

Cedarhurst Unitarian Universalists Annual Report 2023-2024

President's Report

2023-2024 was an eventful year for Cedarhurst, most especially because we reluctantly said goodbye to our beloved minister, Rev. Amy Williams-Clark in March. Rev. Amy was with us for almost nine years, and she helped our congregation move forward with spiritual growth, community engagement, social justice, and adult religious education. She found full-time employment as Chaplain Lead at Bridging Life Hospice in Westminster. I miss her, and I enjoyed working with her for the first nine months of my term as Board President. For Amy's send off on March 17, Gerry Galuardi wrote new words to Pure Prairie League's song "Aimee", and Gerry and the choir performed it during the service.

At each of our monthly Board meetings this past year, we began with a check-in that would help us get to know each other better. These check-ins ranged from "what are you most excited about right now?" to "what is your favorite thing about Cedarhurst?" to "what is your favorite pizza topping?" No one said anchovies...

In the fall and early winter, our two main areas of focus were restarting our Religious Exploration (RE) program, and several needed repairs & maintenance of the building. Sherry Dean and I worked with Lenore Bajare-Dukes, our UUA primary contact, on ideas and strategies for restarting RE, which resulted in the February congregational workshop that many of you attended. Our sense is that there is enough support for RE that we can move forward, which has begun with hiring a nursery assistant.

Our building needed some immediate attention, and those details can be found in the Building & Grounds Report in this Annual Report.

In addition to repairs, David Pittman and I began looking at a document called "2912 Reimagined" (2912 is our street number on Club House Road) which was the result of a number of conversations with CUU members held in 2019 before the pandemic shut everything down. With the shift in focus that the pandemic had caused, this important work – centered on making our building truly handicapped accessible, among other things – got lost in the shuffle.

Having restarted the conversation, David came up with a rough sketch of possible renovation and addition plans for our aging building and shared it with the Board. This sketch incorporated much of what had been discussed in 2019. The Board was in favor of exploring this further, and Dean Camlin was asked if he would be willing to take David's sketch and turn it into a blueprint. What eventually came out of all of this was a building renovation and addition proposal that became known as Elevate Cedarhurst! [I added the "!" because, to me, it symbolized the excitement about this building project!]

In May we held a special congregational meeting to look at large pictures of Dean's blueprints, listen to David's vision and Dean's architectural perspective, and answer questions anyone had. Then the congregation had an additional month to continue the conversation, if desired, before a vote to move forward would be taken on June 9 at the Annual Meeting.

Following Rev. Amy's departure in March, the Board appointed a six-member Ministerial Search Committee, in accordance with UUA guidelines. Hopefully you have been reading the reports from that committee's chair, David Pittman. In addition to David, serving on the committee are Beth Schilpp, Roderic Hooks, Alan Bogage, Lisa Miller and myself. David sent out a survey to the congregation to help us understand what people are looking for in a new minister. Many people responded, and this feedback has been extremely helpful.

The Search Committee has met at least a half dozen times so far, and our first big job was to put together an online profile of Cedarhurst for potential candidates to look at. That task alone took several meetings. But finally, our job posting went live in early May, and so far, four potential candidates have contacted us. This says a lot about the desirability of becoming Cedarhurst's minister – this year there have been many more congregations looking than candidates looking.

We have had three new members sign our book since I became your President last July. Two of them signed on Rev Amy's last day, and she was thrilled about that! And quite a few newcomers have been attending services regularly. Cindy Hirshberg continues her excellent leadership of our outreach efforts, and "festival season" in Carroll County is well underway. Let Cindy know if you'd like to help out at the CUU table at an event this summer or fall.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all of you for your thoughts, prayers, cards, food, and good wishes during my husband Jay's surgery and recovery. Having my CUU community surrounding me and Jay during this time made a huge difference.

Becky Zimmerman, Board President

Building & Grounds Report

In the last year, the church building has had several minor repairs done. The boiler that is used to heat the basement was tuned up and the mini-splits used to heat and cool the sanctuary were also serviced. A broken downstairs window was replaced, and two new dehumidifiers were purchased and placed at both ends of the downstairs – one in the nursery and the other in the large open room towards the exit door.

After a firm came to look at applying a sealant to the cracks in the boiler room's walls, they advised having another evaluation done by a structural engineer before any work is done. At this writing, that evaluation is expected to take place in mid-June. The resulting report will be compared to the report that was written in 2013.

We have also received one estimate so far on replacing the boiler itself with a different heating system. The oil tank for the boiler was refilled several times this winter at a cost of thousands of dollars, so we are researching replacing the boiler with a more energy-efficient and cost-effective system.

Much of the work so far is in anticipation of the more ambitious addition and remodeling of the building, which will include an elevator for accessibility to the downstairs and a wider stairwell.

We are fortunate to have the partner of one our members, who is a retired landscaper, helping us with upkeep of our grounds and garden. In addition, Terry & Alec Vinson take care of our mowing needs, and Dan Levenson, Jay's son, does our snow removal – which we needed twice this past winter.

Steve Hirsch, At-large Board member

Worship Services Committee

This committee is responsible for ensuring that a service happens every Sunday. We find guest speakers for the Minister's off Sundays, along with scheduling a lay leader, Zoom coordinator and hospitality person for every Sunday from September through mid-June.

This year, we welcomed ten different guest speakers and had two completely lay-led services thanks to Francine Hahn and Gerry Galuardi. We offered Zoom for remote attendees the entire regular church year, except for those couple times that Comcast didn't cooperate and there was no internet. We also were able to adjust the Zoom setup after several tries to improve the sound quality for those on Zoom.

We are always looking for new guest speakers, and this may be especially necessary next year as a couple of our regulars have taken on more permanent positions and a new minister may not be in place by September or October. Please pass along any suggestions to me or others on the committee. Additionally, all are welcome to join the committee, although if joining a committee isn't your thing, you can still try out being lay leader or Zoom coordinator.

Thank you to everyone who served a role in making Sunday services happen as seamlessly as they do. Special thanks to Lisa Miller who stepped in to be the Zoom coordinator whenever necessary and to Alan Bogage for trouble shooting our Zoom setup several times over the year. Also thank you to our music coordinators and choir who selected the music for each Sunday and shared their wonderful voices with us.

Maria Warburton, Committee Chair

Members: Alan Bogage, Cindy Hirshberg, Jan Pennington, Beth Schilpp, Becky Zimmerman

Congregational Life Committee

The Congregational Life Committee meets on a regular basis, but the schedule has changed over the last now and we now meet on Zoom at 7pm on the first Monday of the month. This change will make it easier to get information forwarded for the Companion and updates.

The Zoom meetings that began during the pandemic to help us feel connected continue to exist. In 2023-24, we made specific efforts to have an in-person activity each month and an in-person meal. The meals are usually at a restaurant and alternate each month between lunch and dinner.

A survey indicated that folks in the congregation wanted hikes, garden visits, in-person dinners and movies plus mahjong lessons and dance parties, possibly with gambling like wheels of fortune. A dance party was one of the auction events this year and we have combined garden visits with hiking. We visited 4 gardens and all required a bit of walking.

Our goal for the coming year will be to have events that attract more participants.

Beth Schilpp, Committee Chair

Endowment Committee Annual Report

Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024

The year ending June 30, 2024, was productive with 2 Endowment Committee (EC) meetings: 9/27/23 and 5/4/24. In May, we reviewed donor Elizabeth Morrow's 2008 will asking us to use 80% of her bequest for CUU's "building fund" and suggesting we require matching contributions by "others" for any such grants. We conceptually modified our policy on distributions accordingly. Mindful of our fiduciary obligation and fluctuations in market prices, we will proceed with caution. We had a good year: starting with a value of \$718k, our portfolio was \$805k at 3/31/24 (6/30/24 is not yet available).

Although independent from the Board, we collaborate closely (cf. CUU By-laws, Article VIII). CUU's Board President and Treasurer both serve ex-officio on the EC. The Board President does not have a vote on EC, but the Board Treasurer does vote on the EC, along with 3 members serving 3-year terms. One voting member is elected at each Annual Meeting. No more than 1 voting member can serve concurrently on the Board, and all elected members are limited to a maximum of two consecutive 3-year terms. Board & EC Treasurer David Pittman transitioned in April to fill a vacant trusteeship on the Board and was replaced by Lisa Miller as both Board and EC Treasurer. David served as Board and EC Treasurer admirably for 7 years. Due to "Covid Confusion", voting member Cindy Hirshberg was inadvertently omitted from the ballot at the last two Annual Meetings. Thus, Cindy was elected this year to serve the final year of her second 3-year term.

Since the inception of Endowment grants in 2012 through 3/31/24, the fund has donated \$280k to CUU. Members are expected to finance CUU's regular operating and maintenance expenses by donations fulfilling pledges or other financial contributions of record. Nonetheless, this year we continued the EC's subsidy with a \$16k authorization to the Operating Fund. EC has continued this subsidy since 2012 because donations declined with membership in recent years. We hope growth will obviate this need.

CUU now has only 2 children in nursery, so EC committed to funding the Board's RE Development initiative 100% for the first few years to allow it to gain traction and the growth necessary to fund RE staff salaries and operational expenses. Thereafter, we expect the congregation to fund RE.

We agree with the Board that it is time to Elevate Cedarhurst and encourage congregational support for this initiative by engagement and commitment to membership growth / retention. Improving easy access to our facility is essential for growth, increasing Sunday attendance and attracting professional staff. EC has committed in principle to fund 100% of Phase I: an elevator and related installation / interior work, adding another rest room up-stairs, repair the boiler room wall, and replacing the rear stairway. We will consider matching contributions to Phase II plans subject to at least 50% funding by membership or other third-party donations. Phase II includes enclosing the front porch, expanding the kitchen, and all other necessary repairs.

Submitted by The Endowment Committee: Jay Levenson (Chair), Lisa Miller (Treasurer), Barbara Bradley (Investment Spreadsheet Manager), and Cindy Hirshberg (Voting member). Board President Becky Zimmerman (ex-officio).

Finance Report

Proposed Annual Budget Attached

For questions regarding the budget, contact David Pittman.

Cedarhurst Unitarian Universalists
PROPOSED BUDGET 2024-25

CONTRIBUTION INCOME	
Pledge Donations	\$65,000
Plate Donations	\$4,000
Auction Income	\$11,000
Endowment Contribution	\$10,000
Subtotal Contribution Income	\$90,000
SCRIP Income	\$750
TOTAL INCOME	\$90,750
MINISTER EXPENSES	\$43,250
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	\$6,600
FINANCE & INSURANCE	\$3,250
COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH	\$1,300
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	\$1,650
UTILITIES	\$5,360
BUILDING MAINTENANCE	\$5,260
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	\$1,400
UUA DUES	\$5,100
BOARD DISCRETIONARY	\$200
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE	\$100
AUCTION EXPENSE	\$200
RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION	\$500
WORSHIP & MUSIC	\$10,480
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$90,010
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSE	\$740