboration that fell through due to harmful comments exchanged over email, two members of the Welcoming Committee met with staff members who were witnesses to the emails in question. A follow-up conversation was held with one of those staff members, the two members of the Welcoming Committee, and senior leadership. A long, frank, and difficult conversation took place about a pattern we experienced: harm is done, acknowledged, and then left unresolved. A decision was made to put the Welcoming Committee on pause while we took time to explore new ways to do the work without incurring the harm that has repeatedly resulted from it. Unfortunately, this work was not prioritized and to my knowledge it has not been addressed. There is no understanding of what will happen with the Welcoming Committee or how the work of LGBTQ+ inclusion will be carried out going forward. I do not know the status of our renewal as a Welcoming Congregation.

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

The Welcoming Committee supported several of our values, including "authentic connection," "courageous action," and "love." In particular, we saw our committee serving the important role of helping to create a community where queer people feel truly welcomed to participate as our authentic selves. We also saw ourselves as playing a key role in educating the congregation so that they are inspired to act courageously in allyship with the LGBTQ+ community while we face a backlash against our hard-earned civil rights, ruthless

policing of our bodies and our relationships, and an unceasing pressure to yield to the right-wing attack on our existence.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Our main accomplishment this church year was to act with brutal honesty about the challenges we were facing as LGBTQ+ members of the committee and ask the church leadership for help in figuring out a new way forward that would not make members of the Welcoming Committee into targets for hurtful and demoralizing critiques from a small number of members of the congregation each time we endeavored to do the work of our group. We raised the issue that for members of the committee who identify as LGBTQ+, the work of educating the congregation was challenging and we often felt that the harm we experienced through our participation in the committee was not fully understood or properly addressed.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

I cannot speak for everyone who has been involved in the Welcoming Committee before our work was paused. My hope is that we will be able to work with an incoming interim minister to find a way to do the work that needs to be done while also maintaining our own sense of belonging in the community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

To be successful in the upcoming church year, we will need to have honest conversations with the new leadership about our experiences and look for other models that have proven to be successful for LGBTQ+ UUs.

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

We have seen our work as intersectional, and our oppression interconnected with other oppressions. We have sought to dismantle racism and other oppressions along with homophobia and transphobia at FRSUU and in the broader community.

Respectfully submitted, Holly Cashman, past co-chair of the Welcoming Committee

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Afghan Resettlement Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

Support the integration into the community of the Mirzayee family, who 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 of 2021 the family was faced, without warning, with the decision to leave all they had and knew to 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 Straubel, Peg Nicol, Bettina Turner, Mary Sortal, Margen Kelsey

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Third Monday of the month, 11am-12pm

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," so to speak, of everything we stand for.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Mohammad completed his MassHire Automotive Technician course in December. He now has several certifications that will, hopefully soon, help him find a better paying job. He was laid off in December which created a real urgency in finding a new job. He is currently working at a small shop in Salisbury and although his pay has not increased, he states he is learning so much more. We are actively pursuing other employment.
- Shabir passed his driving test in February. He has been on the honor roll at Whittier Tech during the entire school year. He is now very fluent in English and requires no academic support outside of school. He is currently going through the process of placement in an auto body co-op job. He is very proud that he can often offer support and explanations to Mohammad. They are quite a pair.
- Yaser is doing well in school and keeps very busy participating in two soccer leagues: Newburyport Travel Team and Seacoast United Club Team. He is a skilled player and valued team member. Yaser continues to receive scholarships for both teams.
- There have been several medical challenges throughout the past year. We have been fortunate to have competent and caring PCPs and specialists. Everyone is making progress.
- Mohammad's brother's family of three is doing well. Their three-year-old child began to attend Head Start in September; the transition was rough, but he is thriving.
- Najia passed her driving test in January. She is dedicated and determined to become fluent in English and is hoping to attend classes at North Shore Community College in the fall.
- NoorAqah continues to work in a small restaurant but has hopes to become a school custodian. We have completed several applications and been to two interviews.
- Zarifa continues to grow her sewing business and use her creativity to develop new products. She benefited greatly by using one of the three "commerce cottages" that FRSUU hosted in front of the church during the summer and fall of 2025. This gave her exposure to customers and an opportunity to use her English. With the skills she's gained through NAAM Artisans, Zarifa has confidence to participate in fairs on her own and seeks more opportunities to sell.
- *Huma is taking ESL courses at a community college with plans to continue on to Medical Assisting. She also works two days a week at Marshalls. *Shoba will graduate from NHS in May and plans to attend community college to increase her English skills before starting a program in the medical field or early childhood education. Both girls are working to get their driver's license this year.
- Soma is thriving at North Shore Community College, where she is taking a full load of ESL and is moving quickly towards finishing ESL requirements. She is taking the train or driving to school and is looking for a summer job as well. She is covered with full aid via FAFSA.
- Tawab is very successful in his ESL courses and continues to work at Otto's.
- Samira is in 6th grade at Nock Middle School. She has made friends at school and is very engaged in her schoolwork. Along with Samira, her mother and I attended her conference a few months ago and the teacher was very complimentary of her. Not only does she do well on tests and assignments, but she's also very insightful and thoughtful, which the teacher thought was quite remarkable considering she's only studied English for a few years. In addition to her studies, Samira has taken a liking to

sports. She's currently participating in an Elite Volleyball class after school, is playing on one of the Newburyport Girls Softball teams, and will be participating in flag football later this year.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- Academic success: Soma, Huma, Tawab, and Shoba having continued success in college.
- Job/career opportunities and financial independence.
- Continue to expand Zarifa's sewing business.
- Assist Soma, Huma, and Shoba in summer job placement.
- Ongoing work with family toward independence with 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 2026-2027 church year?

Continue to support partial rent for the family until the TRP is able to house them.

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 encourage implementation of the UUA's 8th Principle (stated below) and to deepen our pursuit of the FRSUU Vision, Mission and Ends and work with our minister, the Parish Board, and the FRSUU 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, Jim Supple, Sharon Tillman, Nick Place

Chair or Chairs: Susan Fasoli, Julie Menin

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Third Wednesday of each month from 3-pm.

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 FRSUU 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 2025-2026 church year?

- Planned and implemented the MLK service with Rev. Rebecca and members of the Leading Edge Team and led an activity titled “American Legacy – Know Your History” focused on Black history in the US during the January 2025 Justice Sunday.
- Successfully organized and implemented a film screening of the 2004 movie Crash at the Newburyport Screening Room, followed by a productive and heartfelt discussion regarding racial injustice in the United States.
- In collaboration with the Immigration Justice Team, we facilitated a screening and discussion of the documentary Hello Privilege, it’s me Chelsea highlighting the impact of white privilege. A pizza luncheon was provided.
- 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.
- Helped to organize the April Justice Sunday featuring representatives of the Louis D. Brown Institute and solicited registrations and donations for the FRSUU Team’s participation in the Mother’s Day Peace Walk in May.
- Met with the Leading Edge Team to learn more about Paula Cole Jones’ model, “Community of Communities,” focused on further implementing the 8th Principle into the work of our congregation. The Anti-Racism Initiative agreed to become an early adopter of this initiative.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- Increase member engagement in anti-racism and anti-oppression initiatives through a variety of workshops and racial/social justice events at FRSUU and in neighboring communities.
- Involve the FRSUU 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. We will use the UUA’s text *Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection* as a model and will learn from colleagues who have used this text to guide a successful workshop at the North Parish UU of North Andover.
- Build partnerships with diverse community groups and organizations engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression work, including the Newburyport YWCA.
- Collaborate with the Leading Edge Team to 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.
- Complete a 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 FRSUU community.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

- Continued support and commitment from the Parish Board and interim minister.
- 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 FRSUU members in this work during the coming year, as highlighted above.

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

Community Outreach Committee

Mission Statement:

The Community Outreach Committee provides a wide range of programs for families and individuals who are struggling and in need of assistance. The group also supports organizations with a mission and values that align with the mission and values of Community Outreach.

Membership:

Jeff Bard, Linda Buddenhagen, Barbara Budelmann, Nancy Crochiere, Barbara Garnis, Sue Gately, Jennifer Gillette, Ann Haaser, Annie Maurer, Ann Power, Faith Sherlock

Accomplishments in 2025-2026 Church Year:

Monthly Sunday Shared Collection: After soliciting suggestions from the congregation, the Community Outreach Committee selected the following organizations.

- September: Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center
- October: one-half Greater Newburyport Elder Pet Fund, one-half Merrimac River Feline Rescue
- November: one-half Essex County Habitat for Humanity, one-half Afghan Housing Fund
- December: Fuel Assistance Program
- January: Nourishing the North Shore
- February: one-half MA Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, one-half UTEC
- March: Among Friends
- April: Emmaus House
- May: Beyond Bond & Legal Defense Fund
- June: Newburyport Pride
- July: Community Action Head Start
- August: LGBT Asylum Task Force

Activities:

- September: We participated in the Program Recruitment Fair and recruited two new members to join the Committee.
- October: We donated a basket for the FRSUU auction, with products from local businesses.
- October: FRSUU members participated in the Jeanne Geiger Walk Against Violence. FRSUU was a sponsor of the walk.
- November: We organized a turkey drive. 15 FRSUU groups participated and 64 turkeys were donated to the Newbury Food Pantry.
- December: We held the annual Joy of Giving event for children that reside at Kelleher Gardens. The children were able to select and wrap gifts for their parents, siblings, and caregivers. Children ages 3-18 look forward to this event each year. The program is made possible because of the many gifts donated by FRSUU members.
- December: We held a Holiday Tea for FRSUU members and their invited guests.
- February: We sponsored a food drive for Community Services, Newburyport. In addition to donating food, \$297 was collected.
- March: We hosted Justice Sunday. Topic for presentation was "Celebrating Women."

- May: Sponsored a collection of items needed for Emmaus House, Mitch's Place.
- May: Organized a team and raised funds for the Louis D. Brown Walk for Peace.
- Among Friends: Each quarter we assist Among Friends, a program sponsored by St. Paul's Church. We cook and prepare takeout meals for 100 individuals.
- Swasey Children's Fund: Two members of the Community Outreach Committee administer this fund. This fund was established to provide children with opportunities that families would not otherwise have the resources to provide. This year we approved 15 applications and disbursed \$15,989.00

Goals for the 2026-2027 church year:

At the June 2026 meeting, the committee will review/evaluate the programs offered in 2025-2026 and vote on direction for 2026-2027.

Members of the Community Outreach Committee would like to thank members and friends of FRSUU for your generosity throughout the year. Because of your support, we can provide the above programs to the broader community.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara E. Garnis

FRSUU 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, over consumption, and other environmental challenges.

Names of people Involved:

Annie Madden (chair), Core Team: Bill Clary, Art Henshaw, Lance Hidy, Doug Latham, Patricia Skibbee, Sandra Thaxter and Kathy Roth Huse. Over 25 others following.

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 and what are some of your accomplishments for the 2025-2026 church year:

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.

In early September, we applauded Bill Clary's extensive support over the summer of the installation of the LMH heat pumps installed by Caswell for air conditioning and heat. He continued to troubleshoot this installation when there were several early problems this fall. ACES (Alliance of Climate and Environmental Stewards) presented their Toward Zero Waste Program explaining the state mandates for reducing waste and outlining their series of regional meetings on this topic (connection). FRSUU is already using compostable

plates, cups, and utensils, along with recycling bins. We can look to reduce printing whenever necessary going forward. We could in the future consider a ban on use of single-use plastic bottles at FRSUU, and/or advocating for Newburyport to adopt this as a municipal goal.

In October, we acknowledged Rev. Rebecca's announcement that she would be completing her ministry at FRSUU in June 2026, and we expressed appreciation and gratitude for her support for the Green Team during her ministry. We agreed to resubmit our Net Zero Policy once again to the Parish Board.

In November, we hosted Chris Nord of C-10 (connection) who spoke about upcoming legislation in the House, addressing installation of new nuclear energy or waste siting. There is concern about the bill in that it removes the requirement for citizen voting and input when considering such new facilities. He advocated for us to be in touch with our legislators, and many on the Green Team did so (action).

In addition, we agreed to focus our spring Earth Day Service and Justice Sunday on Climate Change, and local food production and sustainable farming. On the topic of food, the Green Team donated (connection, action, love) four large turkeys to the First Church of Newbury's food pantry for families in need for Thanksgiving holiday.

Lance Hidy, with additional contributions by Bill Clary, penned a remarkable document: "A Report for Congregational Awareness about Climate Change," with the help of AI. In particular, and in response to Lance's prompts, the report connects Climate Change to multiple social justice issues that are top of mind here at FRSUU, including impacts on people of color, low-income communities, LGBTQ+ people, children, elders, countries around the world not responsible for carbon emissions, amplification of gun violence associated with excessive heat, and sea level rise, food insecurity, etc. This report was abbreviated to a two-page handout, "Climate Change: What We Need to Know, and What Can We Do," that was shared with the congregation at our Earth Day service, with a link to the full report. (Connection, Action)

Bill Clary did an exceptional amount of work investigating and developing a proposal for solar on the Meetinghouse roof, with a leased system, to avoid large capital costs. Reinforcing the roof structure to support the solar load would be the only capital cost, at \$36,000 as estimated. The payback would be 5.5 years on those capital costs. Rebates and credits were understood at that time to expire soon, so Bill wrote to the Parish Board and Facilities Team and its leaderships to consider this proposal. The Facilities Team, on which Bill, Doug, and Annie sit, considered this proposal worthy of consideration. The Board finally did have us attend the meeting in February, asking that we continue to investigate the proposal. By early March, Bill explained, and notified the Parish Board, that he had withdrawn the proposal for this year, as there was now insufficient time to manage the many steps required to meet the deadlines for government subsidies. The Team is grateful for Bill's tireless efforts on this project (action).

By spring, we were fully engaged in organizing our Earth Day Service on Climate Change, with Rev. Rebecca leading the worship service and giving a strong sermon on the interconnection of climate and so many other issues of our times (spirituality). Gay Pearson again offered a powerful musical accompaniment (wonder, spirituality) to our service as she has done for many years. Four of the FRSUU youth group, introduced by Mara Flynn, read moving selections from "Old Enough to Save the Planet" by Loll Kirby (love, wonder). The afternoon Justice Sunday event was titled "Local Farms: A Community Conversation—the Promise of Local Agriculture," and featured two local farmers, Stacey Apple of Iron Ox Farm and Andre Cantelmo of Heron Pond Farm, and a segment lead by Vanessa Johnson Hall of Greenbelt, on the challenges to local farming related to loss of farmlands to development and to the expense of acquiring farmland (connection, action). The audience included local farmers, and plenty of attendees who support and rely on local farm stands for a bounty of fresh produce throughout the growing season (wonder, action).

Most recently, Pat Skibbee hosted, and many on the Green Team cooked and served, a Moroccan Dinner to benefit the FRSUU Auction. Thanks to our guests for the support of FRSUU on that delightful evening.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

Our plans for the 2026-2027 church year will be discussed at our upcoming May meeting. We hope again to directly focus more on issues of environmental justice and on the urgency of environmental action given the lack of attention and negative policies of the continuing federal administration. We will look forward to collaborating with our interim minister during a two-year transition between Rev. Rebecca's time with us and the beginning of an engagement with our next settled minister. We will, in particular, miss the presence of Lance Hidy on our Team as he focuses his time closer to home. He has been a strong contributor to all our endeavors over the years, especially with his recommendations for books on all matters having to do with the environment, climate, science, and so much more.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

We welcome others to join our core team or become regular participants. We will continue to partner with community environmental groups. 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?

The previously referenced FRSUU Green Team Report on Climate Change particularly calls out the links between climate and justice issues and impacts on all living beings and peoples. Fostering understanding and actions on the subjects of climate and environmental justice will continue to benefit all.

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

FRSUU Shelter Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The FRSUU Shelter Team collaborates with The Salvation Army, the City of Newburyport Mayor's Office and Police Department, the City of Amesbury Mayor's Office, area churches, social service organizations, and local businesses to provide shelter and meet basic needs for Greater Newburyport residents seeking relief during extreme summer and winter weather conditions.

Names of people Involved:

FRSUU Shelter Team members: Jeff Bard, Minnie Flanagan, Andy Lobb, Rebecca Lobb, Anne Maurer, Susan Ricker, Megan Wilson.

Major Jessica Berkhoudt of The Newburyport Salvation Army convenes the overall shelter system across participating organizations. The shelter is located at 40 Water Street in Newburyport.

Shelter volunteers also include members of Immaculate Conception, St. Paul's Newburyport, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, and the Newburyport Human Rights Commission.

Guests at the shelter are connected to mental health, housing, and other human and social services through collaboration with Emmaus Inc., the Newburyport YWCA, Community Service of Newburyport, and Eliot Community Service Agency.

Local restaurants provide nourishment to guests and include Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant and Marketplace, Port Vida Mexican Cantina, Abraham's, Chococoa Baking Company, and The Angry Donut.

Joppa Laundry in Newburyport partners with the shelter to provide laundry facilities for bed linens and other items that require cleaning when the shelter is open overnight.

Chair or Chairs: Rebecca Lobb

Meeting Times, Days and Dates:

Team Leaders Andy Lobb, Rebecca Lobb, and Megan Wilson serve on the Executive Committee, which governs shelter protocols and procedures. The Executive Committee typically meets monthly before and during the shelter season. FRSUU Shelter Team members serve in teams of three or more during shelter shifts. Major Jessica Berkhoudt provides timely communication about the shelter's progress and needs.

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

Through collaboration with the local network and personal interactions with shelter guests, members of the FRSUU Shelter Team live our mission to journey together in love, act with courage, and transform our world. Team members practice authentic connection by building trust and sharing resources with community members when they are most vulnerable. Guests of the shelter often have complex social and mental health needs, and weather emergencies can place additional strain on their coping abilities. FRSUU Shelter Team members embody courageous action as they support guests with dignity and love. Team members have also described the spiritual fulfillment of being part of something greater than oneself, as well as the joy and peace they experience through volunteering.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

The Emergency Shelter launched in January 2026 to provide overnight shelter for unhoused neighbors during extreme cold or severe weather.

- All FRSUU Shelter Team members completed training to work at the shelter, including orientation to the shelter facility and protocols.
- Team Leaders Andy Lobb, Rebecca Lobb, and Megan Wilson completed more than 35 hours of training in shelter services, first aid, and mental health first aid, and received certificates in Adult Mental Health First Aid.
- Rebecca Lobb, Chair, provided administrative support to the collaborative network, including taking meeting notes, creating a spreadsheet to document volunteer information, scheduling volunteers, and communicating with the volunteer network.
- Major Jessica Berhoudt, in collaboration with the volunteer network, developed working relationships with several social service agencies and local restaurants to build a supportive network for guests.
- Emmaus and Eliot Community Service Agency joined the network. Both organizations now send representatives to The Salvation Army on the second and fourth Fridays of each month to meet with people and help address barriers to housing, social services, and mental health resources.
- The overnight winter shelter provided 65 individual stays, offering guests a warm place to sleep, nutritious food, emergency clothing, hygiene kits, gas cards, laundry services, and assistance with other basic needs.
- Through the generosity of FRSUU congregants we raised over \$1,700 to support the shelter program.
- The FRSUU Shelter Team hosted the February 2026 Justice Sunday, where Major Jessica Berkhoudt and Al Hanscom, CEO of Emmaus Inc., spoke about housing and social support services in the region and locally.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

The Summer Shelter will launch in June 2026 to help prevent heatstroke and provide necessities to residents in Greater Newburyport when temperatures are forecast to reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit or higher after 4:00 p.m. The Summer Shelter will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and will provide a daytime sleep room, daylong nutrition, regular access to a private shower, laundry machines, fresh clothing, and customized personal hygiene kits.

The specific goals for the 2026–2027 church year are to:

- Create a shared vision for the FRSUU Shelter Team in collaboration with team members.
- Intentionally identify intersections with two or three other FRSUU ministries, such as Pastoral Care Associates, Friday Book Group, or the Leading Edge Team, to share knowledge and collaborate in ways that create a deeper and more impactful experience for the congregation than any individual ministry could accomplish alone. Actions to support this goal may include individual conversations or discussions at cross-ministry meetings.
- Continue collaborating with the Greater Newburyport network to strengthen the ecosystem of support for shelter guests.
- Add new FRSUU members to the FRSUU Shelter Team, with a goal of welcoming two new members.
- Share information about the shelter within our community to build interest among social service agencies and food service providers in participating in the shelter support network.
- Host a Justice Sunday to share information about the emergency shelter with our congregation.
- Participate in fundraising for the emergency shelter. Our team has requested to be added to the Sunday Shared Collection.
- Continue providing a loving and safe environment for people in Greater Newburyport who face life-threatening challenges during extreme weather.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

The Emergency Shelter is a new resource in our community. Continued participation, including networking, volunteering, and donations, along with sustained congregational interest, will help ensure the success of this collective effort to support our neighbors when they are most vulnerable during extreme weather.

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

We address systemic and personal forms of oppression by creating mechanisms that ensure people who are vulnerable during extreme weather conditions are aware of and have access to the emergency shelter. We provide education and mentoring to volunteers so that each person is treated with fairness and dignity. We also reflect intentionally on how to affirm the value and dignity of people of color and other oppressed groups through our communication, our presence, and the actions of groups within our network.

Respectfully submitted, Rebecca Lobb (Chair), lobbrebecca@gmail.com

Habitat For Humanity

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

To assist the Essex County Habitat for Humanity organization in building houses for low-income people.

Names of people Involved:

Rick Anderson, Elizabeth Beach, Scott Clark, William Clary, Vern Ellis, Lee Fasoli, Susan Fasoli, Mark Hodgson, Thayer Phipps, Mark Pine, Pat Skibbee

Chair or chairs: Rick Anderson

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates:

The Essex County Habitat for Humanity organization assigns us “build days.” These days happen once per quarter on a Saturday.

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

At the FRSUU we say the service is our prayer. There are no special requirements to be a part of this group, so we support the “come as you are” mission. We work together to build homes for people in need and therefore do a small part to transform our world.

What are some of your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

Our team helped to build houses in Seabrook, NH; Hamilton, MA; and Haverhill, MA

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

To continue to support the Essex County Habitat for Humanity with enthusiastic workers.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

Despite having almost a dozen members on the team, we rarely have more than three to four who show up for any particular build day. Sometimes people are sick, or out of town, or have other commitments. Ideally, we would like to have six to eight volunteers support a build day. Therefore, we will try to expand the number of people who have expressed interest in this program.

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

Habitat does not specifically target racial discrimination. However, since African Americans have historically suffered housing discrimination the addition of more low-income housing stock will be a small step in promoting equality.

Respectfully submitted, Rick Anderson, rickanderson006@gmail.com

Immigration Justice Team

What is the mission or purpose of your group?

The mission of the 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:

Our active members include Anne Mulvey, Mark Hodgson, Kathy Desilets, Sue Fasoli, Minnie Flanagan, Jean Noonan, Caitlan Erikson

Chair: Annie Maurer

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: We generally meet on the first Sunday of the month.

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

We support our Values, Mission, and Ends by trying to transform our world by making it more equitable and by engaging in courageous action.

What are your accomplishments in the 2025-2026 church year?

- Organized a forum with our state legislators, Rep. Dawne Shand and Sen. Bruce Tarr; speakers included Mayor Reardon and City Councilor Kahn.
- Distributed information on how to contact LUCE if ICE agents are spotted.
- Members attended a hearing on immigration legislation at the State House.
- Several members traveled to Burlington to attend the protests outside the ICE offices.
- Advertised and members attended various workshops on bystander training, court watching, and ICE monitoring.
- Provided information to members of the congregation on how to contact their legislators to support immigration legislation.
- Worked with the Merrimack Valley Project to present a workshop on community organizing.
- Worked with the Anti-Racism Initiative and the Afghan Support group to present a Justice Sunday.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 church year?

- To continue to work with Merrimack Valley Project and other immigration justice groups including UU Mass Action to support immigrants in our state.
- To more fully engage the congregation in immigration justice through programming and training opportunities.
- To assist the Anti-Racism Initiative in organizing and presenting a workshop on Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection.

What will you need to be successful in the 2026-2027 church year?

- The support and commitment of our team and the congregation to work on issues of immigration justice.
- Closer collaboration with the faith-based and other organizations that work on immigration issues.

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

The inherent racism displayed by the current actions of the Department of Homeland Security working through ICE demands that we act to support our immigrant neighbors.

Respectfully submitted, Annie Maurer

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

The mission of the Leading Edge Team is to support implementation of the 8th Principle by working with early adopters to implement Paula Cole Jones' framework, "A Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge."

Names of people involved: Susan Fasoli, Julie Menin, Hugh Martinez, Sarina Khan Reddy, Eileen Vargas-Costello

Chair or chairs: Leadership is shared by team members.

Meeting Times, Days, and Dates: Second 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 with 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 2025-2026 church year?

- Prepared and delivered a PPT presentation that summarized Paula Cole Jones' two-part workshop, Building a Culture of Inclusion. This presentation reviewed the "Community of Communities" paradigm and the Seven Levels of Readiness tool, which will be used to gauge how well our community groups address and implement 8th Principle. This presentation was delivered to the Parish Board, Justice Action Council, and the Anti-Racism Initiative.
- Identified the Anti-Racism Initiative and Board as initial Leading Edge Team adopters.
- Worked to improve awareness of the Board and entire congregation of the Leading Edge Team, to promote this as OUR collective work.

What are your vision, goals, and objectives for the 2026-2027 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. In the coming year, we would like to:

- Create information we will share with our FRSUU congregation about the Leading Edge Team: determine format, where we will share this, and timeline.
- Establish communication guidelines to facilitate conversations within and among groups as they relate to the 8th Principle.
- Collaborate with members of the Justice Action Council to identify ways 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 2026-2027 church year?

- Continued support and commitment from the Parish Board and interim minister.
- 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 FRSUU members in this work during the coming year, as highlighted above.

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

FY2026-2027 Budget Worksheet and Explanation

See next two pages.

FRSUU Budget for 2026-27 Church Year

		25- 26 Budget		Full Year Projection		FY 26-27 Projections
Total 4100.1 Pledged Income		\$ 585,321		\$ 577,535		\$ 620,260
Other Contributions		56,800		86,203		51,500
Total 4100 Contributions		642,121		663,738		671,760
Total 4135 Steeple Income		94,902		77,096		70,163
Total 4200 Building Rental		32,500		27,411		31,500
Total 4300 FUNDRAISING INCOME		43,150		40,949		43,500
4500 MISCELLANEOUS INCOME		1,000		1,699		1,000
Total 4549 Income From Endowment		55,968		55,968		60,716
TOTAL INCOME		869,641		866,861		878,639
Total 7200 Employee Salaries		483,288		504,220		527,272
Total 7201 Employee Benefits		110,636		134,994		190,789
7240.5 Workers Comp		2,000		2,000		2,000
Total 7500 Contract Personnel		101,400		43,000		44,158
Total 7000 Staffing		697,324		684,214		764,219
Total 8200 Facilities		79,360		118,770		110,444
Total 8360 Worship		2,000		5,450		4,000
Total 8370 Music		7,450		8,400		7,650
Total 8380 Young Church		3,000		1,500		2,000
Total 8390 Membership & Faith Formation		1,600		1,350		1,600
Total 8399 Communication & Publicity		4,000		5,100		4,800
Total 8400 General & Administrative		23,200		28,760		28,785
Total 8489 Social Justice & Community		18,000		18,200		18,000
8600 UUA Dues		30,000		30,000		30,000
Total 8350 Program Specific Support		89,250		98,760		96,835
8501 Miscellaneous Other		-		3,800		3,500
Total 8XXX Debt Service		-		-		12,943
TOTAL EXPENSES		865,934		905,544		987,941
Transfer from Sabbatical Reserve						38,714
Net Income (Loss)		\$ 3,707		\$ (38,683)		\$ (70,588)
Loan From the Operating Reserve						101,000
Net						30,412

Budget 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. Despite a very successful Annual Campaign that raised \$632,000 in pledges, the budget being presented includes a deficit of approximately \$70,000. Among the contributing factors:

- Numerous unexpected and unbudgeted repairs to our historic buildings.
- A 20 percent increase in our health insurance premiums, along with increased participation in the health plan by staff members.
- Payment of four months of Rev. Rebecca Bryan's sabbatical, which was postponed twice during her tenure and was never taken.
- General inflation and higher cost of labor and goods, particularly in building repairs and maintenance.
- Loss of steeple rental income of approximately \$32,000 resulting from DISH leaving the 5G network business and canceling its contract with FRSUU.

The budget proposal reflects the following regarding staff:

- Not replacing the position of Assistant Minister for Congregational Life.
- Creating a new 80% Full-Time-Equivalent position responsible for business management and church operations (title and complete job description to be determined).
- Increasing the Director of Youth and Children's Ministry to an 80% Full-Time-Equivalent position, with additional responsibilities (including some previously belonging to the Assistant Minister), to be determined by the Interim Minister.

The Parish Board plans to create an Operating Reserve using a portion of the bequest received from longtime Director of Church Music Barbara Owen. The church will draw on that reserve as needed in 2026-27, with a commitment to replenish the fund over a three-year term at 4 percent interest. The repayment plan is incorporated into the proposed budget.