

# Music Proposal 2018

**Submitted by Gretchen Ohmann**

## **MY PERSPECTIVE**

Over the nearly 35 years I've been a member of BUUF, I've served in several capacities: board member, bookkeeper, volunteer accompanist, volunteer choir director, paid music director, and worship arts committee member. So I have some long-range view, even though I hold no formal position at this point in time, volunteer or otherwise.

BUUF has been my home for a long time, and I love it when we "do" Sunday services well. With all the talents and experience in our group right now we have a lot of opportunity to lift spirits and have fun through our music.

## **THE QUESTION**

What would make music a really great part of a Sunday morning at BUUF?

## **THE TASK**

Board members have asked me to put together a proposal for a music budget for 2018-19.

## **THE CURRENT VIEW**

According to Harvey,

"BUUF Music budget for FY17/18 is \$1300. Piano tuning is \$135.  $\$1300 - \$135 = \$1165$  available for accompany. Candace is \$50 each Sunday.  $\$1165/\$50$  per piano accomp. = 23 times that Candace is budgeted for FY (23/12 months = approx. 2 times / month). Without additions to the Music budget we can afford Candace 2 times/month out of the BUUF funds."

I know Jim McConnell has been paying Candace out of his own pocket for additional Sundays so we can have her wonderful music almost every week.

Jim has also been volunteering his own time to doing many of the things a Music Director would do - planning and selecting hymns and asking volunteer musicians to contribute to Sunday mornings.

Everyone may not be seeing this part of things because we all try to make things run smoothly the very best we can, but we're often operating in our own individual silos, failing to achieve sufficient communication, then making quick decisions and trying to put things together at 10:25 Sunday morning, or making major changes at the last minute. That's more stressful than it needs to be, on both our staff and on our volunteers. I know I've stepped on more than one person's toes in the last few months. I have to admit that my initial idea of a wholly collaborative, sort of co-op music group has not produced anything long-term or sustainable.

## **A POSSIBLE PATH**

So we need consistent leadership. Candace and I have talked about this. I very much respect her musicianship, and her willingness to work with a loosely (or not-) coordinated bunch of volunteers. I asked if she'd be willing

to take on the coordination of the whole thing... but she just doesn't have the time. I've done a little, then I got distracted. Parents roped me into working on a "kids choir" and I've veered off in that (fun! shiny!) direction... and it's using most of my available energy.

I've talked to a couple of other people who have the talent for coordination, but who also don't have the time or energy to volunteer for a job this big. So it makes some sense to consider hiring a Music Director or Coordinator. I also think we should post the job opening so anyone who wants to can consider the position!

I think that person would:

- work as a team with Jim and Candace (and volunteers) to plan music for Sunday services, especially with thought to how things all fit together
- lead singing at least 2 out of 4 Sundays a month
- be an accompanist and special-music performer occasionally
- lead the main choir as well as the kids choir OR coordinate volunteers to do those things
- maintain music resources (library, accompanist hymnals, recorded music, PowerPoint lyrics)
- find and coordinate volunteers for special music
- watch for enrichment opportunities (workshops, conferences, other events) and encourage musicians to take part
- work on alternative ways for us all to enjoy congregational singing
- connect with UU musicians in the wider world
- tune in to what people in the congregation want and what talents they might like to offer
- ... what else?

## **A DREAM**

What would happen if we could:

- Find and pay a 1/8 time (5 hours/week) Music Director or Music Coordinator?  $\$70/\text{wk} \times 36 \text{ weeks} = \$2520$
- Pay Candace from the budget for at least 3 times/month?  $\$50/\text{wk} \times 36 \text{ weeks} = \$1800$
- Pay her an additional \$20 each of those weeks to accompany and help with choir rehearsals?  $\$20/\text{wk} \times 36 \text{ weeks} = \$720$
- Get the piano tuned more than once a year? \$270
- Pay UU Musicians Network dues for music staff?  $2 \times \$60 = \$120$
- Bring in and pay outside musicians occasionally - for performance AND education? ~\$500
- Pay for staff and volunteer training and enrichment activities? ~\$500/year?
- Buy sheet music when needed ~\$100/year
- Buy some more teal hymnals ~\$200
- What else?

We might also want to invest in our multi-thousand-dollar piano by getting it repaired next year? Maybe even have a new cover made for it? ~\$900

That looks like around \$7600... and that's only my wish list; the vision can be larger/different than only my perspective! And that's grossly underpaying contract workers who would have no benefits, and expecting them to do a LOT.

## **A WAY FORWARD**

The Board has said they're interested in investing in the BUUF community by taking some money from the endowment fund. The annual interest from that fund is part of our operating budget. This would be good for a one-time boost. I think it might also be better if we planned to sustain that additional level of money, so I've suggested a three-year step-down, step-up program. This kind of thing worked well when we first funded a Religious Education Director, back in the 90s.

If we were to add, say \$5000, to the 2018-19 budget, that would be \$6300 and we could do most of the things on that list.

If we add \$3000 to the 2019-20 budget, a "step-down" on drawing from the endowment fund, the Fellowship would need to "step-up" to the tune of \$2000 that year, just to maintain a similar level of funding.

If we added \$2000 to the 2020-2021 budget, we'd have to step up our game an additional \$1000. In 2021-2022, ideally we would have a Music program fully funded from pledges without having to add from the Endowment fund.

That's a \$10,000 investment over three years. What could we build in that time? What would BUUF look like? Sound like?

## **WHY?**

I think BUUF should always be that place where a 5-year old or a 55-year-old can freely dance around the Sanctuary or a fledgling musician can try out their stuff, or us pretty-good musicians can contribute to the quality of the Sunday morning experience, and be upheld by the acceptance and approval of the members of the Fellowship. We do that well. I also think there's more than enough room to work toward excellence, whether it's individual performances or group participation.

## **WHAT TO DO...**

Please let me know your thoughts and ideas over the next week or so. I'd like to write something up to propose to the Board by the end of April. They'll review the proposal to use funds from the Endowment and decide whether to offer the proposal (among other proposals) for a congregational vote at the Annual meeting the first Sunday in June.

Let me know what you think over email, snag me on Sunday the 29th, or give me a call. I'm listening. And I'll take our collective thoughts to the Board. Sound good?

Peace,

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## Comments and replies to Gretchen's email:

Thanks, Gretchen. Sounds good. –Julie Williams

Hi Gretchen, I think you did an amazing job putting this proposal together. Very well thought-out and well-written. It would be awesome to have one person to run all the music requests through. For example, you know I ran into some challenges the first time the children sang at the children's service, and I don't think I went through the right channels asking Candace to provide accompaniment to Pepper's version of The Lord's Prayer. I really don't want to cause any confusion again, and I felt very bad that I upset Candace, even if it all worked out in the end.

In terms of the children's choir, if we don't have enough interest among the children, I think it would be great if Gene and Persephone were invited to accompany the "adults" occasionally in song. Persephone's mom, Tanya, has already admitted to having a beautiful song voice and I think we might be able to employ her talents somewhere as well. :)

I love your idea about incorporating fledgling musicians into the service. There was so much talent on display at the cabaret! Maybe Jim could ask those with talent to provide a song at the service just like he asks individuals to do a reading or a story for all ages. Just a thought. And Jim, I didn't realize you were paying Candace out of your own pocket occasionally to play piano. Now I admire you even more!

Thanks so much, Gretchen. You are the best! –Joanne Krettek

Thanks, everyone who's commented so far. Remember that the vision part is a work-in-progress, and should the Board and Fellowship decide to fund Music at BUUF, let's all work together on what we as a Fellowship want. Peace, --Gretchen

I'm new to this whole game but the proposal sounds impressive and worth investing in. –Beth LaFleur

Bravo, Gretchen! Music is, indeed, central to a meaningful service. Thank you for calling this to our attention in such a meaningful, stimulating way. I'd say yes to your proposal and add this: maybe we could have a kick-off special fund drive to set your proposal in motion, giving it a jump start. –Marilyn Klawiter

Thank you drafting an excellent proposal. Our Sunday services have become much richer over the past few years and I can see investing in music bringing further benefits. I'm glad you are reminding us that ambitious stretches don't occur overnight and that we need a plan for growing into new programming and budget expectations.

I am excited to share this plan with the congregation. –Lisa Fuller

Gretchen, these are worthwhile proposals that would invest in growing our Fellowship. A vibrant music program is important in attracting and keeping members. I am glad you are doing the kids' choir. You honored the energy for that when it came forward. It's a good way to attract and keep young families. Also, their voices lighten our burdens. –Nan Lundeen

Thank you for taking the time to articulate exactly what is going on and what could be. I agree with your vision 100% and will support it in all possible ways. –Harvey Johnson

Wow!! Gretchen. You are a much better dreamer than I am. I really like your ideas they are much bigger than mine.

I think we should give your program a try. We have enough talented people to put together a really good planning committee. I also think we should step-out-on-faith and budget your proposed 7600.00 per year for two years. Music is the single most important component for setting the tone for a worship service and transporting us spiritually. Music reaches where words can't. We are a thriving congregation. We need good music. –Rev. Jim McConnell