

## ALUUC President's Year-End Report 2008-2009

I am very happy to report that this Congregation has once again proved that we can accomplish great things! Despite starting out this fiscal year with a serious budget shortfall, we have had a very positive year. The Board, with help from Bonnie Ettinger and John Malan, made a special appeal in the fall, and additional pledges of approximately \$10,000 were received. Even with these extra funds, we lacked money for the janitorial service, so the Board asked the congregation for donations to keep providing this service for as long as possible. Contributions of approximately \$4000 enabled us to pay for basic cleaning all year without having to ask members to form volunteer cleaning crews, and many congregants were very thankful that they were spared from this duty.

The Board was also charged with ramping up our fundraising goal to a record level of \$21,000 in order to balance the budget. This seemed like an impossible dream, but we came very close to our goal with nearly \$19,000 in net proceeds from our Trash and Treasure Sale, our World Cruise Fantasy Auction and other small fundraisers. We owe many thanks to everyone who helped make these tremendous efforts successful. Along with special donations of \$2500 to Facilities, \$1000 to Aesthetics, used office equipment worth approximately \$1300, in-house repair work, and frugal committee spending, we have managed to make ends meet.

Thanks to Frank Kopecky and our wonderful canvass team, we also had our most successful stewardship drive ever, with pledges of approximately \$149,000 for next fiscal year, an increase of approximately 2%. Many congregations have seen sharp decreases in total pledge contributions, so we were pleased with these results. However, the poor economy is having a negative impact on our interest income and our total contributions, and we also face uncertainties about energy costs, so that will continue to challenge us as we try to meet our budget needs for this coming year. Nevertheless, we are optimistic about this Congregation's commitment level.

Even though the Board has been forced to focus so much energy on finances, we have also kept an eye on our mission:

- The Board approved a total of 14 new Adult RE programs, 7 of which have been implemented.
- The RE Committee provided us with great teachers for our children, put on a holiday pageant and concentrated on the Youth Group. They also helped coordinate efforts to install our fantastic playground, which would not have been possible without many hours of volunteer labor. The Board is presently convening a hiring committee to interview applicants for the CRE position for next year.
- Our groups, such as the Humanist Interest Group, Theologies in Dialogue, Flute Circle, Kid's Club, Chalice Circles, Spanish Club and numerous others listed in the directory, had strong participation this year. The CUUPs group informed the Board that it had decided to dissolve itself as a separate organization, and it may be re-organized as an interest group in the future. A Young Adult Group was approved by the Board, and it is in the process of forming.
- The Program Committee did a great job during Martin's Sabbatical, engaging many wonderful speakers and doing a masterful job of conserving their budget. We are pleased that attendance did not suffer during this time.
- The Finance Committee was kept very busy helping guide us through our financial challenges this year. They worked with our Treasurer, Victoria Vincent, who spent many extra hours this year making corrections and improvements in our accounting procedures.
- The Electronics & Communications Committee kept us well-informed by maintaining our website, sending congregational emails and by publishing our directory and monthly newsletter. This year, the Board approved emailing our newsletter to most of our mailing list, thereby saving over \$1000 in mailing and printing costs annually.
- The Fellowship Committee has sponsored numerous potlucks with interesting themes, a campout with a pancake breakfast, a Halloween party, mystery dinners, game night, and several other activities that encourage us to build the bonds of friendship. They are encouraging congregants to host the Sunday Coffee Hour.

- The Facilities Committee has worked hard to keep our building and grounds in good shape. Besides doing exterior tasks such as re-staining the courtyard area and maintaining the landscaping, it has labored to meet the challenges of a building that is hitting the 15-year mark and is requiring increased attention to the furnace, AC, carpet, roof leaks and septic system. The Flower Subcommittee continues to provide us with fresh flowers on the altar each Sunday, and the Aesthetics Subcommittee has focused most of its energy on making new banners for the Sanctuary. Six new holiday banners and a large Diversity banner made their debut this year, and several others are in the works.
- The Green Committee has shown great leadership in making our building more energy efficient by installing special window film to many of the windows, replacing our old light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, replacing the required exit lights with greener models, and so forth. They also handle our recycling for us.
- The Social Action Committee was committed to feeding those who do not have homes. It also coordinated our Change-for-Change and "Mitten Tree" donations, and it made our presence felt at various social action functions in our community.
- The Membership & Publicity Committee has started to implement a number of ideas that help us greet our visitors, provide follow-up contact, and integrate new people into activities. The publicity for various events has been wonderful.
- The Pastoral Care Committee continues to help people who are in need of support. The Board has also asked them to check in with people we haven't seen in some time to make sure that they are OK. The Board passed a policy encouraging members to contribute Gift Cards from grocery stores to enable this committee and the minister's Benevolence Fund to easily help members who are in need.
- Our Musical Director, Bonnie Ettinger, and the Choir have lifted our spirits through music. We are pleased to hear many new anthems, and the pre-service singing time is being used to teach us unfamiliar hymns. We have also enjoyed hearing vocal solos, duets, small ensembles, and a children's choir. Instrumental music has included Native American flute, drums, guitar and violin. The fabulous new piano has been a joy to all of us.

I would like to express everyone's deep appreciation to all of our committee chairs and their members for everything they have done to serve us this year.

At its annual retreat this summer, the new Board will evaluate the progress that was made on the goals that we set last year, and it will set new goals for next year. These are some of the priorities that I would like to see addressed: Strengthening our Social Action programs, adopting a policy on public statements, creating an emergency response plan, and finding a way to make the Treasurer position less burdensome by expanding our use of professional accounting services.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their hard work and support this year. Mark Hanson and Ceceilia Hassis have served out their terms, and they have been a joy to work with. I would like to especially thank Carol Floyd, our Secretary, for her excellent contribution to the Board. She has kept very faithful records of our proceedings, and she is very good at spotting important details. I am very grateful for all the help she has given to me.

I sincerely hope that everyone has found, in this special place, the sources of inspiration and support that we all need at times. I am proud of our congregation, and it has been an honor to serve you.

---Gwen Childs