

Report to the Board of the First Unitarian Church of South Bend, Indiana
Rev. Chip Roush - 14 June 2023

INFORMATION

We'll have a booth at the Pride Festival this Saturday (Potawatomi Park, 11a-5p). Please consider stopping by!

Our Office Manager, Pat Davis, will be on vacation from Wednesday, July 5 through Sunday, July 9. With the office being closed for the holiday on Tuesday anyway, there will be no Chirp! email that week.

Leader Lab resources

<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/part-time>

<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/reducing-process>

From 2018-2023, in person attendance at our congregations declined by 25%. However, the vast majority of our congregations now offer virtual attendance options and the combined virtual and in person attendance totals increased during that period. (source: <https://uuma.org/resource/current-trends-in-parish-ministry-may-2023>)

General Assembly is this month! It will be in Pittsburgh, PA, June 21-25, 2023. There will not be an in-person GA in 2024; there will be an in-person MidAmerica Regional Assembly in late spring of 2024.

SCHEDULE

I have taken all the study leave and vacation for which I am eligible in FY23.

In July, I will take a vacation from Wednesday, July 19, through Wednesday, August 2.

PERPETUAL CALENDAR

June

Newly elected Board members join standing Board for monthly meeting

Determine dates for monthly meetings

Quarterly update on Endowment disbursements

Get door codes for newly-elected Trustees

July

Determine dates for annual events (e.g. Service Auction in fall, congregational meeting in May; board retreat, all-church retreat) if possible

Add new officers to bank & UUCEF permissions; remove old officers

Appoint Assistant Treasurer, Personnel Liaison, chairs for annual Service Auction and Holiday Bazaar, and liaison with committees

All Board members receive basic documents pursuant to their task

Consider and approve the Minister's request for identifying portion of salary to be designated for housing (important for tax reporting requirement)

August

Inform Chairs and Congregation that committees are formed and chairs approved

Set dates for Service auction, annual meeting, concerts, other fundraisers and social events.

Endowment Committee sends Board quarterly report

Annual Board Retreat: set goals for the year; renew the Covenant between Board and Minister

QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MONTH

Shall we recreate, rather than renew, a covenant between the Board and the Minister?

ACTIVITIES

From Monday, May 1, through Sunday, May 28, 2023, there were four weeks; my contract calls for an average of at least twelve units per week, for a total of 48+ units (where a unit is defined as a morning, an afternoon, or an evening of work, in general).

Subtracting 6 units for study leave, that leaves a contractual minimum of 42+ units of work. Over that May time period, I recorded 44 units:

Sunday Services (15 units)

- Planning & presenting worship services on Sunday (3)
- meeting to recruit worship presenter(s) (1)
- interfacing with Sound Techs and Zoom (Co-)Hosts
- reviewing drafts of orders of service prior to printing
- uploading sermons to YouTube, Facebook, and congregational website
- Worship Arts Committee meeting (1)
- Sermon Sounding Board (weekly; 4)

Governance (6 units)

- Board meeting (1), communications & follow-up tasks from Board
- Committee on Ministry meeting (1)
- Annual Meeting (1)
- Conversations about the Ministerial Discretionary Fund (1)
- Conversations with concerned members (1)

Pastoral Care & Counseling (6 units)

- Phone calls & texts (2)
- Home, hospital, etc., visits (3)
- Visits at church, restaurant, etc. (4)
- Grief Circle (1)
- Care Committee meeting (1)
- Planning & calls for Eileen Murphy's Celebration of Life (1)
- Buy Martin's grocery cards (2)
- Buy Marathon gas cards (1)

weekly Thursday afternoon Zoom Gathering (4)

Associational Ties (5 units)

meet with Mentees (3)

record Charge to Minister for Julie Jones' Ordination (1)

Chicago Area Liberal Ministers (CALM) meeting (1)

Annual Meeting of Central Midwest Chapter of UU Ministers Assoc. (1)

conversations with colleagues (1)

Co-Moderator of UUMA Facebook page (approx. daily)

Communications (3 units)

submitting items for Chirp! each week

putting informational posts on church Facebook page & website

adding pages, content to our website

compiling Board Report

compiling Annual Report

miscellaneous email, not included in other categories

Membership (2.5 units)

Office Hours (8)

Tenth Anniversary of my first sermon here (1)

emails & call from members & friends

Staff Supervision (2 units)

weekly meetings (4); ongoing training

Adult RE (1 units)

Awe Covenant Group & prep therefor (1)

ad hoc conversations

Marketing / Publicity (1 units)

posting upcoming services on Facebook, Twitter, our website

correspondence with musicians seeking concert venue (1)

Rites of Passage (1 unit)

Memorial service for Eileen Murphy (1)

child dedications, marriages, memorial services

Children & Youth RE (1 unit)

RE families event at local playground (1)

ad hoc conversations

Public Religious Face of the Congregation (0.5 units)

theological conversations with folks who ask for gift cards (1)

emails from local students / organizations

attend author event at Brain Lair Books (1)

Social Justice (rounded down to 0 units)

a few conversations

Spiritual Development of Congregation (rounded down to 0 units)

short conversations with congregant(s)

PROGRESS ON GOALS (as set on October 12, 2021):

Take a class in communication / conflict / ambiguity / attuned listening this church year.

I did some work on these things with therapists and coaches, but did not attend a class.

Offer at least one Book Group that explores the above skills and/or tools.

I'm offering a covenant group which will read *Awe* by Dacher Keltner

I welcome other suggestions for book group discussions or sermons.

Preach at least three times about these skills/tools.

The services on 11/20, 12/4, and 3/12 touched on some of these topics.

Explore incorporating skills/tools practice in the majority of the services I lead.

I had several conversations about this while on Sabbatical

I incorporated some of the above conversations in services, and have plans to do so in the coming months.

Co-lead (with Board and/or Committee on Ministry members) a “Fireside Chat” / Q&A session to demonstrate transparency and accountability, approximately quarterly.

We have held Town Hall meetings on Sunday afternoons, 12/18/22 and 4/2/23.

PASTORAL CARE

We have had many people inquire about help from the Ministerial Discretionary Fund.

When I am in for Office Hours, it is not uncommon for there to be three to five visitors each day.

MEDITATION

Whatever we think we are doing, whatever struggles overtake us, may we remember the words of Fred Small: “the only measure of your words and your deeds will be the love you leave behind”

So may we be,

Chip

APPENDIX A – The Ministerial Discretionary Fund in FY23

We disbursed over \$19,600 in fiscal year 2023, mostly to non-members, to help pay rent, utility bills, a few vehicle payments, and one overnight stay in a hotel. We also distributed quite a few grocery cards (Martin's, and Meijer) and gas cards (Marathon). All told, 54 different people received assistance; 53 of these were non-members. Our policy limits me to ten grocery/gas cards per month. In June, these were all gone in five days.

We helped five people four times or more—two of these people received only grocery or gas cards; the others often got cards but also received help with one or more utility bills or a rent payment or car repair.

We gave out the maximum amount (for non-members) of \$999 three times. Two of those were to pay mortgages (usually a full month and a partial month in arrears). The third was to participate in a neighborhood group arranging home repairs for a local handyman (the group was recommended to us by a member).

Among these disbursements, we helped:

a young man gets off the streets, so that he has place he can bring his baby son;

an 84 year old with a relatively small utility bill – it is hard to find work she is physically able to do, or has the tech knowledge to do;

to keep the water on, or the electric on, or the gas on, in several families' lives;

a woman with brain cancer, then a stroke, who is now mostly homeless;

a family wherein the father lost his job, then the place they rented was sold out from under them; then the new place (expensive due to short-term search) had its furnace go out. We could not pay their rent (over \$1k limit) so we made a truck payment of \$875;

two women, one of whom got sick and could not work for a while, then had surgery, and a relapse...we helped to keep them warm and fed for several months, until they were evicted and moved to another state;

and one woman who came to get financial help and also got a chance to pour out her heart over her jailed son and how some folks (mis)treat her now.

APPENDIX B – Communication from Our UUA Ministries & Faith Development Staff Group

This was posted in a ministers-only Facebook page by Keith Kron, Transitions Director
He granted us permission to share it widely.

Dear Colleagues,

In what surely is a bellwether moment, the first round of interim search concluded Wednesday with 38 congregations searching for full-time interim ministry. Only 21 were able to make an offer. Seventeen congregations looking for full-time interim ministry learned they did not have a mutual match. We knew it was going to be difficult. Only 32 ministers even entered the interim search.

Historically, we've always been slow to fill part-time positions as ministers rarely move for a part-time position. In the last few years we've seen that creep into interim ministry and smaller full time congregations.

Beginning this year we are recommending to any congregation under 125 members that they do contract ministry searches. The expense of settled search and leadership drain in smaller congregations with seven leaders now serving on a search committee is quite a toll.

This year in interim search we saw 4 congregations of over between 250 and 400 members not find an interim minister. That has not in recent memory happened before. A shortage of ministers willing to work with congregations is real.

On some level, this is not a surprise. In talking with other denomination colleagues, they report a similar shortage. Every denomination is struggling. It's not just about ministry. Membership is down. This too is across denominations, with despite public claims otherwise, the more conservative religions losing at higher rate than the more liberal denominations.

It's also not just about religion. We see a shortage of teachers, doctors, nurses—all helping professions. In some ways this makes great sense. All helping professions have been expected to absorb a certain amount of society's frustrations, often at less compensation. The world has been very frustrated these last few years. It should be noted that we really haven't recognized and certainly prioritized the need to deal with the fact that the world is angry. And human beings did not go into helping professions to quietly absorb this expanding burden of frustrations. We're seeing an exodus.

Specific to Unitarian Universalism, the biggest gap, as is often questioned is not a slew of new retirements. The biggest gaps are new ministers going into ministries that aren't congregationally based. This is followed by a jump in ministers deciding community ministry, chaplaincy, and social justice ministries are more likely to be rewarding than congregational ministry. For years, the Transitions Office would hear from about 25-30 newly fellowshipped ministers looking to consider congregational ministry. The last two years it's been 5 ministers, then 8. Rarely are any of those new ministers free geographically to search. More often, ministry has become, at best, a co-equal income in a household. Increasingly, it has become the second income in a two-income family.