

## **FUUSM Finance Committee Annual Report, 2024-2025**

Members: Mike Lang (Chair), Joe Baker (Liaison for Buildings & Grounds Committee), Shari Ballantyne (Liaison for the Board), George Banziger (note-taker), Don Poole (Treasurer, ex-officio), Shari Ballantyne Nancy Lee

The committee usually met on the fourth Monday every month this fiscal year. Thus far, a meeting has been held each month except December.

Committee goals were also established early in the fiscal year and included making a long-term plan for a balanced operational budget, monitoring the operational budget (in concert with the treasurer); on a monthly basis, oversight of the annual pledge drive, monitoring special funds, following best practices in fund raising, arranging for the annual service auction and yard sale, oversight of special projects, and drafting next year's budget (in collaboration with the treasurer).

The committee also oversees the balance sheet which lists the special funds that are outside the operations budget, such as the minister's discretionary fund, the Green Sanctuary fund, and the trust funds; the task of awarding expenditure requests and monitoring of the trust funds are done by the Board of Trust Governors. The committee reviews these special funds in order to verify who the "owner" of the fund is and whether each fund is being utilized. The committee also oversees the counting of collections, the schedule for which is managed by George Banziger through the online service of Sign-up Genius. The Counting-Collections team currently consists of George Banziger, Ellen Bond, Lori Flis, Virginia Henthorn, Scott Lacey, Mike Lang, and Stephanie Rector.

A calendar for the Committee was established at the beginning of the fiscal year and is checked at the end of each meeting to monitor committee progress.

Important financial tasks are completed on a regular basis by Maggie Meyer who sends out checks for occasional purchases and service costs (those not on automatic payments). Dawn Hewitt, FUUSM Administrative Assistant, has agreed to serve as a back-up for Maggie. She will help Maggie in making special payments and in the deposit of checks and cash received in the FUUSM account at People's Bank, which are recorded in Quick Books by our paid bookkeeper, Jennifer Schenkel of Wark & Wark Accounting.

The committee oversees the Yard Sale, which this fiscal year was held in August, 2024. Stephanie Rector coordinated last summer's Yard Sale, which took in a total revenue of \$1,548.

Last year official signatories for FUUSM checks were identified in coordination with People's Bank. Those not active in financial affairs were deleted; Don, George, and Dawn Hewitt are currently official signatories for FUUSM accounts.

Activities related to the Chalice Lighter grant were temporarily discontinued in September 2024 by the Board (in response to UUA Central East region recommendation). The Central East Region has since given authorization to resume Chalice Lighter grant activities. We await Board action on designating a manager of the project in order to proceed.

Ron Rees helped with the research on our elevated electricity costs, which had been a puzzle or over a year. In consultation with AEP-Ohio, Ron determined that this placement of FUUSM in a higher-consuming category of customers was due to a peak-load issue. Ron and Dawn Hewitt continue to proceed in addressing that issue.

In November Don identified several families, i.e. pledge units, who had not completely fulfilled their pledges in FY 24. George and Don followed up and were able to get several of these families to fulfill their pledges, which were added to the current fiscal year revenue.

On March 5, 2025, the committee arranged a forum on FUUSM finances, which involved a presentation in the form of an overview of expenses and revenue by Treasurer, Don Poole. About 21 people attended in-person and virtually; there were questions about the minister's compensation package among other queries.

In its oversight of the Pledge Drive (for the 2025-2026 budget) the Committee received regular updates from George, who coordinated this year's pledge drive. Since those who worked on last year's pledge drive were no longer involved with the committee, George reached out to three different people to determine if they would be willing to help with the Pledge Drive in anticipation of taking over that task in the future. Chris Jacobs agreed to assist George this year. With the help of Dawn Hewitt, FUUSM Office Assistant, an email message was sent to the FUUSM list. Those who did not respond to the emailing were sent pledge letters, which went out in February via USPS. Dawn Hewitt was extremely helpful in arranging for the mailing of customized pledge letters and forms using mail merge. George and Chris conducted follow-up phone calls to those who did not respond to the pledge letter. At this writing a total of \$126,140 has been pledged (compared to \$113,125 last year and \$115,760 the year before). There were 69 pledges received, i.e., pledge units (72 last year). The average pledge was \$1,911 (above last year's figure of \$1,546). A total of 22 people (pledge units) increased their pledge; nine decreased, and seven people pledged this year. who had not previously pledged. It should be noted in this context that, in his long-term analysis of our budget Ted Goertzel conducted three years ago, he noted that just 12 families account for over 50% of pledges. Due to family moves and deaths we have already lost some strong contributors to our pledged income. If we continue to lose many more of these 12 key families, our budget will suffer. This problem brings into focus the importance of what the Chalice Lighter Membership Project is attempting to do by building up our membership base for the long term. Treasurer Don Poole made the point in our budget-planning meeting that pledge participants should consider arranging in their wills for a contribution to the annual pledge drive be submitted every year through an endowment as long as resources in one's estate allow. Don has presented this idea to the board for their consideration.

Dawn Hewitt and Don Poole have been working on the transfer of pledge records from MemInfo, which is being discontinued to the Planning Center, which provides more storage and reporting options than MemInfo did. This new system is now operational.

On February 21 Nancy Lee and Shari Ballantyne, with the help of other volunteers, held a chili supper with entertainment utilizing an "open mic" process. There was very good participation in the entertainment, and \$373 was raised.

The committee also oversees and initiates plans for the Service Auction, which is scheduled this fiscal year for May 16 at the Gathering Place on the Marietta College campus.

Shari has made arrangements for the event, and Cindy Brown has already sent out forms for activities to be auctioned.

Virginia Henthorn is arranging a special FUUSM fund-raising event at Campus Martius Museum scheduled for June 22. She has already obtained sponsors, reserved the site, and made other arrangements.

The Kroger Community Rewards program is still operating, but few people are utilizing it.

A major item of business at each monthly meeting is the monitoring of the current operational budget. The treasurer provides by e-mail attachments beforehand copies of the profit-and-loss statement for each month (actually the previous month to each meeting). He also provides an update on the status of special funds (i.e., balance sheet), which are apart from the operational budget. In recent meetings Don has noted at several points in this fiscal year that pledge contributions are behind what was budgeted.

At its March 2025 meeting the Committee reviewed the draft budget for 2025-26 which Don had prepared. In building this budget, Don focused on actual expenditures and income figures rather than those previously budgeted in an effort to provide the most accurate information. Employee compensation (salaries, wages, fringe benefits etc.) represents the major portion of our budget (over 60%), and these expenses do not change much year to year. FY26 budget will be eased somewhat by the application of funds from the Ting Trust (yield, not principal) to maintenance and renovation expenses. The FY26 budget is built with the assumption of a half-time minister. The committee made the recommendation of a half-time minister to the Board, given the assumption that our budget will only support that level of ministerial activity. There was little budget savings in ministerial compensation this fiscal year since the Board had decided to give Rev Kat six months of her compensation package, i.e. through May, 2025.

The committee has not yet arranged an audit of FUUSM finances. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

We have much to consider about our FUUSM finances but much to be grateful for including a dedicated, generous, and caring congregation, which has responded effectively to our budget challenges. Long-term sustainability of our operations budget, however, will depend on engaging our existing members/friends more seriously in congregation activities (increased engagement leads to increased contributions) and expanding our membership.

Submitted by George Banziger (with committee input)

April 10, 2024