

**First Unitarian Church of Orlando**  
**2022-2023 Annual Congregational Meetings**  
**May 21, 2023 –12:00 Noon**  
**Link to [Video Recording](#)**  
**Link to [Annual Report](#)**

*The mission of the First Unitarian Church of Orlando (1U) is to exemplify liberal religion in Central Florida with a commitment to lifelong spiritual growth and compassionate service to the community.*

**Endowment Fund Annual Meeting Called to Order @ 12:04 PM**

Endowment Fund Financial Report – Michael Cohen  
Endowment Board Election of Officers – Michael Cohen

**Annual Meeting of the Congregation Called to Order @ 12:20 PM** - Joan Nelson, BOT President. The quorum of 47 members has been reached.

**Opening Words & Chalice Lighting** - Reverend Margalie Belizaire and Joan

**In Memoriam** - Reverend Margalie, Sharon Kay Durrant and Benjamin Wyatt McKay passed this year. Please observe a moment of silence for each. May our memories of Sharon and Ben bring us joy when we think of them. Even in the sadness, may we find joy as well.

**Board of Trustees** – Joan, John Hartgering is serving as interim treasurer until June 30<sup>th</sup>. August Calabrese served us for many years as treasurer and we are grateful to everything that August contributed to our community.

**Congregational Meeting Minutes** - Vote on Approval of the March 19, 2023 minutes. The minutes have been approved.

**President's Report** – Joan, the board set six goals for the year: improve communication, support a robust Religious Enrichment program, initiate Strategic Planning, address membership growth and stability, address our financial future, and to continue becoming a Program Church. Some of our successes to note are the 1U Feed, a trustee in worship every week, monthly Conversations with the Board, supporting our new LDRE (Judith), Stewardship, Strategic Planning and Operations Committees were formed, we submitted and are now approved for our 501(c)3 tax status, a severance policy was implemented, the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle was adopted, we approved (and will continue working with) the new Garden of Remembrance team, and we installed the Rev. Mary A. Safford Historical marker on our property. Please see the Annual Program Report online for more information on other activities going on at 1U.

I want to share special thanks to our 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Team made up of Ellen Tetlow, Libby Jackson, Sandy Cawthorn, Charlotte Kendall, Wende Phillips, Allison McMillen, Nicki Drumb, Cat Rigby, Carrie Morgan, and Anita Thompson. A special Shout Out goes to Bev Alig for our new 8<sup>th</sup> Principle tapestry that is now hanging on the wall of our sanctuary.

Our delegates to the UUA General Assembly in Pittsburgh will be Joan Nelson, Allison McMillen, and Linnea Nelson attending in person, and Paul Knight and Andy Berry attending virtually.

**Garden of Remembrance** - Michael Lewis, the Memorial Garden Task Force members are Dan Homblette, Michael Lewis, Rev. Margalie, Rev. Marni, Charlotte Kendall. The previous plaque has been removed and restored, a master plan for the space has been approved, all name plates have been preserved and will be returned. There will be space for human and pet ashes. It will have a bench, memorial wall, hedge, paver path, landscaping, and irrigation. There is a \$18,600 budget and the project will be phased. The bench in memory of Irma Scudder has already been placed, and The Alliance has graciously donated \$2,000 to start Phase One. Annual costs for maintenance will be minimal and designated reserves will be established for donations. Fundraising will take place for the future phases. The Dedication and ways to participate will be announced in the future.

**Strategic Planning Team** - Gregg Buckingham and Kathy Homblette are co-leads, plus Linnea Nelson and Joan Nelson. The BOT is responsible for adopting the plan and bringing it to the congregation in one year at the 2024 Annual Meeting. The team has met with the Governance Committee and will meet during the summer. In the fall, the Team will reach out to the congregation to gain more information and insight. It will be a 5 year plan with milestone interim goals. We will be using the SOAR model (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results). Please help us start today by writing down your aspirations for 1U in 5 years and post them on the glass doors.

**Minister's Report** - Reverend Margalie, our Annual Report is almost 200 pages – What an Exciting Time at 1U!

This past year we have been experimenting with worship ideas: the Soul Matters theme, the Order of Service (QR code with no paper copies), ringing of the bell, call to action, the use of specific and consistent language, BOT participation, and monthly multigenerational services. We will continue online services and Vespers. We dedicated 3 children, held memorial services, but we had no weddings in the congregation.

Thank you to the wonderful folks who make this happen, Worship Team, Tech Team, Music/Choir, our new accompanist will start in August, EMC is on pause for now, Folk Ensemble. The Music Team held 4 successful concerts with two this coming year. Staffing is complete. We have increased communications with the new Blog, Weekly Update, 1U Feed Newsletter, Website, and Facebook.

We are hoping for church picnic June 18<sup>th</sup> which is also our Volunteer Appreciation Day. The Justice Team and the 8th Principle Team are very active. I wrote a letter to Gov. DeSantis and media outlets with help from Rene Stutzman on media contacts. Spectrum News interviewed me about the anti gay hate sign that was posted last week in Lake Nona. I represent us in the larger community by serving on many committees and councils and also with the UUA. We were again voted one of the One of Favorite Faith-Based Establishments of LGBTQ+ Community by Watermark Magazine. We unveiled a historical plaque honoring Mary A. Safford and our own Joy Dickenson was recognized with a Proclamation from the Mayor.

Next year I plan to focus on Social Justice, including reproductive and trans justice, the Caring Circle, and exploring alternate sources of income other than pledges.

**Lifespan Religious Enrichment Report** - Judith Stein-Farrall, DLRE, there were many programs in LRE this year including: How to Raise an Antiracist taught by Rev. Kierstin, the Twilight Zone class for middle youth, OWL, spirit play, Superhero Academy, Tai Chi, Meditation, Wellspring, and Mystic Grove. 29 families are registered, which represents 50 potential children from the congregation. We hired two nursery staffers, and we are looking for a third to be sure we have two adults at all times.

Goals for next year: focus on World Religions Curricula, Lifespan OWL (Our Whole Lives), building youth culture, partnering with Green Team and Social Justice. We are planning field trips to the local landfill, houses of worship, and civil rights locations. We will continue with enriched Welcoming Wednesdays, Wellspring, Tai Chi, Meditation, and Mystic Grove.

**Treasurer's Report 2022-2023** – John Hartgering, Interim Treasurer. Joan expressed thanks to John for stepping in suddenly to become interim treasurer.

We were very excited to receive the letter approving our 501(c)3 that we've been trying to get for years. A huge thank you to August Calabrese for doing an enormous amount of work to accomplish this.

As for the budget, the Finance Committee starts the process in December every year. All programs were asked for their needs, including the Personnel Committee which considers raises for staff. After total expenses were calculated, we determined what pledges we need to meet these expenses. When total pledges are received, the budget is finalized, the BOT endorses it, and the numbers are posted. Two forums were held for the congregation and a lot of questions were answered. We then report at the Congregational meeting and vote. The numbers are run again, and adjustments are made in the fall.

Our pledge income for the July 2022-June 2023 fiscal year was below budget. Building Use was down 18% this fiscal year due to the lack of outside events, including weddings. The Service Auction was an amazing event and raised \$25K, well over the \$18K budgeted. Expenses are within budget overall but are up due to the Enrichment Center roof repairs, higher electric rates, and an increase in health insurance costs. We forecast a \$35K deficit for this year, which we now project will be \$26K instead.

For the coming year, pledges were received from 50.5% of the congregation during the Generosity Campaign, which ended April 5. Of those who pledged, 59% increased their pledges. We are projecting \$452,000 from pledges, which is a 5% increase, while our goal was \$475,000, a 10% increase. Many thanks to Ken Lofgren for his careful projections that help us with the budget process throughout the year.

Here are some ways we hope to increase our income in the next year. We hope to increase facility income for weddings, workshops, and weekend meeting space. We have unused capacity in our great facility. We need to add a marketing team and event hosts. Another goal is to think of ways to continue the service auction. \$15,000 of the \$25,000 raised was from services our members offered. Dinners, tours, and other events are very popular and well attended. We hope to offer some of those again with bidding online. Carolina Lofgren and her team have been so important to our fundraising. We welcome ideas from the congregation and hope to hear from you at [Stewardship@orlandouu.org](mailto:Stewardship@orlandouu.org). We want to give thanks to the Endowment for the \$40,000 gift which helps us a lot.

We had hoped to give staff a 5% raise, and that will be adjusted due to low pledging. There will be 35% budget cuts for all programs. The one program that did receive an increase of \$3,000 was for childcare due to acknowledging the requests from the congregation so our parents can be fully involved in the congregation.

We are projecting \$43,000 in deficits for 2023-2024, of course hoping it will come in under that. We have raised almost \$2.5 million in cash over the last 5 years for building renovations and our new DLRE. We have many new programs and services here and in our larger community.

To preserve and grow our achievements, we need to increase pledges by 8% for each of the next two years and average 6% over the following 3 years. We can reduce the need for that by increasing fundraising income, increasing facility use income, and increasing our net new membership income.

### **Questions?**

Marty Haynie: Can you put the deficit in perspective with the undesignated reserves to make deficit sound more manageable? John: Reserves are held for the projected \$43,000 deficit. We have \$110,000 in undesignated reserves, \$150,00 in designated reserves. We have a guideline to try not to have our deficit be over 1/3 of undesignated reserves in one year, and not have more than 50% in 5 years at risk. \$50,000 has been set aside for self insuring wind and hail damage which is no longer covered by our insurance carrier.

Craig Alig: How much has been collected in the past year for Share The Plate? John & Gaby C.: The range in past years has been \$8,000 - \$13,000.

Mike McCleskey: Thank you to everyone who has worked on the budget process; I realize that it is a lot of work. I love this place, but I will be voting No on this budget. I am extremely concerned over the deficits this current year, this coming year, and the year after that. We are living beyond our means and it is not sustainable. We are in negative numbers, not to take away from the effort. John: This is obviously a concern. We would like to have a balanced budget. We feel we are taking reasonable risks and have cut as many costs as reasonably possible. We have said we need an 8% to 10% increase in income to balance the budget. I appreciate that our congregation is comfortable enough to express their views.

Marty: There is a tremendous amount of work and John H. is one of the most conservative people I've ever worked with. I feel this has been worked out in excruciating detail with a great deal of thought, a great deal of love, and a little bit of a leap of faith. I will support this budget.

**Vote on Proposed Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget** - The vote was a majority approval of the budget.

**Nominees for 2023-24 BOT & Nominating Committee** - Mary Ann Horne thanked her committee: Wendy Derrow, Mike McCleskey, Bonnie Rich, and Rene Stutzman.

#### *Proposed Slate for Board of Trustees:*

Paul Knight – Board President  
Gregg Buckingham – President Elect  
Wendy McCleskey – Returning Secretary  
Ted Nelson – Treasurer  
Jim Erwin – Trustee

Debra Reinhart – Trustee  
Rose Beiler – Returning Trustee  
Andy Berry – Returning Trustee  
Michael Lewis – Returning Trustee

*Ex-Officio Members:*

Joan Nelson – through 6/30/24  
Rev. Margalie Belizaire

**Vote on BOT members** - The majority voted to approve the slate as presented.

*Proposed slate for the Nominating Committee is:*

Nicole Deaver  
Mike McCleskey  
Margaret McLaren  
Wendy Darrow - Returning  
Mary Ann Horne - Returning  
Rene Stutzman - Returning

**Vote on Nominating Committee** - The majority voted to approve the slate as presented.

**Recognition of Outgoing Elected Leaders** - Joan Nelson thanked our outgoing leaders: Mary Dipboye, Jenniffer Allen, Allison McMillen, and nominating committee members Bonnie Rich and Eileen Simoneau.

Paul Knight: We all want to thank Joan for her two years as President and for all of the advice and tutelage you've given us. [Joan presented the Presidential Banner to Paul.]

**Installation of Incoming Elected Officers** - Reverend Margalie, thank you to the outgoing BOT members; you are relieved of your duties. For our new members Gregg, Ted, Jim and Debra, you are now installed. To our new Nominating Committee members Nicole, Mike, and Margaret, you are hereby installed.

**Comments, questions, and concerns**

No further questions.

**Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice** - Joan and Reverend Margalie  
Joan is honored to have served and grateful to have received so much support. Special thanks to the woman behind the woman, thank you to my wife Yvonne Vassel. I feel very privileged to be part of this community and look forward to serving in other ways moving forward. The chalice was extinguished.

Adjourned at 1:40 PM

Respectfully submitted by Wendy McCleskey, Secretary