

ANNUAL REPORT

- 2022 / 2023 -



(713) 526-5200

info@firstuu.org

www.firstuu.org



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AGENDA FOR 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

•	Welcome and Lighting the ChaliceRev. Dr. Colin Bossen
•	Call to OrderRon Cookston, Board President
•	Review of Rules and Procedures and designation of Roles
	Ron Cookston, Board President
•	Approval of Minutes from 2022 Annual Meeting and the March 2023
	Called Meeting
•	Presentation: Board ReportRon Cookston, Board President
•	Presentation: Annual Vision of MinistryRev. Dr. Colin Bossen
•	Presentation and Receipt of Comments: Proposed Budget for 2023-
	2024Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen
•	Presentation and Vote: Consideration the Adoption of the 8th
	Principle: "Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to
	build a diverse and multicultural Beloved Community by our
	actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions
	in ourselves and our institutions."Leslie Morrison and
	Charles Johnson, Co-Chairs of the Transformation Committee
•	Presentation: Slate of Candidates for the Board and Nominating
	Committee (See pages 38 - 41)Linda Richardson,
	Chair of the Nominating Committee
•	Election of Members for the 2023-2024 Nominating Committee
•	Election of Members for the 2023-2024 Board of Directors
•	Adjourn

VISION, MISSION AND COVENANT

Vision

Widening Love's Circle

Mission

Located in Houston's Museum District, the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston commits to being a growing multicultural, multigenerational, and multiracial congregation in the city's diverse urban center.

We widen love's circle by honoring the inherent worth and dignity of all, advancing justice and religious pluralism, and inspiring an ever-deepening spirituality.

In the coming years, we shall serve as a pillar congregation for Houstonians of many faiths and build the Beloved Community by:

- providing religious leadership and collective action devoted to ecological, social, and racial justice;
- Increasing the opportunities for transformative spiritual growth for members and seekers;
- Serving as responsible stewards through a commitment of our time, talent, and treasure; and
- Expanding and deepening our intergenerational community.

Covenant

Love is the spirit of our congregation. Service is our prayer.

To dwell together in peace, to seek truth in love, and to encourage one another, thus do we covenant.

Our Covenantal Intent

As a non-creedal community, we commit to our Covenant. We trust one another:

To dwell together in peace

- Express our ideas respectfully and kindly.
- Be mindful and responsible for the way our words and actions affect others.

To seek truth in love

- Hear one another through active listening and assuming good intentions.
- Seek the truth together by being connected with each other and the world around us as we explore meanings from diverse viewpoints.

To encourage one another

- Apply our time, talents, and resources to serve each other and the community with compassion.
- Celebrate our commonalities and differences.
- Embrace the full spectrum of human abilities.
- Commit to diversity, equity, and anti-racism.

We promise to put our covenant into practice and to be accountable to it.

Letter from the Senior Minister

Reverend Dr. Colin Bossen is an award winning preacher, scholar, and social justice organizer, he has served the congregation since 2018 when he arrived in August as Intern Senior Minister. He is now the Developmental Senior Minister.

This has been another year of excitement and accomplishment for the congregation. At a time when many religious communities across the country are shrinking we have been welcoming new members and friends into our beloved community. More and more people are attracted to our message of love and justice. In-person attendance has been steadily increasing and with it member engagement. Last autumn, the Board created a catalog of all of the people active on Board Committees, with Ministry Teams, and with leading our programs. They counted over 150 active volunteers! You are a dedicated and dynamic community!

We are slightly more than half-way through my five year developmental ministry contract with you. During that time we have made major progress on the congregation's developmental goals.



Certainly, the biggest achievement for this year was the passage of a new vision, mission, and covenant. The texts you crafted will serve you over the years as you seek to widen love's circle and build an ever more welcoming, loving, and spiritually vibrant community!

One of the major things that came out of the process that the Vision, Mission, and Covenant Committee led was the feedback that members of the congregation want to deepen the community's sense of spirituality. So, this coming year the staff and I are planning a program designed to do just that. We're calling it "Lives of the Spirit."

Over the course of the year, we will explore the lives and teachings of some of the great religious leaders of the last century. The program will have three elements: worship, study, and reflection.

In worship we will devote at least one Sunday a month to the spiritual biography of a religious leader. We will ask the questions: What is the essence of this person's teaching? How might it apply to our lives?

Through study we will provide the opportunity for our members and friends to go deeper. There will be three offerings each month: a workshop, a covenant group, and the minister's book group.

The workshop will be provided by a religious leader. scholar community practitioner and focus on the life, teaching or tradition of the figure whose spiritual biography we are contemplating over the course of the month. The covenant group will include material about their life and teachings and an opportunity for personal sharing and reflection on the significance of both in our own lives. The minister's book group will engage in-depth with one of the figure's seminal works.

It is our hope that this program will offer you a chance to both deepen your sense of spirituality as individuals and to strengthen the spirit of our congregation. A program book describing "Lives of the Spirit" will be available towards the end of summer.

I would be remiss to end without a note of appreciation. I am deeply grateful for all of the wonderful volunteers who make this community what it is. And I am blessed to work with a fine and dedicated staff!

Together we are bringing more joy, hope, beauty, and love into a world that desperately needs it!



LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In one of my monthly President's messages, I told a story about how my mother would scold and shame me with the words "Look what you did." I do not remember or think I learned from those incidents. However, when I graduated from college, the same phrase was used to praise my achievement and then those words affected me very differently.

Before I begin, with a focus on last year I want to recognize achievements that occurred during the last three years. We were able to reopen for in-person services and activities.

This was a remarkable achievement because we needed to raise funds to make the Church ready and you responded. Because our friends associated with the Thoreau campus wanted to form a separate congregation, it was necessary to negotiate a fair separation. This was a real challenge because of issues relating to the property.



Additionally, our Senior Minister and staff had to create a very different ministry plan, make extensive changes in staff responsibilities and all this while having both in-person and online services. If that was not enough, the Board, with a lot of input from members, set the stage to launch a major effort to begin greening our campus and moving away from using electricity produced with fossil fuels. I can now say, "Look what we did!"

As I think about how to report on the work of this year, I am struck by the number of remarkable accomplishments the Board and membership have made together. Therefore, I will just review them. Because the issue with the Thoreau separation was resolved we focus on 4 Open Questions/Goals.

Mission/Vision/Covenant Α Committee was charted. Led by cochairs Johanna DeYoung and Steve Braun, the Committee included Sheryl Abrahams, P.D. Wadler, Sonal Pandya, Mirta Estrada, Rebecca Throop, Mary Koch, and consultant Toni Holland. In order to build consensus within the congregational membership. the Committee surveyed the entire membership, provided 36 engagement opportunities, and drafted Mission, Vision, and Covenant statements. Then, with input from you, they revised again and again in order to create final proposed statements presented to the Congregation at the Called Membership Meeting in March 2023. The new Mission. Vision and Covenant statements were approved unanimously.



These statements will guide our ministerial services and spiritual growth over the next several years. Instead of saying "Look what you did," more appropriately, I must say "Look what you have begun." Tasks for future Boards and membership will be to indentify means to live into and realize our vision "Widening Love's Circle."

Governance. Ministry, and **Administration:** A Bylaws Revision Committee was charted to respond to this Open Ouestion/Goal and determine how to create a governance structure that fits with Articles the revised Incorporation for the Church, (see Membership meeting in June 2022,) that respects the history of our Church, protects the rights of members while still facilitating the business of the congregation.

The Committee included Ruth Hoffman-Lock. Connie Acosta. Linda Richardson, Earl Dredge, Charles Johnson and John Stauffacher. They needed to revise and combine the Constitution and Bylaws into one coherent document. After seeking input from you, carefully studying examples from other congregations, and developing fifteen revisions, they were able to create a set of Bylaws which you unanimously approved at the Called Membership Meeting in March 2023. Creating structures that support not only our survival but also our growth almost miraculous was а achievement. Again, I can say "Look what you did."

In order to move forward on our Open Question/Goal to address Multiculturalism, Anti-racism, and Inclusion, a Transformation Committee was charted Co-chaired by Charles Johnson and Leslie Morrison, the Committee includes Georgette Dredge, Page Powell, Manuel Quintana, and Forrest Johnson. Its work is currently underway.



One of their tasks is to create congregation-wide conversations about the need to consider adopting the 8th Principle. The Committee is working to sharpen our focus and efforts on taking actions and accepting accountability for promoting multiculturalism, dismantling supremacy, promoting democracy and inclusion. The Committee's work will culminate in a vote at the 2022-2023 annual meeting in June 2023. Regardless of the outcome of this vote, momentum has been created that is making a difference in our congregation.

The work to focus on the Open Question/Goal to promote **Growth** and **Membership Engagement** has required a remarkable level of involvement among Board, staff, and all of you.

Our Welcome Team, which by the way consists of more than 21 of you at the time of this report, is having a remarkable, positive effect helping visitors feel welcome. The conscientious and dedicated work of our Membership Coordinator, and frankly all our staff, to reach out and facilitate a pathway to membership is working.

Our outstanding Religious Education program for both Adults and Youth and our emphasis on an exceptional Music Program are helping to make our congregation compelling. Our Ministers continue not only to deliver compelling Sunday services, but also, with help from our Care Team, provide remarkable pastoral care. Finally, it is YOU, our welcoming beloved community, that is having the greatest impact on visitors and new members.

To summarize, it seems appropriate to review highlights not just from last year but from the last three years. During this time, the Board, Rev. Bossen and staff have struggled to deal with many issues including:



- Keeping the Church functional during the COVID shutdown.
 This required innovations including providing compelling on-line services and pastoral care during a time when the membership was dealing with unprecedented challenges.
- Getting the Church open again with both in-house and online services.
- Working though the challenges associated with the Thoreau campus desiring to become a separate congregation.
- Creating governance structures adequate to guide the Church into the future. This culminated in the adoption of revised Bylaws at the March 2023 called membership meeting.



- Establishing Mission, Vision and Covenant statements which were adopted unanimously by the congregation at the called membership meeting in March 2023. These will guide the future growth of our ministerial services and congregational spirituality.
- At today's meeting, we will consider adopting the 8th Principle. If approved, this will set the stage for our congregation to initiate a journey toward building a diverse and multicultural Beloved Community through actions and accountably to dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.
- By signing a PACE Loan to support energy efficiency, the Board initiated a 25-year commitment to reduce the facility's use of carbon generated electricity.

With these foundations in place, imagine what we will accomplish together over the next three years! Our Developmental Ministry will end, and we will call a settled minister. We will expand the "Circle of Love" not only in and among our members, but also within the larger community. I have not reported here on the profound iustice social work our Congregation has and is engaged because that is reported separately in this Annual Report. However, I think about how much of a difference we are making beyond the walls of our Church by standing for and promoting values that respect the worth and dignity of every human being and the interdependent web of all existence.

What will the impact of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston be in the future just by being who we are together and how we project that into the community? I am confident it will be powerful and the "Circle of Love" will expand.

Letter from the Assistant Minister

Reverend D. Scott Cooper serves as Assistant Minister. He graduated in 2016 with his Master of Divinity degree from Brite Divinity School.

While no year of ministry is what one would call predictable, this year may have been the first since I've been here that wasn't defined in a major way by the pandemic. We continued to offer our in-person and livestreamed services, and in-person and hybrid events continued to flourish. We settled into the new normal of zoom meeting augmenting the in-person ones.

We welcomed a wealth of talented and inspiring speakers to the pulpit during Dr. Bossen's sabbatical. Several people commented it was the most vibrant summer programming they could remember.

Even when not preaching, I would join Dr. Bossen on the chancel to help lead worship. I was honored to have been asked to hold several memorial services and I officiated several weddings.



I also helped plan and organize the Day of Mourning for Victims of Gun Violence which was held to coincide with the NRA Annual Meeting. I am facilitating a new round of Covenant Groups and continue to oversee the Pastoral Care in our community.

I continue to work closely with both the Justice Coordinating Council and Community Projects Team, both of whom are doing amazing things in and for our community.

I continued my ministerial development by attending UUMA Ministry Days and the Festival of Homiletics. I took continuing education classes and met one-on-one with a leadership coach, a mentor and Dr. Bossen.

I continued to meet with my Ministerial Formation Team, made up of dedicated congregants, until we sent in my most recent set of evaluations. I am beyond pleased and proud, that having begun this journey almost twelve years ago when I decided to enter seminary, I was awarded Full Fellowship as a UU Minister on May 1.

I continued my work with UUA colleagues by attending General Assembly, and continuing to serve as treasurer for the Southwest UU Minister's Association. I helped plan their retreat, which both Dr. Bossen and I attended, at the end of February. I also continued to schedule our Houston UU Minister's monthly get-togethers. Along with several of you, I met with Rev. Brock Leach for a series of meetings on congregations' journeys toward multiculturalism.

In the community, Dr. Bossen and I attended the Emergency Aid Coalition Gala. We were also at the Third Ward Cloth 30th Anniversary Gala, and I continued to attend the monthly Cloth meetings. I also continued to be a part of The Metropolitan Organization (TMO) meetings, and was asked to speak at one of their Leadership Training events.



This has been an exciting year and I've worked hard and learned a lot. I look forward to what the future holds for my ministry and our church.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Reverend D. Scott Cooper has received full fellowship from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) has jurisdiction over all phases of ministerial credentialing. Candidates for ministerial fellowship are interviewed by the Committee before fellowship is granted.

Director of Finance and Operations

Tawanna Grice directs the finance and facilities departments. She graduated with an MBA from Texas Women's University, serves as Secretary of the Board at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston.



It's 2023! I am so thankful we are on the other side of the Covid pandemic. Around this time last year, many of our members were battling with Covid 19, me included. We all tried to be as careful as we could by masking, handwashing, remaining socially distanced and getting vaccinated/boosted, yet we still were exposed to that pesky virus. After receiving fewer cases in the county at the beginning of this fiscal year, as well as being advised by our Health Advisory Group, we were finally able to remain unmasked here at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston.

Operations

There were several facility projects completed this year with the help of the Facilities Team, led by Michael Morrison consisting of Bob Miller, Joe Lach, & Jon Naylor. I am so thankful for the amazing work Ron Cookston, Board President, accomplished on the PACE project. He has assisted in positioning the church on the path to the most efficient use of energy in the history of the church

We have begun several projects identified as methods of "greening" the building as a part of the PACE project. We replaced the remaining 4 HVAC systems, which included adding 2 Plasma Air Bipolar Ionization units in the sanctuary. These units were basically installed to purify the air circulated in the This sanctuary. was areat suggestion made by Nancy Edwards and I was happy to be able to have them installed.

The Library remodel is 85% complete. This was funded by the Hoppens Library Fund.

I am pleased to report that we also installed the Assisted Listening System in the sanctuary this year. This system has provided our hearing-impaired members and friends with the increased ability to hear the Sunday morning services unlike ever before.

A Safety Gate was installed at the Southmore entrance after several instances of staff & members' safety being threatened.



Finances

There were a few anonymous donors this year who I wish I could name. The fact that they gave generously from their hearts in support of various causes and were not concerned about being recognized by name, made the donation even more special. Thank you to those amazing, kind, and generous sweethearts! I pray a special prayer for selfless people like you!

A special thank you to The Houston Area Women's Group. They received a sizable donation from a prior member of their group. The leaders of the group gifted First Church with \$50,000. Thank you to all the amazing women who meet every Sunday to recognize & uplift other amazing women throughout Houston.

We lost a few members this year, some of whom were members of the Chalice Society and left bequests to the church. Memorial Services were held for Rosita Kirkman, J. Kay Dunn, & Stuart Chatkin. Most recently Ken Walker, whose estate will be liquidated and recognized next fiscal year, left a generous donation to the church. I was blessed enough to meet Rosita & Ken and am thankful for the time I spent chatting with them both. Their donations have assisted us in replenishing the Reserve Fund.

My brother Rashad and I had the first Black History Fundraiser in February of this year. It was a lot of work, but I was pleased to share a modern take on my black history to benefit First Church. I was so thankful for all the attendees and even more thankful for the members who donated to the fundraiser even though they were unable to attend.

The Leonora Montgomery Trust Fund was established this year. We have raised \$4,262. You still have time to contribute to this fund.



Special Thank You

I am so thankful for all of the at First Unitarian volunteers Universalist Church, I am so thankful for our Welcome Team Members (led by Leslie Morrison and Michael Morrison), Garden Team (led by Hazel Heddings), The flower team (led by Penny Cerling) and many others. I must acknowledge the amazing gift cards Penny designed for the church as a fundraiser. (We still have several boxes left for \$25/set of 10. Makes perfect gifts for your loved ones.)

I must also recognize the Board of Directors for their endless efforts to ensure the very best place of worship in Houston. Ron Cookston. Connie Acosta. Lauri Zuchlewski. Sheryl Abrahams, Beth McCracken, Chris Scott, Forrest Johnson, Rachel Naegeli & Eva Thibaudeau, Ruth Hoffman-Lach and Joe Zuchlewski are simply the best. Some are not current Board members but have assisted in endless ways over the past year. Don Poole (Treasurer), the Finance Committee, and the Audit Committee have assisted Cheryl Rivers (Bookkeeper) and I in producing some of the best, most accurate financial records in years.

In addition to her role on the Board, Lauri Zuchlewski worked extensively with me to identify the current Information Technology (IT) being used and identified areas needing improvement, which will be addressed in the upcoming capital campaign.

Thank you to the best colleagues ever! Together, we make this place of worship a place some can call home!

Tawanna Grice

Goals/Open Questions for 2023 - 2024 Fiscal Year for First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston

Goal / Open Question 1: Identity - Mission / Vision / Covenant:

"What kind of a church do we want to become?"

- Discern who we are now, where we are going in the future, and how we will treat one another.
- Build a culture of mutual trust and develop effective ways to have open and transparent communications with each other (members, Board, clergy, and staff).

Make the Mission, Vision, and Covenant common knowledge and, develop a Strategic

Plan and Annual Vision of Ministry, inform decision-making.

Goal / Open Question 2: Governance, Ministry, and Administration:

"How can we have a healthy relationship with our Senior Minister and with the UUA?"

- Implement and refine our new Principles of Governance, including our new management and administrative structure.
- Expand the financial capacity of the Church in order to sustain fair compensation, enhance our physical plant, grow programs, and achieve Honor Congregation status in the UUA Annual Program Fund.
- Prepare the congregation to call a Settled Minister.

Goal / Open Question 3: Multiculturalism, Anti-racism, and Inclusion:

"How can we increase diversity in our church and work to dismantle white supremacy?"

- Engage the congregation in deep dialogue on multiculturalism, antiracism, true inclusion, and our journey towards spiritual wholeness.
- Align the institutional framework of the Church with the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism. Encourage the increased involvement of members from underrepresented groups in congregational life and Church leadership at all levels.

Build a diverse, intergenerational, multicultural Beloved Community in the Church.

Goal / Open Question 4: Growth and Membership Engagement:

"More people should be here with us how do we engage them?"

- Provide more structure and opportunities for engagement within and beyond the Church:
- In congregational life -- pastoral care, building community, finding meaning, contributing skills to teams and committees, developing leadership, etc.

- With community needs, programs, and organizations, so that the Church is visibly engaged with our partners.
- With larger organizations like the UUA, UUSC, and Houston area UU congregations.

Increase active membership to 330 and provide a path for involvement of members, their children and youth.

Goal / Open Question 5: Spirituality:

How do we increase and deepen the spirituality of this Congregation and its members?

- Create opportunities for all members to feel welcome to seek their own spirituality.
- Create a wide spectrum of experiences and opportunities for all members to develop their own spirituality.
- Create ministry affinity groups of all kinds for shared experiences and discovery.
- Provide more intercultural, intergenerational and multi religious opportunities and experiences.

ABOUT US

Located in Houston's Museum District, the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston commits to being a growing multicultural, multigenerational, and multiracial congregation in the city's diverse urban center.

We widen love's circle by honoring the inherent worth and dignity of all, advancing justice and religious pluralism, and inspiring an everdeepening spirituality.



2023-2024 Annual Plan for Ministry

Uplifting and Inspiring Worship Devoted to Deepening Spirituality and Furthering Justice

A weekly Sunday morning celebration coordinated by the Senior Minister and overseen by the Sunday Celebration Team:

- focus on spiritual growth through a yearlong sermon services devoted to "Lives of the Spirit"
- guest preachers with national reputations five to six times a year;
- at least two services incorporating visual art and audio visual technology;
- liturgical elements designed to help the congregation live out its commitment to anti-racism, multiculturalism, and inclusion:
- a professionally led music program including a choir, an accompanist, and two music services (All Souls Day plus one in the spring).

Development of a Strategic Plan and Preparation for the Congregation's Future

The creation of a five-year strategic plan to help the congregation live into its new vision, mission, and covenant:

- the integration of the new mission, vision, and covenant into the life of the congregation—including in its publicly facing documents (orders of service, website, etc.);
- the chartering of a task force to develop a strategic plan;
- the launch of a capital campaign;
- the establishment of search committee to call a settled minister for August 2025.

Multiculturalism, Anti-racism, and Inclusion

An effort to begin to implement the Eighth Principle+ and a renewed commitment to dismantling white supremacy and building a more multiracial and multiethnic community:

- the creation of one or more BIPOC specific programs;
- the creation of one or more program furthering the congregation's antiracism work;
- a commitment to diversity in pulpit guests, musicians, and guest program leaders;

- three forums for the Religion in Houston's Pan-African Community to bring the congregation in conversation with representatives of the region's Africana communities;
- three Spanish language services:
 Day of the Dead, Christmas Eve,
 and Mothers Day.
- +This assumes the adoption of the Eighth Principle by the congregation at its June 4th meeting.

Invite into Membership Our Visitors and Online Audience

Leverage our increasing attendance and number of visitors to increase our membership:

- continue to offer a variety of onlinehybrid programming, presenting some programs via Zoom;
- a well-organized path to membership, with small group ministry to welcome new members and visitors with opportunities for spiritual deepening, fellowship, and social justice engagement.
- engaging existing members with more opportunities for connections and linkages.

Provide Engaging and Nourishing Lifespan Religious Education

A religious education program coordinated by the Director of Religious Community featuring:

- Five intergenerational services during the year;
- Monthly Time for All Ages;
- Sunday morning religious education and nursery care for children and youth;
- A diversity of volunteer led adult programs;
- A monthly covenant group program as part of "Lives of the Spirit";
- A monthly workshop as part of "Lives of the Spirit";
- A minister's book group as part of "Lives of the Spirit";
- Our Whole Lives.

Organize Impactful Social Justice

A commitment to side with love and to build the beloved community in Houston and beyond:

 *community projects, shared offerings, and social justice ministries working with The Metropolitan Organization, the UUA, and other partners on issues vital to our region, country, and planet.

Strategically Nurture Growing Presence in the Houston Region

- participation in FotoFest 2024 through the hosting of a social justice-oriented exhibition cocurated by the Senior Minister and a professional curator;
- ample opportunities for volunteer development, engagement, and encouragement;
- consistent communication of an uplifting justice centered message throughout congregational life.
- a monthly arts forum led by the Music Director;
- Spring Arts Festival

LIVES OF THE SPIRIT

Over the course of the year, in order to help deepen the spiritual life of our congregation and the spiritual lives of our members and friends, we will explore the lives and teachings of some of the great religious leaders of the last century. The program will have three elements: worship, study, and reflection.

In worship we will devote at least one Sunday a month to the spiritual biography of a religious leader. We will ask the questions: What is the essence of this person's teaching? How might it apply to our lives?

Through study we will provide the opportunity for our members and friends to go deeper. There will be three offerings each month: a workshop, a covenant group, and the minister's book group. The workshop will be provided by a religious leader, scholar or community practitioner and focus on the life, teaching or tradition of the figure whose spiritual biography we are contemplating over the course of the month. The covenant group will include material about their life and teachings and an opportunity for personal sharing and reflection on the significance of both in our own lives. The minister's book group will engage in-depth with one of the figure's seminal works.

The majority of the covenant groups will meet at the church on a weekday evening (likely the first Tuesdays of the month) for an event that will include a potluck and childcare. Depending on interest, there may also be an online/hybrid option and an option to meet on a Sunday after the second service.

The workshops will be scheduled according to the availability of the workshop leaders.

In 2024-2025 we intend to follow the series with a similar one organized around Thandeka's program "Love Beyond Belief." We hope to bring her out to work with us on it.

- September: Divine Pathos: Abraham Joshua Heschel
- October: Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa
- November: Works of Mercy: Dorothy Day
- December: The Common Good: Howard Thurman
- January: The Next American Revolution: Grace Lee Boggs
- February: Crying for America: Fannie Lou Hamer
- March: The River is Our Blood: Mary Brave Bird
- April: Think of God All the Time: Paramahansa Yogananda
- May: The Practice of Nonpractice: Thich Nhat Han
- June: Love & Death: Forrest Church

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 5, 2021

President Hoffman-Lach opened the meeting at 1:05 pm and announced that, including members present and those that have participated by submitting competed absentee ballots, seventy-four members were counted which represents a quorum necessary for the membership to conduct business.

She announced that the Timekeeper for the meeting was Connie Acosta, the Process Observer was Michael Morrison, and the Parliamentarian was Steve Braun. Other attendees were Dr. Rev. Bossen, Senior Minister, D. Scott Cooper, Assistant Minister, and Tawanna Grice, Secretary of the Board and Business Manager.

Ruth also reviewed the meeting guidelines for the meeting which included: (1) Members will be recognized to speak for two minutes; (2) No member may speak twice on any single issue/subject before all other member who wish to speak have done so;

(3) Discussion of any issue / subject will be limited to 10 minutes. At the end of 10 minutes, the time may be extended by 10 additional minutes by majority vote. Total time not to exceed 20 minutes; (4) During discussion, members wishing to speak for or against a motion will form a line at the microphone designated as pro or con. The chair will recognize speaker alternately from each line. If there are no speakers remaining in a single line, the Chair will ask the remaining speakers in line will be asked to be seated.

President Hoffman-Lach then presented a board report that focused on the work over the last year to address key questions including: (1) What kind of Church do we want to be?

Her report focused on efforts over the last year to build a culture of mutual trust and develop effective ways to have open and transparent communication with each other (members, Board, clergy, and staff;

(2) What is our vision for a multi-site church? She reported that the resolution to this question was finalized by the creation of the independent Thoreau Congregation.

The sale of the property at 3515 Clayhead Road to the Thoreau Congregation is expected to be completed by June 12, 2022, or as soon as the legal paperwork is completed--"God willing and if the creek don't rise" (3) How can we have a healthy relationship with our Senior Minister and with the UUA?

The report included information about work that the Board has done to refine our Principle of Governance including our management and administrative structure and improvements in our financial capacity-- most evident by the successful recent pledge drive.

She further reported on the formation of the Vision, Mission and Covenant Committee which is working with the membership to develop and adopt Vision, Mission, and Covenant statements to provide guidance for our future; (4) How can we increase diversity in our church and work to dismantle white supremacy?

This report included information about the creation of the Transformation Committee and the plans to launch a congregation-wide engagement process in the Spring of 2023 to consider the adoption of the proposed UUA 8th Principle;

(5) More people should be here with us - how do we engage them? The President asked members present to stand if they are serving on the Board, Committees, Teams, as teachers associated with our Religious Education Program and other active roles at the Church. Almost every member present stood.

President Ruth stated that this illustrates the great strides First UU has made toward engaging our membership. She noted that in most churches only 20 percent of the members are engaged. She further referred to the fact that our membership growth remarkably has resulted in more pledging units although many people left to move their affiliation to the Thoreau Congregation.

She also acknowledged that our online and in-person services have been at such a level of excellence that we have managed to not only get through the pandemic, but also grow.

President Hoffman-Lach than asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last Annual Meeting on June 19, 2021. Ron Cookston moved that the Minutes be approved. Ilene Allen seconded the motion, and it passed by a unanimous vote which included members present and the absentee ballots.

President Hoffman-Lach then invited Rev. Dr. Bolin Bossen to come forward to present his 2022-2023 Annual Vision of Ministry. He emphasized the fact that the Annual Vision of Ministry is key to the development of the Budget for next year.

In his presentation Rev. Dr. Bossen highlighted plans to: (1) Offer uplifting and inspiring worship which will include guest preachers of national reputation, two services each Sunday which will also be live-streamed, and professionally led music; (2) Re-image Vision, Mission and Covenant and integrate them into the life of the congregation:

(3) Promote multiculturalism, antiracism, and inclusion which will culminate with the adoption of the 8th principle; (4) Engage with and invite into membership those who have found us online; (5) Provide engaging and nourishing lifespan religious education: (6) Nurture the Spanish language ministry; (7) Launch a larger capital campaign designed to position the church for the future; (8) Organize and provide impactful social justice activities to include the working with other UU congregation hire of a Voting Justice Organizer, community projects, shared offerings, and working with TMO, the UUA, and community partners; (9) Strategically nurture a growing presence in the Greater Houston region including participation in FotoFest 2022, Ministers' forums in the Third. Fourth. and Fifth Wards, and consistent communication of an uplifting justice centered messages.

President Hoffman-Lach then invited Linda Richardson, Chair of the Nominating Committee, to come forward to present nominees for election to the Nominating Committee and the Board for terms of office that begin July 1, 2022. For the Nominating Committee she reported that the Committee is recommending Georgette Dredge and Natalie Brown. For the Board, the Committee nominated Sheryl Abrahams, Beth McCracken, Forest Johnson for threeyear terms, and Rachel Naegeli for a full term of office. In her role as Chair of the Nominating Committee Ms. Richardson nominated the candidates for consideration by the membership. Peggy Harvey seconded the nominations and after providing an opportunity for comment from the floor President Hoffman-Lach called the question and asked for a voice vote from the membership which passed unanimously including the count of the absentee ballots.

President Hoffman-Lach then presented a resolution to the membership to amend the articles of incorporation designed to clarify that the name of the Church is First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston; to state that Tawanna Grice in her role as Secretary of the Board is the Registered Agent; to update membership of the Board of Directors; to establish that we have Members with voting rights and that the Board manages the corporation, and to articulate Members' voting rights that have been in the Constitution including calling a special meeting of the membership, election of Nominating Committee members, election of the Board of Directors, election of a Search Committee members, election. termination, or removal of the Senior Minister, any action concerning the use of endowment funds, amending the Articles of Incorporation, and defining a quorum needed for a meeting of the membership will be included in the Articles of Incorporation.

She then opened the floor for discussion. Many members had questions that were discussed and answered. She then called the question. Earl Dredge made the motion to pass the resolution and Diane Stokes seconded the motion which passed unanimously by a voice vote and a count of the absentee ballots received.

President Hoffman-Lach then called the Senior Minister forward to join her for the presentation of the Proposed Budget. They presented the budget and opened the floor for discussion. Thoughtful questions were asked and answered. When the Parliamentarian pointed out that the ten-minute time limit for this discussed had passed discussion ended with out objection from the membership.

Upon a motion made by Natalie Brown and a second by David Wurdlow, the members voted to adjourn the meeting at 2:22 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by: Ron Cookston. Board Vice President

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MARCH 5, 2023 12:45 PM

- Call to Order: President Cookston called the meeting to order at 1:05pm. A quorum was present.
 There were 56 members in attendance in person and 40 who appeared by absentee ballot, constituting a total of 96 members towards the total for the quorum (50 members or 15% of the membership, which is 44, whichever is less). *
- Chalice Lighting: We light this
 Chalice to remind ourselves that we are human, and we are both lifted and limited by our humanity. May we be kind, compassionate, and make room for growth, both within ourselves and this group. Here, we practice governance rooted in love.
- Rolls Established: President: Ron Cookston, Timekeeper: Karen Carlson, Process Observer: Earl Dredge of the Governance Committee, Board Clerk: Joe Zuchlewski, Presenters: Steve Braun, Johanna DeYoung, Connie Acosta, and Ruth Hoffman Lach

Presentation of the Proposed Mission, Vision, and Covenant (MVC) by Johanna De Young and Steve Braun, Co-chairs of the MVC Committee.

Committee Members: Steve Braun, Johanna DeYoung, Sheryl Abrahams, Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen, Mirta Estrada, Mary Koch., Sonal Pandya, Rebecca Throop, P.D. Wadler, and Resident Poet, Toni Holland, who guided the finished statements.

The members of the committee were recognized. The Mission, Vision, and Covenant statements were read to the members present, and the process was explained. It was noted that there were 167 responses from members that were reviewed and considered in the making of the documents.

Motion by Johanna de Young to adopt the proposed Mission, Vision, and Covenant, Second by Connie Acosta. Discussion: Comments included a question as to why spirituality was not first in the Mission statement, but social justice was. Another congregant offered that the Mission is what we give to the community. Spirituality is not "pushed out" but gathered in from our efforts. Another member offered praise for the commitment in the Mission to an innercity Church. The vote was then called.

All in favor: All voting members present voted in favor. Of the Absentee Ballots, it was reported there were 39 in favor. Opposed: None Abstentions: one. Motion carried.

Consideration of the adoption of the Revised Bylaws by Connie Acosta, Vice President of the Board and Board Liaison to the Bylaws Revision Committee.

Committee Members: Connie Acosta, Ruth Hoffman-Lach, Linda Richardson, John Stauffacher and Charles Johnson.

Connie Acosta noted there were inconsistent rules in the former Constitution, the Bylaws, the Articles of Incorporation, and the Principles of Governance adopted last June. There were also problems and noncompliance with Texas nonprofit corporation law.

In all, the committee worked through 15 drafts to come up with the revised proposed Bylaws. Draft 13 was sent to the Board and others for comments and review and drafting continued. The final and 15th draft is an amalgam of all four above mentioned documents. Note that the Constitution is now null and void but the information and protections of rights remains now in the Bylaws.

Ruth Hoffman-Lach reviewed language changes via a PowerPoint presentation to the members present. Color coding of text was presented as to the origin of the text in previous documents as well as new wording added. There was a side-by-side comparison of the new document with wording from the other governing documents. Also noted was what language was removed and what was added.

Motion by Connie Acosta to adopt the proposed Revised Bylaws. Second: Steve Braun. Discussion: Members had a variety of questions regarding the eight reasons members could call for a congregational meeting. This was brought up to ensure that problems in calling a congregational meeting in the past would be able to be brought to the attention of the First Church Community by members. There were questions about electronic communications. There were also several questions about membership and the age of at which a member could vote.

At this point there was a motion by David Collins to amend the proposed Bylaws to allow any 14- to 18-year-old who had completed the Coming-of-Age Program to vote. Second by Sheryl Abrahams. After a period of discussion, it was determined by Process Observed Earl Dredge that the Amendment was out of order and the amendment was taken off the table.

Nonetheless discussion continued regarding the issue of 14- to 18-year-olds voting in the Church. Several members expressed their opinions. The issue came down to the maturity of these young individuals to grasp the seriousness of the potential issues to be voted on and the amount of life experiences that they have had vs. the desire to empower our youth and allow them to fully become integrated members of our Church community. Time was called on the issue.

At this time there was a motion to extend the discussion by David Wurdlow. Second by Bunny Carlson. There was no discussion. In favor: 24. Opposed: 17. Abstentions were not polled. The motion carried and time was extended by five minutes. After more discussion the issue was referred to the Board for further consideration. It was noted that if members passed the Revised Bylaws, the matter could in future be changed but that change would be solely up to the Board. A vote was taken on the original motion to adopt the prosed Revised Bylaw. In favor: All voting members present. Of the Absentee Ballots, there were 39 absentee ballots for, none opposed, and I abstention. The motion carried.

Adjournment: There being no further business, President Cookston happily adjourned the meeting at 2:19pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joe Zuchlewski. Board Clerk

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Carol leads our Children's and Youth religious education and our Adult Program opportunities with a talented and devoted group of volunteers. You will find Carol gathering people together to take action on issues of urgent concern.

Religious Education for Children, Youth & Adult Programming

During 2022-2023, we returned more fully to in-person programs for all ages. Highlights included five multigen worship services including a lovely Christmas Pageant and a youth-let Earth Day service, our children & families memorizing and sharing a poem and our annual Spring Retreat.



For our religious education groups, children especially enjoyed days in the garden for harvesting and planting, singing in Closing Circle, jumping over the fire for Feast of All Good Children and our annual Easter Parade.

Special programs included our Coming of Age, Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education (4th - 6th) and our YoUUth Unit's (ages 11-14) yearlong exploration of Families including photos and interviews culminating in a church-wide event.

Our Parent's Group continued to support families of young children. And a monthly park meet-up for young families was added this year. Our Religious Education Leader's Circle continued to provide longrange reflection and planning.







This year we created a new Adults Programs Steering Team, that will research the needs of congregation for offerings and provide guidance and support to carry out a new plan. Our current adult programs include: Guided Mindful Meditation. Sunday Discussion Circle. Changing Women, Houston Women's Group, Wednesday Discussions. Games Nights, String Band and Garden Team. Along with the Transition Committee, we offered a book discussion. The Climate Action Team offered monthly Plant-Based and potlucks began new collaborations with local environmental groups, including a quarterly green movie series.

With over 50 dedicated volunteers we continued to offer programs for all ages that engaged and grew during the 2022-2023 year and look forward to next year with excitement and anticipation.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Dr. Jolie Rocke received a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance from the University of Connecticut, a Master of Early Childhood Education from Loyola College in Baltimore, and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Hartford's Hartt School.



The Arts Team had a solid start, and we are continuing to plan events and activities that are exciting and engaging. The Arts Team has 16 church members, including visual artists, literary artists, musicians, and art enthusiasts. We began our work as volunteers for FotoFest 2022 with activities and tours from September through November. There were several arts excursions, including viewing the MFAH Gordan Parks exhibit Stokely Carmichael and Black Power, followed by a lovely lunch at the museum cafe. In February and March, we attended performances of Cambodian Rock Band at The Alley & Roe at Stages.



Arts Our Forum series has expanded from quarterly monthly, with an attendance of 40. We are happy to see non-members from the greater Houston community as guests and in the audience for the Arts Forum series each 3rd Sunday from 10:45 -11:15 AM that focuses on ways social justice connects with the arts. Dr. Toni Holland has recently taken on the role of organizer for the Arts Forum.

The choir is growing, and during 2023 we have had as many as 22 volunteer participants. We have sung diverse music, including works by well known Unitarian Universalist musicians. Choral arrangements. solo renditions, and instrumental offerings range from jazz, classical, musical theater, art song, folk, gospel, rock, funk, soul, pop, and more. Besides English, we have sung other languages, including Spanish, Latin, and Transylvanian, A music internship position funded and advertised in the fall. We are happy to announce we have hired Cymphoni Pringle as our intern.





Chelsea de Souza deserves a paragraph all on her own. Her music and energy bring joy to congregants, staff, choir, and guests. During reflective moments in the service, she often inspirationally improvises pianistic melodies and harmonies that reverberate the sermonic Chelsea works with messages. volunteer instrumentalists and sinaers to ensure thev feel comfortable and at ease when they offer their musical gifts. She graciously rehearses the choir in my absence and accompanies guest musicians who sing her praises. The John Cage Service was exceptional as we saw Chelsea in a new light presenting the Time for All Ages message.

I don't think we will ever forget her performance of Cage's "Prelude for Meditation" on the toy piano. A First Unitarian Universalist favorite, 17 members of the choir and congregation attended Chelsea's doctoral recital at Rice in March, with several requests to email the link to those unable to attend. Her dedication, creativity, and musical genius are greatly appreciated.

We have a fantastic group of volunteer musicians at First Unitarian Universalist who serve the congregation with excellence. String band, led by Lydia Luz, is featured during Sunday services in January, March, May and July. They have graciously shared music during the Auction and Spring Arts Festival. Traveler has played during Solstice Vesper Services, Sunday Services, and Arts Forum.



Traveler also presented a fundraising concert in March. In August of 2022, Dr. Jason Oby lead a workshop on The Negro Spiritual with more than 40 participants.

In addition to creative planning programs here at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, I serve on the planning 2023 team for the Annual Conference of the Association of Universalist Unitarian Music Ministries (AUUMM) in Baltimore. Maryland, this July. Attending the AUUMM conference last year in Ann Arbor, Michigan, provided invaluable professional development and creative ideas and helped me build connections Unitarian Universalist with musicians across the country. I also look forward to attending General Assembly in Pittsburgh. Pennsylvania, in June. While away from First Unitarian Universalist of Houston, I travel as an educator, professional performing artist, and producer or spend time with family and my partner Patricc. I am blessed to serve in a church where I feel valued and appreciated.

We are thriving and rebuilding a solid foundation. The future looks bright. Thank you for allowing me to serve as the Director of Music and providing the involvement to support a vibrant arts community here at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston.





ARTS EVENTS

- FotoFest 2022
- MFAH Gordon Parks exhibit Stokely Carmichael and Black Power
- Cambodian Rock Band
- Roe
- The Photographer as Dissident with Dr. Howard Bossen
- Little Central America: 1985 with Ruben Martinez
- Songwriting with Carol Burrus
- Religion in Houston's Pan-African Community with Dr. Colin Bossen & Sade Perkins
- Evolving Lines with Penny Cerling
- Not Just Words: Social Justice Ideas in Poetry with John Milkereit and friends.
- Spring Arts Festival
- The Lived Experience: Arts as Social Practice with Sarah Sudhoff
- Painted Churches Tour of Schulenburg, Texas

Governance Committee

The governance committee continues to work with the Board to ensure that governance issues are addressed and finalized to maintain proper procedures are followed at Board meetings and congregational meetings as well.

The principles of governance (POG) are reviewed so that they will be upto-date.

Following the specially called congregational meeting which included the passing of revised Bylaws, the committee has proposed revisions to the POG so that there will not be conflicts with the Bylaws. These revisions have been passed onto the Board.

Again, we worked with the Board at the February retreat which helps prepare for the budget for the next fiscal year. We also assisted with evaluation of the senior minister and the Board as well. We worked with the Board to help prepare new Board members at the fall retreat.

The Board president asked a member of the governance to attend board meetings this year to act as process observer. All members of the committee have attended one or more board meetings in this role.

BOARD NOMINEES

The Board is nine members who keep us going and take us toward where we want to go. The Board meets once a month and does a lot in between. The Board will need three new members, because three of its nine members will finish their three-year commitments in June. This renewal of shared leadership brings new energy, new ideas, and new skills.

ANDREW "DREW" STAWAR (THREE YEAR TERM)



Andrew "Drew" Stawar has been a member of First UU Church of Houston since 2020. He is a practicing attorney, specializing in immigration law for 15 years. He has worked for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for the last 10 years. Drew obtained his undergraduate degree in political science and humanities from New College of Florida in 2002. In 2005, he received his Juris Doctorate degree from the Washington College of Law, American University. He is married and has three children. He volunteer teaches math and social studies in a local GED program in Cypress, Texas.

PD Wadler has been a member of First UU Church of Houston since 2019 and an active UU for over 40 years. He grew up in Wharton, Texas, where his family has lived for 5 generations. He moved back to Texas after living 25 years in Chicago where he was a member of the Second Unitarian Church, and served as its Board Chair and was named to its Hall of Fame. He also served as Vice President of the Central Midwest District of the UUA and as Vice-Chair of the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee. He works as a psychologist and primarily works with military veterans who have issues with PTSD. He is Jewish and especially appreciates the religious diversity of First UU Houston

PD WADLER (THREE YEAR TERM)



TONI HOLLAND (THREE YEAR TERM)



Toni Holland became UU in 2007 while studying for doctoral exams in poetry and poetics. Dr. Rev. Hallman blessed her group of new members at First Unitarian Church of Dallas's rose ceremony where she also participated in Hallman's designed spiritual practices based on poetry, Spiritual Conversations and Living by Heart. She loved the 2009 UU First International Women's Convocation in Houston. She attended The Unitarian Church or Edmonton and All Peoples Church Unitarian (formerly First Jefferson Unitarian Church) before becoming a member at FUCCH in 2020. She's served on steering committees for Houston Poetry Festival and 100,000 Poets for Change. She cofounded and curated the first year of the annual poetry festival Reel Poetry and Public Poetry. She's current board member and past president of Fulbright Houston/SE Alumni Chapter. She has been a UU greeter, Chalice Circle Facilitator, and is in her 3rd year as a religious education in COA.

Ron Cookston has been a member of the Church since 2001. He has served on many committees over the years and currently is completing a 3-year term on the Board and has been President for the last year. Recognizing that there are many initiatives that he would like to see to completion including the Greening of the Campus and the Capital Campaign that will be launched next year he desires to continue on the Board. Dr. Cookston is retired from a 45year career in Health and Human Services where he gained experience at the executive management level of Notfor-Profit organizations.

RON COOKSTON (ONE YEAR TERM)



NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOMINEES

The Nominating Committee searches for candidates for Board of Directors as well as itself. It is made up of six committee members plus one representative from the Board and the last year's Board president (ex-oficio). Committee members serve two years. The Nominating Committee will also need three new members, as three of its six members will finish their two-year terms, also in June.

PENNY CERLING (ONE YEAR TERM)



Penny Cerling started attending
First Church 27 years ago when
her 5 year old granddaughter
wanted to go Sunday School
and regards the religious
education program as
extremely important. Penny's
background is in the arts and
medicine. She is married to
attorney Jeff Skarda who she
met at First Church.

Edmund Pantuliano is a proud recent member of First UU. Edmund is a first generation American with a background in Music and Education. After teaching in public schools for over 15 years he's now establishing an educational nonprofit to develop resources for dual language learners. He is currently on the Climate Action Team, the Arts Team, the Spanish Planning Team, the RE Team, he hosts the monthly games night, and plays bass on occasion for the congregation.

EDMUND PANTULIANO (TWO YEAR TERM)



JON NAYLOR (TWO YEAR TERM)



Seeking community, Jon joined First UU in March 2009. He quickly volunteered on many committees and was a member of the Services Auction Team even before he was a member of the church. Later that same year Jon headed the Services Auction Team breaking all previous revenue records. He has also volunteered on several of the church's many Social Justice projects over the years and participated in the church's Pride Parade efforts pulling the float. He has served on the Nominating Committee in the past, as well. In addition. Jon worked in the church office for seven years before retiring in June 2019. Jon feels pretty strongly that church membership requires both one's time and talents and looks forward to serving on the Nominating Committee again.

Zach Nelson joined First UU with his wife, Natasha Collins, during the pandemic. As new Houstonians, they've since enjoyed becoming part of the First UU Community. They were thrilled to have their son, Raffi, inducted at the Flower Communion, and they've enjoyed taking part in church activities. A lawyer by day, Zach hopes to join the Nominating Committee to meet more of the congregation and contribute to First UU's continued success.

ZACH NELSON (TWO YEAR TERM)





JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Our Calling: To weave the fabric of community with our love and action.

Our Mission: To organize the talents and voices of our congregation to advocate for policies and practices at all levels of government and society that will positively impact the worth and dignity of people and our planet.

TOPICS

- Primary and Mid-term Elections
- Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV)
- UU-the-Vote (UUTV)
- Volunteer Deputy Voter Registars (VVDRs)
- Lobbying at the Texas Legislature
- · Affordable housing
- Supporting families of trans youth
- Gun violence prevention
- Advocates for asylum seekers
- Adopted Afghan family
- Immigration assistance and advocacy

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston

"SIDE WITH LOVE"





The last year has been a very busy one for the JCC. From established events like primary and mid-term elections to specific events like the Dobbs case that over-turned Roe, the JCC was front-and-center in the public square advocating for and defending our principles. We are definitely non-partisan and do not support specific candidates - but we fiercely support issues that reflect our valued at all levels of government and society.

Our Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) and UU-the-Vote (UUTV) efforts began with the Spring 2022 primaries and run-offs, with many congregants engaged as Voluntary Deputy Voter Registars (VVDRs) and poll watchers and workers. We also were heavily engaged in "Accountability Sessions" organized by The Metropolitan Organization (TMO - the local Industrial Arts Foundation affiliate). Diverse candidates were asked to agree (or not) with our positions on a variety issues. These candidates included races for local school boards, State Board of Education, County Commissioner, Texas House of Representatives, and U.S. House of Representatives.

Efforts escalated in the Summer of 2022 with the hiring of a part-time organizer (in coordination with several other area UU churches) and the start of our GOTV efforts leading up to the mid-term elections. We would coalesce with many local, state, and national partners.

Over 50 congregants would engage in one or many of our different actions. We "adopted" Precinct 20 near the Church, and dozens of congregants knocked on doors and made phone calls to almost 2,000 voters in this precinct. TMO data showed that we increased voter participation in this Precinct between 5 and 10 percent. Other local, state and national efforts at encouraging voter participation in marginalized or low-propensity voting areas included: 5,000 postcards, 200 personal letters, 35,000 text messages, 17 VDVRs registered, and 90 hours of works as clerks and chairs at various polling locations.

The 88th Session of the biennial Texas Legislature began in January, and many members of our church have been active in terms of attending lobby days to visit with representatives, appearing at rallies, testifying before committees, making phone calls, writing letters, and simply showing up in Austin with our "Side with Love" shirts. One of the first events was the TXUUJM 10th Anniversary Celebration in Austin, followed by the TXUUJM lobby day where a dozen First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston congregants joined with over 150 UUs in Austin.

Several of us joined Texas Impact issue groups and the rapid response team - all geared toward contacting legislators on key and pressing bills. TMO also organized particularly to focus on bills attempting to resurrect "Chapter 313" (corporate welfare).

Numerous actions have been undertaken by church members outside elections and legislative sessions. Testimony has been offered before the City Council in support of diversifying the location of affordable housing throughout the city. Additionally, we have attending meetings of the Department of Family Protective Services in Austin to support families of trans youth targeted for investigation by the Governor for "child abuse." In response to the Dobbs decision overturning Wade, we massed with others on several occasions in downtown to express our outrage over the decision and supportive for reproductive justice. During the NRA Convention, we also contributed our presence and voices to the rally against gun violence. While our options are limited in terms of supporting access to abortion, we continued to pursue avenues through established organizations, such as Planned Parenthood.

First Unitarian Universalist of Houston has been one of the earliest advocates for asylum and other policies advocating a humane approach to immigration. Most notable was our welcoming into sanctuary an asylum seeker in the 19802. This last year, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston hosted the premier of Little Central America 1984, which highlighted the sanctuary movement in Houston in the 1980s - with a particular focus on the efforts of this church.

For some time, a team from First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston and other area churches have been supporting/sponsoring a family of 8 Afghans. We have provided financial assistance, helped children enroll in school, given lessons to improve their English, assisting setting up apartments, and a multitude of other tasks needed to implement their settlement into life in Houston. Regrettably, their federal financial support and even their parole visa status will end shortly if the Afghan Adjustment Act is not passed by Congress and signed by the President. It has widespread popular support and bipartisan support in Congress. Bus has been blocked by a minority of legislators. WE have talked to local representatives for the support and worked with the UUSJ at the national level.

The JCC has also been very involved in immigration assistance and advocacy in terms of the southern border and the attempt by many migrants from Latin America and Africa to seek asylum in this country. We have created a Houston Interfaith Immigration Rapid Response Group that has aided hundreds of immigrants needing transportation, food and clothing, short-term house, and more. We work in partnership with many local immigration advocacy and assistance groups - most notably Casa Juan Diego, Catholic Charities, LaUnidad11, and the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative.

The Community Projects Team organizes our outreach to help our neighborhood and beyond, often in tandem with other groups in the church. Whether rallying congregants to give blood or donate food and toiletries, the Team has had a busy and productive year. They have cooked and served meals to homeless youth, given them donated gift cards for the holidays, planted trees and cleaned a greenspace, repaired homes for elders, and volunteered their time to help refugees and the unsheltered. Their ongoing efforts to restore historic homes in Freedmen's Town led the Yates Museum to nominate them for a prestigious Houston Chronicle "Houston Gives" award.

Through an individual effort, the Church received a substantial grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalist Social Responsibility. Entitled Centering the Worth, Dignity and Lived Experiences of Asylum-Seekers in Houston, this grant includes cooking classes led by Latin American migrants with a goal of learning more about the culture and experiences of these individuals, collaborative community service projects, and a variety of educational programs.

The JCC has also worked closely and in alliance with the Community Projects Team and the Climate Action Team.

This summary and overview of our recent year's efforts cannot do justice to the myriad of issues that we addressed, nor the incalculable individual efforts of individual members of our church community. Hopefully, others are inspired to continue to speak up for our values and principles in the public square.



PARTNERSHIPS

- The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)
- Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry (TXUUJM)
- Texas Impact
- Reclaim our Vote
- Vote Forward
- Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ)
- Poor People's Campaign
- Third Ward Cloth

- Equality Texas
- Texas Freedom Network
- Planned Parenthood
- Houston Interfaith Immigration
 Rapid Response Group
- Casa Juan Diego
- Catholic Charities
- LaUnidad11
- Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
- Unitarian Universalist Network of Houston

SHARED OFFERING TEAM

The 5-member Shared Offering Team has been very busy this year with all kinds of funding for very diverse organizations and projects. On your behalf, we supported more UUA programs and fundraising efforts such as emergency funds for Puerto Rico and the Ukraine, Black Lives UU, Texas UU Justice Ministry, and our own home-grown projects as Rebuilding Together Houston, Freedmen's Town, and UU the Vote. WE put our money where our mouths and hearts are!

We also focused on diversifying our funding to reflect our efforts at multiculturalism, antiracism and against white supremacy by adding new community and multicultural programs. Your funds helped support women, and the environment. Reference Exhibit below.

We joined together with the Community Projects Team for a joint Christmas Gift card and sharing funding project to support Child Advocates and Montrose Grace Place.

As a Tribute to Reverend Leonora Montgomery on her 100th birthday, we started a new funding program with a Leonora Montgomery Tribute Fund which raised \$4,262 for individuals with startup or ongoing projects that reflect our UU values and principles.

A busy year indeed! Thank you for your generosity!

RECIPIENTS

- MECA
- Casa Juan Diego
- Coalition of Community Organizations
- Doctors Without Borders
- Third Ward Community of Cloth
- SHAPE Center
- Moms Demand Action
- Houston Area Women's Center
- League of Women Voters
- Clean Water Fund
- Plant it Forward
- Planned Parenthood

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston

FUNDRAISING *AS OF MAY 2023

\$1,638 Shared Funds \$1,420 Gift Cards \$3,058 Total Split between Child Advocates and Montrose Grace Place

\$4,262 Leonora Montgomery Tribute Fund <u>\$19,073 Shared Funds</u> \$23,335 Combined Total

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2023-2024 BUDGET



Fiscal Year				2022 – 2023	Proposed
Tiscai icai				Budget	2023 - 2024
Income St	Income Statement				
		Total 110) – Pledge Income	\$625,394	\$677,058
		115 – Ins	spiration Sunday	\$16,000	\$10,000
		116 – En	dowment Draw	\$33,682	\$33,639
		Total 120) – Shared Offering	\$61,000	\$56,000
		Total 130) – Services Auction	\$40,500	\$35,500
		Total 140) – Fundraising Team	\$13,500	\$11,000
		Total 150) – Gifts	\$56,000	\$155,738
		Total 160) – Rental Income	\$78,400	\$72,000
		170 – Re	serve Fund Draw	\$50,000	\$0
		180 – Other Income		\$31,500	
			180.01 Misc Income		\$5,000
			180.03 Investment Income		\$3,000
			180.05 Voting Justice Organizer		\$4,000
			180.06 FotoFest		\$6,000
			180.07 Green Campus Transfer		\$10,000
			180.08 Music Intern		\$5,000
			0 – Other income		\$33,000
	Total 10	00 - Income		\$1,005,976	\$1,083,935
Expenses				1	
·	190 – Ex	xpenses			
		Total 200 – Financial Obligations		\$46,084	\$41,911
		Total 300 – Program		\$114,863	\$108,690
		Total 400 – Facilities		\$115,791	\$135,222
		Total 500 – Personnel Expense		\$729,239	\$798,112
	Total 19	00 – Expens	ses	\$1,005,976	\$1,083,935
	SUMMA	ARY CONSC	DLIDATED		
		Total Income		\$1,005,976	\$1,083,935
		Total Expense		\$1,005,976	\$1,083,935
	NET INCOME				\$ (0)

PROPOSED BUDGET \$1,083,935

2022-2023 MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE



The congregation started the fiscal year with a membership total of 306 members. As of May 17, 2023, we have 301 members. During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we added 14 new members, 11 members did not renew their membership and we memorialized 9 members. There were also 3 corrections to members' status.

IN LOVING MEMORY

- Gail Wilkins
- Richard Braastad
- John Staples
- Joyce Ambler
- Shirley Homes
- Josef Kamerling
- George Cauthen
- Betty Paterson
- Audrey Hall

Attendance

Sunday attendance continues to grow as we all return to in-person services and programs. We are averaging a 21% increase in attendance compared to last year.

Online

Our online presence also continues to grow as we offer virtual options to members and friends. We are averaging 103 total views every Sunday.



Welcome Team Training

We had 21 volunteers attend a training workshop in February.





THANK YOU!

We the staff would like to thank the members for their continued dedication and support of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston. It has been a difficult year with all of the staff changes. However, because of your support, we now are fully staffed! We are ready to do the work needed to Widen Love's Circle with you!



First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston



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