

Dear Friends and Members of the Unitarian Society,

This letter is arriving with a copy of our proposed annual budget for 2019-20, but it is about so much more than line-items and balance sheets.

This is about who we are, and who we want to become.

Who we are: We are a financially stable, generous congregation. Over the past few years, our budgeting process has focused on creating achievable, balanced budgets that have sustained us as we have gone through changes in staff and ministry. Our beautiful campus has provided us with a much-needed source of income. Our pledge income has begun to grow over the past three years.

For the past two years, we have set our budgeted pledge goal at \$420,000. We hope to finish this year close to that target.

We could have prepared a budget, once again, with \$420k in the “pledge income” line. We could have stayed flat with our pledge goal, and our budget would have been flat as well, since we have pretty much hit a ceiling with what we can expect to earn from our facilities rentals.

But we’ve got more “fizz” than flat going on here at USSB! There is so much heart-expanding, mind-opening, justice-making work that we are doing together, and we are poised and ready to reach out beyond our walls and welcome more people into this work with us. To support this “effervescence”, we decided on a modest increase to our pledge goal this year, raising it to \$440,000 - but you, the congregation, are the ones who will make this possible. Your generosity is the only way we will get to that goal.

As we interviewed applicants for our settled Director of Lifespan Religious Education, one of the main questions we asked was, “Are you prepared to launch programs that are not just for the people already within the congregation, but programs that will inspire and connect with folks beyond our walls, people who are waiting to find us?”

Our Adult Religious Education Team is brimming with ideas. Our families are ready to take Children’s RE to the next level. Our Worship Arts Team and our Music Ministry is creating a Sunday morning service that engages our hearts and minds. Our people are showing up to create justice and heal the earth. Among us, there is a longing for a better understanding of our multi-religious world. There is a longing to go deeper in our own spiritual and ethical practices. There is a longing to invite new people into our programs so that they, too, may discover the joy and richness of this liberal religious tradition.

This means that we have to be intentional about how we communicate both within the congregation and out to the wider community. We have created a line-item in the budget for marketing and communication, so that our staff and volunteers have some resources to get creative with how we get the word out (Does this sound like fun? Talk with Maureen Claffey, our Director of Congregational Life!). This means we have to support our program budgets with the staff and resources they need to be successful. And we are making progress toward our goal of paying our fair share of support to the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Believe it or not, working with the Budget Planning Task Force and the Board of Trustees as we build our budget each year is an inspiring process. It is an opportunity for to clarify the ways that we hope to live into the vision we have set out for ourselves, to wrestle with the priorities we have established, and ultimately, to be inspired by the generosity of our community.

I hope you will see the care that went into creating this budget, and that it will inspire you to do your part to make this work possible.

Together, we can bring more love and healing into this hurting world.

With Gratitude,

Rev. Julia

PS: I am looking forward to seeing you in August, when I return from my sabbatical, and hearing about the wonderful, joyful summer that you have had at the Unitarian Society!