

President's Annual Report June 9, 2024

What a phenomenal year this has been! I am in awe at the steady progress of this community. Reflecting on the past couple of years, I would give 2021-2022 the title "*Reopening and Reconnecting*," followed by the 2022-2023 chapter entitled "*Settling in and Rebuilding*". This past year's chapter, then, I'd call "*Growing and Maturing*".

This past year has brought many new members into our community: we've welcomed 13 (!) people to UUCSC, people that have already become part of the fabric of our congregation. What a joy to welcome our newcomers! Rev Denis continues to grow as our minister, always imagining the creative next step to help us move more deeply into worship and community. The recently added monthly meditation circles are just one more example of Rev Denis' responding to requests for additional opportunities to grow spiritually.

And the staff, Lee Cowan, DRE, Mike Galib, MD, Sara Kaplow, Congregation Administrator, and Sue Rogola, Financial Admin, (now Karen St Peters) are absolutely outstanding individuals with whom it is a total pleasure to work. I can't say enough about each of them! Heartfelt thanks to each of them for their wonderful contributions to this community.

I so appreciate the impressive work of our committees that are each working with strength, competence, and amazing enthusiasm. Thank you all! Because of this, the Board is able to move away from helping manage operations to taking a big picture strategic and governance focus. As such, our responsibility as board members is not to make operational decisions—the committees and staff are empowered to do that—but to share in the lives of the congregation and foster opportunities to bring people together. Strengthening our relationships, fiscal and strategic oversight, and policy management is the task of the Board.

Speaking of the Board – what an amazing group of dedicated and loving people with whom I have the privilege of working, absolutely committed to the well-being of this congregation and the individuals within. For the Board, leading this congregation is truly, a labor of love!

In January, over 30 people attended the Strategic Planning meeting, hosted by the Board, when we brainstormed our Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Hopes/Wishes. One of the key insights from this meeting that the Board has been discussing is how we can best shift from focusing on **recruiting** new members and families to **servicing** the members and families already here. What is servicing? Asking and listening deeply to the diverse voices within our community and responding to what people need in order to feel connected, nourished and loved. What is serving? Enriching our members, building relationships, and weaving us together into one tapestry. Why wouldn't people be drawn to a community that serves each other in these ways?!

At the same time, our biggest challenge that we must face head on is our financial situation. We began this fiscal year with a \$21,000 deficit budget. Because of your generosity with pledges, the end-of-year holiday Gratitude House, other donations, and our various fundraisers, (at the moment of writing this) it seems likely that we will end the year in the black or close to it. However, we cannot go along as we have year after year and remain financially sound. What we bring in simply does not cover our operational expenses despite us all giving to the best of our abilities. We have been spared facing this reality by luck and good fortune over the past few

years. At this point, though, our aging building requires significant financial outlay to sustain it for the future. In this year's budget the Facilities Committee has recommended that the first major project (roof and chimney repair) be added to the budget and completed this year – a significant capital expense (estimate of \$40,000). The Committee recommends that this be followed by the second high priority project of tuck pointing and sealing the bricks on the back wall to stop the moisture penetration which is beginning to deteriorate the structure.

As we move into 2024-2025, continuing our path of growth and maturity, the need to raise sufficient operational income and capital to maintain our building for the foreseeable future will be a critical issue for discussion. We can't grow without careful consideration, together, of the needs of our building and our fiscal constraints. It is time.

Just before the annual meeting last year our congregation lost two very beloved members of our community, Nancy Rose and Helene Gersuny, and EssJay Foulkrod not long before that. It was a hard way to begin the year and we grieve still. This year we grieve the loss of Ron Macy and Gerre Alderwick. We remember each of these amazing individuals as beacons of love and light in this world and in our congregation.

This is a congregation where we feel love deeply – for each other, for our earth, for the world. We express it in the many ways that we show up for each other. We affirm our commitment to love every week with the words of our Covenant, "Love is the spirit of this congregation..." Indeed, I felt it the minute I walked into UUCSC, more than two years ago, and was welcomed with open arms. I knew immediately that this was my place, my community, my spiritual home.

It is my privilege to serve as your president and I am grateful to each of you for your support. I look forward to the coming year. May we grow into the future, together, as beacons of love and light in challenging times in a tumultuous world.

Nancy Richman
President
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