



TREE *of* LIFE
INTERFAITH TEMPLE

2021

Annual Report

Many are the ways we pray to one God!

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Our History

The seed of the Tree of Life Interfaith Temple, our “What If” poem, was received by our founder, Rev. Stephanie Rutt in 2005 upon graduating from the New Seminary for Interfaith Studies in New York. For the first few years, Rev. Rutt offered worship services, other ministerial duties, and sacred studies classes under the name Tree of Life Interfaith Fellowship. Rev. Rutt developed and taught a a year-long study called *Living Our Purpose: The Heart of Spiritual Practice* during this time, and in 2009 this program became the core draft for the 2-year Tree of Life Interfaith Seminary program: *The Path of Crow: As the Crow Flies, Discover Your Direct Path to God*. Along with this curriculum, an optional 3rd year program, the Spiritual Mentoring certificate program, was also developed.

In June of 2010, it was time for the “Tree of Life Interfaith Fellowship” to become the “Tree of Life Interfaith Temple,” a 501c3 legally established church, to rightly serve as the ordination body for the first Tree of Life Interfaith Seminary Class of 2011 and for all the classes that follow. In those early years, many people served and worked hard to create a structure for our Temple: Board of Directors, Bylaws, Constitution, Articles of Incorporation; and The Tree of Life Interfaith Temple was born!

After ordaining that first class of Tree of Life ministers, those who desired to offer worship services began doing so alternating Sundays with Rev. Rutt. Over the years, the Temple also welcomed teachers from communities including Sikh, Sufi and Hindu teachers and, in conjunction with the seminary program, hosted and enjoyed a wide variety of speakers from across faith traditions.

In 2015, Rev. Rutt graduated from Andover-Newton Theological Seminary earning her doctoral degree. After many years of dreaming of having our own space, in 2018 the Temple began renting a space on the Milford, NH, Oval. Here, in addition to Rev. Dr. Stephanie Rutt, many of our ministers offered a variety of sacred studies programs. The work continued to create an organizational structure to hold and support this new growth and the expansion of the What If? vision seed planted all those years ago.

In 2019, the running of the seminary program was turned over to the Temple and to other Tree of Life ministers who will become the guides for new seminarians. In this way, our amazing What If? vision can go out, reach, and serve many more seminarians than Rev. Rutt could ever serve alone. The Temple welcomed 3 new students into our seminary program this year, and the next phase of our evolution began. With a change in her key role for the Temple, Rev. Dr. Rutt’s focus is now to publish our sacred texts, continue updating the core curriculum for the seminary program integrating new theologies, and to take our vision message out and spread it far and wide. With this new path ahead, Rev. Rutt has stepped aside, deciding to appoint a new presiding minister, someone to accept and oversee the duties of the day-to-day running of the Temple and Seminary. In January 2020, the Tree of Life Interfaith Temple community members had their first election, choosing the Rev. Linda Goodman as our first presiding minister! And then the pandemic hit.

Just after the election of Rev. Goodman, the Leadership Council voted to suspend our Sunday worship services and by the beginning of March, the Temple was up and running on Zoom! Our current classes were

adapted to the on-line platform as well as our worship services, and what seemed like a not-so-ideal way to come together became an amazing connection to the many Tree of Life community members who are spread out across the country and an amazing outreach to people across the globe. In June 2020, unfortunately, the pandemic was still spreading and since all of the Temple operations had already moved to on-line formats, the Leadership Council voted to not renew the lease on the Milford Oval. Even with this set-back, we welcomed 2 new students into our seminary program!

Hoping for a return to in-person events in the fall, a committee was formed to find a new location to serve as home to the Temple. During this search period, the first condo rented by Rev. Rutt and the place where the Tree of Life Interfaith Seminary was born, came on the market and the committee worked to secure this property. With the pandemic still strong and large in-person gatherings not possible, Rev. Linda Goodman was installed as our presiding minister via a hybrid Zoom service on November 29th 2020. Negotiations for the condo continued and with the help of the Temple community, on December 31, 2020, Rev. Linda Goodman and Rev. Karen Manchester signed the closing paperwork to purchase the condo. The Tree of Life Interfaith Temple has a new home at 5 Northern Blvd, Suite 8, Amherst, NH 03031.

Our Mission and Vision Statements

Our Mission:

Through worship, community service, and education, embracing all faith traditions, The Tree of Life Interfaith Temple cultivates understanding to combat religious divisiveness and works to breathe Life, Light, and Healing out into our world.

Our Vision:

The Tree of Life Interfaith Temple aspires to be a religious community where each individual and all faith traditions are celebrated as unique expressions of the One Divine Truth.



May 19, 2022

Minister's 2021 Annual Report

Rev. Linda: Hey God, I am having a hard time writing this report. I knew it would be hard to be the first Presiding Minister after the Founder, but I wasn't expecting it to be quite this much of a struggle.

God: Transitions are always difficult. But so much is learned through the struggle, and the Tree of Life Temple remains healthy and grows stronger, not in spite of but because of the struggle to grow through painful transition.

Rev. Linda: So many of the things we planned have been put on hold because of the pandemic and pandemic related delays in our space renovations.

God: The pandemic has brought gifts as well. The weekly updates have kept the community informed and connected. You would not be seeing the faces of beloveds across the country without the necessity of learning Zoom for worship and meetings and classes. Now that you know you can keep your connections regardless of geography, you will never again exclude anyone because of where they live.

Rev. Linda: I fear that Zoom fatigue will starve the Tree.

God: Fear not! The Tree is strong and will not be harmed by a season of drought. The Tree has strong, well-established roots planted by the Founding Minister that can weather the difficult times. The membership has actually grown in the past year. Members old and new have stepped up to continue to nurture and sustain the Tree.

Rev. Linda: Will the pandemic ever end so we can hug each other, share food, dance and sing, have sound baths, cozy up in our new library to meditate and read?

God: Yes!

Rev. Linda Goodman
Presiding Minister
Tree of Life Interfaith Temple

2021 Overview from the Leadership Council

Much of our activity in 2021 centered around making repairs and renovations to the condo space that was purchased in December of 2020. This has been a time-consuming process, and is not yet complete, mainly due to the difficulty in finding licensed tradespeople to complete the work.

Because of these delays, the Founder's Day/Grand Opening that we had planned for September of 2021 was not able to be held. We had hoped to schedule the event to coincide with September 11, the anniversary date of the incorporation of the Tree of Life Temple.

Thanks to a donation, we were able to hire Connor Kwiecien to edit our recorded worship services and post them to our youtube channel. (At this time, Connor is no longer able to work for us and we are seeking his replacement.) We have also been researching equipment that will offer the best audio and video capabilities when we are able to hold hybrid services from the Temple.

We oversaw the selection of two people for new leadership positions. Rev. Jan Grossman took over from Rev. Carol LaChance in June as Seminary Director and Rev. Debora-Ellen Brown was installed in August as our first Associate Minister. We wish to acknowledge Rev. Carol for her outstanding leadership of the seminary and thank her for stepping up to become our first Seminary Director and for working with Rev. Jan as she assumed her duties. Thank you to Rev. Jan and Rev. Debora-Ellen for their willingness to offer their gifts of service in their respective leadership roles. (Rev. Deb-Ellen recently stepped down from her position and new candidates will be sought for Associate Minister.)

Outreach activities included the second annual scholarship award to a Milford High School student. We were able to match a generous \$500 donation to award a scholarship in the amount of \$1000. We also conducted a successful diaper drive and donated disposable diapers to the Milford SHARE food pantry for distribution to their clients. The annual pledge and membership drive was conducted and we thank all those who became members and who made pledges or donations to the Temple.

Plans were made for the 2021 seminary retreat and ordination. The retreat for seminarians and their guides was held at Rolling Ridge and was followed by the hybrid ordination ceremony in September at the Unitarian Church in Milford.

Our newsletter, formerly the Living Bridge, was resurrected under the leadership of Rev. Ilona Kwiecien and Rev. Carrie Ives with the new name of Soul Link. Thanks to all who contributed to the newsletter. The Spiritual Mentoring class has also been reinstated and, using Rev. Dr. Stephanie Rutt's curriculum, will be taught by Rev. Beth Cohen and Rev. Carrie Ives.

Our purpose, mission and vision statements were revised and will be added to our website.

Current members of the Leadership Council are Alexis Eaton, Rev. Linda Goodman, Rev. Jan Grossman, Rev. Carrie Ives, Rev. Karen Manchester, and Joe Pollock. Alexis serves as secretary, Linda as Presiding Minister, Jan as Seminary Director, Carrie as website manager, Karen as Treasurer and Administrator, and Joe as our newest member and supportive participant.

2021 Overview from the Program Steering Committee

The Program Steering Committee solicits and approves your offerings of classes and programs that are presented by the Tree of Life Interfaith Temple. Additionally, the committee promotes the Tree of Life Seminary. The programs and seminary are a way for us to spread the word about the mission of the Tree of Life. They are also an important source of revenue.

The PSC promotes our programs on the World Awake website, on our Facebook page, and in our own Weekly Update emails. It is also in the process of creating a video, narrated by our founder, Rev. Dr. Stephanie Rutt, that describes our unique interfaith Seminary Program that was created by our Stephanie. When completed, it will air on social media.

Thank you to Rev. Carolyn Tobin for her work as our liaison to World Awake, and to Rev. Carrie Ives for posting our programs to the Tree of Life website and to our Facebook page, and to Rev. Karen Manchester for processing the registrations and payments for all programs.

As part of the Seminary Program, a Spiritual Mentoring class will once again be offered in the fall, pending sufficient enrollment. This class will be taught by Rev. Beth Cohen and Rev. Carrie Ives.

The following is a list of classes and programs that were offered in 2021. (Some did not run due to insufficient enrollment.)

Conversations in the Wilderness
Exploring Your Dream World
Hope and Action for Our Times
Li'l Bits of Heaven
Monday Meditation
Our Sacred Call
Radical Regeneration Book Study
Revolutionary Love Training
Rise Up and Call Her Name
Seekers Book Club
Spiritual Resiliency for Everyone
Teilhard, Tom and Us
The Healing and Empowerment of Women in the Gospel Stories
The Path of Direct Revelation: Journeys to the Soul of the World
Tranquility Yoga Nidra

The PSC wishes to thank Rev. Camilla Sanderson for her outstanding work as chair of our committee for two years and our John Silva as co-chair. Both have stepped down from the committee. We welcome our Anne Hebert as our newest member and thank her for assuming the role of chairperson.

Committee members are Alexis Eaton, Rev. Linda Goodman, Anne Hebert, Rev. Carol LaChance, and Rev. Carolyn Tobin

2021 Overview of the Seminary Program

The Tree of Life Interfaith Seminary affords individuals the opportunity to massage one's inner witness and realize the experiential presence of the Divine within. Through this supported journey one gains greater understanding of the Self and is freed to better serve their individual personhood, the Divine by all its Holy Names and ultimately the world. This remains the mission of the Seminary offering.

To begin, deep gratitude is given for the service of our previous Director of Seminary Reverend Carol LaChance. Carol offered tender and firm oversight and guidance to the Seminary Guides and participants and remained in the role for an extended two years throughout the uncertain COVID times. She assisted the transition of her role to Reverend Ahjan and finally was able to oversee the in-person Seminarian's Retreat and Ordination in October of 2021.

Following a four-day retreat at the Rolling Ridge Conference Center in North Andover, Ma., six new members were honored at Ordination, which took place at the UU Church in Milford, NH. We communally welcomed Reverends Carolyn Tobin, DeAnne Devaul, Gail Barrows, Jim Curley, Lisa Solomon and Steven Schultz. Ordination was zoomed as a hybrid to include our out of state participants. (Thank you to the technical efforts of Reverends Karen Manchester and Carrie Ives.)

Many of our previously trained Guides have stepped back due to life adjustments but have offered to consider serving if specifically called upon; Reverend Barbara Landry (Damanjeet), Reverend Peggy Petahtegoose and Reverend Camilla Sanderson. Our Presiding Minister Linda Goodman has committed to holding the whole community. A new Guide training may be necessary in the future as we continue to grow.

Efforts for the promotion and marketing of the Seminary continued in conjunction with the Temple's Program Committee.

Switching roles, Reverend Carol LaChance has been selected as a Seminary Guide and now serves in that capacity as we welcome our newest and singular Seminarian Pamela Wallace, presently of Austin, Tx. Carol remains also in dual roles, still with her director hat on, as I complete my role as Seminary Guide to Carol Gaudreau who is due to be Ordained in June of 2022. Thank you, Carol!

The Seminary program and Leadership Council also began a conversation with Reverend Carrie Ives and Reverend Beth Cohen in hopes of establishing a Spiritual Mentoring or Directorship program to give on-going support and refinement of skills to present day ministers and others in service professions. This would be a positive asset to the program and would fulfill the gap of the past Spiritual Mentoring Certificate Program as originally intended but no longer offered by our founder Reverend Stephanie Rutt.

The Seminary program, along with the Temple, gratefully weathered the thick of the pandemic and moves onward and upward, one soul at a time, many souls in community.

Respectfully submitted,
Reverend Ahjan Grossman, Reverend Carol LaChance

2021 Overview of our Website and Tech

The pandemic has continued to provide the opportunity for us to improve our technology connections locally and beyond.

We have continued to offer worship over Zoom, and in 2021 we were able to begin offering classes also over Zoom. We were able to get many of our worship service recordings uploaded and published to YouTube. We experimented with hybrid options by broadcasting the installation of our Associate Minister and ordination of our combined seminary classes of 2020 and 2021, learning valuable lessons on the need for good omnidirectional microphones and screens.

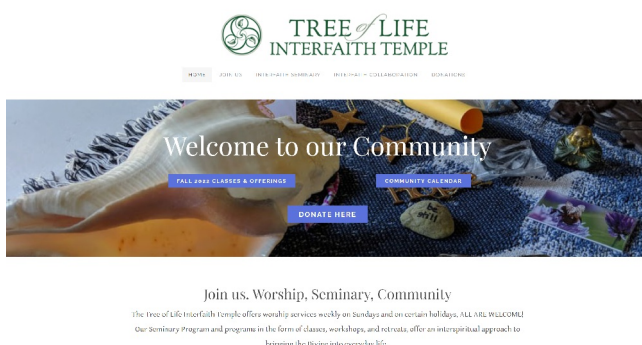
In looking toward updating and refreshing our website, we made the decision to switch to an all-in-one non-profit management site, Wild Apricot. This will allow us to lower our overall tech costs and make it easier for anyone new to take over the backend of our temple management. Our website, class registration and payment, the event and worship calendar, donations, our newsletters, and our weekly update emails will all be able to go through the one system, replacing our use of five different tools currently.

Transitioning has taken some time. Our revamped newsletter, Soul Link, was sent through Wild Apricot in September 2021 and February 2022. The framework for the website is in place, a preview of which was shown as part of a worship service on The State of the Community on Jan 30, 2022.

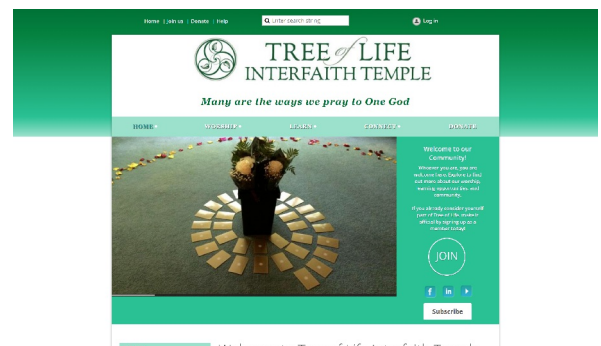
Looking forward, we hope to be transitioned fully to the new Wild Apricot platform by the fall of 2022. This will also provide a new online area for members, including a member directory and member forums. We are looking for a volunteer to re-engage with posting our worship recordings on YouTube. Soon we hope to have our physical location ready, which will prompt a quick shift to hybrid services. As much as we want everyone to be in person, we don't want to lose any of our inter-state congregation!

Tech and website work for the temple is primarily managed by Karen Manchester and Carrie Ives. If you have any suggestions or want to volunteer, please feel free to email admin@tolit.org or templenews@tolit.org.

Current Website Design



New Website Design



Temple Growth

Donors:

2018 ~ Tree of Life began looking for a space to call home. At this time, the community was asked to begin pledging and donating to be able to support rental of a space. A space was found on the oval in Milford, NH.

Tree of Life began this new venture with 17 donors.

2019 ~ Support grew to 24 donors

2020 ~ Support grew to 44 donors

2021 ~ Support of the Temple grew to 53 donors!

Thank you to ALL who generously give. Your support makes everything possible!

Membership:

The current membership sign up began in 2020 to ensure that election process for installing new Temple leadership positions would comply with NH Non-profit regulations.

2020 Membership ~ 37

2021 Membership ~ 42

2022 Membership ~ 44, so far . . .

Our New Temple Home

The generous gifts, donations, and pledges of our Members, Donors, and all who support the Temple have allowed us to purchase, repair, and upgrade a business condo. And, not just any business condo, the very same business condo where the seminary program was born!



Throughout January, February, and March, plans were discussed and finalized-ish, followed by many phone calls, interviews, and contractors were selected in order to apply for our renovation permit. During this time, work was also being done that was not contingent on our permit. Michael Surprenant assisted with bringing the furnace room up to current codes per the fire chief.

We had the furnace cleaned, serviced, and the heating zones repaired so that they both now work properly. And, we ordered the required fire dampers for the furnace room vents - which were backordered.

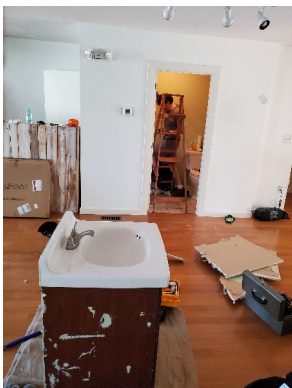


In April our permit was submitted to the town of Amherst, and now the wait began. Much of the work is contingent upon receiving the permit to begin . . . In the meantime, new light fixtures were chosen and ordered, new bath doors were ordered, a storage cabinet system was custom designed, created and ordered. Once installed, this system will create a small hallway, separating the new bath entrance from the sanctuary space on the main level upstairs. We searched second hand shops and frequented the Habitat ReStore to watch and wait for fixtures and cabinets for the planned new kitchen space downstairs...



During this time, work to remove the popcorn texture on the ceiling was also being done. The test removal of the popcorn ceiling and the subsequent restoration to a smooth finish in the small office upstairs was the impetus to tackle the large ceiling in the rest of the space. At this point, all the work and time is voluntary and being donated to move the project along, with the Temple paying for most, but not all, of the supplies.

June arrived and we're still waiting to receive our construction permit, but, our new signs were installed! ... and we even found a place to display our sign from the Oval ...

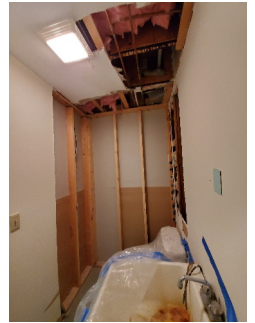


Mid-August arrived and along with it - Our Permit!!! Finally, the reconstruction and renovations can begin! The fire dampers, some of the fixtures, and the custom cabinets also begin arriving after months of delays and continuing back orders . . .

In September, the sheet rock was removed from the walls, reorientation of the bath door upstairs was completed, new sheet rock on the exterior walls was put up, the electrician wired the upstairs bath and added plugs above and below the counter in the kitchenette upstairs. The plumber found a leak between the floors when he came in and ran the new piping for the kitchen area downstairs. Leak fixed! And, plumbing has passed rough inspection!



A new pump under the stairs for the future kitchen sink!



October began with Ordaining the Classes of 2020 & 2021!

Congratulations!



Work on the condo continued, and the ceiling scraping was completed!!!



Just in time to clean up, scrub down, and make the space ready to host our first workshop in the space!



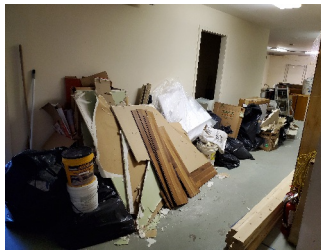
The new bathroom doors have finally arrived! And a beautiful set of kitchen cabinets was found at the Habitat ReStore for a very affordable price, along with a kitchen sink ...



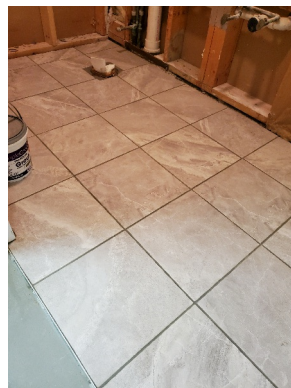
During November, our contractor installed the new bath doors upstairs and downstairs. We rented a dumpster to take out all the construction debris. And December ended with the tile installed in the downstairs bathroom.



A new wider door for the upstairs bathroom



Trash to take out!



A beautiful new tile floor for the downstairs bath



Financial Highlights

Tree of Life Interfaith Temple

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

For the Period Beginning January 1, 2021 & Ended December 31, 2021

REVENUES

Donations	\$	7,095	
Pledges		21,771	
Building Fund Donations		4,665	
Programs Revenue		5,142	
Scholarship Fund Donations		1,467	
Seminary Program		7,105	
Charitable Donations		992	
Other Income (Interest/Referrals/Reimbursements)		211	
Total revenues			\$ 48,448

EXPENSES

Presiding Minister Stipend	1,000	
Administration Stipend	1,000	
Program Instructor Stipends	2,745	
Minister Stipends (Sunday Services)	1,250	
Seminary Expenses	6,616	
Condo Fees	3,900	
Interest Paid on Mortgage	4,548	
Communications (Internet & Phone)	1,505	
Utilities (Heat & Electricity)	994	
Insurance	1,134	
Advertising (website/YouTube maintenance)	3,689	
Banking fees	1,183	
Moving Expenses	2,184	
Office supplies	410	
Ministry Operating Expenses	600	
Repairs & Maintenance (exit lights/fire extinguishers/furnace repair)	4,049	
Renovations & Upgrades	12,630	
Charitable Outreach Gifting	1,992	
Scholarship Funds Awarded	4,200	
Other expenses		
Total expenses		55,629

Excess of revenues over expenses \$ (7,181)

Tree of Life Interfaith Temple
Statement of Assets and Liabilities
As of December 31, 2021
ASSETS
CURRENT ASSETS

Cash	\$	11,030	
Scholarship Savings Acct		9,700	
Accounts receivable		35	
Inventory		400	
Prepaid expenses			
Other current assets		1,436	
Total current assets			\$ 22,601

FIXED ASSETS

Land and buildings (net)		117,500	
Equipment (net)		851	
Other fixed assets			
Total fixed assets			118,351

OTHER ASSETS

Long-term investments		5	
Enter other assets here			
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Total other assets			5

Total assets
\$ 140,957
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY
CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable			
Short-term loans payable			
Taxes payable			
Other current liabilities			
Total current liabilities			\$ 0

LONG-TERM LIABILITIES

Mortgage payable		93,104	
Long-term loans payable			
Other long-term liabilities			
Total long-term liabilities			93,104

EQUITY

Net equity			
Retained earnings		47,853	
Total equity			47,853

Total liabilities and equity
\$ 140,957

TOL Estimated Budget

2022

INCOME		ANNUAL	MONTHLY	%
Donations		\$7,000.00	\$583.00	15.80%
Pledges		\$21,500.00	\$1,792.00	48.40%
Building Fund Donations		\$3,600.00	\$300.00	8.10%
Programs Revenue		\$6,000.00	\$500.00	13.50%
Scholarship Fund Donations		\$300.00	\$25.00	0.70%
Seminary Program		\$4,000.00	\$333.00	9.00%
Charitable Donations		\$2,000.00	\$167.00	4.50%
Other Income				
TOTAL INCOME		\$44,400.00	\$3,700.00	100.00%
EXPENSES		ANNUAL	MONTHLY	%
(Expenses To Be Covered by Pledges & Donations)				
Mortgage P&I		\$7,500.00	\$625.00	16.90%
Condo Fees		\$3,900.00	\$325.00	8.80%
Internet/Telephone		\$2,700.00	\$225.00	6.10%
Utilities		\$1,800.00	\$150.00	4.10%
Insurance		\$1,200.00	\$100.00	2.70%
Advertising/Website		\$900.00	\$75.00	2.00%
Banking Fees		\$1,200.00	\$100.00	2.70%
Office Supplies		\$600.00	\$50.00	1.40%
Ministry Operating Expenses		\$600.00	\$50.00	1.40%
Presiding Minister Stipend		\$1,200.00	\$100.00	2.70%
Administration Stipend		\$1,200.00	\$100.00	2.70%
Repairs & Maintenance		\$2,400.00	\$200.00	5.40%
(Temporary Expenses)				
Moving Expenses		\$2,400.00	\$50.00	1.40%
Renovations		\$6,500.00	\$542.00	14.60%
(Expenses Paid by the Programs that Generate the Expense)				
Program Instructor Fees		\$2,750.00	\$229.00	6.20%
Minister Stipends (Sundays)		\$1,250.00	\$104.00	2.80%
Seminary Stipends		\$1,800.00	\$150.00	4.10%
Seminary Expenses		\$600.00	\$50.00	1.40%
Scholarships Awarded		\$1,800.00	\$150.00	4.10%
Charitable Outreach Gifting		\$2,000.00	\$167.00	4.50%
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$44,300.00	\$3,542.00	99.80%
SURPLUS OR SHORTFALL		\$100.00	\$158.00	0.20%

Explanation of Finances:

The Tree of Life Interfaith Temple had 6 months of reserve and capital campaign funds from 2020 built up toward the purchase and renovation of this condo unit. Although the expenses are seen and shown as a loss for 2021, the reserve funds covered these expenses entirely.

The secondary large expense of Scholarship Funds Awarded comes from a dedicated reserve account specifically set up for the awarding of scholarship assistance, mainly for the seminary program, and these funds, when awarded, only deplete the reserve account and do not represent a true expense or impact the working capital of the Temple.

For further information, please contact our office at (603) 732-0224 or by email at admin@tolit.org

Acknowledgments

Leadership Position Changes in 2021

With Our Deepest Gratitude and Appreciation . . .

We most heartily thank the following people who have concluded their service from various leadership positions: Debora-Ellen Brown as Associate Minister, Carol LaChance as Seminary Director, and Camilla Sanderson as chairperson of the Program Steering Committee.

We gratefully welcome Ahjan Grossman as the Seminary Director and Anne Hebert as the chairperson of the Program Steering Committee.

