



Annual Report

May 2023

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Minister's Annual Report May 2023

Rev. Laura Smidzik

"There is always light.
Only if we are brave enough to see it.
There is always light.
Only if we are brave enough to be it."
— Amanda Gorman

I remember watching Amanda Gorman, the Youth Poet Laureate, up high on the stage outside the Capitol facing the large crowd that filled the National Mall. She was a confident twenty-two year old standing up there in her yellow coat. She delivered the poem "The Hill We Climb" which ended with the quote above. I remember feeling absolute awe and a sense of hope. Her words gave so many of us strength as we began a new chapter in American history...or at least many of us thought we were going to return to a country less divided and headed in the direction of greater equality, environmental policies, and more.

When I was a candidate for ministry at Michael Servetus Unitarian Society (MSUS) in the spring of 2016 I was told several times that MSUS wants to be a beacon of liberal faith in the Northern suburbs. I believe that we are still needed in the Northern metro to provide that light if only we are brave enough to see it and be it. This dream of being a beacon or progressive faith is such a beautiful image and it is a challenge in a time when church attendance and religious influence is dropping in America.

There is something special about MSUS—a light that shines bright for those who find us and those who are connected and engaged. The joy, connection, and vibrancy of the MSUS community has not wavered throughout the years. We are a congregation that has a strong Unitarian Universalist identity and we understand how invaluable a progressive faith like ours is to people who are looking for a community where they can grapple with larger questions of faith, ethics, justice, and living a meaningful life.

I took time to assess the state of the church this past January by spending time with the MSUS membership/friend list. I wanted to assess what engagement in the congregation looked like. Some numbers may vary slightly today, but they will give you a snapshot of MSUS:

- We certified 98 members with the UUA this year.
- We have around 80 adults connected to the congregation at this time. Not all of those connected are members. This does not include youth or children. We have around 11 kids/youth connected at this point.
- We have 54 people who attend worship on a fairly regular basis.
- 25 people are connected to small groups (this does not include those who are in book groups because I don't have those lists)
- Coffee house has 24 people who attend on a regular basis.
- Music has 18 people connected through choir, band, and Delphi.
- Mom's group has 4 regulars and around 6 connected loosely.
- 5 people are regular worship leaders. New members, Joey Hunter and Kevin Sitter also lead services recently. Katie Johnson and Kathy Burek have been involved in co-planning and leading services.
- Coming of Age has 6 youth and 6 mentors.
- Our tech team has 7 members.
- We have 26 people serving on teams/committees and of that number 10 people serve on several teams/committees and support or participate in a number of other activities of the church.

My immediate reflection is that given our numbers the level of engagement feels quite healthy. I am concerned about our reliance on a core group of 10 members who hold multiple roles and responsibilities. This is not unique to our congregation, but there is no denying how much we depend on core leaders.



Minister's Annual Report *cont.*

OTHER LARGER OBSERVATIONS:

This was a big year for internal systems. We started the year with a new chart of accounts and a move to QuickBooks for accounting. This has proved to be very beneficial in terms of staff and our accountant's time. We moved our membership data into a database called Faith Teams. We now have online banking and have moved all of our email to Google Workspace. All of these changes were made in response to needing better technologies to support the work of the church.

The consistency of staff over the past two years has been invaluable. We work as a healthy and committed team. The staff is a joy and they've helped stabilize and expand our offerings.

We took the bold step of selling our building and have settled into a rhythm with worship in the Fridley Community Center. The space is much nicer than the Middle School with carpeting, a more formal entrance, padded chairs, and storage. We also have all three parts of the large room for the same price as just two parts so we were able to host Coming of Age during our worship services. The laughter on the other side of the wall was awesome!

Programs and additional services/rituals are being held at Pilgrim House UU Fellowship in Arden Hills. There is a broad range of feelings about us owning or sharing a building or continuing to rent. We intentionally decided to let go of the old building in order to embrace the radical welcome we have found possible with an accessible building. And, by letting go we are free of the people power and financial costs of owning a building of our own. I want to acknowledge the continued feeling of loss for those of you who felt at home in the Oakley Drive building and encourage you to stay in the conversation as we determine what is next.

Next fall, we will engage in a strategic planning process that will help us clarify what we hold dear, what we can let go of, and how we can have the greatest impact in our own lives and the community. We need to better understand who we are post-pandemic and who we want to become. Hope, courage, and commitment will be asked of all of us. I look forward to joining all of you again in the fall after my sabbatical and feel assured that the congregation will continue to thrive in the months to come.

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Each year we take time to recognize those among us who have died. This year we honored the passing of Melissa Winn, Bob Dakin, Kasey Bridgeman, Mary Martin, and our past intern, Lisa Myers.

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I continue to write my monthly report to the Board based on our Ends Statements which help guide us in our mission and vision. The statements are in bold and I've reported on the past year under those headings.

GROUND OURSELVES IN RITUAL AND PRACTICE THAT DEVELOP LIVES OF MEANING AND PURPOSE.

- We are now holding facilitated "sparklet circles" after services. People who attend the service in person can choose to mingle informally or join the circle. We all share our names, preferred pronouns, something that stuck with us or sparkled from the service, and then do a check in. It has deepened connections and the level of reflection on the content of the services.
- This year has solidified that hybrid services and many events are here to stay. Two of our new members joined us solely online until they came to the service where we held the new member ritual.
- It has been really helpful to have Pilgrim House as a site for additional services. We held Blessing of the Animals, Blue Christmas, and a memorial service there. We were scheduled to hold the Winter Solstice service there as well but a storm had us move it to online only.



Minister's Annual Report *cont.*

- We started the church year with a service acknowledging Chad Snyder as a Commissioned Lay Minister. This role is something that was created and exists in other parts of the country and I am not aware of any other local congregation having someone in this role. Chad started seminary this year and has assumed a large amount of summer preaching as well as having led a service per month during the church year.

CREATE A LOVING COMMUNITY OF INTENTIONAL CARE AND SUPPORT FOR ONE ANOTHER.

- We did not have a formal Congregational Care Team this year but the congregation stepped up to support a number of congregants with serious health events. Chad Snyder is convening a new team over the summer.
- We've held several small groups this year. Some were a continuation of past years and a few new this year. The two book groups which are affiliated with MSUS are still going strong. The Covenant Group, Third Thursdays for 60+ers, and the Mom's group all met monthly in person. I also facilitated two Soul Matters Theme groups and a year-long book group on Rev. Karen Hering's book titled *Trusting Change*. There are people who are consistently involved in these groups who we do not see at Sunday services.
- The Joys and Sorrows section of Sunday services continues to provide a way for us to know what is going on in each other's lives and to celebrate the joy and help bear the weight of each other's sorrows.
- 35% of our services have focused on pastoral care, self-care, and spiritual practice. As we all grow in our understanding of ourselves and each other and ground ourselves in meaningful spiritual practices we strengthen the community as a whole.

PRACTICE GENEROSITY THAT NOURISHES OUR SPIRITS.

We did not have a formal Generosity Team this year, but Laurie Young and Deb Schneider took the lead on the Service Auction and the Holiday Craft and Cookie Buffet (Jen Grilliot was also a leader for that event). We raised \$1,200 at the holiday event and the Service Auction has not yet taken place at the time of my report.

- Delphi Jazz designated MSUS as the recipient of their concert at Pilgrim House. We collected approximately \$400 from that event.
- The congregation has been generous in supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) family from Guatemala. Laurie Young has been working with the family and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka (UUCM).
- We have continued with our monthly social action passthrough donations. We've moved from having "special collections" on the second Sunday of the month to announcing our social action partner at the start of the month and keeping the donation option open throughout the month. Each month the partner's name shows up in the drop down menu for donations on our web page.
- One of our past members who lives out of state worked with us and her attorney to include us in her estate when she dies. If others are interested in learning more about this process let me know in the Fall and we can assist you. Legacy gifts have been so important for the financial health of MSUS.
- Darla Kashian, a financial planner with RBC Wealth Management has donated her time to work with the Finance Committee, Board, and congregation at a Congregational Forum to better understand our financial position and how to live generously at a time of so many unknowns.

BUILD AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE; AND PROVIDE RADICAL HOSPITALITY FOR ALL.

- Our monthly Congregational Forums give us an opportunity to learn together and to discuss issues related to the life of the church. They are respectful, well-run, gatherings and have provided an opportunity for a range of voices and opinions to be heard.



Minister's Annual Report *cont.*

- We continue to focus on the experience of the newcomer and adjust our webpage, Thursday Update, Sunday services script and announcements so they reflect welcoming language and descriptions that move beyond “insiders” language.
- We are building a beautiful, authentic connection with the Turkish American Society of MN (TASMN). Tolga Misirli, the executive director, and Fuat Aktan, a TASMN leader, spoke at a service this past January. I spent time with a group of people at TASMN sharing about our faith and history.

ARTICULATE AND EXPLORE OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FAITH IDENTITY AS AN INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY LEARNING AS WE LIVE IT TOGETHER IN THE WORLD.

- Rev. Diana McLean led three sessions of a multigenerational faith formation program called Gather the Spirit. The program focused on water stewardship.
- 25% of our Sunday service topics have focused on UU history and theology. Sunday mornings are a time of spiritual exploration.
- Our multi-aged Sparklet Circles have provided intergenerational reflection opportunities.
- We held a Coming of Age (COA) program this year led by Chad Snyder and Amy Luedtke. Those who participated are (Participant: Mentor):
 - Ollie Zander: Deb Schneider
 - Collin Ray: Polly Philblad
 - Cy Treuenfels: Ed Burek
 - Elliot Hunter: Brian Hill
 - Jo Treuenfels: Katie Johnson
 - Grey Blenker: Byron Johnson

DISCERN OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE WORK FOR JUSTICE AND PURSUE THAT WORK WITH COURAGE.

- Following a large turnout at the 2021 initial meeting of UUSC's Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers (CAPAS) program, we joined with UUCM to support a family with their transition to living in Minnesota. Our two congregations have helped the family navigate setting up their apartment, health care, taxes, etc.
- Approximately 30% of the services this year have been focused on social justice issues and calls to work for justice. We had Rev. Kelli Clement preach on reproductive justice and Rev. Terri Burnor from MN Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) preach about environmental justice this year.

ACT AS A TRUSTED AND COMMITTED PARTNER WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT BRING MORE LOVE AND JUSTICE TO THE WORLD.

- I've connected formally with Minnesota Multifaith Network and attended organizing events hosted by Isaiah and MNIPL this year. I was able to represent MSUS in a legislative visit with Senator Mary K. Kunesch (39, DFL) who is the Assistant Majority Leader and serves Fridley.
- Eleven congregants from MSUS attended a Sacred Sites tour with Jim Bear Jacobs of the MN Council of Churches. This was an event planned by Pilgrim House and they invited us to join them.
- I participated in two vigils following the devastating earthquake in Turkey and a number of MSUSers bought and donated supplies to be shipped to those in need. TASMN hosted an Iftar dinner at Pilgrim House for our congregation which helped to build a deeper connection.



Minister's Annual Report *cont.*

CULTIVATE OUR COVENANTED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LARGER UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FAITH MOVEMENT.

- We “certify” with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) at the end of every year. The survey includes a question where we have to check off boxes that describe ways that we have collaborated with other UU congregations. We responded that we have shared space, worship, community events (Potluck and coffee house), programming (small groups), and religious education (Diana contracts with Northfield UU and has reached out to Pilgrim House families) this past year. These connections have enriched our congregation.
- Kathy Burek has been a champion for keeping the congregation informed about Article 2 Commission which has created the first draft of language for our covenant, purpose, inspirations, and values. The youth in Coming of Age really like the new language!
- Our joint service with UUCM in the fall included our choirs working together on a few musical pieces and Rev. Lisa Friedman and I sharing leadership for the service.
- We started the year with the intention of studying and voting on the 8th Principle. Unfortunately, my focus was elsewhere and this did not happen.
- I was able to hand over the presidency of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association (UUMA) Prairie Star District over to new leadership in October.
- I continue to mentor Rev. Sara Smally, the minister of the Northfield fellowship, in her three years of preliminary fellowship. I will start mentoring Stacy Craig who is serving the Chequamegon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Ashland, WI and the Keweenaw Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Houghton, MI in the Fall. I also participated in the ordination of Rev. Jill Schwendeman who works in hospice.

EXTEND A VISIBLE INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL SEEKERS IN OUR BROADER COMMUNITY.

- Our web page is lively with photographs of the congregation and has an easy user's experience. Colleen Bemis, our Communications and Office Administrator, is constantly responding to new needs and requests from staff, teams and committees, and broader community members.
- We moved away from the monthly newsletter and now have the content that used to be in that publication in the Thursday Update. The Update has been redesigned and offers dynamic and timely information along with links for further engagement (registration pages, supporting documents, and web pages with additional information).
- Our Facebook page is active with events, videos, and posts from the Unitarian Universalist Association. This gives a greater sense of who we are to people who find us on Facebook.
- I have been creating weekly video content reflecting on the monthly theme, sharing reflections, and sometimes poetry. At the end of each video there is an invitation to join us on the following Sunday. I keep the internal and external community in mind when I am recording.
- We had a very positive response when we marched and played music in the Fridley 49ers parade last summer. Katie Johnson suggested that we hand out pride flags which caught the attention of lots of young people. We will hand them out again this year with some added information so people know where it came from and how to find us.
- The Name Choice Task Force has worked diligently this year to keep the congregation engaged and to move through the process of deciding if we are going to change our name. They will lead the Congregational Forum in May and then wait until the Fall to reengage in the work. It is too big of a decision to try to advance it during the summer months.
- We had six new members join us this Spring: Elizabeth Douglas, Rob Fulton, Joey Hunter, Sawyer Olson, Kevin Sitter, and Mary West.



Board of Trustees Annual Report - May 2023

Katie Johnson, President

It is just over 3 years since a worldwide pandemic disrupted everything about our lives, and one year from completing the sale of our Oakley Drive building. As we reacted and adapted to these circumstances, we developed new patterns of engaging with each other both individually and as a congregation. At MSUS we started gathering together in person in a new place, in fact in multiple new places as we started meeting on Sunday mornings at Fridley Middle School, and now at the Fridley Community Center, and added use of the Pilgrim House UU Fellowship for other events. A constant throughout this time has been our ability to meet with each other and welcome newcomers online via Zoom. A few years ago I would not have predicted video conferencing would be a key part of our connectedness!

Our ability to offer a hybrid format for most gatherings, and opportunities to build relationships with Pilgrim House and the Turkish American Society are a few outcomes from these years of dramatic change. These things were reactions to the changes happening, yet we could look to our values, mission and ends statements as we chose to put our limited energy toward these tasks in this past year. Now that we are in somewhat calmer waters, we can shift from a reactive mode of adapting to change toward strategic thinking and longer-term planning about how to meet the ever-evolving needs of our congregation and what we can offer the world.

WE HAVE STARTED THESE CONVERSATIONS.

At our Board retreat in August we reflected on whether our Vision for MSUS – our common values, our mission statement and our ends statements - still held meaning for us. Could this Vision be our starting point, or did the last few years disrupt things so much that we needed to revise those guiding statements? The Board agreed that these statements still express both who we are and who we wish to become and can be the basis for future planning.

We collected congregational input to inform our future planning by hosting a few congregational forums. These are the things we explored together:

IN SEPTEMBER – we shared information about the “state of MSUS” to help ensure that we were starting with a shared understanding of our strengths and our challenges.

IN JANUARY – we asked which things from our Vision for MSUS seemed most relevant or most important to the congregation right now, what might be most in need of our attention at this time?

IN MARCH - financial planner Darla Kashian shared insights about how financial decisions are about funding what is important to us. Congregants shared the things that brought them to MSUS and/or keep them coming back – what are the things we treasure about this community?

Some of the themes that emerged are the importance of tending to our connections within our MSUS community and a desire to extend a welcoming invitation and to be a more visible presence in the community. We hold dear the ideal of being a community of all ages and are curious about how best to nurture multigenerational connections. And there is gratitude for the friendships, the spiritual and intellectual growth, the music, the support, and the sense of belonging that so many find here.

The thoughtful reflections at these forums and the number of people who decide to stick around for an hour or more after a service are a testament to the love we have for this congregation and our hope and intention for a flourishing MSUS community.



Board of Trustees Annual Report *cont.*

NAME CHOICE TASK FORCE

This time last year the Board authorized a Name Choice Task Force to lead us in a process of generating potential new names for our congregation and eventually to a decision about keeping or changing our name. The task force has collected name ideas and mapped out a process for the congregation to whittle that list down to something manageable for a final vote. This Task Force will host a forum on Sunday May 28 to forecast the rest of the process. More details can be found in their report.

NOTES ABOUT A BUILDING

We have not been in an active search for a new building this year in order to give ourselves time to nourish other areas. But when a building came to our attention in April, it held enough promise that we placed an offer. Though a different buyer was selected, we were told that our offer was in “2nd place”, suggesting that our offer was strong, and that the seller might reconsider our offer if the first deal falters. This building generated a lot of excitement. Whether or not this particular opportunity comes back to us, it awakened our capacity to imagine what is possible. Our upcoming strategic planning effort will enhance our ability to make creative and confident decisions about our gathering space.

A challenge when considering a building purchase is finding the sweet spot between making a competitive offer and keeping money in reserve to help us meet our operating costs and any unknown costs that pop up during a transition period between making a purchase and realizing income growth as a result of operating out of a building that better suits our Vision. It may be valuable to try to assess our congregational risk tolerance related to this question.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Board will have a Strategic Planning Retreat in September. The president of Isthmus Engineering, where Katie Johnson works, will guide us through some strategic planning exercises that have been fruitful with a similarly sized church in St. Paul. This retreat will help the Board to identify specific areas of focus, and possibly propose specific actions, that match our current capacities to our aspirations. Then, together with the congregation, we'll further prioritize, refine, and implement the work we begin in our guided strategic planning retreat.

GRATEFUL

As president, I am continually filled with gratitude as I work with and for this congregation. The Board of Trustees shows up wholeheartedly to meetings and takes great care in making decisions for this congregation. While acknowledging the challenges we face, this group sees a promising future and works energetically to make it so. It is an honor to serve with them.

Thanks to the 2022-23 Board of Trustees: Lauren Culbert, Pat Ferrian (Secretary), Liz Haworth (Treasurer), Marilyn Hiatt (Vice President), Katie Johnson (President), Lynne Schuman and Jan Vassar. Rev. Laura Smidzik is an ex officio member of the Board. And we greatly appreciate Brian Hill who, serving as recording secretary at the request of the Board, allowed the Trustees to focus more attention on the meeting than on taking notes.



Treasurer's Annual Report

July 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023, Recent Updates

Income

	FY 21-22	6/30/2023	YTD	3/31/2023
Major Sources:				
Pledge Income	\$132,551.92		\$79,298.70	
Offerings and Gifts	\$2,190.01		\$4,821.75	
Fundraisers	\$771.60		\$1,868.40	
Total Income	\$142,377.46		\$94,153.55	

Expenses

	FY 21-22	6/30/2023	3/31/2023
Major Sources:			
Salary and Payroll Expense	\$157,448.11		\$113,354.37
Building and Occupancy (rent)	\$37,734.94		\$23,437.72
Total Expenses	\$236,402.74		\$155,360.95

Account Balances

	FY 20-21	6/30/2021	FY 21-22	6/30/2022	YTD	3/31/2023
Checking	\$54,333.67		\$23,542.05		\$13,320.53	
Investments	\$891,119.56		\$1,322,717.15*		\$1,343,026.98	
Totals	\$836,785.89		\$1,346,259.20		\$1,356,347.51	

*Includes proceeds from sale of Oakley Drive building

	FY 20-21	6/30/2021	FY 21-22	6/30/2022	YTD	3/31/2023
Investment Withdrawals	-\$114,000		-\$50,000		-\$40,000	

Director of Music Ministry Annual Report - May 2023

Bruce Van Bronkhorst

The MSUS mUUSIC program is a community of support for each other, of fun, and musical growth. It provides music to support Sunday services and the MSUS community.

HOORAY, we are back to rehearsing and performing LIVE and unmasked!

I direct the MSUS choir, band, and Delphi, plus accompany soloists and ensembles when requested. Plus, I meet with staff, Rev Laura and our Muusic Team. Our musicians perform music to support Sunday services: preludes, hymns, interludes, offertories, and other music as needed; and to share their musical talents in other ways for MSUS.

THE CHOIR helps lead the hymns, performs for the Holiday and Spring concerts, and had an occasion to perform with the UU Church of Minnetonka choir this year. The choir rehearses Wednesday evenings, plus “special help Saturdays” when preparing for concerts.

THE BAND helps lead hymns on band Sundays, sometimes performing preludes or offertories. It also performs for the Winter and Spring concerts and appears in the Fridley 49ers Day Parade. The band rehearses the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of each month before church.

DELPHI performs at the Holiday and Spring concerts, plus has its own concert held usually in February. It was also performed at Springbrook Nature Center.

OUR CONCERTS, plus our appearances outside of our walls provide visibility for MSUS in the surrounding areas.

SUMMER REHEARSALS – the choir and band rehearse once in July and August with members coming in throughout the summer to work on special songs they want to perform. Delphi usually rehearses at least twice each month during the summer.

OUR MUUSIC PROGRAM wouldn't be able to do what it does with a lot of support, so thank you to our great tech team, Muusic Team, Jamie Hubbard for looking for and bringing our choir some great music, our board, our staff along with Rev. Laura, you – the MSUS congregation and friends, AND the great musicians I have to - - ooops, I mean I GET to work with.

Annual Report from the Director of Family Ministry - May 2023

Rev. Diana McLean

OVERVIEW

This year, we began to add more curricula for youth and families into our congregational schedule, while also still offering many other kinds of opportunities for families with children to build and sustain connection to each other and to the larger MSUS community.

COMING OF AGE

As we had hoped, we were able to gather a group of high schoolers to participate in the Coming of Age program, led by Chad Snyder and Amy Luedtke. There are six youth participating. They began meeting in September and will culminate with a Coming of Age worship service on the 14th of May. Each youth has been paired with a mentor, which helps build intergenerational connections within the congregation.

PARENTS AS SPIRITUAL GUIDES

In the fall, I offered a six-session UUA curriculum called "Parents as Spiritual Guides." Three families benefited from it: two who had one parent attend the classes on Zoom, and one who received the materials from me and used them at home. The sharing and mutual support between the class participants was a beautiful form of shared ministry, and I consider that a success.

GATHER THE SPIRIT

This spring, I have been offering standalone workshops from the UUA curriculum "Gather the Spirit," which talks about stewardship primarily through the lens of water stewardship. As of this writing, two of the three sessions have happened, and we have had a total of six adults and two children participating so far.

FAMILY FUUN EVENTS

Now that we have other events in person again, especially the Coffeehouse, we are doing fewer Family FUUN Events, but we do still pay attention to making sure we have frequent all-ages-friendly activities. This summer, we will participate in the Fridley parade, have another ice cream social hosted by the Thompsons, and of course enjoy the annual backyard party at Bruce and Marie's home!

SUNDAY WORSHIP ELEMENTS

There are two primary ways in which we worked to make Sundays family-friendly:

MULTIGENERATIONAL MINISTRY MOMENTS

I provided this child-friendly, all-ages appropriate moment in worship each Sunday that I worked, and sometimes provided materials for someone else to lead it on my days off. Sometimes this was a story I found on the UUA's Tapestry of Faith website or another online resource; sometimes it was something I wrote myself; and sometimes it was drawn from the Mindful Kids card deck.

SUNDAY MORNING ACTIVITY TABLE

I provide a quiet activity at a table from which kids can see worship (including the screen with Zoom participants). This activity is often related to the specific worship service, or to our Unitarian Universalist faith. This year, I create a



Director of Family Ministry Annual Report *cont.*

file box with folders on each of our principles (and other topics coming soon) to make it easier on the Sundays that I am not working and a volunteer is responsible for the table. We have added a line to our welcome words stating that children are welcome to either remain with their adults or be at the table, or to move back and forth. This has been a success with the kids who have attended.

MOTHERS OF MICHAEL SERVETUS (MOMS) GROUP

The MOMS group returned to meeting in person this spring, and I am now the facilitator of the group, with Rev. Laura filling in if I need to miss a session for any reason.

PERSONAL CONTACT WITH FAMILIES

Last year's outreach to families was focused on getting to know them (and letting them get to know me), and finding out if they had needs I could meet (including curricula they could use at home). This year, much of the outreach has been more focused on getting families connected or re-connected with the larger congregation. This has included the new "Family Spotlight" feature that appears occasionally in our Thursday Update emails and on the website, in which I interview a family with children to find out what they are up to these days, what they value most about MSUS, and anything else they want to share, so that the wider congregation can know them better, whether or not they attend Sunday worship.

RESEARCH

Again this year, part of my work has been to explore what others are doing in the area of religious education or family ministry. To that end, I've done a lot of online reading, and also had conversations with some of my peers both within and beyond the Twin Cities area. The short answer is that everyone is doing their own version of what we are: experimenting, trying new things, learning what serves and does not serve the needs of our families right now, and not considering any of that to be a failure, but just more information for us to move forward with. I imagine that this will continue to be part of my practice every congregational year. Over the summer, my research will focus on best practices for multigenerational worship—see below for more about that.

FUTURE PLANS

Here are the hopes and plans I have for next congregational year:

- Our Whole Lives (OWL) for Grades 7–9: I am assessing whether we have enough youth in these grades next year to run this important lifespan sexuality education curriculum. This module is the cornerstone of the program, and offers very valuable fact-based comprehensive education. Assuming we have enough participants, I will be getting trained (with a volunteer second facilitator) to offer this next church year.
- Parents as Social Justice Educators: I plan to offer this six-session program from the UUA in the fall, probably on Zoom. Parents are their children's first and most prominent teachers of how to live our Unitarian Universalist values through social justice efforts; this class provides opportunities for parents to grow in their confidence in that role, and to think explicitly about how meaning-making happens in their families.
- Monthly participatory, all-ages worship services: Rev. Laura and I clearly heard this year, including in a congregational forum, that there is a longing for more multigenerational worship; pre-COVID there was one multigen service per month. We plan to return to that pattern, beginning in the fall. We will co-lead one worship service a month that is explicitly all-ages friendly and more embodied and participatory than many of our regular services. This is a particular passion of mine, and I am excited to see how it goes at MSUS! We also intend to continue to work to make those regular services more child-friendly as well, beyond the elements I have named above.



Director of Family Ministry Annual Report *cont.*

- Monthly family packets on our Soul Matters themes: We plan to subscribe to the Soulful Home packets, which help families with children bring our monthly themes into their days beyond Sunday worship. We hope to have monthly social events at which we distribute these packets (and will deliver or mail them to anyone unable to attend).

Thanks to each of you for your support of family ministry at MSUS, and for your loving care of the families who are part of our community. I have so enjoyed serving as your Director of Family Ministry again this year, and I look forward to another congregational year with you, as we continue to explore what is possible for us! Please reach out to me if you have any questions or just want to have a conversation. The best way to reach me is through my work email address, dfm@msuu.org.

In gratitude,
Rev. Diana McLean



Committee and Team Leadership Annual Report

Marily Hiatt (Vice President, Board of Trustees)

As another church year comes to an end there are many reasons for MSUS to be optimistic. Although we don't have our own building, MSUS has found a warm, bright, comfortable and welcoming site at Fridley Community Center for Sunday services and children's programs such as Coming of Age. MSUS has developed a partnership with Pilgrim House for most other programs. MSUS has also developed an interfaith relationship with the Turkish American Society of Minnesota (TASMN), who bought our beloved former building, and has been invited to some of their programming. The threat of COVID hasn't truly ended but its' effects have lessened enough that masks are now optional and has taught us the value of Zoom. The ability to use Zoom has allowed those who can't attend activities in person can still participate on-line. MSUS has a dynamic new web-site that is welcoming, eye catching and informative to those who are searching for a new faith community. MSUS has recently welcomed 6 new members. The teams and committees of MSUS continue to work hard to develop programming, events and problem solve.

Below is a list of current and potential Team and Committee descriptions, then following are yearend reports from some of the Team and Committees. The groups are always looking for new members so please contact the chair directly, any board member, or Rev Laura. Your skills and energy can add greatly to this vibrant community!

TEAM AND COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS AND LEADERSHIP FOR 2022-23 CHURCH YEAR

CONGREGATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership Development Committee (Pamela Brustman)

- Recommends candidates for board, provides leadership training and opportunities.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance, Stewardship and Investment Committee (Lynn Schuman)

- Financial oversight, including investments, budgeting, pledge drive and the fundraising initiatives.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (TBD)

Assists Minister with personnel policies and issues, assesses staffing needs.

MINISTERIAL TEAMS

Adult Programming (Convened by Rev. Laura)

- The function of adult programming is currently in the hands of staff. Rev. Laura would like to move this function into a shared ministry model in the coming years.

Congregational Care (Convened by Rev. Laura)

- Board members and staff made several phone calls to check on members. Rev. Laura is working on convening a new team.

Religious Education Advisory (Convened by Rev. Laura)



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MISSION TEAMS AND VOLUNTEERS

Action and Justice Team (Laurie Young)

- Plans social action programs and supports the community beyond the church walls.

Generosity Team (Shared leadership-contact Rev Laura)

- Created to focus on fund raising, but also to consider ways to nourish generosity of spirit at MSUS.

Membership Team

- Assists with new members classes, outreach to visitors, and helps new members to find meaningful connections.

Music Team (Brian Hill)

- Supports music programs, including assisting with concerts, managing budget, and planning for the future of the music program.

Denominational Affairs Volunteer (TBD)

- Informs congregation on denominational issues, promotes MSUS involvement in UUA areas of study and witness, encourages individual/congregational involvement in MidAmerica Region and UUA.

OPERATIONAL TEAMS AND VOLUNTEERS

Tech Team (Linda Smidzik)

- Operates the video and sound systems for all services and other events as needed. Expanded to support hybrid services and events.

Building and Grounds Team

- Maintains the church buildings; plans, plants, and cares for landscaping; plans for the present and future facilities needs of the church; and organizes volunteers to do repair and maintenance.

Communications Team

- With the hire of the new Administration/Communication position, more of these duties have been shifted to a staff position as lead. Volunteers support the efforts, and she is able to call upon a talented group of individuals as she supports the church in reaching out to the congregation and wider community. Includes internal/external communications, web page, and social media outreach.

Hospitality Team (Laures Young)

- Makes Sunday Services and other Life Events welcoming for guests and members.

Informational Resources: Clerical Support Volunteer (TBD)

- Supports office administrator with bulk data entry needs, bank runs, and other office tasks. With the building sale this position is currently not active.

Informational Resources: Historian Volunteer (TBD)

- Records, catalogs, and preserves the history of the congregation.

Informational Resources: Librarian Volunteer (TBD)

- Manages MSUS library collection, records lending activity, selects new titles.

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Purchasing Volunteer (TBD)

- This position is being evaluated. In the past, this person has purchased any needed items, such as coffee and kitchen/bathroom supplies.

Covid Task Force

- Board appointed task force to study and make recommendations on how to respond to the ever-changing pandemic conditions.

NAME CHOICE TASK FORCE (DATE OF REPORT: MAY 1)

Byron Johnson – Chair

Janice Sankot

Carol Whitman – resigned

Marilyn Hiatt – Board Liaison Marie Phillips

Rev. Laura Smidzik

Polly Philblad – resigned

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Charge to the Name Choice Task Force Adopted by the MSUS Board of Trustees May 2022: The Board of Trustees asks the Name Choice Task Force to bring to the congregation the opportunity to rename Michael Servetus Unitarian Society by carrying out the process developed by the 2019 Name Change Exploration Task Force. The current task force is asked to:

1. Review the process developed by the Name Change Exploration Task Force and revise as needed to correct for omissions, new information, or in other ways to match the current situation.
2. Develop a specific timeline to implement the plan. Coordinate with Rev. Laura and Colleen and potentially others to place significant milestones onto the MSUS calendar to keep the process moving without unduly interfering with other MSUS activities.
3. Implement the name choice process. Bring to the congregation an opportunity to vote about changing our congregational name.

This task force shall begin on June 1, 2022, and will continue until the congregation has voted to choose our congregational name. Every effort shall be made to have a final vote regarding the name by June 1, 2023.

ANY CHALLENGES

Everyone is at a different place in their life. The challenge is to meet people where they are and allow them time to process their feelings while keeping the process moving forward respectfully.

SUCSESSES OR NEW INITIATIVES

October 2022, a Survey (Straw Poll) was held (Online and USPS) to determine congregational interest in exploring a new name, gather information on potential new names, and give the congregation an opportunity to express their thoughts on the possibilities and process.

On November 27, 2022, a congregational forum was held to present the survey results, including analysis. Participants offered thoughts, feelings, and feedback, questions were answered, and next steps were outlined



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Name Availability: A list of over 130 potential new names was expanded to include full name, shortened name, and initials. These names were checked online using a variety of websites including the UUA Directory, Minnesota Secretary of State Database, Google, and other church directories. A spreadsheet was compiled with name availability, notes, and conflicts; then distributed to the congregation.

A "Lessons Learned from Other Congregations that Changed their Name" listening session was held February 23, 2023. Before the session, articles about other churches' journeys and a list of current candidate names were sent to the congregation along with questions to think about beforehand. Participants asked questions and gave feedback.

After the listening session, a summary of the session, a revised short summary document of all the articles, and an updated list of the unique names with their availability, were sent to the congregation. Also sent along were thoughts and questions for the congregation to ponder, offered by Chad Snyder, MSUS Commissioned Lay Minister.

A report to the board on February 28, 2023, focused on the selected voting method for upcoming votes. STAR voting is the preferred method over plurality and ranked choice voting. Next steps include voting to narrow the choices for a unique name (over 70 choices), denominational name (UU, etc.), and organizational type (church, congregation, etc.).

NEXT STEPS

1. Hold a congregational forum on May 28, 2023, to review our next steps and the proposed voting process.
2. Hold an educational Zoom meeting regarding the proposed voting process.
3. Develop a detailed voting procedure and schedule per the bylaws.
4. Close nominations of names.
5. Hold a congregational "primary" vote that will:
 - a. Reduce the list of unique names to a yet-to-be-determined number of finalists.
 - b. Select final choice for denomination (U's) and institution (C's).
6. Hold a forum for community discussion of the finalist names.
 - a. Admit new candidate names resulting from this discussion.
7. Hold a congregational vote that will select a single candidate for our new unique name.
8. Hold a congregational vote on whether to adopt the new name.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (DATE OF REPORT - APRIL 16)

There is no formal chair, Laurie Young and Rev. Laura convene the committee. Committee members are: Patti Finnemore, Stephanie McDonald, Laurie Young

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

The personnel team spent most of the time this year learning about new salary recommendations from the UUA and taking a look at the Communications and Administration Manager position since it does not fit in a specific type of position in the UUA salary guidelines.

They recommended salary increases mid-year to bring the 3 staff members to a fairer wage and then gave salary recommendations for the 2023-2024 budget cycle.



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The committee recommends that staff salaries are looked at early next year when the Board and congregation are doing strategic planning. The new UUA salary recommendations present a significant shift. The emphasis on the new guidelines is process and values. The UUA recommends that congregations create a “roadmap” for the next couple of years.

ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THOSE GOALS

The committee worked well together and feel like they accomplished their duty this year.

SUCSESSES OR NEW INITIATIVES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE

We have not outlined our agenda for next year but imagine we will provide data and insight into the UUA recommendations. If anyone is interested in joining the team, please let us know.

HOSPITALITY TEAM (DATE OF REPORT—MAY 2)

Laurie Young is the team lead.

Members are: Merle DeNuccio, Pat Ferrian, Joey Hunter, Kevin Sitter.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

The team provided hospitality for the Saturday Coffee Houses at Pilgrim House (room set up, food set up for the potluck dinner, made coffee and cleaned up). The Hospitality Team also provided coffee and treats for several Sunday Services on days when there was a forum after services. They provided hospitality for the Celebration of Life Service for Mary Martin at Pilgrim House. This involved asking volunteers to bring cookies and bars, making coffee, room set up, clean up, and making flower arrangements for centerpieces.

ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THESE GOALS

Providing coffee and treats at the Community Center is challenging because we don't have use of a kitchen. Storage of dishes and utensils is a problem and dishwashing is problematic. We bring home the dirty dishes to wash and bring them back to the community center which isn't convenient.

SUCCESS OR NEW INITIATIVES WOULD LIKE TO SEE

We would like to provide coffee and treats after Sunday Services because it fosters connection, conversation and builds community.

ACTION AND JUSTICE TEAM (DATE OF REPORT—MAY 2)

Laurie Young is the team lead.

Members are: Lynne Schuman, Lauren Culbert, Jamie Hubbard



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BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR.

The Action and Justice Team made recommendations for recipients of special collections. In the past year that included Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, the Lemus Perez Family, Meals on Wheels, Ministers Discretionary Fund, World Central Kitchen, International Women's Convocation in support of Ukraine, Southern Anoka County Assistance, (SACA), Alexandra House, and Springbrook Nature Center.

The Action and Justice Team continues to schedule Meals on Wheels volunteers from the congregation to deliver meals for a week once every seven weeks.

The main focus of the team this past year has been supporting the Lemus Perez family, a family from Guatemala that was separated at the border under the Trump administration. The family was reunited and are in the US for three years with the status of humanitarian parole. MSUS in partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka are supporting the family by providing groceries, transportation, household items, and winter clothing. We are also connecting them with services to get medical insurance, dental care, and tax preparation assistance.

ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THESE GOALS

Language has been a challenge. The family does not speak English and most of the supporters don't speak Spanish. We have worked to identify Apps that provide translation for our conversations.

SUCCESS OR NEW INITIATIVES WOULD LIKE TO SEE

Goals for the Lemus Perez family are to provide support to help them with technology (access the internet, use email, and attend English classes online. They would also like to obtain driver's licenses). We will also assist them on their journey to obtain permanent residency. Additional volunteers are needed to provide this support. Spanish speakers would be very helpful.

Additional volunteers or Meals on Wheels are needed

The committee would also like to take on some new initiatives, particularly in the area of the environment. One opportunity would be to become a designated Climate Congregation by MNIPL. Additional members to the committee are needed to make this happen.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (DATE OF REPORT—APRIL 25)

Pamela Brustman - (2nd year – Chair)	Amy Luedtke - (3rd year)
Jamie Hubbard - (2nd year)	Debbie Schneider - (2nd year)
Allen Grilliot - (1st year)	Marylin Hiatt – Board Liaison

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

- Nominate candidates to the Board. There are three openings this year.
- Nominate candidates to the LDC. There is one opening this year.
- Provide Leadership training for members and friends.
- Promote training opportunities and encourage all to participate.



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ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THOSE GOALS

The reality of our smaller congregation makes it difficult to find enough people to run for the Board and the LDC, with many members taking on multiple roles to get the work of our church done.

We have three excellent nominees for the Board, two new and one returning, but at the time of this submittal, we do not have a candidate for the LDC.

In the past, Service Fests were conducted as a means to educate congregants and friends of the different service groups and opportunities as well as a means to recruit. These had been successful but were curtailed during the pandemic when we halted meeting in person.

SUCSESSES OR NEW INITIATIVES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE

We offered and delivered a hybrid training course on Moving Through Change in November 2022. This was held at Pilgrim House as well as online via our Zoom room.

TECH TEAM (DATE OF REPORT: MAY 4)

Members are: Linda Smidzik, Katie Johnson, Brian Hill, Byron Johnson, Chad Snider, Kathy Burek and Anna Landes Benz

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

Provide AV for MSUS Sunday services, meetings, and other events as needed—this includes enhancing audio with microphones/PA system for in-person and Zoom participants.

- Set up and tear down MSUS equipment for events at Fridley Middle School (July-Oct) and the Fridley Community Center (Oct-present).
- Learn protocols for using Pilgrim House equipment and determine workable mix of MSUS equipment and Pilgrim House equipment.
- Manage Zoom participants, share content to Zoom to support virtual or hybrid meetings.
- Manage and/or provide input to various computer and technology decisions, most specifically those that impact or are driven by Sunday service or other meeting needs.

ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THOSE GOALS

Time consuming to have to set up and tear down AV equipment for each event, but the equipment we purchased seems to be working well.

This has not been a problem as the space we use (Fridley schools and Pilgrim House) have large screens, but we are limited to locations that have a screen or television if we are to broadcast remote participants into a meeting; can use standard laptop screen or computer monitor if needed for small meetings, but need large screen for larger room sizes.

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SUCCESSSES OR NEW INITIATIVES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE

- Portability of MSUS AV equipment supports multiple locations.
- Able to integrate MSUS equipment with Pilgrim House equipment for Coffee House and other events.
- Successfully transitioned to Sunday services with all tech tasks happening on site in anticipation of Linda being away while Rev. Laura is on sabbatical; an online attendee facilitates a post-service Sparklet conversation on Zoom—does not need to be someone from the tech team.
- Initiative—generate documentation so that more people can help with this task.

FINANCE COMMITTEE (DATE OF REPORT—MAY 5)

Lynne Schuman—Chair

Members are: Katie Johnson, Liz Haworth, Jan Vassar, Chad Snyder, Ed Burek (Investments) and Laura Smidzik (ex officio member)

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES PLUS ANY GOALS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

Primary responsibilities are developing the annual budget, managing investments, and preparing for long-rang financial planning. As part of preparing for a strategic planning effort in 2023-2024, we started asking ourselves how our budget reflects both our current priorities and challenges. The finance committee also had multiple conversations with our internal investment expert, Ed Burek, and consulted with an external advisor, Darla Kashian. After those conversations, we recommended to the board that we continue with our 60/40 mix of stocks and bonds/money market. This included a recommendation that we keep at least \$300,000 in the money market to prevent the need to withdraw stock funds when the volatile market might be down.

ANY CHALLENGES TO REACHING THOSE GOALS

Uncertainty in the financial and political environment and the need for the church to do the strategic planning which will help define our building plans and the time horizon for our investment strategy.

SUCCESSSES OR NEW INITIATIVES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE

A major success this year was finalizing the new chart of accounts and financial reporting system which gives the board and financial committee clear and timely information. We now use QuickBooks for financial records and are receiving regular monthly reports from our bookkeeper, Barb Yanish, plus regular updates from Katie Johnson and Liz Haworth on our bank accounts and investment portfolio. Thanks to Rev Laura, Katie Johnson, Liz Haworth, Jan Vassar, Chad Snyder, Colleen Bemis and Barb Yanish for all the work they put into creating this new system.

The finance committee also worked with the board to promote the congregation's discussion of financial issues and how they relate to our church's mission. We invited financial consultant, Darla Kashian, to lead such a discussion in early April and will continue with these conversations next year as part of the strategic planning process.

