

Budgeting 101 – Thinking about our 2023-2024 budget

All kinds of generosity are needed to sustain our community and its mission to care, learn, and engage – seeking truth and promoting justice, compassion, and planetary well-being.

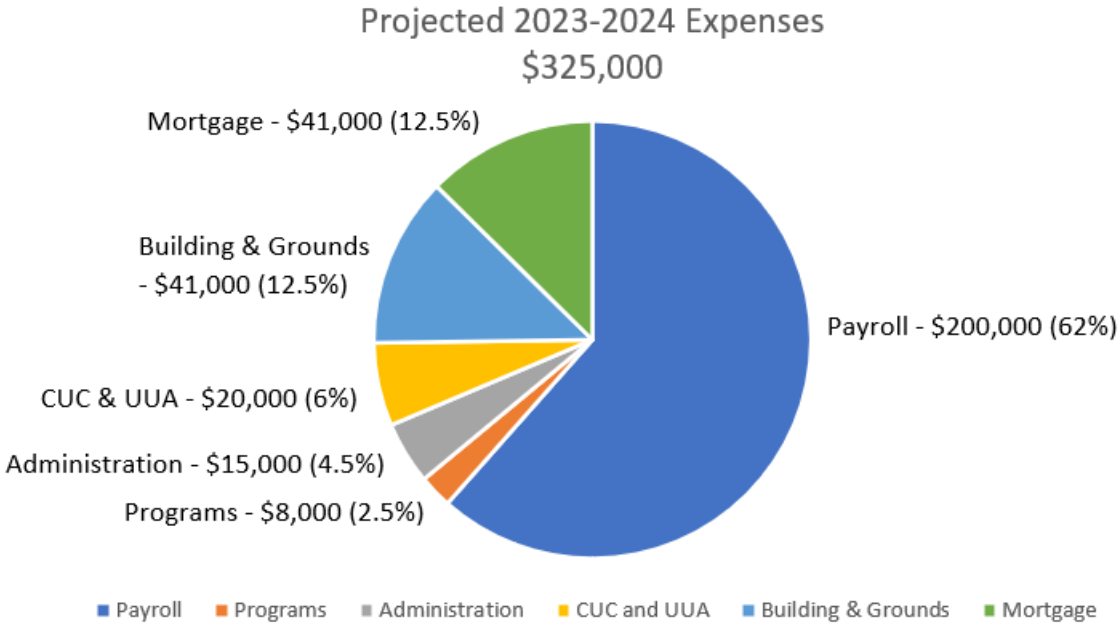
Our budget challenge is to identify resources to **support our community and its mission and values sustainably, efficiently, and effectively** ([Mission into Action](#)).

Expenses

Let’s begin with dollars needed to support core operations. These projections are not the actual AGM budget, but likely close, to help understand our options.

Projected 2023-2024 Expenses \$325,000:

- Mortgage: \$41,000 (12.5%)
- Building and grounds: \$41,000 (12.5%)
- CUC and UUA: \$20,000 (6%)
- Administration: \$15,000 (4.5%)
- Programs: \$8,000 (2.5%)
- Payroll: \$200,000 (62%)

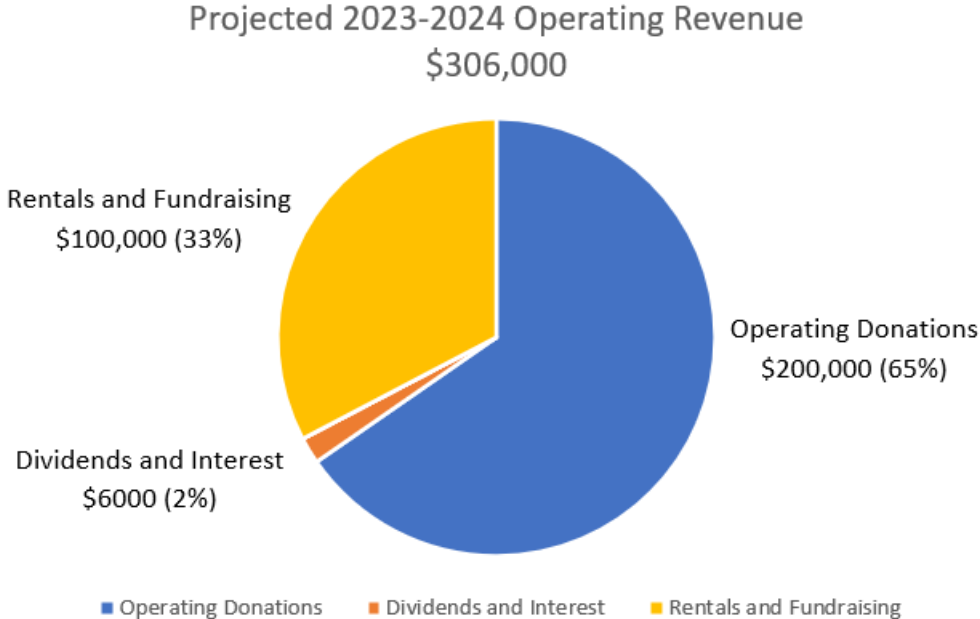


Revenues

How can we pay for these costs? First choice is to generate current income, depicted below.

Projected 2023-2024 Operating Revenue, \$306,000:

- Rentals and fundraising: \$100,000 (33%)
- dividends and interest: \$6,000 (2%)
- Operating donations: \$200,000 (65%)



Dividends and interest from endowment and savings provide only a sliver of revenue. We project one third of income to come from rentals and two-thirds from general donations (excluding restricted donations for refugees, capital, endowment, Harvest, or Minister’s discretionary fund).

Choices

Projected income falls \$19,000 short of costs, a deficit.

Volunteer choices

Not counted above is the huge value of dedicated volunteers working in all corners of our operations, for which otherwise we might have to pay tens of thousands of dollars more. The choices of these wonderful volunteers directly affect our budgeting needs.

Beyond volunteer choices, we need to make collective and individual choices about money.

A collective choice

Should we risk a projected deficit or trim expenses to balance the budget? For me, the answer is clear. We have little flexibility outside of payroll if we are to maintain a viable building and meet our obligations. So, cutting expenses means cutting staff, as we have done in recent years. This fall and winter, though, we built back staff to meet critical needs identified by the congregation. Let's keep the momentum going to resource the staff who support our dynamic caring community and mission.

A repeating deficit is unsustainable in the longer run. We'll run out of savings to cover the bills. But cutting staff invites an even more unsustainable downward spiral of a church that meets fewer needs, over-extends its volunteers, and offers less to attract new members and giving.

We have begun an upturn in staffing. Increasing both membership and donations to support them is our most sustainable strategy.

Individual choices

Two-thirds of our projected revenue comes from pledges and donations of individual members and friends. Whether we exceed or fall short of that projection very much depends on the choices you and others make. We are indeed fortunate that individual choices of countless members and friends over the years have allowed us to thrive since 1891. But we can never take such generosity for granted. It must be renewed each year by each of us.

Please consider how much you can contribute to make our renewal sustainable.

Thoughts on a budget for spiraling up

- Our church is a passionate, inclusive caring community with proven resilience in the face of adversity and a mission the world needs. As of this winter, to complement our many volunteers, we have employees serving caretaking, A/V, Zoom, web, rentals, RE, music, and ministerial support for pastoral care, membership, Sunday services and programming.
- We have kids back in the church, covenant groups and pastoral programs meeting regularly (in addition to events arranged by program volunteers), membership workshops underway, more continuity in sermons, music and choir restored, and up to 90 persons attending a service in person and by zoom. We have foundations to build on.
- Our employees benefit the church community and its mission and deserve our support for that reason.
- They also have the potential to bring in revenue – not only rentals, but also programs that draw folks in and keep them participating – and giving. The programs that serve our needs can serve a wider public, some of whom might choose to join us. We need the publicity, invitations, and welcoming to make that happen, in addition to supporting our employees.

- We also need to continue to cultivate in old and new participants the generosity that sustains us. Generosity is not just dollars, but includes them, when we are able.
- How much? [The Fair-Share Contribution Guide](#) helps weigh together personal resources and commitment. Some churches recommend a [“UU tithe”](#) — 5% to the church, and 5% to other charitable organizations.
- It may also help to think of more concrete targets. For example, if you participate in our church but don’t yet pledge or donate, please consider a starting commitment of \$10 a month to cover the dues we pay on your behalf to the CUC and UUA. If you can add more, that will begin to share the costs of the building and programs that you enjoy and the employees who support them.
- If you have been giving the same amount over several years, consider whether your resources permit an increase of, say, 10% or more to reflect the rising costs we face.
- If you have the resources and generosity to donate to United Way or other agencies serving the community, consider increasing your donations through our Share the Plate program. You will thereby support organizations that carry out our values. But you will also foster direct relations between these groups and our church, while supporting the church as well.
- Some folks have precarious income. No pledge or donation is too small. Giving what you can when you can, with a generous spirit and a volunteering hand is abundant generosity that lifts us up.

These thoughts are but starting points for your own reflection. One piece of advice from the Bloomington, Indiana UUs is to “make your pledge in an amount you feel good about in your current circumstances.... Give until it feels good.”