

Westside UU Congregation Annual Meeting - 2019 Report from the President

In these hard times, let us look first to the response of love.

In the midst of challenge, may our chalice flame bear witness to the inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

In the midst of uncertainty, may our chalice be a beacon of encouragement, that our values may guide our choices.

Let us look first to the response of love.

By Maureen Killoran, UU Interim Minister (Retired)

Here are my notes I wrote for myself for the Annual Meeting this year. If you were not able to make it, you were missed! These words are not scripted for a letter to the congregation, but were written to be spoken, so please keep that in context. Additionally, I left out all of the motions and budget materials, as that was sent out in advance of the meeting. The minutes should reflect the actual meeting (these are not the minutes!), but everything was passed or approved or whatever the right parliamentary language is!

When I was in my 20's, after having completed the California AIDS Ride, a bicycle ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles, a friend of mine that had joined me on the ride asked me to train and run a marathon with her. At least that is how I remembered it. I said, sure! And for the next many months we trained. And trained. The night before the race, eating dinner with her parents and our significant others, it came to light that she thought that I had asked her instead of the other way around. So there we were, on the eve of a 26.2 mile race, each thinking we were here for the other.

The race started out well, but there is that hill, that stomach ache, that moment when the plantar fasciitis that you thought the orthotics in your shoes would keep at bay kicks in at mile 22 such that the last 4.2 miles are full of searing pain. I crossed the finish line while announcing to the friends there greeting me, "Worst idea ever!" And I'm not even sure whose idea it was.

I started out this year with a swimming analogy, but I am ending it with a marathon analogy. Because it has been a marathon. Replace the hills and the stomach aches and the plantar fasciitis with whatever association you would like. And I'm not even sure whose idea this was! But I did it with a friend, and that relationship will last a lifetime.

And I said that running a marathon was the worst idea ever. And I've never done it again. But it builds muscle memory that your body never forgets, and I can probably bust out an 8 mile run untrained (it would hurt, but I could do it).

And the street cred. Never underestimate the street cred. The oh yeah, I've run a marathon street cred. So while for now, I might be a little exhausted, I have new faith muscles, a stronger friendship with so many of you that never would have happened, and I am honored to join that motley crew of Westside past presidents. True street cred.

OK, so here I am at the start of my marathon, all joy and excitement with my fellow board members. This was part of a flyer I put together for the first Members Connect dinner. This is what it said:

"Every year brings new opportunities and new challenges, and once a year the WSUU board meets at a retreat to determine how best to navigate the myriad of decisions that must be made throughout the course of a church year. What are our priorities? At the end of our term, we will be welcoming a new minister,



Westside
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation

Priorities of the Board

1. Community Engagement
2. Preparing for a New Minister
3. Build a Lift



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with whom the next board will be working on developing a long-term vision. So for this year, in our last year of transition, the 2018-2019 WSUU Board had to discern, where are our efforts best devoted? The answer we determined was to focus our attention on the congregation, supporting an environment of engagement and enthusiasm to carry us through our last year of transition, doing everything we can to support the Ministerial Search Team, and to finally solve for a very large accessibility gap from the social hall to the sanctuary.

In love and community, The WSUU Board of 2018-2019”

So first priority, Community Engagement. I think we did OK here. ☺ Ingathering, covenant groups, soup lunches, Cottage meetings, members connect dinners... the attendance has been amazing.

For our cottage meetings, BCT workshop and Beloved Conversations...our attendance as a percent of overall membership is above and beyond other churches.

What did Rev Christopher say?

We show up. Not only do we show up, we break records.

And it's been a hard year. Our fourth year of interim ministry in the midst of a ministerial search, and the board announced the termination of our music director. During that time, I witnessed a lot of anger, sadness, frustration...with the board, with me, personally, and with each other. But still we showed up. I am in awe of all of you. This event highlighted some cracks in our foundation, and while some have decided to find a different house, mostly I see people ready to get to work on repairs.

Sunday morning attendance has been rising steadily, with break-through attendance for Candidating week.

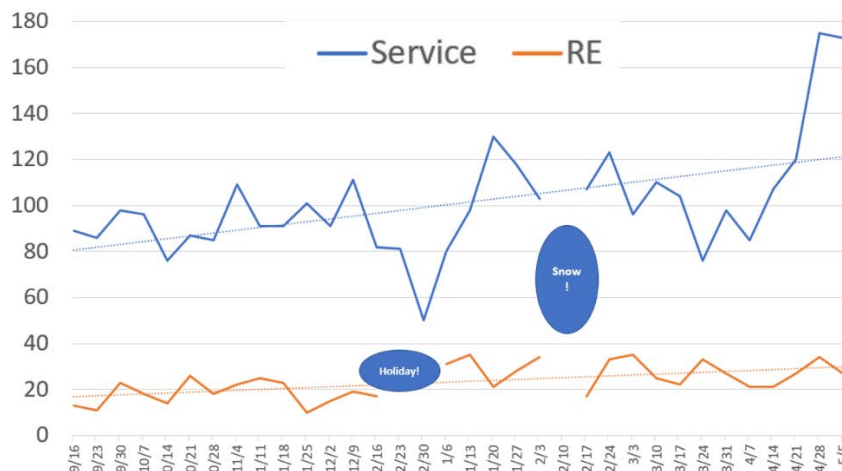
1. Community Engagement

- Ingathering
- 4 Covenant Groups, Humanist Group
- Soup Lunches, Pie Sales, and Book Sales
- Cottage Meetings
- BCT Workshop
- Members Connect Dinners
- Beloved Conversations
- Common Quest Offerings
- The Auction!
- Committee Work
- Social Justice Events
- Restorative Circles
- Crystal's Ordination
- Auction Labors of Love



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WSUU Sunday Attendance



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Second priority, prepare for a New Minister. We did it, y'all! And while we couldn't have done it without the collective efforts of two MSTs, I also want to acknowledge that it couldn't have happened without you.

2. Preparing for a New Minister



- MST 2018-2019
- BCT Workshop
- BCT Sermon
- Negotiating Team
- Surveys
- Candidating Week
- The largest Members Connect dinner in history
- It was a Team Effort!

You filled out surveys, you showed up to workshops, you helped with contracts, partners helped support the worker bees. MST 19 couldn't have selected the best fit for WSUU without us letting them know what we needed. Your time and, again, showing up, makes a difference.

Now that we have called a minister, we need to bring him here!

We welcomed Rev Christopher Wulff to WSUU on May 5, 2019

Rev Christopher, a Canadian citizen, will need an R-1 religious worker visa before he can join the WSUU community as our called minister.

Before we can apply for the visa, we need to have our own 501c3 tax status. Currently, we are using the UUA 501c3 status, but we need our own for the visa application.

It could take 2-6 months for the 501c3 application, and another 6-9 months for the visa application.

Important Notes!

- These timelines are not in our control. They are affected by conditions in the government offices that manage them, such as number of applicants, availability of case managers, etc.
- We are exploring all possibilities for expediting the process.
- January is the earliest we can expect to possibly have these things in place for Rev. Christopher to join us.
- Our MST 19 is working with a lawyer to determine if, or to what extent, we might be able to engage with Rev. Christopher prior to the R-1 visa being approved.

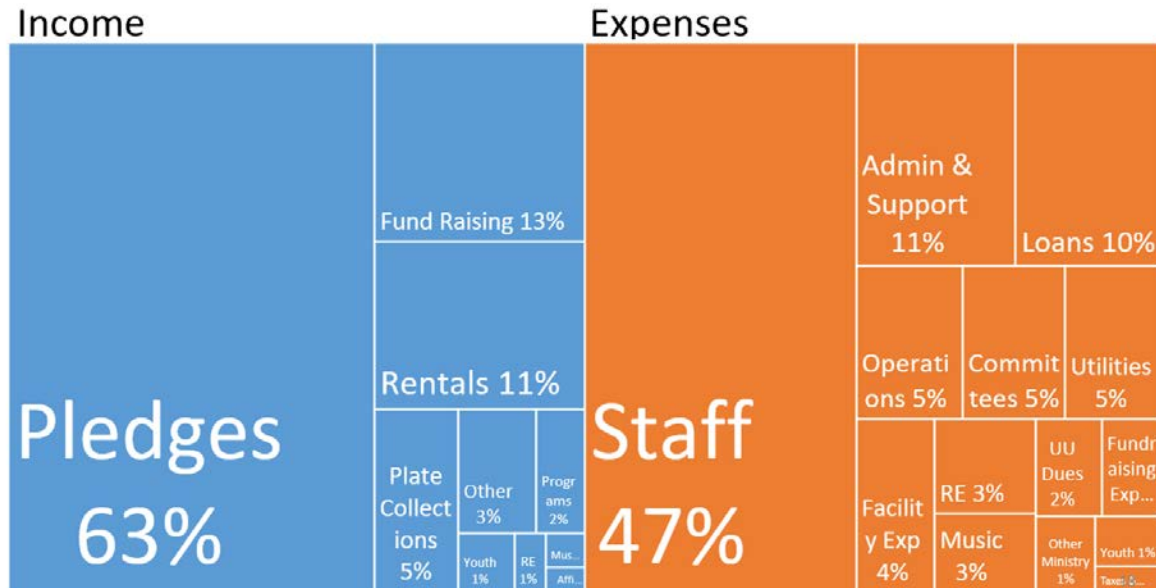
Transition Task Force!

- The MST has completed its job, so the idea of a Transition Task Force is to identify a group of people who will keep their focus on the processes necessary to bring Rev. Christopher to us, and to help in planning our gap time.
- The charter for this task force is still being formed, and will be solidified with wisdom from both the current and new boards, drawing from other models, and UUA input.
- The board is still accepting nominations of others, or self-nominations for this task force. It will likely be a full year commitment.
- In addition to the logistics of bringing Rev. Christopher to us, the board **and** the Transition Task Force will be serving the community with leadership to help us to thrive through this gap period.
- We have decisions to make regarding **contract ministry, worship, pastoral care, and general administration** of our community.
- It is our intention to be transparent through this process; to create a clear pathway for congregational input; to have clear communications out to the congregation; and to be inclusive so that we don't marginalize anyone's voice or experience through this transition.

Our third priority was to build a lift! Patti McCall gave a wonderful update on the lift! We are very close to having all of the money raised, but still need \$5,000 to cover the cost of an automatic door.

Financial Report

Here is a bird's eye view of our current budget divided by Income and Expenses. So the question is, does this look good?

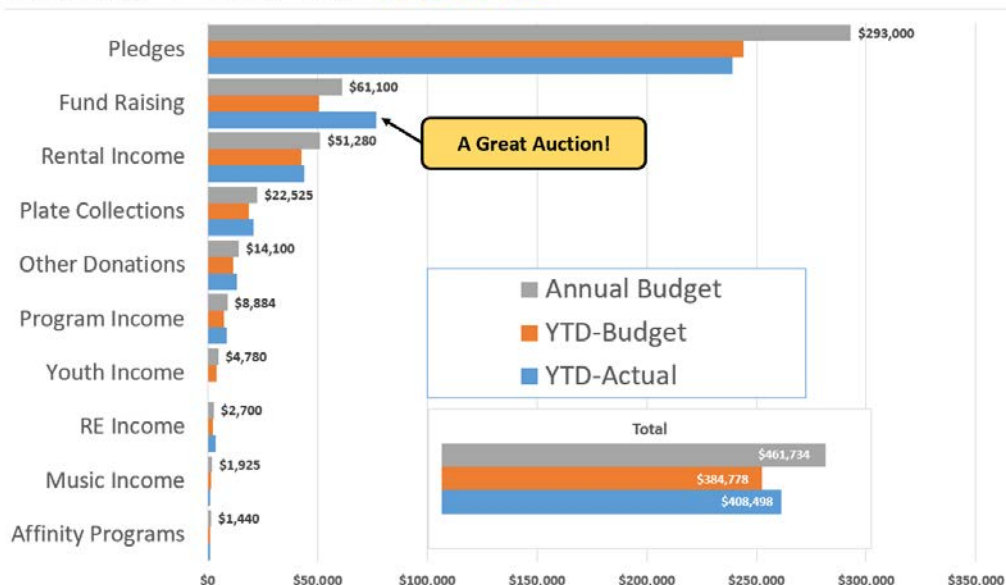


To benchmark this,

- The recommended % of financial support from pledges is 80%. WSUU is at 63%
 - We are very reliant on our auction and on our rentals.
- Staff should fall between 40-55% of expenses. WSUU is at 58% (Staff+Admin)
- Debt service payments should be no more than 15%. WSUU is at 10%
- Total staff and debt service should be 40-70%, WSUU is at 68%.

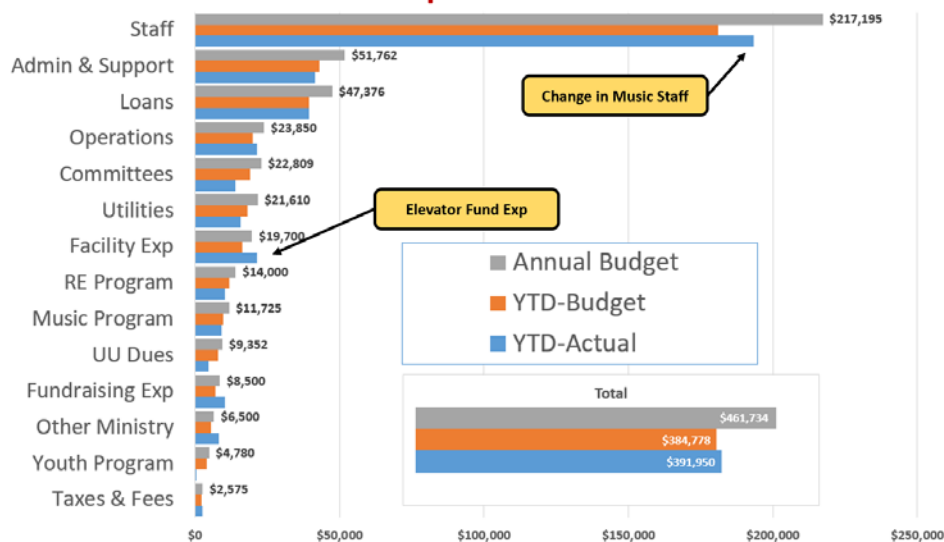
Mostly income is on track, with Pledges a little behind, but great auction results!

WSUU FY18-19 Income



With regards to Expenses, YTD for Staff is higher than budget for this point in the year because of the severance package to Bert. This will be less of a gap as the year progresses. There is a gap due to the Elevator Fund expense, but that is a good thing! And there is special fund-raising happening to cover that.

WSUU FY18-19 Expenses



So now on to the 2019-2020 Budget. Once, when I was a kid, an older child from down the street knocked on our door and offered to mow the lawn for my dad for \$20. My dad politely declined. After the kid left, I asked my dad why he didn't take it? Wasn't it worth it? See, for me, I had to pick up all the pinecones from the lawn before my dad mowed it, and I would have delighted in not having to do this! My dad responded that absolutely it was worth it! For sure! But if you don't have \$20 you don't have \$20.

A few weeks ago, I sent a letter out to the congregation noting we are \$75,000 short of where we need to be to adequately welcome our new minister and to support our wonderful staff and programs that shape Westside. Fortunately, many of you revised your pledges or sent in forms that were not in hand to-date. We were able to close a significant portion of that gap! The remainder that we could not close was able to be covered by the Wake Now our Vision Legacy Giving Campaign and we have allocated a smaller amount to cover costs in our ministerial gap period than we otherwise would have liked and several programs we would have liked to have covered from the General Fund cannot be covered that way.

Important Notes!

- We acknowledge that Music and RE are operating on a thin budget
- We acknowledge that the programs that we highly value are not supported by the General Fund (Beloved Conversations, Racial Equity Capacity Training, Keys to Conflict Management) [Note that BC and Capacity training will be covered through personal donations and participant registration fees per amended budget, and to show our value of these trainings, we will add them to the budget. This will not change the bottom line of the budget since money is coming in and then back out.]
- We acknowledge that the building needs more love and attention (and is at risk for a large expense, like a new furnace)
- We acknowledge that we are in the fourth year of interim ministry (and that we are impressed with all of you!)
- While we got hit while we were down (pre-school vacancy!), we have nothing but optimism for the future of Westside!

- The future will be challenging, but also full of joy and promise
- Thank you for your support of this vibrant congregation with your financial contributions!

As we welcome this incoming board, my wish is that this is a team sport, where we are all collectively on the team. We are not going to simply cheer them on from the sidelines, or worse tell them their form is wrong when they are on mile 15. We have voted them in not because of their capacity to work 20 hour days, or respond to email at any hour of the day and night.

We are voting them in because of their wisdom, their commitment to the church, their willingness and ability to provide leadership in a challenging budget time and a year of transition.

They should not be in charge of ingathering, they do not have to do bylaws and policy work all on their own, or serve in the capacity of a board AND a personnel committee.

If there is anything I want to walk away from at the end of this second year, is knowing that we all stepped forward to give them the scaffolding and support to get things done, and for them to still love us all as we sit here together this time next year.

Many years ago when I was part of RE, I made it a practice to just say yes when Jade asked for something. She wouldn't ask if she didn't need it. So let's practice. Will you support this board with love, respect, empathy, and service? (Followed by a resounding Yes!)

We ended the meeting with deep appreciation (and presents) to the MST 19 and the outgoing board, and then we sang them through the children's arch ("we hold you in our love as you go..."). Lisa and the great uke team provided joyful musical accompaniment, and I felt, yes, here we are...uniquely Westside and willing to have a little fun! I so enjoy all of you, and I am looking forward to supporting WSUU this coming year, albeit in a different capacity. Much love to you all!

Shelley