

Message from Our Board

Wayne Neu, President



... [T]he big task last month for the Finance Committee and Board was setting a budget for the next fiscal year in preparation for our annual Stewardship Campaign. In setting the budget, we had three major priorities. The first is giving our staff a much-deserved raise in salary. Last year, after the results of our Stewardship Campaign, we had to eliminate all cost-of-living raises from our budget. (In recognition of having earned her credentialing as a religious educator, Karen Hager got a small increment per UUA guidelines.) Of course, we all know how the advent of the COVID pandemic added so much work for them this past year. In next year's budget, we have included 3.5% cost-of-living raises for all staff in an effort to make up for the lack of raises last year in some small way. I sincerely hope that we will be able to raise the funding to make this possible!

The second major priority in our budget was putting away money for major expenses we know we'll have in the future. We have savings in two areas, the Building Maintenance Escrow Fund and the Minister's Sabbatical Fund. Our last major facility expenditure was during the building expansion (completed in 2008). Many things are now reaching the age where they will soon need replacement or repair. Among the major items that will need to be addressed are our heat pumps, the roof, and exterior painting. The heat pumps will cost \$30,000 or more to replace, a new roof will cost \$10,000- \$15,000 or so. I don't know what a paint job will cost or what other items will need replacing soon. The point is that these are all costs of our building ownership and will be a lot easier to swallow in annual installments than all at once when they hit. During Pam's next sabbatical, we will have to pay others to come in and substitute for her in her ministerial duties. Again, this year we had money in our budget for these items which had to be eliminated after our Stewardship Campaign. In next year's budget, we have added \$6000 for the Building Maintenance Escrow Fund and \$2500 for savings toward the sabbatical.

Finally, we recognize that, at some point in the not-too-distant future, we will be transitioning back to in-person services. We recognize that that transition will happen gradually, and we'll want to maintain our online presence for those who choose not to (or are unable to) attend in person. This will require an investment in new equipment to make both modes of delivery work together. The budget includes \$5000 for investment in equipment for that purpose.

We have limited our budget goals this year due to the financial realities facing many of our members during these times. Our stewardship goal is \$12,000 less than it was last year. However, our goal is still about 8% greater than pledges for this year. Considering that some of us may not be able to commit as much as last year, I am hoping that those who can will step up and "give until it feels good" to help fill in the gap. I do feel strongly that the additions to our budget are all very important.

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