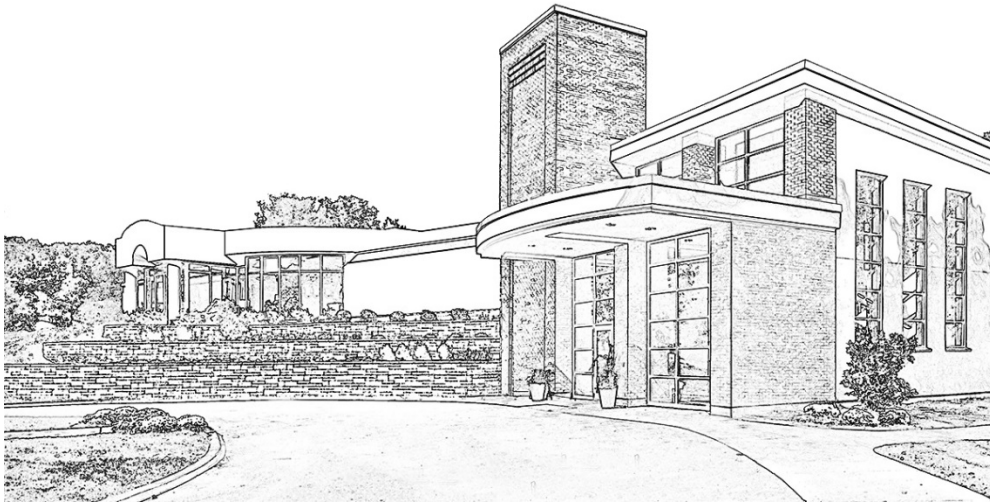


**PEOPLE'S CHURCH**  
**169<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**May 19, 2024**



**STAFF & COMMITTEE**  
**ANNUAL REPORTS**

**PEOPLE'S CHURCH**  
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# Minister's Report

## 2023-2024

In the poem 'Auguries of Innocence,' William Blake writes  
'Man was made for Joy & Woe  
And when this we rightly know  
Thro the World we safely go  
Joy & Woe are woven fin  
A Clothing for the soul divine  
Under every grief & pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine'

Joy and Woe, grief and gladness always present, all at once. That reality – and this poem – have been something I've held close at People's Church this year. We have lived with joy and woe this year.

There has been so much grief in our congregation this year. Since I wrote the 2023 annual minister's report, eleven People's people have died: Ken Dahlberg, Calvin Everly, Clifton Fisher, Nita Fowler, Dottie Goodwin, Donna Grath, Evelyn Husser, Matt Johnson, Ivan Klinesteker, Jan Park, and John Tanner. Gryffin, beloved dog of Diane Melvin, our director of religious education, died during a church sleepover for children in November. We have supported each other through these deaths– and the many smaller losses that are part of life.

In the fall of 2023, your church board identified goals for this church year, they were joy, financial sustainability, and becoming better prepared for emergencies.

Joy:

There were many moments of joy and delight in our worship services, including a book exchange ritual, creating dorsal fin hats for our water service, several group art projects, baking cornbread, and excellent music. We brought back our 'reverse service' after a four year hiatus, having a special service for our children in the Commons while the adults participated in specialty classes, ranging from craft projects to learning about nuclear power.

There were also many moments of fun and connection in our chalice circles, religious education classes for all ages, in committee meetings, and as we worked together on shared projects. This year's board of trustees has laughed together many times. All of this joy strengthens us to live in a world that needs more joy.

A joyful moment for me was being named the Clergy of the Year by ISAAC, the congregation-based community organizing group we are part of. Many People's people were present when I received that award at the ISAAC Run/Walk/Roll.

Financial Sustainability:

People's Church made great strides toward financial sustainability this year. Thank you to all the generous people who have made this possible.

We passed a budget last spring that included a significant budget deficit and a plan to hold a supplemental fundraiser in the fall. We met our \$40,000 goal for that additional campaign. We had budgeted to withdraw about \$20,000 from our unrestricted reserve fund this year. With two months to go in our fiscal year, it looks like we will need to draw less, as our building rental

income and fundraisers have exceeded our estimates (and the white elephant sale has not happened yet). Many thanks to our administrator, Melissa Emrich and all of the People's people who helped make the bazaar and the auction so successful.

For our spring stewardship campaign, we held a series of grateful gatherings at which People's people gathered (mostly over a snack or meal) spoke about why the church mattered in their lives, learned more about the church's financial situation and received their pledge materials. About 1/3 of the church participated in these gatherings. Others received their pledge materials in the mail. Our total pledges increased by about 18% over what was pledged last spring, with about 14 households pledging for the first time (or the first time in several years). I had worried that our budget building process this spring would be brutal, with many painful cuts to core church programs. Your generosity has created a very different reality.

#### Preparedness

While this work will be covered in more detail in the preparedness committee's report, I want to highlight the good progress that has happened in this area of church life. A preparedness policy was drafted and adopted by the board. The preparedness committee has developed an emergency action plan. They recruited and trained medical and safety teams – we have someone from each team on duty and present at other church events with high attendance. We also held a shelter-in-place drill this spring, which is probably the first-ever drill like that at People's Church. We are becoming more skilled at keeping each other safe and healthy. Many thanks to the People's people who are participating in this good and important work.

*Submitted by Rev. Rachel Lonberg, April 30, 2024*

## **Director of Religious Education Report 2023-2024**

Our religious education (RE) program has had a successful church year. We continue to rebuild from the many effects of the pandemic on our programs. The impact of the pandemic continues to be widely felt on our children, youth and families. We lost a cohort of youth who's connections did not survive the disruption. The many changes have been profound in our RE program at People's Church as well as at other UU churches across the country and in other denominations as well.

Church attendance looks different than it did pre-pandemic. Sunday attendance is far less consistent among families. Instead of offering Sunday morning curriculum content with depth and breadth with lessons that build upon one another, we are moving toward stand alone lessons. With such inconsistent attendance, most kids miss too much content to be able to make connections across weeks. We want the content to make sense and be meaningful on the weeks they attend.

The goal of our religious education program is to provide opportunities for authentic connections, learning and spiritual growth, with a deliberate anti-racism lens, to build the Beloved Community with more love, peace and justice for all. We aspire for participants to feel welcome, seen, valued and heard while they are engaged in religious education activities.

Our curriculum pillar this year was learning about Unitarian Universalism. With excellent stories and engaging activities, our elementary aged children learned about our UU values and explored how to best live them in the world. We've been fortunate to have 25 RE teachers committed to consistently working with our children and youth this year.

Our middle school youth engaged in Our Whole Lives sexuality education curriculum this year with excellent discussion and thoughtful participation. Our 5th and 6th graders also participated in Our Whole Lives for ten weeks after church on Sunday's this winter. The 5/6th grade OWL parents engaged in a parent chalice circle that ran concurrent with the youth class. Many meaningful connections and valuable learning took place through these opportunities.

Our religious education committee has done an excellent job overseeing many facets of our religious education program. They've recruited a wide variety of congregants to assist the RE program in supportive roles such as serving as RE greeters, Sunday morning point people, as buddies to kids with special needs, and to help with preparing food and kitchen clean up. We couldn't do what we do without help from so many people in this congregation!

RE Committee members also coordinated and managed monthly Specialty Classes for kids, which is always a favorite week for all. In order to ensure that events and activities at our church are family friendly, we commit to offering childcare as often as needed. Team members oversee and manage the childcare provider scheduling system for all these events. Behind the scenes, team members support our RE teachers by gathering and preparing weekly class supplies.

I recruit, train and oversee our RE Teachers, committee members and childcare providers as well as many of these invaluable volunteers who are the backbone of our vibrant program. I also work with a team to oversee and manage our ten chalice circles in our small group ministry program for adults, including a newer circle for and by young adults. I worked with a fabulous team of young adults to resurrect the regional UU young adult conference that People's Church hosted in January 2024. Of course, that was the weekend of the biggest blizzard of the winter; consequently the group that gathered was small but mighty in spirit.

In the fall I organized and accompanied a group of middle schoolers to Mystic Lake Middle School Retreat for UU youth from all over Michigan. These middle schoolers appreciate the fun time in nature to meet and form meaningful connections with UU youth from around the state.

Our RE program is in the midst of change and transition and we are doing really well adapting as necessary to better meet current needs. We have many new families who are excited to discover us and partake in the richness we have to offer.

Overall, kids, youth, families and adults are positively engaged in our program offerings. They appreciate making meaningful connections with one another and are grateful for the opportunities for inspiring religious learning and growth.

I hope that our time together at People's Church can help each of us to remain grounded in our own spiritual paths and practices so we are better able to live out our UU values in the world. May we continue to work together to build the Beloved Community, cultivating more peace, love and justice for all living beings.

Respectfully Submitted by Diane Melvin, Director of Religious Education  
May, 2024

# **Administrators Report**

## **2023-2024**

My biggest project of the year involved the complete rebuild of our church website. As I noted in my report last year, the website was built over 10 years ago and needed a full rebuild as small fixes and updates were no longer sufficient. It took many months but I'm delighted to say that the new website launched in the Fall of 2023 and thus far, I have received a lot of great feedback from church members as well as outside folks. A few small tweaks have been made but overall, the reception has been very positive. The website is much more user friendly; content is easier to find, the visuals are updated to bring the website from 2013 to 2024. In this process, I have also dramatically improved our web security, including implementing a change in how the directories can be accessed. There used to be a generic log in that everyone used and was very easy to guess. Now, when someone wants access, they must create their own username/password which then must be approved by the Administrator (me). At the time of writing this report, I have approved 61 accounts and rejected 82 requests from names/emails I do not know, many of which seem to be bots!

We have a picture directory for the first time since 2016-2017! So many people had made comments to me about how we should have a new one. Previously, this was something handled by LifeTouch, where a professional photographer would come to the church, take photos and put together the directory. After not being able to find a few volunteers to take on this project, I found a way to generate one with our database software. I put out announcements to the congregation, gathered photos to supplement the vast number that I have (see my report from last year on the creating a single, well organized, church photo database). So many different church members and groups have been able to make sure of this, especially our Nominating Committee! After the creating of the framework last year, this is something that the Administrator should be able to do on a regular basis – I am planning to generate an updated version each summer to be ready by September church services.

Over first year and a half of my employment here, there were numerous issues with the wireless network here in the building. Over the years, the internet network has been piecemealed together by volunteers and staff who have done their best to keep us online, myself included, but without expertise in this area. After battling with the Wi-Fi over a year and a half, I reached the end of my knowledge and capacity it became time to get a professional in to remove the varying band aid solutions so that the Wi-Fi can be consistent and available through the entire building for both church members and outside renters alike. After doing research, we went with Geek Easy, a minority owned local company who has helped us in the past (including providing free helpful tips and information to me via phone and email!). They redid our full network set up and I'm delighted to say that since then, the Wifi in the church is stronger than ever, reaches all corners of the building and we haven't had any issues with reliability!

Last year the church chose to not replace the RE Assistant after Laura Bultman left, instead eliminating the position. Over the last year, I have provided our DRE a lot of support and assistance, in particular with managing a variety of administrative tasks that were previously handled by her assistant. On average, about 10 hours of my week have been dedicated to helping

the RE program this year. Some of my regular tasks have been managing the attendance, ensuring that we have adequate teacher coverage for upcoming Sundays (incl. finding subs when needed), reviewing and managing the RE budget reports to provide updated information for the RE Committee, creating/posting the weekly social media information for parents, managing RE enrollment/volunteer forms, managing background checks/employment paperwork, as well as a variety of other tasks. I have also done work to assist the overall RE team, such as organizing the shared Google Drive of RE files, creating a functional spreadsheet to track attendance and averages over time. I meet with Diane weekly to discuss the upcoming week and what tasks she needs assistance with.

The Silent/Service Auction ran from Feb. 4th - Feb. 18th and was a successful fundraiser for the church. When all was said and done, the total of the winning bids came in at about \$3,700, which was about \$1,000 more than last year's auction (we budgeted \$4,000 for this year and we came very close to that number)! Last year, I wound up running almost all of the auction on my own as the prior auction team had not reformed after COVID. This year, I was able to recruit a number of folks to help make this event happen. Special thanks to Laura Bultman, Rochelle Habeck Hunt, Lori Rupe, Martha Beverly and Dolores Strom for all of their wonderful help and great ideas. We've had some discussions and have talked to folks around the church to begin formulating ideas for next year to hopefully grow the auction even more as well as getting an established team/committee to keep this going each year without the Administrator leading it.

This year, as a part of our work on Safety & Preparedness, the building went through a re-key! The last known re-key of our building took place in 1994 so we were very past due! The old system of tracking keys issued/returned was a paper notebook that was not always updated and so we did not know who all had keys to our building as many old keys were not marked as returned and so their locations were unknown. Now, when a key is issued, a key agreement form is signed by both the receiver of the key as well as the issuer (the church Administrator). A digital key log is kept where the date of the key being issued as well as the reason for the key is logged as well as a return date once the key has some back. This system is already helping to keep the building access organized and allows us to have a running list of folks who actively have a building key at any point.

It has been mentioned elsewhere but this year has been an amazing year for renters! This time last year, we budgeted \$5,000 for rental income and as of the writing of this report, we're on track to exceed \$10k! Last year, I did work with increasing our online presence as a local option for renting spaces (some of this was done with the website rebuild!) as well as communicating with groups who had rented from us previously as well as other area groups. I tried to spread the word that our big, beautiful building is available, and boy did word spread! Now, I get regular calls/emails every month from someone reaching out about our spaces, most frequently through word of mouth. Hopefully, next year this will only continue to grow as all of these additional renters have brought so much new energy to the building, especially during times when it's otherwise not in use, and have even led to renters wanting to become involved in our church programs and vice versa – truly helping to build the beloved community!

*Submitted by Melissa Emrich, May 2024*



# Art Wall Committee

## Annual Report 2023-2024

The Art Wall Committee consists of two sub-groups: **Exhibitions** and **Receptions**

**Purpose:** To engage the congregation and others who use the Commons, with a variety of interesting and stimulating art exhibits in different mediums. The work may be for sale and no commission is taken. The committee looks for original work from professionals, skilled amateurs, and emerging artists, which can be hung on the wall. When possible, priority is given to People's members and their friends. The committee is always open to suggestions and requests.

**Exhibitions:** Exhibitions are organized, curated, and managed by Gay Walker, who also creates public relations for each exhibit. David Smallcombe is the master exhibit installer with assistance from the committee and others.

**Receptions:** River Artz-Iffland has coordinated the receptions with her committee this year. An artist reception is usually scheduled after church on a Sunday during the exhibit period (dates chosen when there is no conflict with other events). There is a budget of \$40 per reception to purchase simple refreshments. Committee members plan, purchase food, set-up, and clean up for each event. The artist(s) is in attendance to talk about their work.

### **Schedule of Exhibitions in 2023-2024**

Collage Collaboration with Sally Padley, April- June  
Kris Walker, Architectural photography, July-August  
Susan Teague, Goddesses, September- October  
Pen Dragons Calligraphy Guild, November-December  
Tracy Klinesteker, pastels January-February  
Conrad Kaufman and Fence Row Painters, March-April

There are several exhibits planned for the future, including one with church member Ann Twillinger. There are also plans to have a People's Art Exhibit in which people from the congregation may display up to several pieces of art (painting, photography, textiles, collage, and other 2D art forms).

There have been a few discussions about having a juried exhibition with a theme, similar to what Westminster Presbyterian Church does. It would be a lot of work, so we need to consider interest and time commitment.

### **David Curl Donations**

A number of photos created by Dave Curl have been donated to the church for fundraising and use in future exhibitions. Some have been sold during the Holiday sale and Auction this year with all profits donated to the church. These will continue to be available for fundraising in the future.

*Submitted by Gay Walker, April 2024*

# **Holiday Bazaar & Fine Art Sale Steering Committee**

## **Annual report 2023-2024**

This church year, we achieved our goal of having our most successful Bazaar ever. Congratulations to our whole People's Church community, staff, and friends. Our net proceeds were \$13,273, exceeding last year by several thousand dollars.

We have committed to increasing our projected earnings by \$1,000 by building on the success of several new strategies this year. Several talented new leaders joined the team, a Mini-Café was added back into the event, a successful new raffle was added with baskets of donated items from our generous artists, our publicity was updated and expanded with more social media outreach and a yard sale campaign supported by donors from the congregation, a few large spaces were created with higher booth fees for artists desiring more space, the pasty marathon prevailed once again, RE specialty classes created delightful items that were a big hit, and increased VOLUME of our bestselling People's Favorites and spectacular array of creations were made by our congregation and added to the well-laden Specialty tables. The contributions of our congregation for People's Specialties are, by far, the financial pillar of this event. It is these beloved homemade and handmade goods that put us over the top!

And good luck played a very significant role this year! In contrast to snowmegeddon last year, this year brought mild weather and clear skies. The turnout held strong, despite the increased number and scope of holiday events now held downtown on this date. So, the **People's Church 2025 Fine Art Sale & Holiday Bazaar will be held on Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

Our plans for next year include the following:

1. Maintain and build on the changes implemented this year including the Mini-Café at same scope, moving the raffle to main hallway to increase access and visibility, adding a few more artist booths in Commons, vigorously promoting volunteering for at least one shift of pasty making with newer members and friends and among various church groups, expand new publicity efforts further, and recruit even MORE contributions for People's Specialties – the food tables were sparse by 11 AM! - by encouraging everyone to make their holiday favorites and increasing the variety of offerings.
2. Recruit a few more leaders to join the Steering Committee in key areas. A new co-leader is needed this year for the Artists and Vendors Area to work with Rochelle Habeck Hunt. This job starts early (by June) when artist recruitment begins. Dolores Strom will lead the event again with support from Melissa Emrich and Rochelle. A new Bazaar co-leader is needed for 2025 to work with Dolores, and it would be ideal for that person to start shadowing some of this work in 2024.

Thank you to everyone – members, friends, volunteers, and staff – who made this magic work and achieved a successful event that strengthens our community, within and outside of our walls and supports our church budget.

*Submitted by Rochelle Haback Hunt*

## **Building & Grounds Committee**

### **Annual Report 2023-2024**

Our committee works closely with the church staff and other committees to maintain and enhance the quality of our building and grounds. The goal is to provide a church environment that meets the changing needs of the congregation and is inviting to all visitors.

During the past year we had weekly small group work sessions on Tuesday mornings and completed tasks as individual workers when needed. The following are some of our activities and enhancements:

#### **Maintenance:**

Mowed and trimmed the lawn and memorial garden to maintain an inviting appearance and accessibility.

Members repaired the roof drain system at the old front door entrance to the foyer to prevent a reoccurrence of the ice dam that caused melt water to flood into the foyer.

Continued to investigate the cause of extensive water damage around the window in room 11. Since similar damage is expected to be occurring to varying degrees in the other RE classrooms, an acceptable solution to the problem remains to be determined.

Rapidly replaced a broken window in a RE classroom on a Sunday using retained used window parts to return the room to safe usage.

#### **Enhancements:**

Worked on a Boy Scout eagle project to refurbish the labyrinth by creating a new pathway and changing the plantings. One goal was to make the area more maintainable.

Continued assisting the Green Sanctuary committee in their project to improve the energy efficiency of the RE rooms by enhancing the exterior wall insulation.

#### **Future Enhancement Plans:**

Refurbish the stage steps in the Commons.

We are always looking for new committee members. Contact us if you would enjoy our kind of contribution to the success of People's Church.

*Submitted by Gary Leadley and Catherine Niessink, Committee Chairpersons  
April 28, 2024*

# **Dismantling Racism Implementation Team**

## **Annual Report 2023-2024**

This church year the Dismantling Racism Team welcomed a new member and said farewell to some who needed to step down, not leaving the work, just pausing from the team. Current members include Rev. Rachel Lonberg, Nadine Godin-Nassaney, Missy Howse-Kurtz, Tim Kieffer, Liis Lahti, Donna McClurkin, and April Schmidt. This is a collective/collaborative team with no chairs/leaders.

The Dismantling Racism Team organizes and promotes the work of claiming and developing an antiracist-multicultural identity fully integrated across all aspects of the institution of People's Church.

Using the definition of Racism as "Race Prejudice + the Misuse of Power by Systems and Institutions", it supports the examination of all aspects of church life, including worship, facilities, decision-making, leadership, policies, and practices, to eliminate the biases of the White dominant culture. It provides leadership, education, and experiences for members to learn and explore their individual racial identity and together the team works with other People's People to apply this learning toward the transformation of ourselves and our community.

This church year members of the DR team led a summer service focused on microaggressions, supported the board to develop our church's anti-racism policy for Article 3, collaborated with other church members to plan a book club based off Layla Saad's *Me and White Supremacy*, began conversations with the board for how Article 3 will be implemented in our church community, and supported one board member to attend an ERACCE training focused on race and racism.

*Submitted by April Schmidt with content from the whole team*

## **Finance Committee Annual Report 2023-2024**

Members: Mike Bultman, Barb Davis, Steve Ferguson (to 12/2023), Denise Hartsough (Chair), Allan Hunt, Brian Lewis (Board Representative), Pat Van Slambrouck

Treasurer: Tom Hackley

Staff: Rev. Rachel Lonberg, Diana Lundquist, Melissa Emrich

Per the Bylaws, the Finance Committee “is responsible for financial affairs, with input from other church stakeholders and direction from the Board of Trustees and shall prepare a budget for each fiscal year.”

During 2023-24, the Finance Committee carried out its responsibility for financial affairs through both routine activities and special projects.

### Routine Activities

#### Weekly

- Collect and count the collection during Sunday services.

#### Monthly

- Monitor operations finances by reviewing actual income and expense vs. budget.
- Monitor church’s cash activity to ensure adequate cash flow.
- Conduct financial reviews, examining financial statements to determine whether they are consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

#### Quarterly

- Receive and review Investment Committee report.

#### Annually

- Work with the Treasurer, staff and board to prepare a budget for the coming fiscal year.

### Special Projects

- Completed revision of the finance policy with input from Rev. Rachel and the Investment Committee for review and adoption by the Board in January 2024.
- Maintained a property inventory, including expected lifetime of capital items and cost to replace them (ongoing).
- Supported the successful special pledge drive in Fall 2023 to balance the budget.
- Supported the annual canvass by helping to facilitate Grateful Gatherings of church members in March 2024.
- Secured from Oshtemo Township a nonprofit exemption from paying property tax on a lot adjacent to the church owned by People’s, thanks to Brian Lewis.

# Green Sanctuary Committee

## Annual Report 2023-2024

**Members active on committee during year:** Allan Hunt, Bob Swicker, Connie Ferguson, Cybelle Shattuck, Gary Heckman, Nicky Leigh, Sue Salvat, Tom Hackley **Others helping with ideas and projects:** April Schmidt, Bob Friedel, Kimberly Ginn, Donna McClurkan, Gary Leadley, Marj Lightner

**Chairperson:** The Committee does not have formal officers; we all share responsibility for the committee.

- Main contact for Church, meeting facilitator: Connie Ferguson
- Note taker, publicity: Sue Salvat
- Liaison with Hope for Creation: Cybelle Shattuck
- Liaison with KCCC and Interfaith Power & Light/Cool Congregations: Tom Hackley
- Net-Zero project: Tom Hackley, Gary Heckman, Cybelle Shattuck, Allan Hunt

### **Purpose of the Committee:**

The Green Sanctuary Committee encourages a sustainable lifestyle for People's Church members as individuals and as a faith community.

### **Accomplishments for the 2023-24 Year:**

- Continued monitoring electricity produced by our solar panels
- Wrote Green Spot articles for most issues of *News & Views* as well as periodic articles for Friday emails
- Participated in Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition
- Presented webinar with UUA Ministry for the Earth about People's energy efficiency efforts (Tom Hackley)
- With Net-Zero Task Force, continued installing insulation on inside surfaces of exterior walls of original building (Tom Hackley, Gary Heckman and Building and Grounds)
- Participated in Hope for Creation (Cybelle Shattuck)
- Conducted a fall clean-up along 10<sup>th</sup> Street
- Helped with June grounds clean-up
- Started installing rain garden as part of our stormwater management (Kimberly Ginn, Sue Salvat)
- Provided sponsorship donation for Kalamazoo Earth Day
- Hosted 3-part Climate Conversations speaker series with League of Women Voters as cosponsors

### **Future Plans and Hopes: (UUA's Green Sanctuary program is based on activities in four areas: worship and celebration, education, environmental justice and sustainable living.)**

- Participate in worship as opportunities arise. (worship)
- Write monthly Green Spot and periodic Climate Corner articles. (education)
- Host speakers, films, etc. focusing on environmental themes, as circumstances allow. (education)
- Broaden our work with community organizations on environmental issues. (environmental justice)

- Monitor implementation of land management plan. (sustainable living)
- Conduct fall and/or spring roadside cleanups on 10<sup>th</sup> St., as needed. (sustainable living)
- Work with Buildings & Grounds on at least one grounds clean-up day. (sustainable living)
- Work to adjust our practices to minimize use of materials and energy and create less pollution and waste. (sustainable living)
- Continue to consider working toward Green Sanctuary 2030 accreditation. (all categories)

*Submitted by Connie Ferguson*

# Investment Committee

## Annual Report 2023-2024

1. The Board approved folding the Reserve Account into the Palmer Fund, since it is no longer necessary to hold cash for emergencies. All assets are now readily available, whether stocks, bonds or cash, for transfer to the Church bank account.

The Investment Committee is now investing for three funds:

Palmer Fund (unrestricted)

Perpetual Pledge Endowment Fund

Community Service and Outreach Endowment Fund.

2. Pat VanSlambrouk and Diana Lundquist developed an Excel spread sheet to account for the investment holdings on a monthly basis.

3. \$20,000 was distributed from the Palmer Fund to cover the predicted Church budget shortfall prior to the end of the fiscal year on June 30. Any unused monies will be returned to the Palmer Fund.

4. The Annual Endowment distributions for the 2024-2025 fiscal year to be distributed July 1 are as follows:

Perpetual Pledge Endowment Fund: \$12,999.45

Community service and Outreach Fund: \$2,525.49

5. The Investment Committee holdings at Mercer Global Advisors as of 3/31/2024 are as follows:

Palmer Fund: \$250,955

Perpetual Pledge Fund: \$271,185

Community Service Outreach Fund: \$52,685

Total: \$574,824

6. We continue to allocate approximately 50% of our holdings to stocks, and 50% to bonds and cash.

The Members of the Investment Committee are Greg Feldmeier (chair), Jeff VanderStratten, and Pat VanSlambrouk.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Greg Feldmeier*



# **Library Committee**

## **Annual Report 2023-2024**

The Library Committee of People's Church, comprised of Susan Stafford, Nancy Stern, Marijo Steenstra, and chairperson Lois Loeffler maintains and guides the church's library collection. The committee inspects donated adult books and magazines and retains those which are deemed suitable for the church library, based on the library's selection policy which is displayed above the library's computer. New adult titles, often recommended in the UUA Bookstore website, are discussed and sometimes examined by committee members before purchase. All library books, both RE (children's) and Main Library (adult) titles are cataloged in LibraryThing, a free online service.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

- Development of the library collection by purchasing new adult non-fiction titles according to the selection policy
- Discussions about donations to the magazine "take/leave" area and its upkeep
- Discussions/tweaking a procedure to address communication with church members and friends and encourage timely return of checked-out books
- Withdrawal of books that are outdated, irrelevant, or in poor condition
- Judicious replacement of lost/ruined books
- Consultation with former Archive Committee members and Rev. Rachel about the appropriate location for old People's and UU history books and other media
- Covering the dust jackets of the library's hardbacks with plastic covers
- Production of Library Corner columns in the monthly church newsletter
- Changing the display of books every month to include new books and to highlight those in the collection by season, holiday, diversity and those relevant to a theme

### **Specific goals for 2024-2025 include:**

- Establish an area for books authored by People's people to honor the authors by making their books more visible and easily accessible.
- Plan creatively for the use of the Spade monetary contribution to the library
- Re-organize the magazine leave/take area and revisit the guidelines for inclusion
- Discuss the development and implementation of a survey to determine library's readership and its preferences
- Inventory of the adult library books
- Develop and place instructive signs near the library area
- Expansion of library announcements into the church's Friday email
- Explore TinyCat, a companion to LibraryThing, for possible use

### **Goals Completed:**

- Welcomed a new member to the committee, Marijo Steenstra

## **Membership/Connections Committee**

### **Annual Report 2023-2024**

This year, the membership committee and Rev. Rachel continued to lead the Inquirers Series of classes. The Inquirers Series is nine stand-alone drop-in classes about all aspects of People's Church (including the history of Unitarian Universalism, governance, a building tour, religious education, and why we do what we do in Sunday services). We ran this class between November and March. This year, attendance was lower than it was last year. We don't know why – there were still plenty of newcomers to the congregation. We did have a great mix of participants in these classes – newcomers, newer members, and long-time members. This made for rich conversations. This class continues to help People's people learn more about the church, make informed decisions about membership, and find their niche in the congregation. We plan to continue this program in the year ahead. We encourage you all to join us for a session that is interesting to you!

In the calendar year ending April 23, 2024, 14 new members have joined the church. While only about half of these people attended an Inquirers class, we like to think that our class had something to do with this. The act of announcing these classes 9 times each year communicates that we are excited to have new people join us. We also want to thank everyone who talked to someone new on a Sunday morning, answered a question, attended an Inquirers class, or otherwise helped a visitor or newcomer feel welcome in our congregation. This is the work we all do together.

Committee Members: Zoë Valette, Chris Semelbauer, Donna Kaye, Rick Johnson, Josh Holcomb, and Rev. Rachel Lonberg

*Submitted by Rev. Rachel Lonberg, April 2024*

## Memorial Garden Committee

### Annual Report 2023-2024

The Memorial Garden Committee is tasked with the upkeep of the garden and with working with families who are interested in memorializing their family members.

Since we have planted a lot of trees in past years, the garden is rather 'full' of trees and has become crowded. After much discussion it was decided that we could not plant any more trees or plants and we are now working on upkeep of the trees that are there. We need to mulch the trees that are present, and can use help with that, if anyone is interested in such work.

If the spouse/family member of the deceased already has a tree, the ashes could be placed under that tree and the signage changed. Ashes can be placed anywhere in the garden, but there is no record kept of where they are. We suggest that instead of a tree families order a plaque for the Memorial Wall. The church office handles these orders.

Last year the committee worked on weeding the mound in the memorial garden, and the beds in front of and back of the church, planting annuals to supplement the perennials we had planted in previous years.

Members of the committee have taken over responsibility for the front planting maintenance and the labyrinth upkeep. The Building and Grounds Committee takes care of mowing the paths in the garden.

The committee is still concerned about the poison ivy and invasives like Swallowwort, Autumn Olive, and others in the Memorial Garden and around the grounds, and has been working on finding a way to combat and get rid of them. We will contact the CISMA (a 3 county group that is working on invasive plants) and ask them to treat the swallowwort.

We have been thinking about changing the plantings on the Memorial Mound, and we worked on this last fall. Kimberly Ginn and others volunteered to help and last year they took out the last of the large bushes. This spring we have to work on the plantings, possibly using hostas thinned from the church north wall, ferns and other small native plants. The area in front of the mound, between the two paths, needs new plantings as well. I am thinking of Pennsylvania sedge, which a nice green short wavy sedge which needs no mowing.

If you want to join us, we work every Tuesday morning on some aspect of the garden or the grounds—at least when the weather is good. Otherwise, we work inside with the Building & Grounds Group. We'd love to have you.

Members: Andrea Huff, Kimberly Ginn, Rick Johnson, Marj Lightner, and Catherine Niessink,  
*Chair Submitted by Catherine Niessink, Chair*

## **Nominating Committee**

### **Annual Report 2023-2024**

The Nominating Committee for the 2023-2024 church year consisted of Rachel Bair, Sandy Steele, Lois Loeffler, Steve Cavanaugh, Lori Rupe, Bob Friedel, and Karen Friedel (Board appointed).

The nominating committee developed a slate of candidates for the People's Church Board of Trustees and for the Nominating Committee for the upcoming church year. The committee followed the procedures as outlined in the church bylaws and candidates were presented to the congregation through published biographies in the April newsletter. The committee also collaborated with Rev. Rachel on a service about leadership that included some congregational education about our nominating process.

The Board nominees are Juli Ginn, Teresa Klan, and Amy Meyer. We thank them for their willingness to serve on our church board.

Our Nominating Committee nominees are Michael Leonard and Ken Tindall.

Pending election of new members for 2024 Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee for the 2024-2025 church year will be composed of Steve Cavanaugh (2025), Lois Loeffler (2025), Robert Friedel (2026), Lori Rupe (2026), Michael Leonard (2027), Ken Tindall (2027) and a member who will be appointed by the Board of Trustees from those stepping down from Board service.

Rachel Bair, Sandy Steele, and Karen Friedel have completed their Nominating Committee service.

The Committee appreciated the Member Photo Directory that was created last summer. This was an especially useful tool for matching faces to names and broadening the pool of potential nominees. We thank Melissa for her quick and effective work on that project.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve People's Church and our fellow members.

Sincerely,

Patrick VanSlambrouck  
Nominating Committee Chairperson.

# Preparedness Committee

## Annual Report 2023-2024

**Members: Gordon Bolar, Chair; Dan Bair, George Hrbek, Melissa Emrich, Gary Heckman, David Greenquist**

In the fall of 2023, the Committee submitted and the Board subsequently adopted a new Preparedness Policy. A key aspect of this policy was addressed the need for an Emergency Action Plan, for church response to emergency situations potentially occurring within People's Church, such as weather-related emergencies, medical emergencies, fire, persons exhibiting inappropriate behavior, violent threats, suspicious packages, and cyber security.

After the Preparedness Policy was adopted by the Board, the committee's main focus became the creation and implementation of an Emergency Action Plan. Our goal was to create a plan that was right for our congregation, our building, and our values.

In the late fall of 2023 the committee reviewed other plans being used by other UUA churches. A plan from Unity Church in St. Paul stood out, and served as a model for much of the work on the plan for People's Church.

In late 2023 the committee embraced the idea of creating volunteer safety and medical teams to serve as our eyes and ears, and to initiate emergency response as spelled out in the plan. By late January of 2024, seven members for each team had been recruited. Team members were trained in February and March in First Aid and in orientation to the building and its equipment, as well as safe spaces.

As the Emergency Action Plan was created the committee consulted with Church Staff, including Religious Education staff, and with other committees, such as Building and Grounds.

After the board reviewed the Emergency Action Plan during the spring of 2024, the plan was implemented in March, with on-duty members of the Safety and Medical teams wearing badges to identify their presence.

The plan was formerly introduced to the congregation on April 7<sup>th</sup> by Gordon Bolar, committee chair. On that day, Rev. Rachel initiated a Shelter In Place drill, as specified by the Emergency Action Plan. The drill was carried out by staff, committee members and by the Safety and Medical teams. Although the drill and other aspects of the plan have been successful to date, the committee will continue to fine tune the plan and improve it based on input from Staff, as well as Safety and Medical Team members.

In response to reports of church doors being left open and lights left on overnight the committee reviewed the benefits and pricing of an access control system. The committee decided not to recommend this system due to price. Instead the committee recommended that the church be re-keyed in the winter of 2024. This solution effectively addressed the reported concerns above.

*Submitted by Gordon Bolar, April 12, 2024*

# Religious Education Committee

## Annual Report 2023-2024

The RE committee had a busy and productive 2023-2024 church year. The primary theme of the year was the “Toolbox of Faith” where kids learned about different aspects of UU faith and how to use them as tools to make a difference in their own lives and the world at large. The committee also had a hand in planning and executing many activities throughout the year, including coordinating child care and food for many events held at the church.

### Curriculum

- **Preschool**
  - The preschoolers participated in an age appropriate chalice circle program with various UU related topics each week. There was also of course plenty of time allowed for play, snacks and crafts.
- **K-6th: Toolbox of Faith**
  - What tools does Unitarian Universalism offer for the challenges of life? Children discover what aspects of UU faith are helpful to them, developing a toolbox of faith. These classes were broken up to allow for age appropriate learning (K-1st, 2nd-3rd and 4th-6th)
- **5th-6th: OWL**
  - This was held after church as an additional class that ran from January 21st through April 14th. Kids were taught valuable age appropriate lessons about their bodies and interacting with others.
- **7th-8th: OWL**
  - This was held Sunday mornings during regular RE hours and ran the entire church year. Kids were taught valuable age appropriate lessons about their bodies and interacting with others.
- **9th-12th: Youth Group**
  - Due to ongoing attendance issues with this age group, the high school youth group only met once a month in the fall and sporadically in the winter/spring. When the group did meet, the focus was on building relationships with each other and connections with the church community.
- **9th-12th/Adult: Coming of Age**
  - This class met the first Sunday of each month after church with the focus on learning and exploring the students’ personal faith journeys and discerning and articulating their values and beliefs. This culminated with the students developing a statement of faith and sharing it with the class and (potentially) the congregation.
- **Speciality Classes**
  - The RE committee was also responsible for organizing specialty classes. These replace normal RE classes on a given Sunday, usually once a month (sometimes more often). In specialty classes kids are led in the creation of something (like a craft or a baked good) or participate in an interactive, educational activity.

### Accomplishments

- Creation and implementation of the curriculum for the church year

- Gathering supplies in advance for the RE classes each week
- Coordinating childcare for RE activities and other church events
- Coordinating meals and snacks for RE activities and other church events
- Facilitating the RE program each Sunday with a greeter welcoming families as they arrive, a point person making sure the kids are where they need to be and everything is running smoothly, and classroom buddies as needed for kids with special needs.
- Recruiting and supporting the RE teachers throughout the church year

**Activities Planned and Executed**

- 10/20 - 10/22 - Mystic Lake Middle School Retreat
- 11/3 - Elementary potluck and sleepover
- 12/17 - Winter Intergen service - Bread for the Journey
- 1/12 - 1/14 - Young Adult Con
- 2/2 - Potluck and Board Game night for new(ish) families
- 3/17 - Reverse service
- 4/21 - Earth Day service
- 5/19 - Coming of Age service
- 6/2 - Bridging service
- 6/24 - 6/28 - Peace and Nature Camp

Overall, I would categorize 2023-2024 as a successful church year for the RE committee. The curriculum was well received and we made steps toward our goal of building a stronger, more loving church community. We had challenges arise, but we were able to overcome them with our teamwork and our adherence to the UU principles.

*Submitted by Brandon Brown*

## Social Justice Coordinating Committee Annual Report 2023-2024

**Committee Members:** Ann Feldmeier (Chair), Rochelle Habeck-Hunt, Rev. Rachel Lonberg

For nearly 30 years, the role of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee (SJCC) has been to confirm to the congregation and the community that social justice activities are a vital aspect of our Church life and mission and to provide a structure and process for members of the congregation to use in creating and joining community service and social justice efforts. The committee helps to provide an avenue for new members, who bring to People’s Church an interest in social problems, the opportunity for participation within the church in social justice activities.

The Social Justice Coordinating Committee (SJCC) has been involved in the following community service and social action activities over the course of the past church year.

**Special Collections:** These are taken once each month to benefit a local non-profit organization whose work aligns with our mission and goals. Non-profit organizations that received contributions from our generous congregation this year:

<b>RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Lincoln School	\$1,484
Care Collective of Southwest Michigan	\$743
Ministry with Community	\$1,134
COPE Network	\$1,468
Community Homeworks	\$1,271
UUA	\$1,244.22

To complete the 2023-2024 Special Collections, there will be a May collection for ISAAC and a June collection for Housing Resources to support the POD initiative.

**Expenditure from Social Service and Community Outreach Endowed Fund:** This endowed fund was created by two now-deceased, former members of People’s Church – George and Virginia Hoeksema – to support community service and outreach activities. This year, our support of \$500 from this fund was directed through the Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch NAACP 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Black History Community Baby Shower Drive to benefit the work of CRADLE KALAMAZOO. CRADLE is a multi-agency community initiative working to reduce the Black infant mortality rate in Kalamazoo County and for all babies to survive their first year of life. The baby showers help support the work of CRADLE KALAMAZOO with these donations to Kalamazoo YWCA for CRADLE families and babies.

**Other Activities – Donations:** Personal care items were collected for Ministry with Community clients. Donated items for the Afghan refugee families we have co-sponsored continue through the Free Store located at Congregation of Moses and supported by our volunteers. Walmart gift card donations continue for Lincoln School’s CIS representative to purchase needed clothing items.



**ISAAC Membership:** Our church continues our legacy of 20 years of support and active participation in ISAAC (Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy and Action in the Community). Through our ISAAC CORE Team, the congregation is invited to participate in and support major events held by ISAAC and in the work of its social justice issue task forces. Since its inception in 2002, Peoples Church and our people have been actively engaged with more than 30 other congregations and partners in organizing for policy reforms that make Kalamazoo County a more just and equitable community. This year, work continued in the preventing youth and gun violence, developing equity and anti-racism in the work of our elected and public officials, and assisting the development of affordable housing initiatives in our City and County. Many People's people participated in two major ISAAC events this year. The Walk/Run/Roll for Social Justice was held at Spring Valley Park in September, where our minister was awarded ISAAC Clergy of the Year, and our Congregation was recognized with a service award for our dedication to the work of ISAAC. In March, more than 30 of our people participated in the Virtual Fireside Chat with Layla Saad, author of *Me and White Supremacy*. Several learning opportunities were provided to ISAAC congregations to further our journey toward anti-racism, with People's people participating in each of these.

**Refugee Resettlement:** As the seven Afghan and one Iraqi families assisted by the group of 40+ volunteers who came together in late October 2021 to form an Interfaith Afghan Resettlement Team settled successfully into their new lives in our community, some volunteer work continues. Several of our members tutor English as a Second Language (ESL), assist in the children's education – tutoring students who may have never attended school, provide transportation, help navigate health and financial systems, and in many other ways. Some of our people volunteer in the “free store” that was established the Congregation of Moses as a resource for to access free clothing, household and personal care items. Many achievements by these families and their children have been celebrated!

**Lincoln School:** Several People's people continue their dedicated service as tutors at Lincoln School. The congregation continues to support the needs of Lincoln students through the above-mentioned means.

**Forging a New Vision for the Future:** The SJCC has decided to end our committee as currently conceived. Social Justice is a vital aspect of People's church and for its members. As the demographics of our congregation shift, modes of communications change, and the nature of social justice issues evolve, the committee thinks it is time for new ideas, new voices, and new ways to function that serve the church and its members going forward. Stay tuned – more to come on this development.

## **Stewardship Committee Annual Report 2023-2024**

Two campaigns and so much generosity!

It was a busy and successful year for the stewardship committee. We led two successful stewardship campaigns:

In October, we held a supplemental stewardship campaign to close a gap in the church budget. Fittingly, we called the campaign ‘S’more.’ The effort featured a s’mores party after church, a service with interruptions by Uncle Pennybags from Monopoly (thank you, Gary Heckman!) and stewardship testimonials from Martin Sauter, the Webb/Pietras, Bair and Nickerson families. This campaign met our \$40,000 goal.

In the spring, we led a small group stewardship campaign focused on relationship-building, reflecting on the value of the church in our lives, and sharing clear information about the church’s financial situation. About 1/3 of the church participated in a small group grateful gathering in March. Many thanks to the hosts, facilitators, and participants! The stewardship committee also reimaged our printed materials, including creating ‘mission-focused’ pie charts that show the church’s expenses and income, a Rainbow of Generosity handout that showed pledge guidance for different financial realities, and a simplified pledge card for previous givers. This campaign was very successful. As of this writing, our pledges have increased 18% from the spring campaign last year.

We are grateful to the many generous People’s people who contribute to our church with their time, talent, and money.

Stewardship Committee: Allan Hunt, Greg Feldmeier, Bob Davis, Tom Hackley, Sharon Sauter (fall 2023 only), and Rev. Rachel Lonberg, with wonderful staff support from Melissa Emrich and Diana Lundquist, and so many others who hosted, facilitated, gave testimonials, or otherwise helped make these campaigns a success.

*Report submitted by Rev. Rachel Lonberg, April 2024*

## **Sunday Services Committee**

### **Annual Report 2023-2024**

Members of the committee this year were John MacLellan (chair), Gordon Bolar, Bob Davis, Donna McClurkan, Matthew Morris McCormick, Chris Measzros, Marty Newman, and Sharon Sauter.

Greg Feldmeier and Becki Moffett-Moore stepped down from the committee this year.

Purpose of the committee: The Sunday Services Committee works with the minister to plan meaningful weekly Sunday services and special services for the church year, and to enrich and support all aspects of the services.

The Sunday Services Committee assisted the minister in planning and facilitating services. In addition to Rev. Rachel's services, the committee worked with guest speakers, musicians, and the youth of the church, and found creative ways of engaging the congregation during Sunday services. Over the summer, we invited eight members of the congregation to share reflections on the theme of "Navigating the Unexpected" and had a series of successful services. As of this writing, we are preparing for summer services. The committee chose "Living Our Values" as our summer theme.

Over the next year, the committee will continue to assist the minister with Sunday services and adapt to changing circumstances that may bring new elements into Sunday mornings.

*Report submitted by John MacLellan, Sunday Services Committee chair*