

The Board and the Transition Search Task Force of Jill Allen, Suzy Comerford, Dan House and Debby Bergh are excited to announce the hiring of Rev. Susan Milnor as our two-year Transition Minister. Susan is an Accredited Interim Minister who has served four congregations as Interim Minister, most recently the First Religious Society in Newburyport MA. She has also served two congregations as a minister and one as a long-term co-minister. She has a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, a BA and MA in English literature from the University of Tennessee and three semesters of law school from the University of Virginia before she decided law was not her calling. We interviewed a number of good candidates for the position and all feel Susan is an excellent fit for us. Susan has strong anti-oppression commitments, a collaborative leadership style, is an open and direct communicator and a strong worship leader. She is excited to join us for two years as our Transition Minister to partner with us as we do the deep discernment about the future of our community and continue support for our social justice work, and our lay ministry.

Next year is the budget crunch year. The budget to pay for all of that exciting discernment and to experience what full staffing for the number of members we have has a large deficit. Over \$130K worth of deficit. Much of this deficit was predicted when we passed LAST year's budget (which had a \$52K deficit) and moved forward with the larger staffing plan re-organization.

Mara's departure will change some details and timing of this plan, but not the overall vision of moving toward sustainable staffing. The Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees has examined the budget in detail, and believes that this path is necessary. The budget proposed for next year includes a substantial increase in salary/payroll compared to our current year. This is primarily due to the consolidation of several part-time positions into approximately 3 FTEs that will begin to receive benefits, and beginning to pay Andre a professional salary, rather than a small student stipend. As both Andre and Andrea will have contracts that conclude in June of 2019, we will have the option of decreasing our budget the following year if we decide as a community not to continue at our current staffing level.

The proposed budget requires a loan of some type to cover the deficit. The details of from whom we borrow (ourselves through the First UU Trust Fund or a bank) will be determined by the recommendation of the Finance committee

depending on interest rates, financial markets etc. at the time that we actually need the money.

There will be opportunities on Sunday, May 20th after the 10 AM service, Monday, May 21st at 5:30 and Thursday, May 31st at 5:30 to discuss the proposed budget in detail, but your Board wanted to announce the "big picture" of the plan as early as possible.

One of the ways to reduce the size of the deficit in the proposed budget is to raise more money! The Stewardship campaign was very successful, and we are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our community and the hard work of all of the committee members. However, we are running a "fund the vision" campaign to help close next year's budget gap. Similar to money donated in our service auction, funds donated to this cause will not be included in the annual pledge total. Donations can be made by check with "fund the vision" on the memo line, cash in an envelope labeled "fund the vision," or by using the 'donate' button on our website. And for anyone who hasn't made their pledge yet, the need is clear.

We have the opportunity next year to feel what it's like to be fully staffed for a community of our size, our vibrancy and our commitment to social justice. We have a year to have deep conversations with each other about our vision for the future of our community before we enter the year-long search process for a new minister to join us on the journey. Reverend Susan is excited to join us on this exciting path. There are three weeks before the vote at the Annual Meeting on June third. Please join us to talk about the overall budget priorities, goals and opportunities for the coming year and beyond.

Your Board of Trustees
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