



The Chalice and the Flame

Diverse people. Diverse beliefs. One community.

A Monthly Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem, OR

February 2024

Masquerade Ball February 10

The UUCS Board of Directors invites one and all to a family friendly Mardi Gras Masquerade and Costume Ball fundraiser on February 10, from 7 to 10 pm in Hanneman Hall. We will have Live Music, a Dance Party and a 50/50 Raffle! Costumes are encouraged!

We are proudly hosting featured entertainment from the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Willamette Empire, who will conduct a drag show for us. Wine, non-alcoholic drinks and appetizers will be provided. Admission \$20 per person. Those under 18 will be admitted free and childcare will be available. Contact office@uusalem.com with questions.



"Building Our Legacy" Pledge Drive Begins February 18

This light we kindle is set in the lamp of our history. We inherit this free faith from the brave and gentle, fierce, and outspoken hearts and minds that have come before us. Let us be worthy inheritors of this faith and through our good works, pass it boldly to a new generation. ~ Audette Fulbright Fulson

Dear UUCS Community,

As we approach the season of our annual pledge drive, I find myself reflecting on the journey we've shared and the path that lies ahead. While I don't have the exact dollar amount for our pledge drive target, I do know that this year's pledge drive is crucial—more so than in previous years. We are embarking on a new chapter, one filled with both excitement and the bittersweet departure of Reverend Rick.

Amidst the heartache of saying farewell to a beloved leader, we are presented with an opportunity to celebrate the joy Reverend Rick brought to our lives. This year's pledge drive, themed "Building Our Legacy," invites us to honor our past while laying the groundwork for future generations.

In the next two years, as we search for a new minister, we have the chance to deeply reflect on our identity as a congregation. What will our shared spaces nurture, and who will find a home within them? Imagining those who will walk through our doors in ten, or twenty years, will they feel the warmth of support and the embrace of a welcoming spirit? Will this be a sanctuary for healing, a space for learning, a place to call home?

To embark on this journey, the pledge team is actively recruiting volunteers and initiating stewardship training. We are committed to making this pledge drive a community effort, acknowledging that every pledge, whether large or small, contributes to the legacy we are building together.

As we navigate this transition, your support is more vital than ever. Keep an eye out for upcoming details about the pledge drive in the "This Week at UUCS" emails. Pledging will be accessible online, and for those who prefer in-person assistance, the Stewardship Committee will be present in the Fellowship Hall on Celebration Sunday, February 18.

Let's come together to ensure that our legacy is one of strength, resilience, and a commitment to providing a home for generations to come.

If you have any questions or would like to help out with the pledge drive this year, feel free to email kraigpdx@gmail.com.

~Craig Rowland, Stewardship Committee Chair

P.S. See the graphs showing the story of pledging at UUCS for the last few years on page 5 of this newsletter.



Reverential Ramblings

~ Rev. Richard Davis, UUCS's minister

As I reflect on my upcoming retirement in just a few months and your pledge drive for next congregational year I am moved to say **thank you**—members and friends of UUCS—for your generous support of ministry during the past thirty-one years that I have served you. I was tempted to say “my” ministry, but it wasn’t mine; it was, and is, our shared endeavor. Ministry is much more powerful and effective when it is shared and not a solo act.

Our shared ministry focuses on serving the common good, beginning within the congregational community and radiating outward. How many forms and expressions there are for this ministry!

Within our congregation we offer to one another our ministry of compassionate presence, our ministry to create and support interpersonal connections, our ministry to welcome and include newcomers, our ministry of the spoken word that serves remind us of the deepest meanings and highest purposes of our lives, our ministry of music that stirs the soul, and our ministry to support our precious children. Then, there is all the ministry that happens naturally, spontaneously when we gather.

Beyond our own congregational community, there is our ministry to families without shelter who stay in our spiritual home several times a year for a week at a time. There is also our support to the many kindred spirit organizations in the community with whom we share our weekly offering and those kindred spirit groups with whom we share our building.

Simply put, ministry means being a friend however you can, wherever you can, whenever you can—a loving, compassionate, supportive, encouraging friend to others. (That’s why my bumper sticker says “Your Friend”).

In just a few months “Your Friend” (i.e., I) will be driving off into the sunset of retirement and you will be looking to the future as you seek your next interim minister (who will be hired by the board of trustees to serve two years) and then your settled minister (who will be called by a vote of the congregation).

Ministerial transitions incur an extra level of expense for congregations—an expense you have been spared for over three decades (since you’ve been stuck with the same minister for that long).

Then, too, it will be good if your next ministers are warmly welcomed with generous financial support. Those who enter the ministry do not do so for the money, but it is important for congregations to offer generous support in order to attract those who can best serve.

This, then, truly *is* a time when an extra push is needed for this pledge drive to be a success. As it is, a relatively small number of devoted members give at extraordinarily generous levels and this enables us to support our shared ministry from year to year. Yet, as the years pass, so too do some of these most generous givers, and there is concern among some who wonder: “Who will take up the financial slack?”

Perhaps it will be you. Could it be? Should it be? As you consider the shared ministry we offer to one another and to our surrounding community, I invite you let the spirit of radical generosity stir in your heart.

You are a wonderful congregation, and I am deeply grateful for all of your support. Now I am excited because you have so much support to offer the next ones fortunate enough to serve as minister at the UUCS.

Love,
Rick



Lifespan Religious Education

~Molly Brown, Director, Lifespan Religious Education~

Wow, January has sped on by! I can't believe it's already February! The LRE Program has finished our January theme of "The Gift of Liberating Love" last week with a lesson about how love pulls us to accept ourselves, knowing that we will never be perfect. In our society, it can be easy to get stuck in the idea of perfectionism and the thought patterns of "I have to be perfect to be enough, to have value, or for people to like me." Our faith reminds us that self-acceptance is like a magnet and pulls us back to a place of accepting ourselves, loving our imperfections, and, in doing so, creating space for us to love ourselves.

[Click here](#) for a special song on YouTube that you can teach and share with the children in your life: "I Love Me (L.O.V.E.), a Self-Esteem Song for Kids." For many kids, it's easy to show kindness and love towards others. It's not always as easy to show that same love and kindness towards themselves. Help your kids learn this song so they can sing it to themselves whenever they feel low self-esteem and can use a pep talk.

This year's overarching theme is The Gifts of Our Faith. In February, Black History Month, we explore the gifts of justice and equity. These gifts will be discussed in four sessions: 1. What is Equality, Equity and Justice? 2. The Gift of Building Better Relationships, 3. The Gift of Building a Better World, and 4. The Gift of Joy.

Event reminder:

Our Youth Group is invited by the Youth Collective (a collection of several youth groups from various congregations in the area) to a Super Bowl Party on February 11 at 3 pm at Salem First Presbyterian Church, 770 Chemeketa St. NE in Salem! Snacks will be provided but bring your own beverages.

More Happenings and Highlights

UU Meditation Group Begins Tuesday, February 6

On Tuesdays at 7 pm beginning February 6 everyone is welcome to join us in our sanctuary for guided and silent meditation followed by tea and discussion. Our first text for our discussion will be Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron's "When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times." (Note: If you do meditate on a cushion, please bring one until we restore our supply.)

Final Vote on Article II Revision in June; Zoom Discussions February 7 and March 6

The final vote on the revision of the UUA's Article II of the Bylaws is coming up this June at the 2024 General Assembly (GA). Your delegates would like your assistance in determining how to vote. The UUCS Board will guide us. However, it is also important to hear from the congregation. You can help by sharing your thoughts.

First, read the latest revision of Article II by [clicking here](#). An article entitled "History of Article II and the [Article II] Study Commission" can be found by [clicking here](#). Search for more links to "Article II" on the uua.org website.

Second, [click here](#) to attend Zoom discussions on February 7 from 7 pm to 8 pm, or March 6 from 7 pm to 8 pm.

Third, be on the lookout for an in-person discussion in April and a chance to provide your "yea" or "nay" in May.

In brief, they are suggesting that the UUA replace its 7 Principles and 6 Sources that are in our hymnal and on the back of every Order of Service you get each Sunday. The replacement includes 6 Values supporting the centering value of Love. Those 6 Values are interdependence, equity, transformation, pluralism, generosity, and justice. In addition, there are ideas of inspiration, inclusion and freedom of belief. It's a bit more complicated than summarized here, which is why it would be so helpful for you to read it yourself and then join the chat on February 7 and or March 6. Thank you ahead of time for your support in our decision-making process.

~Hannah Batu, Joel Martin, Sara Pickett and Barbara Stebbins-Boaz, your 2024 GA Delegates.

Bake Sale to Support the Women's Retreat March 3

Come buy some goodies after service on March 3 and help support scholarships and expenses for the Women's Retreat at Suttle Lake from June 28 to 30. If you have questions or would like to offer some goodies to buy as well, please email the womensretreat@uusalem.org. Thank you for your support and here's to some yummy goodies!

Save the Date, June 23; Celebrate Rev. Rick and Gordana!

We hope you will join us June 23 for a celebration of more than 30 years of love, wisdom, dedication and leadership that our beloved Rev. Rick and Gordana Davis brought to our congregation. More information to come.

Contribute to Book for Rick and Gordana

We are accepting contributions for a commemorative book which will be presented to Rick and Gordana. Submissions may be no more than 1 page, size 8.5 x 11 inches, per person. Submissions may be testimonials, reflections, memories or other prose, poetry, printable artwork, photographs, or similar. Items will be bound in book form so please do not submit textured, raised or bulky items; however photos of such items are great. Electronic submission is preferred for text. Please phone Janet Stevens at 503-949-2457 for more information or submit contributions to stevens.janet.kay@gmail.com. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

Tai Chi Each Sunday at 10 am

Come Grasp the Peacock's Tail with us. Tai Chi will be held weekly before Sunday Service, from 10:00 to 10:20 in Hanneman Hall, led by Meryl or Sara. A nice way to center yourself as part of your spiritual experience.

Men Meet Twice Monthly

UUCS Men's Group will meet twice a month, on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, starting February 11. The 2nd Sunday meetings will be from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm, with personal food optional. The 4th Sunday meetings will be from 8 am to 10 am, with food to be arranged by participants. Format will include a 1 to 2-minute check in at the beginning of the meeting and a 1-minute check out at the end of the meeting. Content within the meetings will vary and may include issues that come up in check-in and/or topics. Each meeting will be facilitated by a group member. The meetings are open to all identifying as men. Confidentiality will be honored at all meetings.

News of the Community

Hey, have you heard the exciting news? Well, you will hear some of it here. Some fun things people have been doing or will be doing soon are:

Mandy Bray writes that she was thrilled to be able to make it to Georgia this September for her mom Mary Bray's 90th birthday! Mary and Jerry Bray were members of UUCS for 12 years and Mandy has been a member for 25 and counting. Mandy, like her folks, enjoys the Connections Group, and she is one of our long-distance members, living now in Eureka, California. She also keeps in touch through watching UUCS Sunday services on YouTube. Mandy is hoping to make it up to Salem for Rev. Rick's Retirement Fiesta! (Mandy, mark your calendar for June 23).



In Simenfalva news, the village has decided that their church bell will ring three times per day, and they will pause to remember the love in their hearts and souls. I wonder if we could do the same thing when we could hear our bell in the foyer ring before service?

Do you have something you want to share for the March Newsletter? Email me, Sara Pickett, at sara@uusalem.org by February 23 or catch me some Sunday and tell me!

Help Wanted and Appreciated!

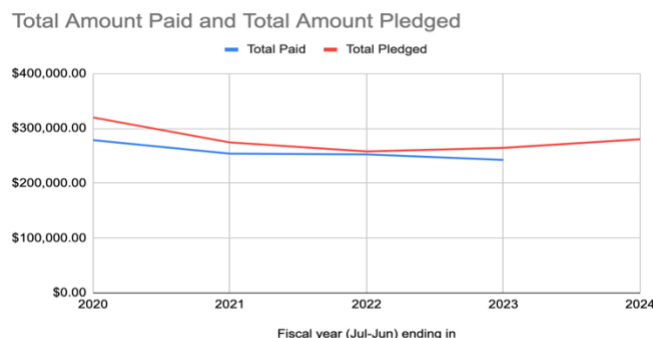
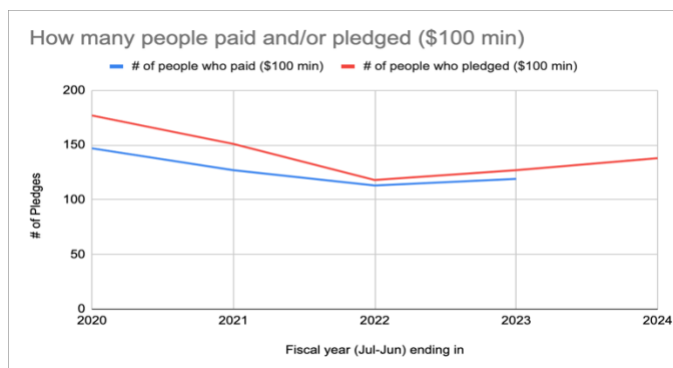
Grant Writer Requested, Needed Soon!

UUCS has been informed by the Board of the Cascadia Growth Fund that there are Grants currently available in several areas. Some have a March 1st, 2024, application deadline. The Cascadia Growth Funds for Unitarian Universalism are aimed at four general areas of congregational life: 1. Building improvements and accessibility;

2. Mission-based initiatives related to ministry, purpose and vitality; 3. Technology and communications equipment and training and; 4. Initiatives among congregations such as collaborations, clusters, conferences, and workshops. Details and the application can be found at Funding Stream 2 and Funding Stream 4 of the new Cascadia website: <https://cascadiauu.org/growth-fund/growth-fund-streams/>. Our Facilities, Landscaping and Aesthetic and Design Teams already have many projects on their “to do” lists. So, the grant funds would be well spent. Who among us could write a grant for any of these funds? I bet you’re out there somewhere! Contact Lynn Cardiff at boardchair@uusalem.org.

The Story of Recent Pledging at UUCS

The average number of people who pledged over \$100 and the average number who paid over \$100 declined in the first years of pandemic, 2020 and 2021. They have increased, but not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.



Fiscal year (Jul-Jun) ending in	# of people who paid (\$100 min)	# of people who pledged (\$100 min)	Notes
2020	147	177	Pre-pandemic pledges
2021	127	151	Pledge drive during beginning of pandemic
2022	113	118	1 year into pandemic
2023	119	127	2 years into pandemic
2024		138	Last year's pledge drive

The graph to the right shows how the total amount of money pledged to the church declined in the first 2 years of the pandemic. The amounts *pledged* have since rebounded but have not fully recovered. In contrast, the total amount *paid* to the church in pledges has gone down every year since the beginning of the pandemic. This trend is a concern because church costs are rising.

Fiscal year (Jul-Jun) ending in	Total Paid	Total Pledged	Total Unpaid
2020	\$278,615.59	\$319,995.00	\$41,379.41
2021	\$253,967.82	\$274,482.08	\$20,514.26
2022	\$252,714.57	\$258,016.00	\$5,301.43
2023	\$242,643.41	\$264,499.00	\$21,855.59
2024		\$280,115.00	

Fiscal year (Jul-Jun) ending in	Average Paid (\$100 min)	Average Pledge (\$100 min)
2020	\$1,893.98	\$1,806.53
2021	\$1,997.97	\$1,817.07
2022	\$2,235.70	\$2,184.81
2023	\$2,038.46	\$2,081.46
2024		\$2,029.09

Data for total pledges paid in 2023-24, of course, is not yet available.

The left graph shows that the average pledges of a decreasing number of people who pledged more than \$100 in the first two years of the pandemic, went up slightly. The average amounts pledged, and average of those pledges paid have gone down a little since 2022. The average amount paid by the end of the most recent fiscal year, 2023, was \$2,038.

Overall takeaways: The main concern for UUCS’s pledge behavior is that we have less income from pledges than we need to adequately support the current operations of the church. While there are other ways that UUCS brings in money, member support through pledges is crucial. Options to meet UUCS stewardship goals include increasing the number of pledgers as well as increasing the average amount pledged and paid.

Opportunities to support this goal: Return your [estimate of giving](#) early. Consider how your pledge aligns with the [Suggested Fair-Share Contribution Guide](#) pledge form. Be part of our Pledge Drive Canvass to reach out to fellow church members. Contact Craig Rowland at kraigpdx@gmail.com.

Social Justice News

The Social Justice Team is considering several areas where UUCS can make a difference in the lives of others. They are listed below with possible ways we can help. We can't do all of them; we need your help in identifying what is doable. There will be a social justice table, identified by the social justice lantern, in the Fellowship Hall after Sunday Service. We want to hear from you. Stop by and help us determine what can be accomplished. You can also comment on the items below by sending an email to slt@uusalem.org.

We can **help the homeless** by offering our personal touch and humanity, partnering with other organizations who are helping and by supporting efforts to create affordable housing.

We can **work for immigrant justice** by educating the congregation on causes of mass immigration, which include environmental degradation, experiences of threats and violence and inability to earn a living wage in their countries of origin. Here, too, we can work with and assist other groups currently helping immigrants, such as Salem for Refugees. And we can advocate for fair treatment of immigrants by our country and communities.

Racial equity can be improved through building bridges, by extending hospitality to other groups and by working on projects with them. We can advocate for public policies that prohibit discrimination. At the same time, we can recognize that such policies alone will not change a person's heart. We can learn and educate others how we have benefited from the abilities, work and experiences of other races.

We can **further access to affordable healthcare** by advocating for and supporting public policies needed to make healthcare accessible and affordable. We can also learn about private equity and hedge fund investments in healthcare and why those investments are attractive to investors. We can assess the effects of consolidation and its impact on healthcare. And we can advocate for affordable pharmaceuticals.

We can **assist children living in poverty** by working with and support agencies that provide services to families and after school programs and advocating support for them. We can advocate for a living wage for all persons. UUCS might also consider a project of its own, such as volunteering to aid after school programs.

We can **help improve environment quality** and reduce global warming by supporting other groups and advocate for effective environmental policies. We can learn and inform others about reducing our environmental footprints. We can become master recyclers or master gardeners and encourage others to do so as well.

Splinters from the Board

Locking the front door after service Based on input from UUA, our Safer Congregations Committee, Hosts and others, the Board approved locking the front door 15 minutes after the start of the service on Sunday mornings. Hosts will monitor the door for latecomers. The door will be unlocked at the end of the service. As is required by building codes, all doors can be opened from the inside, so no one can get locked in the building.

Interim Minister search At every board forum and in every newsletter, there is an update on our progress toward finding an interim minister. The IM search group is Christine Ertl, Robert Galloway and Lynn Cardiff. This month we reported that we worked on a budget that will be needed to fund an interim minister. This has been discussed with the Finance Team and the Committee on Human Resources. We also have been putting together our UUCS profile which will be posted on our and UUA's website for potential interim ministers to see.

Congregational input regarding the interim minister The next two board forums are on Sunday, February 18 and March 17 at noon in the sanctuary. These will be devoted to gathering input from the congregation on questions such as what we want in an interim minister, and what do we want the minister to do to help us grow into our next phase as a congregation. There could also be many other questions discussed. Please put these dates on your calendar. All are invited to attend one of these sessions; there is no need to attend both.

Mardi Gras Ball Your board of directors will be putting on a fun-filled, family friendly ball on the evening of February 10 from 7-10 pm. Costumes, fancy attire and masks are encouraged but not required. Snacks, a live performance and live music will all be a part of this fun-packed evening. See the article on page 1 of this newsletter.

Sunday Services and Religious Education

Religious Education <i>In person, during service</i>	Sunday Service <i>In-person and Live-streamed</i>	Fellowship Time <i>In person</i>
10:30 am	10:30 am	After Service
February Share the Plate Recipient: <u>Marion-Polk Foodshare</u>		

Sunday, February 11

Gloria Holland, Homilist/Storyteller

"From Gigi a Gift"

Everyone has a story to tell, but many of us suffer roadblocks to getting that story on paper. Gloria Holland will explore the physical and spiritual benefits and pitfalls of writing a memoir, as we often gain a new perspective on our own life story.

Celebrant: Sara Pickett

Music: UUCS Choir

Sunday, February 18

The Rev. Richard R. Davis

"Love the Children"

On this Sunday we will reflect on our ministry to youth and consider how we can support them.

Celebrant: Barbara Stebbins-Boaz

Music: Loriann Schmidt and Ramona Morris

Sunday, February 25

The Rev. Richard R. Davis

"A Life to Celebrate"

When I prepare a memorial service, I reflect on the lives of those who have died, and this long practice has given me insight into what matters and what doesn't matter in our lives.

Celebrant: Brenna Norval

Music: UUCS Choir

Sunday, March 3

The Rev. Richard R. Davis & Life Lines Lay Ministers

"A Ministry of Presence"

Rev. Rick and Members of our Life Lines Lay Ministry will share their vision of a caring community.

Celebrant: Janet Stevens

Music: Marcia Christenson

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This issue was edited by Bob Muir with help from Vicki Cunningham, Kathleen McKinney, Ross Patty, and Elsa Struble.

EVENT SCHEDULING: use the [Event Scheduling Request](#) form on the UUCS website to add event to the UUCS calendar and/or reserve a UUCS space.

PUBLICITY and ANNOUNCEMENTS: Fill out the [Publication Request](#) form on the UUCS website for any announcement, event or news item. This form is a one-stop place to put a notice in the monthly newsletter, the UUCS website, the *This Week* email and/or Facebook.

DEADLINES:

Newsletter: The deadline for the **next** newsletter is 8:00 pm on Friday, **March 1, 2023.**

This Week submissions are due by **Wed.** noon.