

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24
Jan Salisbury

We have had a very special year. Our complete emergence out of COVID has replenished our quest to live our values and sprouted new growth and accomplishments.

Together, let's review the highlights of the year.

We identified that taking care of our spiritual home as our priority. This past year the Board has focused primarily on the needs of our building and grounds. When our HVAC system began to breakdown (back in July), it was clear we would need to make some big decisions. At the same time, our Engaging Space Implementation Task Force had begun work on options for redesigning our Sanctuary Space, the second priority of our Engaging Spaces Projects identified by the congregation in 2019 (the first priority being dedicated hospitality space which we completed in 2022).

The Board was grateful to have the support and expertise of BUUF members to help us discern, plan, and investigate financial resources for the continued long-term maintenance of our building, replacing our HVAC system and reimagining our Sanctuary.

As a result, a new HVAC system will significantly reduce our carbon footprint bringing us much closer to our goal of becoming fully carbon neutral. From the beginning the board unanimously supporting sustainability and reducing our carbon output when weighing decisions about how to proceed with HVAC repairs and potential replacements.

Our reimagined Sanctuary will invite more beauty, serenity and natural light, provide increased chancel space where our choir, minister and children can be seen and heard by all, and address safety needs. The board and task forces presented their plans and budgets in town hall meetings, culminating in a 94% member vote to support a combined Annual Giving Drive and Capital Campaign. We committed to building a new way.

To assure a successful process, the board hired a UU fundraising consultant Kay Crider. She provided a robust plan to assess our readiness to move forward. Her feasibility study consisted of in-depth interviews of dozens of members. From that we gleaned insight into your experiences and needs. Kay went on to train volunteer Stewards and provide our campaign team continued expertise and consultation as needed.

To date, we are at 85% of CC and 80% of annual giving drive. After only two months of stewardship visits, we have seized the moment to propel our building plans and commitments to our staff and operating needs forward. Thank you to those who have been Stewards (please stand) and all of you who have or will meet with them to consider your support of these goals.

As you will see from presentations today, the board and project teams have continued to employ fiscally responsible practices. Each project is now defined by timelines and financial commitments. We will continue these practices and keep you informed.

We are also growing! Thirty-two people joined us as members this year, bringing total membership to 304. You could not attend services and not notice the many new people that you don't know! People in our community are seeking a spiritual home and we are pleased to be a choice for many.

And we continue to care for others through challenges, sickness and death. The congregational team has provided meals and comfort throughout this year for many of us. I know, I was one of them and it was a life saver for me and my husband.

Through all the growth, projects and initiatives, Rev. Sara has brought us wisdom, vulnerability and humor each Sunday. Whether sharing the history of Unitarians Universalists, showing us a way to love our bodies, confronting privilege, understanding the power of black poetry and challenging us to live our values in our community, it was difficult to walk away from her sermons and not be reflective and inspired.

Of note, was Rev. Sara's facilitation of the memorial service of Sue Chew, longest serving democratic member of the legislature. Through wholehearted testimonials we learned that Sue lived her values in remarkable ways. Stories upon stories highlighted her acceptance of diverse people and her willingness to advocate for the poor, our health, reproductive choice and education. She modeled working across the political spectrum to get things done. We were honored to host Sue's memorial that was filled to the brim with republicans, democrats, her family and all the diverse people who felt her touch. It was a profound UU moment.

Our social justice ministry teams have offered us inspiring events to expand our spiritual growth and learning while also serving and advocating in our community for a variety of issues. helped create change in our world. We are always growing inside as well as outside.

All of these changes and progress could not have been achieved without the diligent committed work of our staff. Rachel Strong, Nancy Harms, Carrie Bastian, Mike Lemieux and Greg Duffy alongside so many dedicated volunteers to support so many important details of congregational life.

In this coming fiscal year beginning July 1st we will complete our HVAC replacement and hopefully begin work on our Sanctuary project. Your board will continue to bring fiscal responsibility and vision to BUUF and celebrate all the ways this community lives into our UU values.

Intro Agenda

- Note: We have removed discussion of a Bridge loan. The Board did a careful analysis of our current financial position and we determined we have enough cash to comfortably proceed at this time. This is due to the generosity of several members who have made major gifts in recent years.