

## Our Budget

Not many of us read budget spreadsheets for relaxation (except, perhaps, as a cure for insomnia), yet this information is important. We all share in the costs and the many benefits of UUFM as our church home. In the spirit of our fifth UU principle, “use of the democratic process,” mutual trust calls us to speak openly with one another about our needs and desires, and about their operational and aspirational costs, as we assume shared responsibility and shared decision-making in charting our path forward. In service to this principle, over the next few weeks I will offer a brief summary of our current UUFM financial situation.

When reviewing our budget, I enjoy a more robust appreciation of the wide-ranging impact of our ministries within our immediate and larger community. For example, we can never measure the full impact our values and teachings have in the lives of our children as they navigate life’s challenges and gifts – but their need to understand and apply our shared values in their own lives is real. This is a tangible expression of our third and fourth principles— “encouraging spiritual growth” and “a free and responsible search for meaning.” Much of the compassionate pastoral care we provide to members and families each week is, by necessity, respectful of personal privacy and the expectation of confidentiality. Although below the radar screen of public view, this care is among the most essential expressions of our ministry to each other at critical times. We hold up these forms of ongoing compassionate care as one of the essential community services we are most proud to be able to provide – whether we personally have experienced crisis or need. It is an expression of our first principle, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person,” and the seventh, “respect for the interdependent web of which are a part.” Much of what we do in the community—supporting PrideFest and LGBTQ rights, engaging in community dialogues about race and diversity, supporting the homeless and others in need, providing opportunity through the Kiva project and our Second Collections—shows up as only small item in our operating budget. But we magnify that little bit and use it to organize and leverage our individual little contributions to combine to make a real impact in our world. This is an expression of our second and sixth principles— “justice, equity and compassion” and “peace, liberty, and justice for all.” These examples illustrate just a few of the links between costs and our ministries that are both invisible and essential. It is a privilege that I and all of us in our community can support these essential services, so that none of us, at any age, is left to struggle or experience hurt and loss alone.

We came to this place gradually, through the efforts of so many who came before us. When we began in 1953, UUFM had 24 members and a budget of \$136. We met in people’s homes, and then in commercial space that was donated to us temporarily. In 1961, we purchased our first home, on Pohl Road. Our membership grew to 30 people, and our operating budget to \$3500 (we also had a \$60,000 mortgage that we were paying out). In 1985, as membership grew to 45, we expanded our home on Pohl Road with a large meeting space, and a budget of \$53,000. In 2005, we purchased our present home on Charles Avenue, expanding our membership to 76 and our budget to \$81,000. In 2015 we added a lift and expanded office and entry space. Our membership was 121 people and our budget was \$142,000. And in 2018 we called our first full-time settled minister.

My goal in sharing this information and my reflections over the next few weeks is to de-mystify our UUFM budget puzzle. We enjoy the fruit of the contributions our founders made for us. Now it is our turn to build on that foundation for ourselves, and our children, “to the seventh generation.”