

Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana

Seeking the Spirit, Building Community, Changing the World

Congregational Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2023



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Submitted by Regina DiLavore, Secretary

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Religion Lifespan Education Director Report
- B. Technology Coordinator Report
- C. Social Justice Committee Report
- D. Search Committee Report
- E. Treasurer's Mid-Year Report

Opening

President Abby Gitlitz called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Reverend Grant delivered the opening words and President Abby Gitlitz lit the chalice.

President Abby Gitlitz introduced Parliamentarian Steve Dillon.

President Abby Gitlitz announced a hybrid meeting format, enabling Members attending online to participate in voting for the first time under the newly revised Bylaws. Drew Schrader will monitor their comments submitted via chat. This hybrid voting trial run at this meeting aims to ensure a smooth process for the upcoming ministerial election in April.

Lead Minister Report

Reverend Connie Grant summarized program improvements over the past six months.

Program Teams

The newly formed multigenerational engagement team will be hosting a birthday celebration in January to foster a sense of community within congregational life.

Welcoming Team

This team will further welcome the community and recognize each visitor. We will improve Sunday hospitality and work on how to welcome people.

Pastoral Care Associates Team

This team will extend pastoral care provided by trained congregants.

Worship Associates

Worship associates will support and participate in Sunday worship services.

Recognition of Staff

Reverend Grant announced that Stephanie Kimball has completed 75 hours of training in the Religious Education Leadership Program.

The Unitarian Universalist Association Lifespan Engagement Office recognized Stephanie with a pin and certificate.

Director of Religious Lifespan Education Report

Stephanie Kimball, Director of Religious Lifespan Education, reported that the program has had growth in all aspects. Even though we are recovering from the COVID years, there have been significant increases in:

- Attendance in our Sunday morning children's programming;
- The number of volunteer teachers and religious education development team volunteers;
- The number adult religious education offerings as well as higher numbers of people participating;

Youth groups will be restarted and four people have been employed as religious education support staff to help with childcare and children's programming. There will be an article in Perspectives describing the changes.

There will be several religious education opportunities available in the spring.

- Our Whole Lives (OWL) for adults
- OWL for children
- New cohort for *Inner Work of Age*
- Sound Baths
- Planned Giving for Wills and Financial Planning.
- Poetry as a spiritual practice.
- What do Unitarian Universalists argue about?

The Director of Religious Lifespan Education also indicated she is collaborating with parents to remove barriers to congregational life. The team is also standardizing the policies and guidebook. They are working on a library committee and expect to expand the collection and digitize the collection as well. The Children's Library will be moving soon.

See Attachment A for a copy of the report.

Technology Coordinator Report

Hans Kelson, Technology Coordinator, expressed his gratitude for his position and serving the congregation. Hans Kelson then provided an update on technology updates over the past six months.

1. The software for live streaming and presentations has been rebuilt.
2. Updates have been focused on streamlining the process and making technology more resilient.
3. A new online voting system has been built.
4. In the future, the main focus will be improving accessibility for the live stream and the website.

Hans Kelson provided guidance about the new voting system to be tested during the meeting. Online participants will need to set up an account, sign in, link to the meeting, and check in so they can be counted for the quorum. Once counted they will be able to vote.

See Attachment B for a copy of the report.

Committee and Task Force Updates

Social Justice Report

Denise Ogren reported that the social justice fall grant is going to Refugee and Immigrant Support and Education (RISE) Helping Refugee Support Network this year. \$1000 is given for dental work and surgeries for refugee families in Monroe County. Barb Backler submitted this grant.

See Attachment C for a copy of the report.

Quorum Report

Board Member Linda Pickle reported 82 attendees both in person and online. A quorum of 15% or 84 members of the church was not reached. Therefore, business could not be conducted during the meeting.

President Abby Gitlitz stressed the importance of accurately understanding the number of church members, to ensure that the quorum can accurately represent the voice and interests of the entire congregation.

The electronic voting system was tested.

Because quorum was not met, President, Abby Gitlitz, stated that during the June 2024 Congregational meeting, there will be a vote to allow the Board to approve the December 2023 and the June 2024 congregational meeting minutes at the July 2024 Board meeting.

Search Committee Update

Denise Breeden-Ost explained that during the month of December, the search will be changing from learning about the congregation to looking for a minister. The search committee held 12 meetings and 5 focus groups with 139 total participants. Approximately 204 congregants responded to the survey. The search committee discovered that Sunday services are very important to the congregants. The committee created a congregational record to inform the potential minister about our congregation. This Congressional Record may be published for interested members.

The first applications will be released on January 2, 2024. Initial interviews will be conducted January-February.

Candidating week will be April 21-28. During candidating week, the candidate will preach twice and have a chance to meet with everyone. On April 28 there will a special congregational meeting to hold a vote to call the candidate as our next settled minister.

See Attachment D for a copy of the report.

Treasurer's Mid-Year Report

Bill Lonnerberg, Treasurer, on behalf of the Finance Committee, presented the income and expense report for the current fiscal year (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024).

Income fluctuations:

- Income dipped below expenses in November, following a trend of lower pledge revenue during the July-November period compared to previous years. This phenomenon was also addressed in the latest issue of the Perspectives.

Pledge update:

- Bill Lonnerberg requested that congregants fulfill their pledges, however they are able. If unforeseen circumstances prevent you from completing your pledge, please notify the Treasurer (Bill Lonnerberg) so the change in expected revenue can be taken into account.

Budget outlook:

- The overall budget income is expected to remain unchanged.
- While there will be a \$4,500 increase in medical insurance costs due to a new employee becoming eligible, this will be offset by a \$4,700 decrease in technology and pianist substitute expenses. Therefore, no significant changes to the total budgeted expenses are projected.

See Attachment E for a copy of the report.

President's Report

President Abby Gitlitz reviewed significant events and accomplishments of the past six months:

1. We have spent the last six months improving clarity on how we operate.
2. The Board revised the Bylaws and obtained congregational approval of the revisions.
3. The Board appointed a personnel committee and formulated a personal committee policy.

4. The Board identified members of the ministerial search committee in order to begin the process of calling a new settled lead minister.
5. The Board retooled the pledge committee based on the recommendations of a member-led committee. The pledge drive committee will now operate throughout the year.
6. The Board is exploring ways to deepen engagement with the congregation. Some ideas include hosting brunch events on the second Sunday of every other month and sponsoring a *Lucy Booth* to answer questions and provide support during the Community Hour after services. These initiatives aim to connect with members and foster a stronger sense of community.
7. The Board is strengthening relationships with other congregations.
8. The Board is assisting with bringing back the Ramadan celebration.
9. January 5th will be the 75th anniversary of the congregation, and the Board will be putting together a Planning Committee for commemorations during the anniversary year.

Adjournment

Reverend Grant provided the closing words, Steve Dillon motioned to adjourn the meeting and Harold Ogren seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm.

Attachment A

Congregational Meeting Report: Religious Education

December 10, 2023

Stephanie Kimball, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

I am pleased to report that so far this year, we are seeing growth and development in ALL areas of lifespan religious education. There have been significant increases in:

- attendance in our Sunday morning children's programming;
- The number of volunteer teachers and RE Development Team volunteers;
- The number adult religious ed offerings as well as higher numbers of people participating;

Our volunteer ranks have grown as well, making so much of this possible: we now have 8 volunteer teachers taking turns providing children's programming on Sunday mornings, 12 who have stepped up to lead adult classes and workshops this year, and 3 who are working on getting our youth groups restarted. In addition, 6 serve on our religious education development teams. If you would like to help out with any of these aspects of religious education I would love to hear from you.

In addition, we now have four people employed in the newly created Religious Education Support Staff position, who help with childcare as well as preparing materials for Sunday morning programs. Look for an article in next month's Perspectives to learn more about who they are and what they do.

I hope that you will take a close look at the religious education opportunities available for people of all ages and stages. In a few weeks we start Our Whole Lives for Adults, as well as for K-1 and grades 4-5. We'll also have a new cohort in the Inner Work of Age, and a chance to look closely at the proposed Article II changes. Jill Courtney will be offering Sound Baths, which sound truly delightful. And in January, Planned Giving is co-sponsoring a class on wills and financial planning – such valuable information for adults of all ages. Later in the spring you can explore poetry as a spiritual practice, or join Stuart Yoak's intriguing class titled "What do Unitarian Universalists Argue About?" You can learn more and register in Church Center.

In addition to programming, I have been working with groups of parents, our new Lifespan Engagement Team, the forming lunch bunch, and more — all with the aim of removing barriers to participation in congregational life in general, and religious ed in particular.

I'm also working on standardizing our religious education policies, procedures, trainings, and so on. In the works is a Handbook for Parents, a guide for adult religious ed facilitators, a roadmap for adult religious ed participants, and a handbook for RESS.

And last but not least, I want to let you know that the Library Committee, which for the past couple years has been under the Religious Education umbrella, has been working on plans to expand our Library collection, digitize our catalog, and incorporate children and youth materials. You may have noticed that the children's library did not move back to Room 106 after the Bazaar; that's because it is now going to be part of the Fuchs Library upstairs. We ask for your patience as we work out the logistics there.

Attachment B

Good afternoon!

I come before you today filled with gratitude. Thank you, thank you, thank you, for allowing me to be part of the staff of this congregation. It's now been almost a year, and it feels like no more than a week.

The second half of my first year here has been more behind-the-scenes than the first. I don't, for example, have a flashy new website to unveil this time. However, I have been hard at work on many, many other things.

Such as:

Who remembers the last meeting, when I came up here holding two laptops and my phone, and gave my report on the website? Remember how I was triggering the slide changes remotely? That was pretty cool. Well, what you might not realize is that during that same meeting, our slide and livestream system broke down no less than four times. In fact, that meeting was truly the straw that broke the camel's back- after that, the old system only lasted 3 or 4 weeks before I managed to completely rework the software.

And now, I can do this: (slide: "Unnecessary Technology Coordinator Slide (for effect), triggered from phone)

I'm very proud to say that since I've rebuilt the software, we have not had a single disrupted live stream due to the system crashing. We've had some internet outages, and at least one instance of operator error, but the software has not been a problem. This new system has not only brought much greater reliability, but also lightened my workload significantly. Once I finish more of the automations and refinements I have planned, there will be a Tech Talks article about this.

That's only one part of what I've been doing, but it's all along similar lines. I've really been focused on streamlining processes and making our technology more reliable and resilient. That has paid off already: Due in part to the more efficient preparation of slides, and far less time spent troubleshooting, I was able to make time to build an entirely new multiplatform voting system (of which more in a moment) between the day we adopted our revised bylaws and now. That would not have been possible a year ago.

Looking to the future, now: My main focus in the coming months will be on improving accessibility. If you joined this morning's service through the livestream, you saw the new format I've configured for hymn lyrics. Where it used to look like this (slide), now the hymn lyrics look like this: (slide). This dramatically increases contrast (and therefore readability), especially where the lyrics were previously displayed over the bright window.

I also have some major accessibility improvements coming for the website (and a few more for the livestream as well). Watch for that Tech Talks column in Perspectives.

Now, to the real reason the board let me get up here to speak: We have a vote coming up in a few minutes! This is important, as it is the first secret ballot vote we will take under our revised bylaws. As such, it is the first secret ballot vote which will include input from those joining us

over the livestream. That's a big deal.

It also means that I'm going to explain some of how it works. If you'd like more details on some of the design decisions, please read this month's Tech Talks column in Perspectives. In brief: If you're with us remotely today, I hope you will already have set up an account on vote.uubloomington.org. If not, you still can! It's not too complicated, and there is help text at all the steps.

Once you're signed in to your account, you will see a link to the December 2023 Congregational Meeting. If you haven't done so yet, please go to that meeting page and check in, so you'll be counted for our quorum. Again, this only applies to those joining us online- if you're in the room, you've been checked in by board members at the back of the room.

Once the vote is called for in the meeting, the question will be opened for voting in the online platform. You may need to refresh the page to see this. When the question is open, click on the option you'd like to vote for (there will be a button for "yes", a button for "no", and a button for "abstain"). Then, you will get a popup asking you to confirm your vote. Click "OK" there, and text below the question should change to saying "You have already voted on this question".

If it's still asking you to vote, please try again. There's no way to vote twice.

Please, please, please: If you're joining us online and you're unsure about the voting system, give it a shot. If you have trouble, please tell me what went wrong, and give me feedback on how to make this better. In April, we will have a vote to call our next settled minister. It is imperative that we hear everyone's voice for that vote. If there are problems, I want to find them now, so I can correct the software before April.

If you're here in person, you will be voting with a paper ballot, just like we've always had.

Attachment C

2023 Fall Social Justice Fall Grants

Each Fall the Social Justice Funds Committee seeks applications from the UU Social Justice Task Forces for grants that further the mission of the Bloomington Unitarian Universalist Church. Funds are available from interest on the Lundin SJ Endowment Fund.

This year the social justice fall grant is going to RISE Helping RSN. \$1000 is given for dental work and surgeries for refugee families in Monroe County. This grant was submitted by Barb Backler.

Contacts persons:

RISE: Barb Backler bbackler@gmail.com

The UUCB RISE task force has a great partnership with The Refugee Support Network. We support them in assuring they are financially able to do their good work. Right now, there is a pressing need for dental work and surgeries and RSN is low on funds. Local dentists no longer accept Medicaid insurance and the local Healthnet nonprofit medical office provides very limited dental care. There are three women from Colombia with very difficult problems that need different surgeries. These women are working in pain every day and the conditions seem to be getting worse. The \$1000 grant will not cover all these expenses but it will certainly help.

Attachment D

1

I'm Denise Breeden-Ost, chair of the ministerial search committee. I hope you've been following our progress in the Friday Update and Perspectives. December is a turning point in the Search process, when we turn our focus from learning about the congregation to preparing for applications from ministers. As we make this transition, we want to say **thank you**. This fall, over 200 of you completed the Congregational Survey; over 120 of you attended one or more of our 17 Cottage Meetings and Focus Groups; and almost 40 attended the Breaking Barriers, Building Beliefs workshop. Your time and input has been incredibly valuable in helping us understand the joys and longings of the whole congregation.

What did we learn? As you might have guessed, we heard a wide array of opinions. Some were contradictory--of course!--but themes emerged. It's clear that Sunday services and the community time around them remain important to a majority of us. We value challenging and inspiring sermons, moving music, friendship and connection, and intergenerational community. Surrounding that Sunday center of our congregation are many and diverse passions: Choir, social justice work, RE, Chalice Circles, Humanist discussions, the Bazaar, and more.

2

You can see survey results and a summary of Cottage Meeting feedback on the church website.

We drew on all of this input to create the Congregational Record, which is an in-depth description of our congregation's history and identity that serves to inform ministers about us. Our Congregational Record is now published for interested ministers to view; with some help from Hans and Mandy, we'll be sharing it with members and friends of the congregation soon.

3

What's next? Well, this Wednesday we're having a potluck, with sweet potato stew, a chocolate tart, and no Search talk allowed.

Then we get back to work, because we'll start receiving applications on January second. In January and February, we'll do initial interviews and reference checks, and choose several Pre-candidates from among the applicants. In February and

March, we'll do in-depth interviews with those Pre-candidates, and more reference checks; we'll also attend services to observe pre-candidates' preaching and other skills. All of this is a confidential process, so you won't hear a lot of details from us during this phase.

4

You can check where we are in the process on the search timeline, on the church website.

In late March or April, we'll decide on one Candidate who we all agree is a good fit for our congregation. There'll be more reference checks and negotiations, and then we'll announce the candidate to the congregation.

5

And that's when you come in again: **Save the dates for Candidating week, April 21st to 28th.** The candidate will preach on both of those Sundays, and meet with the congregation in between. Please plan to be around and available that week-- **especially the afternoon of April 28th, for the special congregational meeting and vote to call the candidate.**

Will any Search committee members present please stand? The ministerial search committee is Ann Kamman, Olaya Fernandez-Gayol, Christine Bannister, Mike McGregor, Von Welch, Mary Beth O'Brien, and myself. These people are pretty awesome. And so are all of you. We thank you for your participation, your support, and your trust. It's been a pleasure for us to get to know so many of you better in this process, and we're honored to be working on your behalf.

Attachment E

Treasurer's Report

Bill Lonnberg

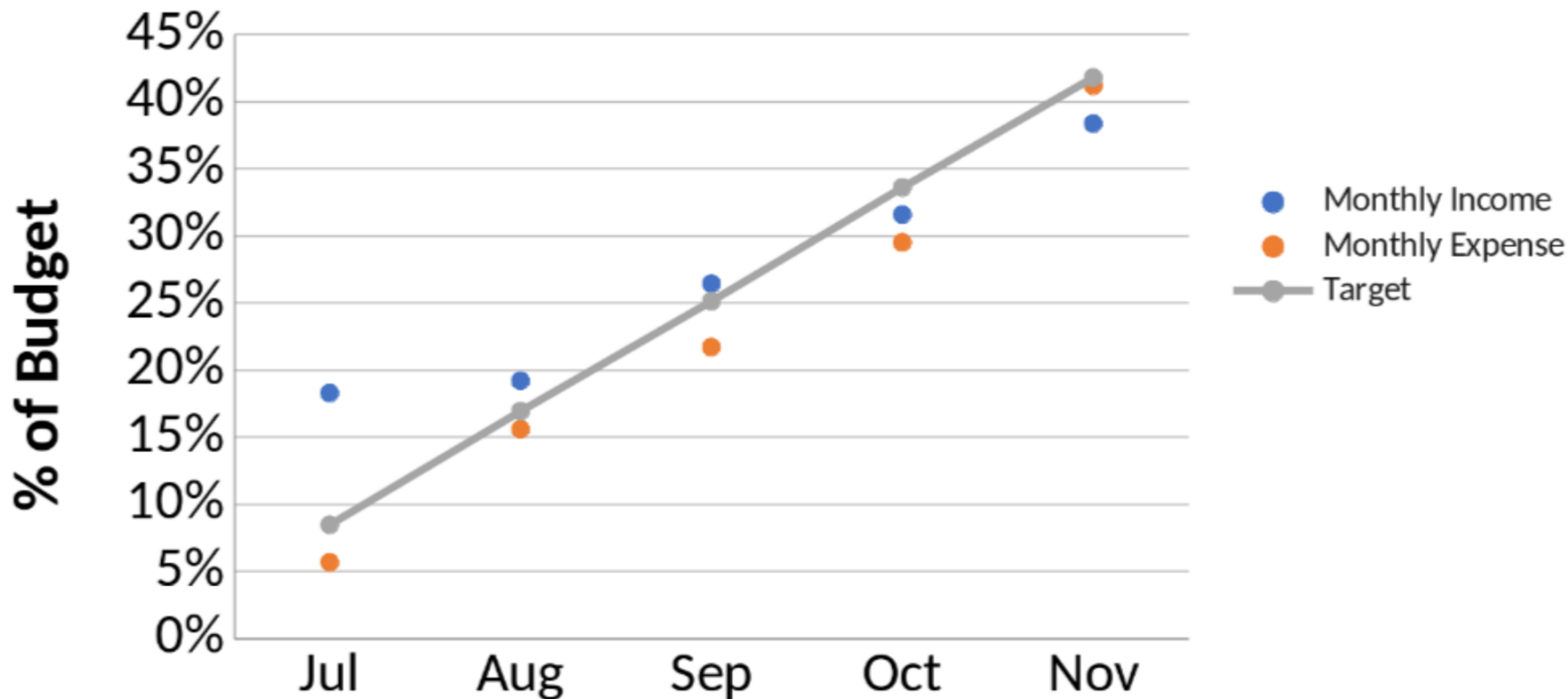
treasurer@uubloomington.org

Finance Committee Members

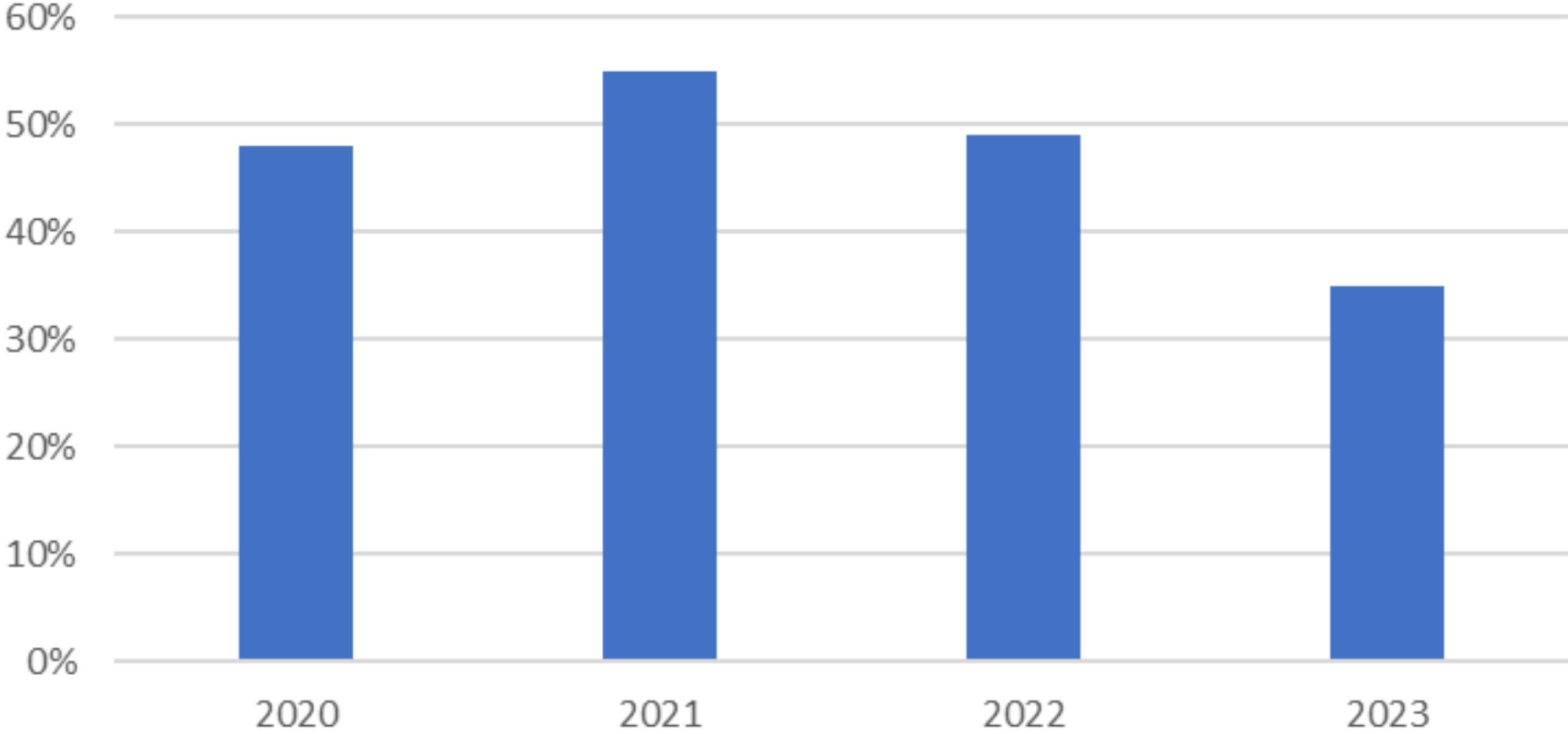
- Bill Lonnborg (Chair/Treasurer)
- Carolyn Emmert (Secretary)
- Ruth Sanders
- Kitty McIntosh
- Arzetta Hults-Losensky
- Rich Slabach (Controller)

FY23-24 Income & Expense

End of month values



Pledges, received Jul-Nov % of budget



FY23-24 Budget Summary and Proposed Revision

| | Current Budget | Proposed Revision | Change |
|------------|----------------|-------------------|----------|
| Income | \$ 699,583 | \$ 699,583 | \$ 0 |
| Expenses | \$ 686,688 | \$ 686,487 | (\$ 201) |
| Net Income | \$ 12,895 | \$ 13,096 | \$ 201 |

FY23-24 Revised Expenses

| | Change |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Employee medical insurance increase | \$ 1,365 |
| One employee adding medical insurance | \$ 3,164 |
| Tech substitute reduction | (\$ 1,000) |
| Pianist reduction | (\$ 3,730) |
| | (\$ 201) |