

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON
ANNUAL REPORTS
2007-2008



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Other reports may be available as attachments at the June 13, 2008 meeting.

**Minutes of
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF
THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON
June 8, 2007**

At 7:30 pm President Valerie White called the meeting to order with a quorum of 44 members in attendance. Minister Deborah Cayer gave the opening remarks.

At this time the congregation considered and voted on the warrant articles, as follows:

Regarding Article 1:

“To approve the minutes of the 2006 Annual Parish Meeting held June 9, 2006 and the minutes of the 2006 November of the Special meeting held November 19, 2006.”

So moved, seconded, and approved, and passed unanimously.

Regarding Article 2:

“To accept annual reports by officers and committees.”

Valerie notes the 2006 -2007 reports indicate Susan Allison, finance committee chair, as a Presidential appointment. However, per our Bylaws the finance committee chair is the Treasurer, which is an elected position. Related comment by Bill Fox that he and Peter Raskin should be named as members of the Finance committee. Also, David Schoenfeld’s name should be added as a member of the Capital Campaign

Regarding Article 3

“To approve the Fiscal Year 2007-2008 budget.”

At this time Valerie praised the hard work and dedication of the Finance and of the Canvass Committee. The BOT met three times to work on the budget. It was the product of a lot of difficult work. Val gave context on the proposed budget as follows:

- 1) This year’s canvass was a great success. The canvass included seven more pledging units than last year.
- 2) The performance of the church’s investments enabled us to take about \$8,000 to fund the budget.
- 3) Regarding salary increases: At the Annual meeting three years ago, we voted on a commitment to moving toward fair compensation for our staff. The Board of Trustees has made it a priority to make significant progress toward this goal. The budget last June put us on the UUA’s “Fair Compensation” charts for the first time. This year the proposed salary packages go farther, as detailed below:
 - The minister’s package puts her in the midrange of a small church – which the Board feels is still inadequate considering her twelve years of service and value to our church.

- The Director of Religious Education's package approaches the midpoint of the range for a midsize congregation. We are a small congregation, but we have a Religious Education program the size and depth which would be expected of a much larger congregation. The proposed budget also funds a small amount of additional hours.
- The salary increase for our administrative assistant puts her close to market rate in this area. We note she has been taken on responsibility for the Chalice newsletter this year. The proposed budget also funds a small amount of additional hours.
- The stipend for our choir director was increased slightly.
- The sexton's position reflects a cost of living adjustment.
- Finally, the Religious Education committee and others strongly urged funding of a youth director at a cost of \$7,000. This is not in the proposed budget.

4) Included in the first draft, was a line item to a capital reserve account in the amount of 5% of our budget. It is mandated by our Bylaws but had been overlooked in recent years.

5) For budget purposes we discount the total amount of pledges by 5% to make a realistic allowance for pledges not collected. However, we erred in our first budget, which appeared balanced, by forgetting this discount. This necessitated an emergency meeting. Many options were considered. There was great resistance to not increasing staff salaries.

In summary, Val what the congregation is voting on is a deficit budget. It will mean we will be taking about \$6,000 out of the investments and putting it back into Capital Reserves.

Motion made to accept the proposed the budget. Seconded. Discussion as follows:

Discussion:

Philip Conover thanks Board and Finance committee for all this work.

Rick Dumont – Notes he will be discussing the Religious Education portion of the budget. (DRE and Minister excuse themselves from the proceedings at this time.) Rick also thanks Board on behalf of the RE committee, and in particular for the fairly substantial proposed increase to the DRE's salary. Rick points out the DRE was not fairly compensated per UUA guidelines last year. The proposed budget shows a DRE salary at a figure which falls between the bare minimum and the midpoint, i.e., about ¼ along the UUA Fair Compensation scale.

Regarding the proposed youth coordinator, Rick asks the congregation to remember this should be for next year, and for years to come. The position is greatly needed here in this congregation. The junior youth group has to go off to the Girl Scout house and it is hard to focus. We need someone to do right by these children. Regarding the Senior Youth group, their leadership is not now an official part of the congregational structure. Louise's job description does not cover it.

Valerie notes Tamsin Kemos said it was perfectly appropriate to include funds related to the growth in our Capital Campaign.

Alison Reid agrees with Rick's remarks. She is a lifelong UU who benefited greatly from her RE experience.

Janet Schmidt asks how the new Massachusetts law requiring health insurance.

Valerie's understanding is that both minister and DRE have health insurance available to them through their spouses.

Melissa Mills questions what would happen if spouse's insurance were not available.

Beth McGregor asks when UUA sets the guidelines is it based on the size of congregation or the size of RE program. If there is no staff directly responsible for the Senior Youth now, would it make sense to put that in the DRE's job description?

Valerie responds there were not enough hours in the DRE's package to do it this year – maybe consider it next year. However, Louise may not want this responsibility added.

Sue Edinger – states that regarding the Senior Youth group, she is taken aback that Senior Youth doesn't fall under RE, she hadn't known that. The Senior Youth needs a lot more support. We are in danger of losing kids.

Rory McGregor – As one of the four volunteers in the Senior Youth Group he feels Susan is right. Notes the experiment with Canton didn't work well. The teens need support and structure. He would want the Senior Youth group advisor position funded now. He is willing to contribute extra to help fund this, perhaps other are also.

Susan Allison – if you take 75 pledging units times \$4 a week you would wipe up the budget deficit and fund the youth coordinator.

David Nelson – hearing these comments, he asks that the RE committee look into a redefinition of the DRE's job description which would include Senior Youth.

At this time the RE and Minister are invited back in.

Rick Dumont – states the RE committee does not recommend at all expanding Louise's job description to include the Senior Youth Group.

Val solicits Deb's and Louise's comments on the Senior Youth Group. Consensus - The Senior Youth Coordinator (YC) needs to be under someone's responsibility,

Rick - The RE committee has formulated that the YC would report to the DRE and the RE committee. YC would be responsible for both the Senior and Junior group position, and would be in the range of 8-10 hours a week. The salary would be \$6,800 not including FICA.

Question - Can we separate this out from the rest of the budget? Or are we thinking of amending the proposed budget.

Linda Godfrey-Bailey – in last several years the budget has been very lean. Cutting what we have in the budget would be productive and might impede our ability to have meaningful worship. We need to look for other avenues to fund that deficit. Probably we should each reassess individually if we could consider increasing our pledges.

Tom D'Avanzo wants to support the idea of a YC for Senior Youth. This group is underserved. Even in the Junior Youth group there are kids drifting away and in Senior youth even more so.

Janet Schmidt – At first this sounded like both Senior and Junior youth. Could we get someone just for the Senior youth this year?

Louise clarifies that the primary focus of this 8-10 hour position was to serve the Senior youth group. Junior Youth fellowship could be added in for very few hours. Fellowship is different – it would be a once a month group meeting sort of thing for grades six, seven and eight.

Ellen Schoenfeld– As a junior youth teacher, she had an “aha” moment, that the kids were “flat” until this year when they started to do the Social Justice activities. There are four teachers who teach junior youth, there is great communication, and they give it their all, but it is not enough

Deb Cayer - states she clearly sees the need for a YC and would be very happy to increase her pledge to make this happen. She has concerns about the process, and says we need to plan better earlier in the year. However, she is very happy with the total budget process this year. The intention of the Stewardship committee is to work toward a mission based budget this fall.

Rick – last year’s proposal was for only a 3 hour position. About a week before the BOT was to set the budget, we realized 3 hours a week wasn’t enough, and doubled the proposal to 8 hours a week for \$6,800 a year.

Patty Fitzgerald– Does the money that’s raised have to feed the deficit before we fund the YC? In favor of using any money raised for the YC. Also, having had two kids gone through the program, in some instances it’s a matter of their health and well being to have what a YC offers.

Philip – His opinion is we should leave the budget the way it is, and do the YC funding outside.

David Nelson – wants to support Philip’s proposal. He has tried to be a budget “hawk” when on the BOT and is not comfortable spending money that those who went before saved. He has always been for a balanced budget. We put the line item in to fund the Capital Reserve as a “flag” to remind ourselves we have a legal and moral obligation to fund ourselves for anticipated expenses to the structure. We should approve this budget and make a separate resolution to raise funds and hire a youth coordinator.

Dan Huse – asks for clarification on the magnitude of the deficit, particularly the things that are counted as income. We are tapping into our investments – the deficit is larger than stated.

Bill Fox - looking at historical expense, re Capital Reserve, under BOT white sheet, page 2. It was an amendment to the Bylaws dating back to twenty years ago, but it has not been funded for at least four or five years. We have made contributions from 1994 through 2001 to the Capital Reserve. There have been no contributions since then.

Val - We included \$8,000 in income from the Wellington Fund.

Bill - notes the increase in appreciation in the Wellington fund is \$3,631. \$7900 was the income.

Tom D’Avanzo – sounds like income from investments was carried over, is that true?

Bill – not exactly, it was from the calendar year, and our FY is in two calendar years.

Also wants to point out the Worship Committee recommended the choir director’s stipend would be increased to \$2,000. The \$200 increase does not reflect this.

Susan Allison – One of the things we have to work on this coming year is putting policies and procedures in place as to how we handle our endowment funds, which show on the sheet as Unrestricted Funds. There are guidelines that say you don’t want to use more than 5% per year. The \$3,600 appreciation figure when added to the deficit of about \$7,000 totals \$10,600. That is about 7%, which is a bit aggressive.

Cindy Wilson - What about the thought we split the Capital Reserve Amount and try to separately reserve, i.e., not correct the non funding of the Capital Reserve to 100%.

Brenda –would not be in favor of cutting back on that Capital Reserve item. Questions when we stopping making that item payment.

Tom Yeransian – It was when the economy was bad, the pledges dropped about \$30,000 in one year, and we had trouble balancing the budget. Capital Reserve is a claim on our asset base and it important to have.

Pat Danner – Will our capital assets be changed according to market fluctuations?
Response - Yes.

Bill Fox – We now have a negative Capital Reserve. He strongly supports keeping the Capital Reserve as we have it in the Budget.

Susan Allison – Recommends a “Miracle Sunday” (where congregants gather together and stay in the building until enough money has been pledged to fund the budget).

Val requests a vote on the budget.

Rory – states he would like to pass the budget as proposed, make a personal contribution to deficit, and pass a separate resolution re YC.

Deb – in light of the programming already scheduled for next year, it would be important to have that miracle event in the spring rather than the fall.

Linda Godfrey-Bailey suggests raising money now.

Motion in favor of adopting budget as presented called to a vote. Passed.

Additional motion: that we fund the YC position to 8 hours per week for ten months, separately from existing budget, and start process of signing up who is willing to coordinate fundraising and hiring procedure.

Dan Huse states he is not comfortable with process raising money by committee. This has consequences for our budget next year and the year after. Also, it may be a mistake to think this will not affect the capital campaign next year.

Val this is the kind of thing we would expect to have as part of the Capital campaign. It is recommended that we include staffing monies as part of the Capital Campaign.

Brenda – the proposed motion feels like it needs to be a little more structured - like “if by certain date we raise enough money.”

Friendly amendment moved:

To provide that funds be raised in advance of June 30th to commit to employ a Youth Coordinator.

Comment - We don't have to have the dollars in hand, we do have to have the commitment for the dollars. \$6,380 works out to \$18.36 an hour plus FICA tax. It does not include any money for expenses.

Further friendly amendment to YC motion, resulting in motion being:

To attempt to raise \$7500 by June 30 and in the event that money is raised and/or pledged, to recruit and hire a youth coordinator along the lines recommended by the RE committee to serve eight hours a week for ten months a year.

Philip acknowledges Dan's discomfort with moving forward with an additional expense in or outside of the budget. We are really moving into a period over the next year that is difficult. However, we are going to grow and we're going to do it. We will create a future that seems outside of the realm of possible right now.

Motion carries with one vote to the contrary.

Article 4: To approve changes to the wording of the Bylaws relative to the Capital Reserve fund as follows:

In Section 13.1 insert the following after the first sentence:

- This fund may also be used for capital purchases greater than an amount approved from time to time by the Board of Trustees based on a recommendation of the Treasurer
And replace the last sentence with:
- Purchases or projects covered by this fund must be approved by the Board of Trustees, and those in excess of \$5000, must also be voted on by the Members at an Annual or Special Congregational Meeting.

Moved to amend the bylaws as presented, carries unanimously.

Regarding the election of a new slate of officers:

Lisa Yeransian presents slate of officers: Val White and Wilbur Edwards continue in their two year terms as President and Vice President. Kathy Farrell will begin a two year term as Clerk. Susan Allison will be starting in a new two year term as Treasurer. Philip Conover begins a two year term as Trustee, joining Bill Fox and Rory McGregor. Other proposed Committee members are detailed on the annual report from the Nominating Committee.

Motion made to close nominations, seconded, and approved

Motion to cast one ballot for the slate as presented by the nominating committee as approved. Motion seconded and approved unanimously.

Other Business:

George suggests next year an attempt be made to distribute documents via email to allow for better scrutiny prior to meeting.

Motion made at 9:15 pm to adjourn. Seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Zaniewski, Clerk

Minutes from Special Meeting– November 18, 2007

President Valerie White presided. The clerk confirmed that there were 30+ members in attendance, and therefore the meeting achieved a quorum

Article I was moved & seconded.

Rick Ripley provided background on the potential wireless service provider contract as follows:

- T-mobil contacted us
- Jack Armstrong & Rick met w/ T-Mobil to show them premises. T-Mobil engineer expressed concern about building being tall enough. They could theoretically take the possible contract off the table
- T-Mobil referenced contract of \$1,400/mo offered for 5 yrs; Rick thinks we can get to \$1,800/mo w/ 3% annual increases.
- Rick stated that town of Sharon is difficult to deal w/ on this, but we wouldn't deal w/. T-Mobil would deal w/ town applications
- T-Mobil is smallest provider, so will take up least amount of space. There is no definite design yet. T-Mobil has referenced three 3 foot antennas. T-Mobil thinking can fit bldg requirements in belfry area, without requiring an outside shed. Rick thinks they may need another access, and they would pay for it.
- T-Mobil stated the equipment makes very little noise and they would be responsible for sound proofing if needed.
- Rick didn't know if there was a need to shield. Jim Mullin pointed out that we have a metal ceiling.
- Rick stated that, based on past experience, neighbors may not want the equipment in area around them
- Utility bills - T-Mobil will put in their own meter if we want that, whatever is better for us. Joe Rando thinks our insurance would not go up; T-Mobil will provide their own insurance.
- T-Mobil would have to remove equipment at end of contract

Valerie White stated that BOT would be authorized to do contracting, but will make this a transparent process. BOT will tap resources as necessary to deal with the contract.

Tom D'Avanzo asked if we could get list of other churches with whom T-Mobil has worked. Rick said they will do that.

Kathy Roth opposed – 1. questions on safety of technology, 2., sees church as sanctuary from modernism, but cell technology symbolizes the rush of modern life, 3rd. as keepers of historic structure, will be inconsistent w/ that

Concern expressed that engineer hasn't even decided if our building is high enough,...why talk about a potential contract until we know if T-Mobil is interested Valerie White - agreed that had hoped for contract offer by now, but had to schedule meeting in advance. We expect the offer shortly.

Joe Rando stated that he had a background in physics, and many sources of radiation are stronger in people's lives, e.g microwaves. He also stated that non-ionized radiation is safe.

Colleen - wanted to modify the article to allow BOT to negotiate, then bring back to congregation for review prior to finalization. She was not concerned about health, but wants specifics, e.g. on structure, etc. Beth McGregor recommends that we should not amend, and the church should move to structure where BOT is empowered. George Bailey believes BOT should be able to negotiate, but that congregation can have veto power. Rory McGregor- we should bring back to congregation to agree or not.

Question on process, how usually works – Rick Ripley stated that the next step would be that if T-Mobil says steeple is tall enough, the parties will need to negotiate a contract. We will want an attorney w/ real estate background to review the document.

Valerie White stated, in response to a question, that the congregation is interested mainly because of financial reasons. The additional income will help w/ operating funds, e.g. add hours for DRE, make more social justice things, youth coordinator hours, etc. Joe Rando stated that it seems that the congregation's greatest concern is what

will happen with the structure of church - the out building. This issue be good leverage w/ T-Mobile or could have them walk away.

Bill Peyton proposed an amendment that allowed BOT to negotiate, but then bring back contract for final congregational approval. Valerie suggested that if people favored not allowing the BOT to negotiate the contract, then they should vote against article. Rebecca Kinraide stated that vote against the article may imply that church is against whole idea. Amendment was seconded. Joyce Bramhall stated we should trust the BOT to negotiate and deal w/ other issues. Bill Fox urged that we not adopt amendment for Rebecca's reasons. George Bailey suggested we allow BOT to finalize contract but then make negotiated contract available to the congregation.

Bill Peyton withdrew motion, favored George's idea. Tom D'Avanzo suggests that we inform neighbors before it is a done deal. Valerie expressed the intention of the BOT to do so in good neighborly manner. Tom D'Avanzo suggests we send a letter to neighbors not asking but telling them what we plan to do. David Schoenfeld suggested that, since we have the tallest building in town, and the town doesn't want a tower, we have resource to help town. We are mistaken to see this decision only as financial. We can do something useful for the town. Rebecca - churches historically have been at forefront of new things such as clocks on churches; this will be a service to the town. Rebecca stated that she also has a degree in physics and feels it is a technology that has been proven safe.

Valerie White stated that the BOT is committed to making any agreement a transparent process.

The article carried.

**Minutes of
SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OF
THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON
March 16, 2008**

At 11:45 a.m. President Valerie White called the meeting to order with a quorum of 45 members in attendance.

The meeting was convened to discuss and vote on a single article, as follows:

"To authorize the Board of Trustees to contract for and further to authorize the expenditures of funds for the Accessibility and Improvements to the Meetinghouse (AIM) project, as long as the total of the contracted costs and expenditures does not exceed available cash on hand intended for that purpose, and to ratify all actions taken to date by the Board of Trustees and the AIM committee concerning the AIM project."

Discussion:

Linda Godfrey spoke in favor of the article. The intent is to allow the Board of Trustees permission to continue to allow expenditures. It will lead to the ability to actually build the new addition. Among other things, approval is required to hire a lawyer to help with the AIM building process.

Valerie White added the church will only expend money that is raised.

David LaFontaine questioned whether the Board had a plan whereby if the full amount is not raised, will the AIM project still go forward?

Rory McGregor, member of the Board of Trustees and of the Stewardship Committee, replied he felt very confident the church can raise the funds necessary to complete the Accessibility part of the AIM project. He explained the costs for this are roughly estimated to be about \$800,000. This encompasses about \$640,000 for basic construction costs, plus architectural fees of about \$80,000, plus site work of about \$80,000.

However, Rory continued, other work such as restoration of the front steps, removal of existing bathrooms, and upgrading of the kitchen are anticipated costs which are part of the AIM project but could be deferred until adequate money is raised. Rory stated the church will not proceed with anything without a vote of approval by the congregation.

Rory finally stated some members of the Stewardship committee will be meeting with a bank to explore financing possibilities, so the congregation may have this option to consider as well.

Valerie informed the assembled members that when someone from the Stewardship Committee contacts each of them in the near future asking for his or her commitment to the Capital Campaign, half the target amount of \$800,000 will have already been pledged by early supporters.

David Schoenfeld spoke in favor of the article. He said he and his wife Ellen had first come to the church thirty years ago. They loved the grace and beauty of the two hundred year old

building. At that time the Religious Education addition had been built twenty years prior. The RE addition is now fifty years old and does not provide accessibility. They are excited “to have the chance to add our legacy for the next two hundred years.”

At 11:50 am the article was moved for a vote and seconded. It passed unanimously.

Valerie invoked Executive Privilege to inform the congregation though she had written in her last Chalice article she was counting down her days as President, the Nominating Committee had “twisted her arm” and she will be standing for President for yet another term. Members met this announcement with applause.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Zaniewski,
Clerk

Annual President's Report

Submitted by Valerie White

The phrase "they were off on a breathtaking ride", which comes from one of my favorite children's books, has been in my mind quite often recently, as I look back over the incredible journey this congregation has taken this past year.

We welcomed our new Youth Coordinator. We had Circle Suppers and First Friday Potlucks, a Holiday Party and a New Member Dinner, and a Yard Sale. We had Teacher Appreciation Breakfasts. The youth had retreats and cons. We worked with our UUA consultant about how to do our capital fund drive. We conducted a capital fund drive. We learned our minister was moving on to other challenges, and we searched for an interim to succeed (I won't say replace) her. We continued our work for justice in the world. We "graduated" our "Coming of Age" youth. We supported the fledgling Humanistic Jewish congregation, Shir Tikvah. We voted to explore the possibility of serving the community and improving our revenues by allowing installation of a cell tower inside our steeple.

As your president I presided over a Special Congregational Meeting and a dozen or so Board of Trustees meetings, attended various Ballou Channing District functions, wrote more than a dozen articles for The Chalice and a handful of president's reports to the board and composed and delivered speeches and "remarks" for half a dozen special occasions not least of which was the Sunday after the announcement of Deb's departure. I reviewed, negotiated and signed contracts.

Which brings me to the most important point of this report: All of you have probably heard by now that the capital fund drive for construction of our new, accessible addition was successful beyond our wildest dreams. We exceeded our goal by more than two hundred thousand dollars.

Yes, in the space of a few short weeks we raised more than a million dollars during a period in which we were grieving Deb's departure and unsure of what the future would bring to the ministry of this church. We raised a million dollars to make sunny RE space, efficient office space, and accessibility part of our future when we couldn't know the future of our ongoing professional leadership. That's because we have confidence in ourselves and each other, confidence in the lay leadership, and confidence in the need for and the rightness for us of this Unitarian Universalism of ours.

I said "confidence in the lay leadership", bringing me to the last point I want to make. I have told you before that it was my intention to have this second term as your president be my last. However, I have accepted the request of the nominating committee to allow my name to be placed in nomination for yet another term, being swayed by the argument that changing ministers and presidents at the same time might not be best for continuity.

Confidentially, although in truth I was looking forward to having more time to spend in other kinds of congregational activities (and out riding my horse), I will be overjoyed if the groundbreaking and, I hope, the dedication of the new addition happen on my watch.

I announced my decision to continue (if you'll have me) with some trepidation. Would people think I was intoxicated by power and determined to be "president for life"? The response of you all has been heartwarming. Folks applauded at the kickoff party and in church, individuals have spoken to me and emailed me with thanks and appreciation. All I can say is, I will do my best to warrant your confidence.

My heart is full of gratitude as I write my final report as the minister of this congregation. Like everyone else, I am thrilled and amazed by the success of the recent Capital Campaign; because of tremendous dedication, your long time dream of accessible space is becoming reality! I am filled with even more gratitude and satisfaction when I look around and see the relationships, especially across the generations, that have developed and grown in recent years. There is still much to be done in order to complete the building, and much planning for the programs that are the reason you're doing all this in the first place. Even so, the vision of this congregation's bright future shines like a hopeful promise on the near horizon.

For the first time, **my goals this year** were not created with the Board and Committee on Ministry. Rather, my goals emerged in response to an unexpected personal situation. Late last summer for several weeks I experienced a health issue that soaked up every ounce of energy and attention that I wasn't devoting to ministry. Astonishingly, by the time I healed, I also became aware that I was being persistently, insistently called by a "still small voice" to a new ministry, though I had no idea what that would be.

By the time I formulated my goals in November, they were simply

- to journey through my remaining months with you with honesty and kindness;
- to support leaders of the Capital Campaign and AIM projects, as well as the staff and church members, through this intense time of learning, planning and action;
- and finally, simply to "be the love" that I hoped all of us would discover and bring to our shared work this year.

Since I've never ended a ministry before, I thought that the only possible way to find a path through this would be to continually name the truth so that, like a compass needle pointing north, it could show the way, and then to hold the truth with the hands of love. Love understood like this is not so much a feeling, as it is an ethic of accountability. I think the way to measure how well I met these goals will be by looking into my soul, and also into the spiritual life of this beloved community, now, and in the future.

Due to the intense nature of the AIM project, I led only **one adult class** in December and January in UU History; I also co-led this year's **Coming of Age** class once a month (October through April) with Louise Marcoux. I am very grateful to Raquel Ramos who arranged for and supported some very satisfying adult programs in collage and Nia (authentic movement), to Mare and Kate Parker-O'Toole who led a wonderful paper arts workshop, and Beth McGregor, who led a discussion of Kate Braestrup's, *Here if You Need Me*.

Last spring and fall I **led the Board through an assessment** of the current state of the congregation. We observed that the church is actually a **solid pastoral size congregation** that has **dreams of becoming a program size church**. *And when we're collectively stressed, we all tend to slip way, way back into family size planning, communication and decision making dynamics.* We also observed that because the congregation supported the organic and spontaneous growth of the RE program for children and youth, that program has already succeeded at growing into a more complex operation. They are already functioning as a mid-size church program, requiring the DRE to plan, support, communicate and deliver programs in very different ways than in the past. The highly successful ways in which the RE Committee now operates could be a model for growth for the rest of the congregation.

This is all good and very interesting news (well, it is to us church junkies), but I see one downside, which is that unless congregation leaders engage in a planning process for all aspects of the congregation, growth will continue to be lopsided. The image that comes to my mind is of the congregation as a very nice size red wagon—it hauls a good deal of very meaningful stuff and it's fun to play in. Two wheels that represent Worship and Social Justice are good size, but the wheel of adult fellowship and learning is quite undersized in comparison; perhaps it's leftover from a much smaller wagon? Similarly, the wheel for children's RE is way bigger than any of the others—perhaps approaching a tractor size. This wagon has tremendous capacity, but it would be better able to steer and travel along if all smaller wheels had some intentional air of planning, programs, planning, dedicated staff time, planning, member participation—did I mention

planning?—added to them; and perhaps by making very intentional decisions about children’s RE until all wheels are more in balance—or are intentionally reprioritized.

I think the congregation has resources and capacity for this, and should engage in planning because, yes—“if you build it they will come.” It might take a leap of faith to figure out how to fund this for 12-18 months until growth comes, but I believe that growth is already trying to happen. The good news is that if you supply the necessary resources in advance as RE has successfully done (and as all the literature predicts) the wagon and its wheels will expand to hold and carry all who are enter the congregation on a regular basis but currently find nowhere satisfying to connect.

The only problem with this wagon metaphor is that it doesn’t even hint at the truth that a congregation is a living entity. It grows to hold not only our individual spiritual lives, but also, I believe, the life of the congregation’s own soul. Consequently, congregational leadership is more of an art and a discipline than a science. I believe this **congregation’s leaders and potential new leaders would benefit from intentional religious leadership education and development.**

Rites of Passage: This year I led **memorial services** for Hilde FitzGerald (Peggy Greenfield’s mother) Ralph Godfrey (Linda Godfrey-Bailey’s father) long time church member, Susie Gray, and my mother-in-law, Barbara Steele Cayer. I led **baby dedications** for Keira Ventola and Ruby Shatterberg, and officiated at the **weddings** of Toby Drewry and Rebecca Kinraide, and Ann Godin and Jeanne McAllister. This year I was surprised and honored to be asked to give the **Installation sermons** when Rev. Steve Landale (Eugene, OR), Rev. Ed Hardy (Bridgewater, MA) and Rev. Ann Willever (Franklin, MA) were each installed.

My **pastoral work** continues to be a vital and very rewarding aspect of my ministry. I have been deeply honored by your trust when you’ve invited me to explore the broken places in your lives with you. I’ve been tremendously inspired by your commitment to truth, spiritual growth and maturity.

Connections Beyond These Doors: This year I led a Nominating Committee/ Leadership Development Council workshop for the Brewster congregation; I was asked to lead a discussion session at the UU Revival (which unfortunately has been postponed). I meet with BCD UU ministers every month and as often as possible with my Sharon clergy colleagues. I serve on the UUA’s New England Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy; we meet three times a year with student ministers early in their education and assessment process to give them feedback about their path into ordained ministry.

Blessing is an Old English word that simply means “to speak well of…” When we lift life’s good things into the light of our consciousness, our lives are illumined with grace and love. As a final blessing, a way of leaving you with the light of my love for you, I simply say: I am grateful to all who lead and serve, organize and protest, fundraise and strategize, teach and mentor, sing and play, pray and argue, weed and plant, light candles and listen, speak and support, worship and grow, all who love one another as well as the aching, bruised world that we could not separate ourselves from if we tried. I see the beauty that shines through your brokenness; I see your courage, strength and goodness. I believe you make an incredible difference in the world—sometimes the crucial difference. I will watch your progress from afar with thrill and joy. I will hold this congregation in my heart and my prayers, and know that you are holding me, too, with love. Thank you for everything, especially that which can’t be seen, or heard, or touched, but only felt in our hearts.

With faith, hope and love, Deborah

Accessibility and Improvement of the Meetinghouse Project Annual Report

Steering Committee Report

Membership:

Linda Godfrey-Bailey, Chair
Jack Armstrong
Deb Cayer
Phillip Conover
Rory McGregor
Joe Rando
Ellen Schoenfeld

What we did:

Selected a new architect, Lou Alleveto
Interviewed a general contractor, Digiando
Needs assessment for space used to develop design with staff, committee chairs, minister, BOT and other frequent users
Communicated the plan to the congregation, obtained comments and finalized revised design
Worked with BOT and Financial Committee on clarifying the need for insurance coverage, financial process and accountability during the building process
Wrote articles for the Chalice
Met with abutting neighbors to inform them of our plans
Met with interested members of congregation to discuss incorporation of green design features into bid documents
Coordinated with Stewardship and BOT concerning timeline for project and capital campaign

What we plan to do:

Obtain needed permits and approvals from Historic commission, zoning board, and Board of Health.
Coordinate process of building with short term planning taskforce and all committees
Track expenses during building process
Publicize the building project to the community
Build accessible addition
Plan celebrations and ceremony with interim minister for groundbreaking and opening
Assist in transition to normal operations after the building is completed
Disband AIM project committee



Nuts 'N Bolts Committee Report

Member's:

Joe Rando, Chair
Jack Armstrong
Deb Cayer
Linda Godfrey-Bailey
Rory MacGregor
Melissa Mills
Alison Reid
Ellen Schoenfeld
Jean Zaniewski

Up till now:

- Schematic building plan finalized
- Site plan finalized
- Septic system designed with preliminary approval of concept form Board of Health
- Bid docs complete and sent to general contractor today

Future:

- United Consultants and Attorney Joel Fishman are meeting with building inspector and town engineer early next week
- Return with final plan to Historical Commission
- Once this meeting occurs the ZBA hearing will be scheduled
- Go before Board of Health for final septic permit
- Get permits from ZBA
- Select subcontractors
- Get building permit (Digiando)
- Build building



Outreach Committee Report

Members:

Susan Edinger, Chair
Phillip Conover
Linda Godfrey-Bailey
Mare Parker-O'Toole
Alison Reid
Ellen Schoenfeld

-Susan Edinger took over chair of the Committee, from Philip Conover, in September.

-An insert was placed in the Order of Service at the second service of the year, to inform new members and update returning church members of status of AIM project.

-Outreach worked to ensure an AIM related article was in every Chalice through the year; some were written by Outreach.

-Worked on putting a timeline on the main bulletin board, the final version undertaken by Jack Armstrong.

-Mare Parker-O'Toole developed and put on the Web an AIM web page that was linked to the main church web site.

-Whereas goal for past year was to keep congregation informed of AIM progress, the goal for next year is to reach out and inform greater community of AIM project-especially since it will start becoming physically visible.

Short Term Planning Task Force
Final Report on Temporary Program and Office Space

May 14, 2008

This is a summary of the Short Term Planning task force's activities and recommendations through May 12, 2008. The full report is available by request in the office.

The Short Term Planning Task Force has been working since November 2007.

Members (in various configurations) have been Jack Armstrong, Deb Cayer, Louise Marcoux, Janet Mayo and Joe Rando; David Nelson provided much expertise and consultation on local rental options.

In summary, we recommend that worship services continue to be held in the sanctuary of the Meetinghouse during construction with nursery space provided in the vestry. We recommend that a multi-age RE class be held in the Sharon Public Library during worship services.

Office space for administrative, RE, treasurer, and ministerial functions should be secured at 79 Pond St. Storage for "in use" RE supplies and office equipment and files would be available within the 79 Pond location. "Long term" storage for items not required during the construction period still must be determined but it is expected that such materials can be stored within space volunteered by members of the congregation.

Copies of the questionnaire used to determine the needs of the committees and the congregation and a copy of the proposal made to the Library are available by request.

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Our **operating principle** was to be very thorough in investigating options, communicate clearly, and keep this project as simple as possible.

Our **methods** were to create a questionnaire in November for RE, Worship and other users of church space; participate in all Committee Chairs meetings to continue to determine requirements and appropriate solutions and to provide information on the status of the project; interview in person all users of the church offices; work through Joe Rando with DiGiando Construction to get accurate information about realities of construction; work with David Nelson to identify commercial rental space.

After talking with congregation leaders, members and professional staff, and representatives from the construction company, our **operating assumptions** have been:

- The congregation will be able to occupy the Meetinghouse and Vestry during construction.
- The present water, bathrooms and kitchen will be functional the entire time the new program space is under construction. When it's time to decommission existing bathrooms, new bathrooms will be fully functioning.
- Plans should be carefully made for HEAT to be restored by the time it gets cold in the fall (November 2008). We will continue to explore back up locations for Sunday services should this prove unworkable.
- The congregation will use the Meetinghouse for Sunday services, and possibly for program space during the week (the alcove works well as "circle space" with a ring of chairs added.)

- The vestry will be available for program space during the week and on weekends when not used for nursery or coffee hour.
- Infants and toddlers will be in an on-site nursery (in the same building as parents). As long as the congregation is able to use the Meetinghouse, a “roll out” nursery can be set up in a corner of the vestry each Sunday.
- Children and adult programs need to be quite close together on Sunday morning. Parents widely agreed that they would not be likely to attend services if they had to drive their children to and from remote RE classes in the fall.
- The DRE and RE leaders prefer temporary space that would allow for one large, multi-age program, with additional program space nearby for preschoolers. The option of the Girl Scout House should be held in reserve in case it proves to be needed for use by older children’s classes/groups on Sunday morning.
- The congregation may need the Sexton’s services more, not less, during this time due to heavy/concentrated program use and construction dust, and also at remote offices.
- Five distinct individuals/groups use the congregation’s office space and will need to be temporarily accommodated: the Administrative Assistant, DRE, Treasurer and Contract Bookkeeper, Lay Leaders, and the Interim Minister. The needs of each have been carefully surveyed and noted.
- In addition, the work flow/processes of each of these five users have been carefully analyzed and considered.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Armstrong, Deb Cayer, Louise Marcoux, Janet Mayo, Joe Rando

## Annual Report - Building and Grounds Committee - May, 2008



The mission of the Buildings and Grounds Committee (B&G) is to keep the church in repair and if we have time, to make it better. We are deeply interested in, but remain separate from the AIM project. Depending on how AIM goes, we may participate in ways like resizing some of the pews so that the Sanctuary aisles can be wheelchair accessible.

Last year we had a budget of up to \$23,785. This covers utilities (which are back over \$120 per week probably due to increased rates), the Sexton, trash collection, general repairs, a yearly professional floor cleaning and yearly servicing of the furnace. We also cover the insurance, snow plowing, and fire and alarm inspections. Anticipating the AIM project remaining on schedule, this budget should increase over the next year to cover increased utilities and Sexton time. We may also need to budget a yearly elevator inspection and our snow plow charges may increase since we will have more parking areas to plow.

Our big project over the past year was the painting of the parking lot side of the main church. Many church members pitched in but the overwhelming majority of work was done by Don Fail. There were no real water emergencies over the year since Gare Reid, using a design idea by Ken Olum, built a sump pump for the outside entrance to the RE wing. Peter Wilson repaired the counterbalance for a Sanctuary window which made it much more comfortable in the warm weather and replaced the sound system upstairs. Jack Armstrong has been very busy with AIM and still finds time to organize the lawn mowing over the summer. Ken Zaniewski arranges for the snow plowing. I wish I could list every contribution by all the members but they do so much I'm sure I would forget someone or something.

We have a core of 6 members and many others who will help on a big project with a simple request. In some ways the entire congregation belongs to the committee: they help with Blue Jean Sundays and other B&G activities like the lawn mowing and the yearly yard sale, which for the time being is a B&G function.. We have one paid employee, the Sexton, Vasco Freitas, who does a great job, is flexible with his hours, and is worth much more than we pay him. We also hired a young man on an intermittent basis to shovel snow from the walks: Evan Gregory, who was fairly busy this year and I hope can work with us next year, too.

We are looking forward to the AIM project. There will be parts of the old church to fix or modify because of the building. There will be new maintenance procedures to learn and more areas to look after. It may be more work but it will certainly be worth it.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Mullin

## Committee on Ministry Report

The Committee on Ministry (CoM) for 2007-2008 is pleased to say it has met on a regular basis with the Rev. Deborah Cayer to discuss the overall spiritual health and needs of the congregation. It has been our charge to keep our fingers on the pulse of the church, through casual and intentional conversations with fellow lay members, to help connect one another and the minister.

Although the by-laws call for three lay members to serve on the CoM, we have operated this year with only two. And because it is uncertain whether our future interim minister will wish to work with the current CoM or develop a transition team of his or her own, the near-term future of the Committee on Ministry is a bit unclear.

Members of CoM (and other members of the congregation) were scheduled to help facilitate Heartfelt Conversations with Rev. Deborah Cayer during the month of May.

Respectfully, Irving Post and Edele Panessidi, chair

## Annual Financial Report from the Treasurer Fiscal Year 2007-2008

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### **Budget Results** as of April 30, 2008 (83% through the year)

|               | <i>Budget</i> | <i>Actual</i> | <i>Per Cent Received</i> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Income        | \$186,755     | \$154,884     | 83%                      |
| Expense       | \$190,913     | \$148,776     | 78%                      |
| Pledge Income | \$152,053     | \$128,505     | 85%                      |

Pledge income is the primary source of income, 81% of the budgeted income. Compensation for employees and contractors comprises the primary source of expenses, \$126,722 or 66% of the budgeted expenses.

### **Assets**

The total current assets as of April 30, 2008, equal \$456,759, including \$260,151 of assets dedicated to the Accessibility and Improvement of the Meetinghouse (AIM) project and \$196,608 of assets dedicated to the General and Designated Funds. The total assets as of April 30, 2007 equaled \$237,431, including \$47,209 of assets dedicated to the AIM project and \$190,222 of assets dedicated to the General and Designated Funds. As shown, the increase is principally due to the increased capital raised for the AIM project.

### **Pledges**

The capital campaign toward the AIM project has raised \$1,017,674 in total pledges, and the annual canvass toward the Operating Budget has raised \$151,846.

**The Finance Committee** for the past year: Susan Allison, Treasurer; Bill Fox, Peter Raskin, and Tom Yeransian. The committee worked diligently to clarify, update, and improve written policies and reports on the following subjects:

- Responsibilities and Roles of Treasurer and Finance Committee
- Position of Assistant Treasurer approved by BOT. Now working on job description
- Finance Guidebook
- Allocation Report (formerly Designated Fund Report)
- New Designated Fund Report
- Investment Policy
- Insurance Policies: Coverage and Cost reviewed
- Guidelines for auditing prepared
- First-ever audit of church finances conducted
- Some redundant funds consolidated/transferred
- Financial controls for AIM project implemented
- Set of financial controls for church funds drafted

## Report of the Interim Search Task Force

While similar in many ways, the task force members did run the gamut from 3-year to 30-year church membership, representing a range of ages and experience.

At this writing the interim Search Task Force is nearing the end of a second round of candidate interviews. The interim search process has been more complicated, intense and lengthy than previously (at least according to remembrance of searches past).

We've just learned that the compensation packages must be cut to address a portion of the budget deficit for 2008-2009. It isn't yet clear what impact this might have on the decision of the candidate to whom we offer the Interim Minister position.

Some meetings with candidates were conducted by phone, not ideal, but necessary in some instances. At least that allowed us to interview everyone within the necessary timeframe. In total, we've interviewed seven candidates, two by phone and five in person.

Task force discussions were frank and respectful (i.e., not frank but respectful).

We must express special thanks to Rick Dumont for putting together our electronic packet, which garnered praise from all of the candidates and which made a huge contribution to their favorable impression of us.

Likewise, special thanks go to Rick for his ongoing work on everyone's behalf maintaining uusharon.org online. This resource was also used by our candidates to help them learn who we are, where we've been and where we're headed, as well as regularly making us available to other seekers.

My gratitude to David Schoenfeld, Alison Reid and Liz Moore (and to our respective patient, nurturing families) is, I fear, inadequately expressed.

We don't know the outcome of our search as I write this. We expect that Liz's refrain, "It will all be alright," will ring true in the end.

We do know it will be the start of the next stage of our being.

Edele Panessidi, Chair  
for the Interim Search Task Force  
Liz Moore  
Alison Reid  
David Schoenfeld

## Membership Committee Annual Report

The Membership Committee for 2007-08 — Jean Zaniewski, Lisa Yeransian, Kathy Farrell, and cochairs Cindy Wilson and Terry Fitzgerald — focused its efforts on encouraging the congregation's growth, conducting the annual census for our Fair Share contribution to the Unitarian-Universalist Association, and preparing a blueprint for future committees to follow.

At each Sunday service, the committee provided an "inside greeter" to provide a welcoming presence for visitors, answer their questions about the Unitarian Church of Sharon and its programs, and introduce them to members with similar interests. Based on names and addresses recorded in the visitors book, the greeters also mailed follow-up postcards inviting them to become involved in the congregation.

The committee worked with the Rev. Cayer to hold "UU 101" sessions in the fall and spring for repeat visitors who expressed interest in learning more about the church and potentially joining its congregation. There was also a Saturday brunch gathering this spring for likely new members that provided a history of Unitarian-Universalism, an overview of the UCS, and a discussion about the spiritual, personal and financial commitments that are involved in becoming a member.

Over the course of the church year, 8 people completed intent forms and were voted into membership by the Board of Trustees. The new members and their families were welcomed by the congregation during a special church service, as well as a potluck dinner at the church hosted by the committee, the Rev. Cayer, the board of trustees and the chairs of the church's other committees. The new members this year are Erin Bigelow, Erin Cassidy-Lunman, Ellen Davey-Fleming, Brian and Sheila Pariser, Dawn Rossi, Linda Rossi, and Mary Forbes Russell.

The annual census of church members in January took on added significance this year, with the AIM fund-raising campaign and an interim minister on the horizon. In reviewing the rolls, the committee noted that a number of longtime members had not been actively involved in the congregation, whether by attending services or providing financial contributions or other signs of support, for several years. Some of them had moved from the area, while others still live nearby but no longer participated in UCS activities. Since the church pays its Fair Share dues to the UUA based on the number of members, the committee decided to contact everyone in this group, and managed to speak with most of them. Along with some good "catching-up," the committee asked whether shifting their status from member to friend would be appropriate for them. Based on the conversations, the committee recommended to the trustees that 10 members have their status changed to friends, which maintains a relationship without requiring a dues payment to the UUA.

Current records show the congregation has 123 adult members.

As an offshoot of this year's census, we decided to start regularly checking in with members and friends who seem to be losing contact with the church, in case they are in need of support or face issues limiting their participation in our community.

The committee, which held several ad hoc sessions in addition to its monthly meetings this year, will continue its work over the summer to develop a formal mission statement, a calendar for membership events, and recommendations to the trustees for expanding the church's profile in the community as a way to attract additional members.

## Religious Education Program Report

Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2008

### Religious Education Committee Report

Under the leadership of the RE Director, Louise Marcoux, programming for our youth continues to be outstanding. Louise leads our committee and the entire RE Program with unequalled passion, commitment and patience. She was recognized this year for her ongoing professional development and this is a significant investment in her professionalism and knowledge. Our program will count the dividends of this investment for years to come.

Louise continues to manage an RE Program that has the look and feel of a mid-sized congregation within a church defined as a small congregation. She consistently works more hours than is contracted. This becomes a real challenge when faced with the unexpected (for example, AIM Project Planning).

Our RE Program will be significantly affected by the AIM Building Project, assuming construction begins in the late summer or early fall 2008. We are excited by the potential, but it will be a challenging year for the RE Program. Our goal is to continue to provide quality RE programming in spite of the potential space limitations. Members of the Unitarian Church of Sharon and their children are known for their compassion and patience so we hope (pray) that goodwill will prevail during construction. While the RE Committee can't mandate goodwill, we will do our best with good planning.

Sue Bollens, our new Youth Coordinator, provided incredible leadership during her first year. We believe her expertise and experience in working with the youth of our congregation is a vital investment in our young adults. Not having this resource would be like Manny Ramirez forgetting to touch third base after hitting a homerun. We have such a wonderful program for our younger children and we want to offer the same quality programming to our older children so they continue their spiritual journey within Unitarian Universalism.

The RE Committee worked well together, meeting at least monthly. During the year each member was responsible for managing a specific committee responsibility. This seemed to work well for the committee, spreading work and responsibility among the members. Below, is outlined the responsibilities for each member.

Peter Raskin, Chair

Alison Reid, Space and Aesthetics and Special Events

Janet Limke, Teacher Recruitment

Glenn Rivard, Registration/Greeting and DRE Support

Ken Olum, Teacher Breakfasts

Jean Zaniewski, Space and Aesthetics

Christine Cavallaro, Planning and Administration

Rebecca Kinraide, Safety

## Annual Report from Director of Religious Education

### **Program:**

Sunday morning religious education

Groupings: Nursery and 4 classrooms

Leadership: 22 teachers (adult and youth), 6 youth assistants

Enrollment (birth through Grade 8): 63

Average attendance: 32

37 sessions from September through June

### Curricula:

Preschool/Kindergarten: *Chalice Children; Revels (Haunting House: The Barn); Nests*

Kindergarten-Grades 1&2: *Around the Church, Around the Year; Revels*

Grades 3-4-5: *We Believe; Revels; In Our Hands*

Junior Youth Group: *Coming of Age in Neighboring Faiths; Revels; Worship Workshop*

*Revels* (K-8) centered on exploring the story of the Pull-Together Morning and retelling the story to the congregation with hand- and shadow-puppets.

### Curricula developed and tested this year:

5 sessions of *Revels (Pull-Together Morning)*,

6 sessions of *Coming of Age in Neighboring Faiths*,

11 sessions of *Worship Workshop*.

Sue Bollens and I coordinated the classroom activities of the Junior Youth Group with the monthly activity of the Junior Youth Fellowship Group in April. Together we were able to provide an extended learning experience integrating spirituality and social action. JYG spent 3 weeks developing a worship service about reaching out to serve others, immediately followed by the JYFG's community service project at MainSpring House.

### **Coming of Age**

Leadership: Rev. Deborah Cayer, Louise Marcoux, 10 mentors

Participants: 10 youth

The Coming of Age program is intended to support youth faith development through personal reflection and community dialogue. The 10 youth who elected to participate met twice each month for seven months: once per month with the Minister and Director of Religious Education and once with their mentors and peers. Content was introduced during the classes with the minister and then explored in greater depth in the small group ministry sessions. The mentor/peer meetings included one-on-one dialogues between mentors and youth as well as small group ministry sessions with 3 to 4 mentor/youth dyads. This format fostered strong mentoring relationships.

### **Seasonal observances:**

Halloween Party (coordinated by Rebecca Kinraide)

Holiday Make-and-Take Craft Workshop (coordinated by Alison Reid)

Pysanky

During the six weeks prior to Easter, several workshops were offered on the Ukrainian art of egg dyeing, pysanky (puh-SAHN-key). The workshops promoted exploration of creativity and spirituality. Five trained facilitators led workshops for various groups: all ages, adults only, senior youth only, and junior youth only.

**Program Support:**

Teacher training was provided to all teachers and youth assistants in September.

Each teaching team also received a separate curriculum orientation.

An Open House provided an opportunity for parents and caregivers to communicate about their goals for their child's religious education with the DRE, the Youth Coordinator, and one another.

**Personnel:**

Youth Coordinator: During July and August, Louise Marcoux, Alison Reid, Rick Dumont and Anna D'Avanzo gathered with the purpose of hiring a Youth Coordinator. We were delighted to hire youth ministry veteran Sue Bollens.

Nursery Provider: In March 2008, DRE hired a new nursery provider upon the resignation of Sheila Francisco.

**Expansion of DRE responsibilities:**

Last year the RE Committee increased the hours for this position to reflect the time that was necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. I was admonished not to take on any new responsibilities. But we live in remarkably dynamic times. Wonderful changes keep on happening in this congregation – and these changes have expanded the DRE's responsibilities and the time demands of the position. Examples of these additional responsibilities/time demands:

- The congregation's decision to hire a Youth Coordinator added hiring and supervision responsibilities to the DRE's job description.
- The congregation's commitment to create new program space added substantial ongoing demands on the DRE's time.

I think this is a good example of "growing pains." I share this information to support careful planning and to protect the quality of religious education programming as we enter another very dynamic year together.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Marcoux, Director of Religious Education

## ANNUAL REPORT 2008 -- YOUTH COORDINATOR

Fifteen teenagers cemented their friendships in Senior Youth Group through talking, laughing, playing, worshiping and working together. The original group rapidly integrated the seven incoming freshmen, and as the older members fit into their roles as leaders, the new members found comfortable footings for themselves. What a dynamic group! Meetings continued to be at church on Sundays from 5 to 7 pm.

The group began the year with a trip to Purgatory Chasm, and planning for their Lock-In and Haunted House. Baking Thanksgiving pies with love grew to collecting Shaw's receipts and a tour of Father Bill's Place, as well as serving lunch at Rosie's Place. The youth once again enjoyed sponsoring two children for Gifts for Kids.

Pysanky remained a favorite senior youth group activity, as was the Panaffle Breakfast. Interspersed through the work and fun, was also a lot of personal discussion and sharing. The youth were really invested in sponsoring the congregational discussion about Jesus Camp.

The highlight of spring was the senior Retreat at Cedar Hill where they planned, played, cooked, cleaned, worshiped and just enjoyed being together. Still to come is a Fun Fair, a Bridging Ceremony for the graduating seniors, and a welcome for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Senior Youth Group was really fortunate to have Julie Armstrong, Erin Bigelow, Dan Huse, and Rory McGregor as advisors. They were a thoughtful, energetic and committed presence at youth group meetings, as well as doing lots of driving and bringing lots of snacks!

Anna D'Avanzo, Davis Peck, and Alora Rando are the three graduating seniors this year. They have each been a committed member of the group, and they will be missed!

The junior youth began their year with discovering that flashlight tag in the rain is the most fun of all!, They did lots of teambuilding exercises, played touch football, enjoyed caroling and hot chocolate, created pysanky and went bowling. A highlight of their year was certainly making lunches and a visit to Mainspring House. It was a reminder for us to value each other more, and to judge others a lot less.

The junior youth group has built strong bonds through their RE classes, and it is great fun to see them in action together at fellowship events. While Jodi, Ethan, Nick, Helaina, Zach and Zuben will all be missed in Junior Youth group next year, the senior youth are anxious to welcome them! Special thanks to each of the parents who made themselves available for these events.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Bollens  
Youth Coordinator

## Social Action for Social Justice

### Annual Report to the Congregation from the Social Justice Committee

Submitted by: Janet Schmidt, Chair

May 20, 2008

**The Social Justice committee of the Unitarian Church of Sharon works to provide opportunities for church members and friends to support and participate in activities in support of social justice issues by:**

- Raising awareness of issues and needs and guiding the focus of the congregation
- Providing opportunities for action and financial contributions
- Promoting positive social change
- Balancing focus on local, national and global issues
- Deciding what the congregation should put energy toward
- Being a religious voice in the world

At our August 2007 meeting, we came up with the above draft of a mission statement. And then the year began and we moved into “action mode” - coordinating the flow of information within the church and to/from outside organizations, both UU-affiliated and not; fundraising through weekly “brown envelope” offerings and Equal Exchange sales; monthly lunch making for Father Bills & MainSpring; regular trips to the Stoughton Food Pantry; and responding to crisis situations as we learned about them and were able to respond. We met monthly, with a few exceptions, on the first Sunday of the month, from noon- 1 p.m. at church. Committee members (Beth McGregor, Gare Reid, Mia Joiner-Moore, Ellen Schoenfeld-Beeks, David Schoenfeld, Colleen Tuck, Susan Mooney, Dia Cheney, Jon Slavin, Janet Limke, Janet Schmidt and Bill Fox, liaison with the Board of Trustees) took on specific tasks (long and short term) also communicated via email between meetings.

**Father Bills & MainSpring and Stoughton Food Pantry:** We continued to coordinate preparation of 85 lunches each month for at a cost of at least \$100 a month. We had some reserve funds left from last year, and we may have some reserve funds available to carry over into next year. Colleen Tuck has continued as “Chief Shopper” (with support from other committee members) and Wilbur Edwards takes care of “Transport and Delivery” to Brockton most months. The Junior Youth prepared the lunches, delivered them, and attended an educational program at the shelter on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Because of the busy church schedule in June, we asked staff at the shelter what they needed, and Gare Reid purchased \$170 worth of towels and personal care products, and delivered these with the May lunches.

We provide reminders through the Chalice and order of service for church members and friends to bring food for the Stoughton Food Pantry (formerly known as the Sharon/Stoughton Food Pantry, but still serving both Sharon and Stoughton). Colleen and Paul Tuck, and other volunteers deliver the food when the basket gets full (which fills 3-4 shopping bags), usually every 4-6 weeks. Donations from our church increase at the holidays (November-December and at the time of the Easter “can hunt”), but the need is there year round. We receive grateful thanks in person and in regular thank-you notes from Pantry staff.

**Social Justice worship service:** The April 13<sup>th</sup> service had a social justice focus, with messages from Rev. Cayer, Karen McHugh and Mia Joiner-Moore. In connection with the service, the brown envelope offerings for the month of April were split between the two organizations presented by the speakers. Karen shared about her experience with The Angkor Hospital for Children in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Mia described the work of NeighborWorks<sup>®</sup> America and its network organizations in developing affordable housing and providing homeownership education and counseling to low and moderate-income families in the U.S.

**Anti-Racist Networking session:** Committee members Beth McGregor and Janet Schmidt, along with our president Valerie White, attended the Ballou-Channing district’s Anti-Racist Networking session on March 6, 2008 at Murray Church in Attleboro. We will follow-up with consideration of ways to resume the anti-racism work that had been done at our church in the not-so-distant past.

**Fair Trade presentation:** Dia Cheney led a presentation on Fair Trade and the lives of small coffee farmers in Chiapas, Mexico on February 24, 2008. She showed slides from her trip to Chiapas and led a group discussion. Approximately 12 people attended this public event, and we acknowledged that we would like to do more events like this in the future.

**Peace vigils:** On Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, 51 people of all ages, from Sharon and neighboring communities, stood together on the four corners next to our church, holding signs for peace and of protest against the war. The Social Justice committee helped to publicize this event and gives periodic reminders that weekly vigils (led by Sharon residents Jeremiah Dickinson and Beth Collea) are ongoing, Wednesdays from 7:00-8:00 p.m. – all are welcome for all or part of the hour.

**Funds raised and spent:** We continued to select monthly recipients for contributions placed in the Social Justice “brown envelopes” available in the pews during Sunday worship services. The following is a list of recipients, with specific amounts listed according to the information available at the time of this report.

| Recipient                                                        | Amount raised | Month(s)  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Father Bills & Mainspring lunches                                | \$598.70      | September |
| UUA/UUSC Gulf Coast Volunteer Program                            | \$504.75      | October   |
| FINCA International (microcredit lending)                        | \$622.55      | November  |
| UU Partner Church Council                                        | \$317.20      | December  |
| Soldiers Helping Those in Need<br>(blankets for Iraqi civilians) | \$391.50      | January   |
| *MIRA                                                            | \$233.80      | February  |
| *CLSACC                                                          | \$233.80      | February  |
| Fistula Foundation (medical care for Ethiopian women)            | \$698.25      | March     |
| Friends Without a Border<br>(for Angkor Hospital for Children)   | \$433.40      | April     |
| Neighborhood Housing Services of the South Shore                 | \$433.40      | April     |
| Afghans4Tomorrow (education for Afghan<br>girls and women)       | TBA           | May       |
| UUSC-UUA Cyclone Nargis Relief Fund<br>(Myanmar/Burma)           | TBA           | June      |

\*MIRA = Mass. Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition and CLSACC = Community Legal Services and Counseling Services (local groups providing support for immigrants)

In addition to the brown envelope funds, \$304.00 raised at the December Holiday Party was donated to Renewal House in Boston. We joined the new UU Mass Action Network (\$125 – from reserve funds) and paid membership dues to the UU Urban Ministry (\$250 – a line item in the budget).

Sales of Equal Exchange products continued, and the table is set up weekly (thanks to the Reid family and occasional backup helpers). At the time of this report, approximately \$400 has been raised (with the potential for nearly \$900 if all existing inventory is sold in the coming weeks), and we are supporting fair trade in the process. Some of these funds will be donated to the Stoughton Food Pantry, in recognition of the increased need in this time of sharply rising food and fuel prices. At the time of this report, we are considering saving some of the funds in reserve

for next year’s lunches and/or donations to Father Bills & MainSpring.

**Leadership Transition:** This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> and last year as committee chair. New committee leadership will take over as the church year ends in June. As I write this last report, I’m including some thoughts I shared with the congregation at the 11/4/07 service, which represent my views on social action in our church:

I believe that *Social Justice* is what we're working for, and *Social Action* is what we do. Learning and reflecting about the meaning of justice and the purposes of our actions is really important.

I've made up a metaphor for social justice and social action in our church – if you picture social action in our church as a human body, perhaps the SJ committee is its head – thinking and planning, processing information, reasoning, deciding. The committee might also be seen as arms and legs when it comes to organizing and planning our church community's work for social justice. But the heart and soul, the spirit of social justice work here, I think, rests with all of us. And the more heads thinking and reflecting, and arms, and legs, moving and working, the better and richer our collective effort will be.

So, as the new church year begins (or before), please consider joining our committee and/or communicating with us – by email at [justicecommittee@uusharon.org](mailto:justicecommittee@uusharon.org), or by dropping a note in the SJ mailbox in the hall downstairs. The committee always has some manageable tasks to share and a readiness to listen to new ideas.

## Stewardship Committee Report

### Membership:

Tim Monroe, Chair

Colleen Tuck

Deb Cayer

Phillip Conover

Rory McGregor

Ellen Schoenfeld-Beeks

David Schoenfeld

Tom Yeranisan

The Stewardship Committee planned and implemented both the AIM Capital Campaign and the Annual Canvass Campaign. To date the AIM Capital Campaign has raised \$1,017,674 in pledges, and the Annual Canvas has raised \$151,846. We initiated a new fundraising process whereby we utilized visiting stewards and made specific ask amounts for the capital project. This process was well received and the results were encouraging. The AIM totals are obviously a great success, but we would like to have raised more for the annual canvass. It is typical, however, in a campaign year for annual giving to remain flat or even decrease slightly. In future years I recommend that pledging members be asked to give a specific amount to the annual canvass that reflects an increase in their previous year's gift.

Our experience this year tells us that the more communication with the congregation the better. The frequent articles in the Chalice, the frequent talks and announcements during services, and the large celebrations both at the beginning and end of the campaign were very beneficial and I think helped to boost our totals. The active participation and endorsement of the Minister was also a great boon to our efforts.

### What we plan to do:

--Track and manage gifts to the campaign over the next three years. This includes sending Thank-you's, acknowledgements, and payment reminders.

--Work to secure short term financing which will allow construction to begin before all cash for the AIM Campaign is collected.

--Continue the visiting stewards fundraising process for the annual campaign next year.

--Create a recognition scheme to publicly thank and acknowledge donors somewhere in the new addition.

**UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SHARON – LEADERSHIP CIRCLES – 2008-2009**

Annual Meeting  
June 13, 2008

Presented by the Nominating Committee:  
Lisa Yeransian  
Blair Weidig  
Brenda Wilbur

**Committees Voted Directly by the Congregation**

Proposed Slate of Officers and Board of Trustees – 2 year terms

|                                                  |                        |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| <b>President</b>                                 | <b>Valerie White*</b>  | 2008 - June 2010 |
| <b>Vice President</b>                            | <b>Wilbur Edwards*</b> | 2008 - June 2010 |
| <b>Clerk</b>                                     | <b>Kathy Farrell</b>   | 2007 - June 2009 |
| <b>Treasurer</b><br>(Chair of Finance Committee) | <b>Susan Allison</b>   | 2007 - June 2009 |

|                            |                          |                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Assistant Treasurer</b> | <b>Pam Baker-Webber*</b> | 2008 – June 2009 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|

|                |                       |                         |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Trustee</b> | <b>Philip Conover</b> | <b>2007 – June 2009</b> |
| <b>Trustee</b> | <b>Bill Fox</b>       | 2007 – June 2009        |
| <b>Trustee</b> | <b>Rory McGregor</b>  | 2007 – June 2009        |

**Endowment Fund – 3 year terms**

|              |                          |                  |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Chair</b> | <b>Rebecca Kinraide*</b> | 2008 – June 2011 |
| Member       | George Bailey *          | 2008 – June 2011 |
| Member       | Colleen Tuck *           | 2008 – June 2011 |
| Member       | Kathy Roth               | 2007 – June 2010 |
| Member       | Pam Baker-Webber         | 2006 – June 2009 |

**Nominating Committee – 3 year terms**

|              |                       |                  |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Chair</b> | <b>Lisa Yeransian</b> | 2006 – June 2009 |
| Member       | Blair Weidig          | 2007 – June 2010 |
| Member       | Brenda Wilbur*        | 2008 – June 2011 |

\* indicates a new term

**Committee of the Minister and Ministry of the Congregation**  
 (Members recommended by the Minister and approved by the Board)

**Committee on Ministry**      Edele Panessidi

**Appointments by President**  
**Committees of the Board**

**Buildings and Grounds**      Jim Mullin  
                                          Memorial Garden      Ellen Schoenfeld-Beeks and Debbie Schulz

**Information & Technology**

**Membership**      Terry Fitzgerald and Cindy Wilson  
                                          Caring      Phyllis Silva

**Finance**      Susan Allison

**Capital Campaign**      Philip Conover, Rory McGregor, Tim Monroe

**Fellowship**      Cindy Wilson

**RE for Youth**      Peter Raskin

**Accessibility**      Linda Godfrey-Bailey

**Social Justice**      Mia Joiner-Moore and Gare Reid

**Worship**      Tom D'Avanzo

**Bean Supper**      Ken Zaniewski

**Autonomous Committee**

Separate from Congregational Governance and established as a community-congregation  
Partnership

**Meetinghouse Preservation Fund – 3 year terms****Chair – Frank Salvatore**

|                                              |                  |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Congregational Member – Fred Bramhall        | 2006 – June 2009 |
| Congregational Member – Linda Godfrey Bailey | 2006 – June 2009 |
| Congregational Member – Rory McGregor        | 2006 – June 2009 |
| Community Member – Barry Zlotin              | 2006 – June 2009 |