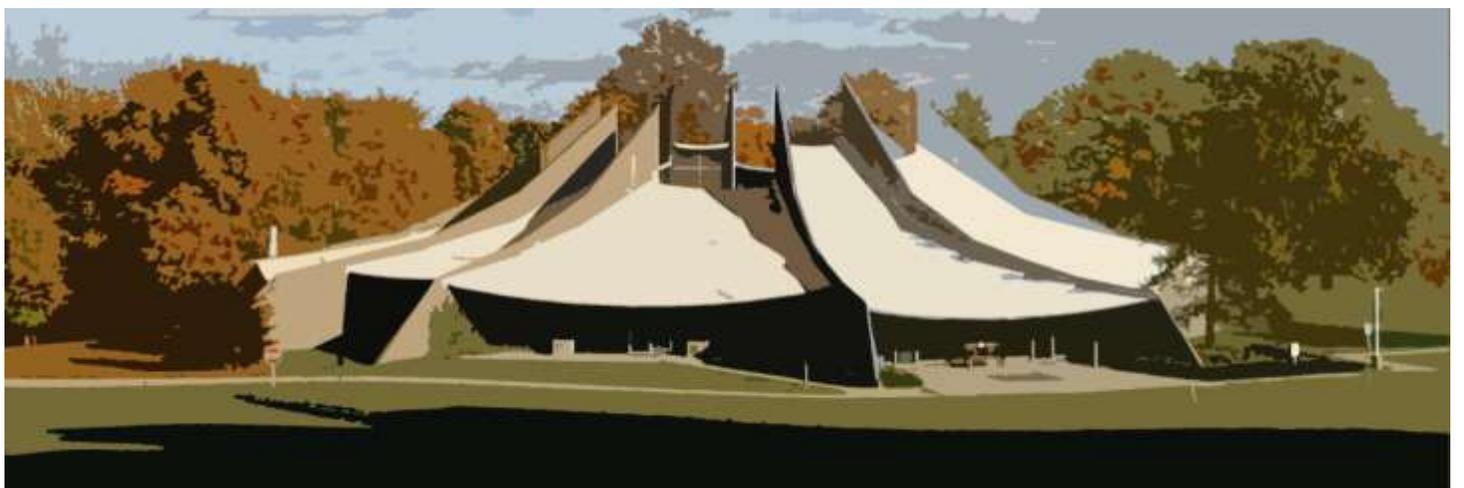


UNITARIAN SOCIETY *of* HARTFORD



ANNUAL REPORT

For Fiscal Year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016

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Proposed Slate for the Board

*Presented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee
Bill LaPorte-Bryan; Chair, Ron Friedman, Diana Heymann, Judy Sullivan, and Chris Wilt*

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce this slate of candidates for election at the Annual Meeting on May 15, 2016. This year all Board positions are unopposed. We are fortunate to have **such talented, qualified and committed members willing to assume leadership responsibilities. We're grateful to the** entire Board for their service to the congregation this year, and send a special thanks to Virginia de Lima, Louise Schmall, John Clapp and Tina Davies who are completing their service. The Chair also wishes to express his appreciation to the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee for their wise participation and hard work.

John Brancato – <i>President</i>	Chris Wilt – <i>Chair – Community Within</i>
Katharine Ann Buck-Anderson – <i>President-Elect</i>	
Phil Gardner – <i>Treasurer</i>	Gloria Mengual – <i>Chair – Social Justice</i>
Margaret Leicach – <i>Secretary</i>	Martha Bradley – <i>Chair – Spiritual Life</i>
Hank Murray – <i>Chair – Administration</i>	

John Brancato (*President, Term: 07.01.2016 - 06.30.2017*) and his husband, Thomas Richardson, were introduced to USH in 2005 by a friend and John's coworker, Laurie Kelliher, who invited them to speak to the teen group. They joined the congregation in 2006, happy to raise their children in a community with similar world views. John served on both the interim minister and settled minister search committees and recently became a Worship Associate. Originally from northern New York, John is an emergency physician at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. He and Tom are the proud parents of two beautiful daughters, Ellie and Maddalena. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to continue to give back to the congregation.

Katharine Ann Buck-Anderson (*President-Elect, Term: 07.01.2016 - 06.30.2017*) began attending services at USH in August 2013 after moving to West Hartford to begin her career as a professor at The University of Saint Joseph. She earned her Ph.D. at The University of Texas at Austin in Human Development and Family Sciences. She quickly felt at home in the USH community. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, reading, painting, watching popular TV series and movies, and trying new culinary cuisine.

Phil Gardner (*Treasurer, Term: 07.01.2016 - 06.30.2018*) is a native of California. His career in developing and engineering laser products had stops at Florida State University; Queens, NY; Danvers, MA; Cupertino, CA; and then 14 years ago - Connecticut. He is now happily retired but active with the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, currently as the treasurer. He has shared this journey with his high school sweetheart, Harriet. They have three children - the oldest son is a research scientist, the second son is a computer and art specialist, and their daughter works in international public health – **most recently in India. Phil enjoys being outdoors in his yard, activities with the Old Guard (a retired men's group in West Hartford), and watching sports especially UConn women's basketball.**

Margaret Leicach (*Secretary, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) first encountered USH and Unitarian Universalism when she was one of the guest speakers for a summer service. A couple of years later, in 1985, she joined USH. In the thirty years in between she has served in various capacities including Treasurer, Chair of the Council on Community Within, and as a member of the "USH 2000" and "Governance" Task Forces. In addition to Sunday services, her spiritual practices at USH include meditation and Tai Chi. She has 3 daughters, 2 grandchildren, 2 sons-in-law and (happily) 1 new SO.

continued

Proposed Slate for the Board

continued

Hank Murray (*Council, Chair of Council on Administration, Term: 07.01.2016 - 06.30.2018*)

and his wife, Mary Sherwin, have been members of USH since 1991 where they raised their now-grown children, Liam and Fionna, at the Meeting House. Hank previously served on the Council in the mid-1990s and he and Mary taught for many years in the Religious Education program. Hank is a labor and employment lawyer in private practice in Hartford and he and Mary **have lived in Hartford's West End for 38 years. Hank was a merchant seaman for eight years and discovered that he and Rev. Teresa Cooley's father, a chief engineer, served aboard the same ship for nearly a year in the early 1970s.**

Chris Wilt (*Chair - Community Within, Term: 07.01.2016 - 06.30.2018*) has been a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, raised in the Unitarian Universalist Church in Nashua, New Hampshire. Prior to coming to the Unitarian Society of Hartford, he has attended Unitarian Universalist churches in New Hampshire, Vermont, and New Jersey. In 2014, he finished his PhD in Computer Science studying artificial intelligence at the University of New Hampshire. He enjoys running, taking things apart, attempting to put them together again, and cooking (especially baking).

Gloria Francesca Mengual (*Chair - Social Justice, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) resides in West Hartford. She has experience in community organizing, marketing, media relations, and copy writing. She earned a B.A. in journalism from the University of Bridgeport and is a past commissioner for the State Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities. She currently works for CREC, the Capital Region Education Council, in their Open Choice program. Gloria Francesca works with school administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents and students to address racial/ethnic tensions and strive toward racial equity in all schools. She enjoys reading, gardening, writing creative non-fiction and spending time with her daughter, Sam. Her inquisitive child has grown into a young adult with her own strong opinions, yet a willingness to hear the perspective of the other. She sensed this same strength and openness at the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

Martha Bradley (*Chair - Spiritual Life, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) is a native of Michigan. She enjoyed growing up in Detroit, and attending Northwest UU church in Southfield. Most of her working life she has been an educator. Martha helped to found one of the first charter schools in Connecticut. As a lifelong UU, she has been active in several congregations. Here at USH, Martha has served most recently on the Search Committee, the SGM Steering Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Relations. As Chair of Spiritual Life, she is looking forward to continuing the transition work begun with Revs. Cathy and Heather, her Board colleagues, and the congregation at large, to help shape a bright and meaningful future for USH.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 17, 2015

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Bill LaPorte-Bryan at 12:01 p.m.

Opening Words – Rev. Heather Rion Starr spoke to us about all that we offer and all that we aspire to at this Society. The assembled congregants responded, “May it be so.”

President’s Report – Bill LaPorte-Bryan shared with the congregation how excited he is with all that is happening in the Society. He thanked all of his colleagues on the Board this year. He also presented his assessment of the last year as detailed in the 2015 Annual Report.

Ministers’ Report – Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr shared and narrated a presentation including photographs depicting highlights of their first year, ranging from their Candidating Week to soup making to racial justice actions. They also touched on the year of excessive snow, the 50th birthday celebration, and the glorious installation ceremony. Rev. Heather spoke of her **gratitude for the congregation members’ understanding for those with young children and their occasionally noisy needs.**

Secretary’s Report – Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the 2014 annual meeting were accepted unanimously.

Patrice Fitzgerald reported that the Society’s membership is in a period of robust growth: In the last 12 months, 26 new members joined us. 5 moved. Sadly, 9 people died.

Votes on motions

Membership – Brian Harvey

Brian introduced a proposed change to the USH Constitution which would simplify membership categories by changing them from six to a single category. Brian made a motion to pass this amendment, and it was seconded. Discussion followed. There was a question regarding whether those who have moved away but want to remain part of the congregation would still be considered members. **There is a recognized category of “Friend” which would allow those interested to retain their ties with the Society.** Bill LaPorte-Bryan explained that this change would not affect those who are already members. One member asked why the proposed age range starts at 15, and if anyone had experience with those of that age being members. Several people spoke about knowing young people who were wonderful members of congregations. Another member suggested that those six categories were designed to keep us from having to pay the UUA for potential new members. The question came up regarding how much the new amendment might cost us. Rev. Heather and Bill indicated it was a very small amount, and would **not impact us until more than a year after we “certify” members (on February 1, 2016). We would not need to pay for those members until July 1, 2016.**

The motion to simplify membership categories passed overwhelmingly.

67 yes

4 no

2 abstain

Endowment – Jim Venneman

A motion was made and seconded regarding a Bylaw addition which would require a two-thirds majority vote by the congregation to restrict investments by the Endowment.

Discussion followed.

continued

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 17, 2015

continued

The motion passed with a 78% majority.

58 yes
13 no
3 abstain

Presentation of Proposed Slate for the Board – Ron Friedman

Three board members are continuing for the second year of two-year terms. They are Treasurer Louise Schmoll, Chair of the Council on the Community Within Tina Davies, and Chair of the Council on Administration John Clapp.

Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera and Gloria Francesca Mengual are nominated to be Co-Chairs of the Council on Social Justice, replacing Marye Gail Harrison, who was thanked for filling the vacancy for Chair of Social Justice. Martha Bradley is nominated to be Chair of the Council on Spiritual Life, to serve a two-year term after filling the vacancy for Chair of Spiritual Life. Margaret Leicach is nominated to be Board Secretary, replacing Patrice Fitzgerald, who was thanked for filling the vacancy for Secretary. John Brancato is nominated to be President Elect, to serve a one-year term. Virginia de Lima is nominated to be President, to serve a first duly-elected one-year term, moving from President Elect.

Ron moved that this leadership slate be accepted in total. Virginia expressed appreciation for those who are leaving the Board.

Motion to accept the slate was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Budget update

Peter Meny gave a report from the Stewardship Committee. They are still waiting to hear from about 19 people regarding their **pledges**. **The original estimate for total pledges was \$254,000. Peter thought we'd never make \$262,000 this year, which** would have matched last year. But in fact, current pledges already total \$271,000 – almost \$10,000 more than last year, and we have yet to hear from those 19 slow pledgers. Hurray!

Our goals for the coming year include the desire to pay fair compensation, increase RE spending, and support Music appropriately. Fundraising parties are planned for particular areas that need greater support.

Louise Schmoll presented the current budget situation. She is optimistic that we will be able to add another \$7,000 to the **bottom line this year between the planned parties and the additional members who haven't yet pledged... and that money will** allow us to reach the maximum \$20,000 (in money received via community-building activities) that can be matched by our anonymous donor.

Incoming President Virginia de Lima asked all attending to write down their hopes and dreams for the future of the Unitarian Society of Hartford. They have been posted on our website and can be read here:
<http://www.ushartford.com/dreams-ush-flourishes/>

Closing Words – **Revs. Heather and Cathy Rion Starr asked all in attendance to rise in body or spirit and sing Tom Schmutzler's version of "Go Now In Peace."**

Submitted by Patrice Fitzgerald

President's Report

Virginia de Lima

What a great year this has been at the Unitarian Society of Hartford! The energy in this building is palpable, and it's not only the energy coming from the solar panels. Many thanks to each of you for bringing your enthusiasm, your dedication, and your support to this wonderful organization. And many thanks to our ministers, Reverends Cathy and Heather Rion Starr, to our hardworking staff and volunteers, and to my fellow board members. This exciting and successful year would not have been possible without you!

After their first year getting to know us, Revs Cathy and Heather began settling in and putting their stamp on this congregation. Not only have they brought inspiring worship and a caring touch to USH, but they also have challenged the Board to **begin a discussion of the "big picture," focusing on items we wanted to have as priorities for the year. Rev. Heather asked us to think about in what ways we need to stretch and grow ourselves, individually and as a congregation.**

Last summer, the Board established 3 goals for the year: 1) developing a "Dashboard" or snapshot report to monitor statistics and progress at USH; 2) increasing collaboration with our sister UU churches in the area, primarily the Universalist Church in West Hartford (Fern Street) and the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester; and 3) planning "our next chapter."

We are making progress on these goals. Members of the Board and Brian Mullen have created a prototype of a dashboard report, showing statistics such as Sunday attendance, new members, children in RE, etc. and we hope to roll it out shortly. Collaboration with Fern Street and Manchester has involved Revs Heather and Cathy meeting routinely with Rev. Len De Roche, interim minister at Fern Street, and Rev. Josh Pawelek at Manchester. Just last month, there was a pulpit exchange; we were honored to have Josh preach here while Cathy preached in Manchester. In addition, Rayla has increased interaction with the other RE programs and I have been meeting periodically with the presidents of the other churches. In a wider area, **last month our Green Sanctuary and AIM subcouncils led workshops at the "Cluster Connections" gathering of many UU churches in Connecticut.**

"Our next chapter" includes both strategic planning and financial planning. A talented and willing team has been established to shepherd this planning. On the financial side, we have begun shifting our budgeting strategy to first identify our priorities and establish goals for the stewardship drive, based on subcouncil input and your dreams (remember last Annual Meeting?). Those priorities have resulted in increased child care, with extended coverage on two Sundays a month, and a greater commitment to our music program. Over the next several years we will be implementing the recommendations of the hardworking Music Transition team, by hiring two professionals at increased hours and pay.

As you know, we have been challenging you to meet those goals.

Perhaps the most visible indication of your commitment to this Society and to our seven principles is the installation of our Solar Array. Many thanks to the stalwart group that dreamed this and made it happen. In the first 3 weeks of operation, the system generated approximately 2.4 Megawatts of electricity, or more than 80% of our typical daily use in March. **As the sign says, "We are saving the planet."**

I trust you share my excitement in the commitment of this Society to ideals of social justice. It's astounding! I am amazed at the progress the AIM group has made, striving to increase our accessibility and at the dedication and energy of the refugee support group. Both groups have already sponsored wonderful programs and have ambitious plans. Wow.

Another area that has been a focus this year is strengthening Leadership Development. The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee wisely determined that the first step in identifying future leaders is to get folks involved in the activities of the church. To this end, they started the Council Fairs, which did an excellent job of exposing the congregation to the work and interests of the many subcouncils. If you missed these or were overwhelmed by the huge variety of activities, look online or talk to the Council Chairs on the Board to get more information.

... and these are only a few of the wonderful goings on at USH.

I have been honored to serve as your Board President for the last year; it truly has been a privilege. We have a wonderful slate of candidates for next year. Please give them your support. For sure, the excitement and progress is continuing.

Co-Ministers' Report

Revs. Cathy & Heather Rion Starr

As we begin to approach the end of our 2nd year with you all, we are ever-mindful that it is a marvelous thing to be your *settled* ministers. After several years of one transition-after-another, **we are so glad to be able to say both “Have a great summer!” and “See you in the fall!”** Of course we look forward to continuing to see and work alongside you through the months of spring, summer, and early fall, while acknowledging that it is a time of travel, rest, and a little less church-work for many, including our family.

There is much to celebrate as we near the end of our 2nd year with you. **It's been a busy, productive, ever-adapting time. As a congregation it feels like we are all still settling in together and we're beginning to pivot from the “survival/maintenance” focus of the transitional or “Troubles” years to real discernment together about where we are going as a congregation, who we are, what our purpose and hopes are for the future of this Unitarian Society of Hartford.**

As of this past May 1 Music and New Member Ceremony Sunday, a total of 55 (fifty-five!) new members have joined USH since we began serving as your Co-Ministers in August of 2014. As RevHeather said just before welcoming the New Members, **this continuous flow of people into the congregation is a reminder to us all that: “We are never exactly the same group of folks on any given Sunday. There are always people who are no longer with us, for a whole spectrum of reasons, and always people who are newly among us, for an equally vast universe of reasons. We are all on our own journeys with our own timetables. There are many right ways.”**

There is a saying in congregational systems-speak that **“People go to a church for the first time because of the minister. They stay because they make at least 5 friends.”** To deepen our connections with one another as human beings is a huge part of why we are here, and why we all keep coming back. Intergenerational connection with one another across and beyond the usual demographic categories that may separate us from each other during the week—this is part of the reason for this congregation. As your Co-Ministers, we need you to follow-up and get to know anybody you do not yet know. Stretch yourself to get to know someone new to you. Accept and encourage one another to spiritual growth. Live out your Unitarian Universalism. Enormous thanks goes to Brian Harvey, our Membership SubCouncil Chair, for the countless hours he puts in to follow-up with potential new members, to create printed materials and graphics of all sorts for USH, and for all his advocacy on behalf of this congregation.

At the beginning of this congregational year we established four goals for the year as your Co-Ministers: 1) to explore collaboration with Fern Street and UU Society: East in Manchester more fully, 2) to strengthen our support of staff and focus on staff transitions, 3) to continue leading strong, engaging, dynamic worship services, and 4) to deepen relationships and communications within and beyond the congregation. We have indeed been exploring more collaboration with Fern Street and UUS:E, through pulpit swaps, Thanksgiving meal co-hosting, e-communications sharing, and conversations about other possibilities (like staggered Christmas Eve services, jointly advertised) as congregational leaders. By way of staff support we are continually working on improving staff pay and benefits, strengthening staff communications, coordinating more team-building social staff gatherings, and planning ahead better for the yearly staff evaluation process. Thanks to the efforts of all those involved or who provided input to the Music Staff Transition Team, real clarity emerged about the benefits of the Choir Director and Accompanist being two separate positions, and hiring is going forward for a more permanent Accompanist. We are so grateful for the positive energy of Choir Director Rebecca Pacuk and so glad that she is staying with us into the coming year! Worship is understandably a central part of our energetic focus—it is the one time each week when we all gather together, and it is so key for our spirits and our work together as a congregation; we are glad to see Sunday attendance steadily increasing and happy about the many meaningful Sunday services held this year. And as far as deepening relationships within and beyond the congregation, we have caught up some with individual pastoral care visits, **one-on-ones with people we hadn't gotten to know yet, and individual meetings with our neighbors**—we have now met with the **Watkinson Head of School and Dean of Admissions, and with the Village for Families and Children's CEO. We still have many others we intend to meet with in the coming months and years, and we also always welcome your suggestions of who it'd be good to visit or sit down with. In sum, if any of these are areas you would like to be involved in or contribute energy to, please let us know!**

Co-Ministers' Report

continued

We are truly blessed, here at USH, with a remarkable, dedicated, diverse, hard-working, and genuinely fun staff team. There are 16 total all-part-time staff here. **Each one brings so much more to this congregation than “just” the work they do.** We hope that as our congregational year comes to a close, you will take a moment to appreciate this staff team that keeps this **place running in so many ways seen and unseen.** In particular this year we'd like to thank **Brian Mullen for his graceful transition** from Business Manager to Bookkeeper, Linda Clark for stepping up and into the role of Office Administrator, and Rayla Mattson for taking initiative in so many areas including taking on the role of Rentals Support Staff. Brian, Rayla, Linda, Rebecca, John, Pi-Hsun, Kevin, Briana, Dominique, Crystal, Sarah, Yamel, Jaz, and Rae: to each of you, an enormous thank you. Your good energy and willingness to do what is needed here makes all the difference in the energy that people feel when they come to this Meeting House.

There is much more that could be said in this Annual Report Letter—**highlights of RevHeather's monthly What Moves Us Saturday morning Salon, RevCathy's work with the USH budget and with 20s/30s group, memorial services and new babies and more than can be reasonably scrunched into these pages!** We can't cover it all here. There *are* few more things that warrant mentioning, though:

Safe Congregations work

The need to address and improve our practices as a Safe Congregation has been identified this year, and significant work has begun to update our policies and practices in this area, which primarily concerns insuring the safety of children and youth in our congregation. A Safe Congregations Team has been established based on UUA recommendations, and that team includes RevCathy, DRE Rayla, Board President Virginia, a trained social worker (Barbara Fraher), behavioral therapist (Rick Tsukada), and teacher/parent (Joan Nicoll-Senft). The idea of the team is that it draws upon professional expertise and particular roles within our congregation to address issues as they arise pertaining to keeping our congregation safe for children and youth. This is not easy work and we appreciate everyone who has engaged with it thoughtfully. There will be more opportunities for conversation about this work in the coming year.

Strategic Planning

The USH Board identified **Long-Range Planning as one of its goals for this year, but it's taken some time for the right** group of people to emerge who have expertise in this area and the willingness to energize a new effort. We now have that group identified, and they are working with RevHeather. Thanks to Kate Gervais, Tom Richardson, Jack Almeida, Virginia de Lima, and Sherry Manetta. We are just in the beginning stages of this 2016 Strategic Planning Effort, so stay tuned!

In Other News...

We Revs share & split one full-time position of ministry here at USH. This year it became apparent to us that we really needed to generate some additional income for ourselves. RevHeather began a 1/3-time Consulting Ministry with the **UU Parish of Monson, Mass., in February, and that is going well (the two congregations are SO different, it's really fun to do** such different kinds of ministry). RevCathy increased her involvement and leadership with SURJ: Showing Up for Racial Justice, and is currently working as a Consultant for SURJ to organize anti-racist actions in response to the national presidential **campaign. RevCathy's involvement with SURJ has helped increase USH's visibility and use as a meeting place for the SURJ-**Hartford Chapter. In related news, the Black Lives Matter lawn signs on the Meeting House property have now been stolen 11 times, reminding us all how important it is that we work to insure that each and every black life matters, and that all of us need to continually work to protect our freedom of speech and right to speak out for justice!

Appreciation

At our weekly USH staff meeting each Tuesday, we start out by sharing an appreciation, usually for someone or **something at the congregation. In that spirit, we want to extend a special “shout-out”** to Board President Virginia de Lima who has worked tirelessly this year to address any issues that came up in need of additional lay leadership and support. There is so much that goes on beyond the scenes here, and Virginia has been there, every step of the way this year, to smooth potential miscommunications, fill-in where a little extra facilitating was needed, and to think through challenging situations or dynamics. Thanks so much, Virginia, for all your incredible service to USH this year.

Secretary's Report

Margaret Leicach

As of February 1, 2016, the membership of the Unitarian Society of Hartford as reported to the UUA was 192. During the past twelve months we joyfully accepted the following individuals into membership: Jack Almeida; Aaron Bleck; Paula Bleck; Crystal Kelley; Valerie Klokow; Owen McKenzie; Sarah McKenzie; Edith Mwenelupembe; Chris Noble; Steve Noble; Ed Pawlak; Kathy Payne; Carol Simpson; Sue Tenorio; Jeremy Young. Over the last twelve months, these individuals, dear to the hearts of our Society, passed away: Roy Cook; Ruth Holland; Nancy Prentis; Margaret Sax. Additionally, the last fiscal year saw the following individuals transition from membership at USH: Chris Callahan; Chris Dilzer; Sara Logan.

Treasurer's Report

Louise Schmoll

As treasurer of USH, I sit on the Board of Directors and keep watch over the dollars supplied by you. Signing checks produced by our bookkeeper, Brian Mullen, is a weekly task. Guiding the Board and maintaining a good fiscal policy is ongoing and is accomplished only with the help of many people.

The Unitarian Society of Hartford has a budget of \$374,300 for fiscal 2015/16. About 70% of our expense is for our wonderful staff. Every dollar is important to all of us, and only as a combined group can we achieve our goals. Our membership has grown in the past two years and we need to continue to reach out to all visitors who come our way. This enlarges our base and allows us to continue our many programs and outreach to the Greater Hartford area.

Budgeting is always a challenge, balancing what we want to do with what we can reasonably afford. That is where you come in. 1) Make an annual pledge, if you have not already done so, and 2) fulfill that pledge with regular payments. That greatly helps our cash flow.

Fundraising is something we must all do, every year. We had another successful auction, chaired by Ginny Allen, and enjoyed some great events organized by our Performing Arts committee, chaired by Patrice Fitzgerald. Used book sales, pancake breakfasts, bake sales, etc. do add to this total, but planning and organizing do not happen in a vacuum. There are too many names to thank them all, but look around and you will see them in action. They all deserve a round of applause for their ongoing help in these efforts. Offer your time for one of these events next year. You will meet some great people and have a good time. All to benefit the Society.

For four years I have served as your Treasurer and will soon step aside. It has been a wonderful experience involving many people and even after more than 40 years of membership, I have learned much. A special thanks to Brian Mullen for his capable work to keep USH on a steady course.

Endowment Committee

Jim Venneman, Chair

Jean Groothuis, Bill LaPorte-Bryan, David Newton, Thomas Richardson

Our Mission: *The Endowment Committee is responsible for the prudent and socially responsible investment of Endowment Funds. It takes into consideration the current needs of the Society, preservation of the worth of permanent funds, the original restrictions on gifts and bequests, the economic climate and the outlook for the future.*

Accomplishments: The Endowment had a balance of \$948,472 at March 31, 2016, consisting of \$876,395 held with our investment adviser, UBS; \$25,037 in the bridge loan to help pay for the new solar array, and \$47,040 in the UUMSB first mortgage held by USH. The \$948,472 represents a decrease of \$66,466 since March 31, 2015. The Endowment contributed \$58,031 to the support of USH in the same period, or 5.9% of the average endowment balance. The overall rate-of-return in the year ending December 31, 2015 was 2.3%. The USH Endowment received \$5,450 in new donations.

continued

Endowment Committee

continued

During the past several years a substantial effort has been made to inform governance-involved members that the operating budget drain on the endowment must be reduced to conserve funds for capital improvements and reverse a continuing **decline in the constant dollar value of USH's endowment. This trend has often been seen in recent years and is not healthy** over the long-run. Most endowments strive to disburse about 4% of the average balance, which is substantially below the 5.9% shown in the preceding paragraph.

Your Endowment is managed by UBS, a professional money management firm. As of March 31, 2016, 25% was in fixed income investments and 75% in equities, which is a typical allocation for a conservatively managed fund designed to provide long-term income with reasonable preservation of capital.

In 2014 USH was asked by the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB), a young UU congregation, to **hold a mortgage on their first church building. This is an example of "Doing Well By Doing Good."** USH is receiving a higher rate-of-return on a part of its fixed income assets, while UUMSB did not incur closing costs and is paying a lower interest rate than what a bank would charge. This loan is about 5% of the Endowment, which minimizes risk to USH.

Another example of the Endowment "Doing Well By Doing Good" is its loan for the new Solar Array that provides USH with fossil free electricity. This array is being financed by generous contributions from USH members, friends and others; plus a clean energy credit from the federal government that will be received in 2017. A bridge loan from the Endowment is being used until outstanding pledges and the federal credit are received.

Our plans for next year:

The Committee will continue to review the Endowment's investment allocations to ensure they are appropriate to meet the needs of the Society. The Committee is working with other members on a Planned Giving Initiative to grow the endowment. The Committee suggested we should aim for an endowment of \$3-5 million with endowment income to be available for USH capital improvements and/or social justice project(s). We are pleased to report that the Society has received in the current year generous donations from several active members of USH. This initiative will be continued.

USH Endowment Honor Roll:

Since 1925, 54 individuals/families have given a total of \$804,633 to the USH Endowment. Their generous gifts have greatly benefited USH and are remembered here. Following is a list, in chronological order, of the people whose contributions made our Endowment possible. We thank these people for their foresight and generosity which help us all today.

The Endowment Committee is pleased to thank in advance the following members and friends who have informed the Unitarian Society of Hartford that provision for its continued support is included, in writing, in their wills. Their generosity will continue to help the mission of our Society for many years to come.

Betty Arnold	Richard and Jean Groothuis
Larry Lunden	Peter and Deb Meny
Ed and Marion Richardson	Ed and Marilyn Stockton

Endowment Committee

continued

Donor	Established	Amount	Donor	Established	Amount
Frank S. Sumner	1925	\$5000	Arthur G. Engstrom	1987	\$2,000
Charles N. Robinson	1927	\$200	Ruth Dieffenbach	1992	\$264,489
Charles H. Field	1928	\$5,000	Helen L. Herrick	1992	\$19,940
Katherine Cornwall Husband	1934	\$4,423	Helen L. Herrick	1994	\$16,315
Marion B. Pepion	1939	\$1,000	Virginia Delaney	1994	\$35,028
Estelle Loveland Noerr	1939	\$1,000	Freeman Meyer	1996	\$6,765
William H. Honiss	1941	\$9,000	Ann Bailey	1997	\$1,893
D. S. Boas Family	1942	\$13,575	Sigmund Aune	1997	\$115,406
Grace A. Bissell	1948	\$9,281	Toni Thomas	2000	\$20,000
Mabel T. Koch	1950	\$8,065	Lois Stowe	2000	\$46,151
Maude Hayes	1953	\$2,061	David Schur	2001	\$24,320
Frank Lester	1958	\$250	Joyce E. (Jones) Bauer	2011	\$3,500
Alice Bacon	1958	\$13,582	Helen M. Skinner	2012	\$26,000
Roy S. Mason	1961	\$1,000	Charles Huntington	2013	\$14,521
Hortense Hahn Guett & Monroe Guett	1963	\$40,780	Rosie Rindfleisch	2014	\$4,310
Gladys Crane	1967	\$9,313	Chris & Jeanette Smith	2015	\$2,795
Paul Dorweiler	1970	\$7,200	E. Joan Sereda	2015	\$2,000
William Harris	1972	\$789	Florence Grieb	2015	\$20,726
Edith M. Arborio	1974	\$5,000	Marye Gail Harrison & John Passalacqua	2015	\$15,000
Freida R. Smith	1977	\$505	Heather & Cathy Rion Starr	2015	\$50
Frances C. Altenberg	1980	\$500	Sue Smolski	2015	\$50
Helen C. Borden	1980	\$500	Louise Schmoll	2015	\$50
Rev. Gilbert C. Meyer	1980	\$500	Susan Spaniol	2015	\$300
Renata Armstrong	1980	\$2,000	Meeting House 50th Anniversary Celebration	2015	\$150
Yvonne d'Elvert Pilpel	1981	\$1,000	Ed & Marilyn Stockton	2015	\$5,000
Alan L. Hart MD & Edna Ruddick Hart	1982	\$5,000	Anonymous	2015	\$300
Jane Lyman Smith	1983	\$500			

Continued

Healthy Relations

Committee on Healthy Relations

The Committee on Healthy Relations met to discuss next steps in fulfilling its mission to create and implement a plan for a sustainable approach to conflict that strengthens our USH community. The USH Board, at its June meeting in 2014, endorsed **the committee's efforts. The committee has reviewed previous efforts at USH in this regard, and, in consultation with UUA** and other experts in the area of conflict management, created a draft proposal. The group has achieved several goals in the educational phase of its mission, including pulpit presentations, and articles in the e-news. There are plans to continue these efforts, that include offering a small group ministry on managing conflict in our lives, and incorporating discussion of maintaining healthy relations into UU, USH and You newcomers program.

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for Sunday, August 28, after the service. Anyone interested in being part of this important effort, whether or not you are able to attend the meeting, should contact Martha Bradley at marthabradley49@yahoo.com, or (860) 305-3307.

Council on Administration

Building & Grounds Sub-Council

Stuart Spence and Edward Sax, Co-Chairs

*Members: Bill Simmons, Peter Magistri, Peter Meny, David Newton,
Ron Sexton, Jim Venneman, Fred Louis, Hugh Schweitzer, Jack Almeida*

Mission: *To maintain and improve the physical plant and surrounding grounds of the Meeting House of the Unitarian Society of Hartford. Before going any further, we note with great sadness the loss of Roy Cook on 2-15-16. Roy was an active member of B and G for more years than most of us can remember and always fully participated in our projects and workdays. In addition, he was a champion of the Meeting House and its aesthetic and symbolic architecture. He will be greatly missed.*

Accomplishments: There are tasks that get completed, those that are continuing and still others resisting easy solution for extended periods.

In the progress made category, this year we identified a water and stain resistant fabric, and recovered the heavy upholstered chairs in various rooms greatly improving the aesthetics of our public spaces. In a related effort, the Archives have been moved from the Library to the Margaret Fuller room, a new and more appropriate space for them. There was a very **annoying leak into the men's room off Fellowship Hall that flooded after every heavy rain. After several attempts to correct the drainage outside the library, it appears this issue may have been solved.**

During the past summer the entire roof was painted with a white gold tinted paint formulated for our kind of roof greatly improving the look of the entire building viewed from afar. In January we had a general clean up of most Meeting House spaces. Two large dumpsters were filled with the accumulated, somebody-else-may-want-it, materials piled up over many years, generations perhaps, as well as a restructuring of the shelving in one of the storage rooms off Fellowship Hall. **Removal of accumulated "debris" freed up a good deal of space and improved the looks of our spaces.**

A renewed effort to add solar power to the Meeting House succeeded! Three ground-based arrays facing south hold 132, 270 watt solar panels. The equipment valued at about \$150,000 is expected to make about as much electricity as the Meeting House consumes each year for the next 20 years or so. Also, a very handy cart was constructed to transport the Bose sound system from storage to place of use.

In the category of continuing challenges, we maintain the roof and keep leaks into the Sanctuary at a minimum, no small task. In addition, we continue to hassle over dependable internet service as well as repairing recurring issues with thermostats and valves as necessary.

Continued

Building & Grounds Sub-Council

continued

We continue to grapple with pending issues including installation of hearing loops, further improvements in lighting and sound arrangements in the Sanctuary and related issues.

B & G extends its thanks to volunteers and employees who helped in many different ways during the year including attendance at workdays scheduled for spring and fall and at various ad hoc times. We are particularly blessed with staff workers John Bengtson, Kevin Girouard, Briana Bittel and Crystal Cruz-Acevedo.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work on existing unfinished tasks and such new ones as arise.

2016 Annual Report from Administration

John Clapp, Chair

Action items since July 1, 2015 took place in three areas: switching to a low cost electricity generation; human resources (including proposed and actual increases in compensation and benefits); and the installation of solar panels.

Low cost electricity generation:

Our new provider is Public Power with a one year contract at 8.99cents/kwh compared to 13.99 with our previous contract. One year contract with cancellation fee.

We maintain 100% carbon offsets for every Kwh consumed at a cost of .01cent/Kwh.

John Clapp is responsible for checking on billing during the year.

Human Relations actions:

Increase hours and rate of pay for Administrative Assistant position. Currently 25 hours @ \$16.50. With additional pension payments annual budget is \$21,728, an increase of \$7,370 to FY 15-16 budget.

Increase hours and rate of pay for Director of Religious Education position. Currently 20 hours @ \$19.18. With additional pension payments annual budget is \$20,549, an increase of \$3,533 to FY 15-16 budget.

Decrease hours and rate of pay for Business Manager position transition to Bookkeeper. Currently 16 hours @ \$23.00. This is a decrease of \$17,348 to FY 15-16 budget.

In the first quarter of 2016, Administration considered proposals for improvements to the building, increases to compensation and the solar project. Proposed improvements to carpeting of Channing, Dix, Emerson and Servetus rooms were considered and some dollar estimates were suggested as part of the goals for the annual Stewardship drive. For the same reason, staff salary increases were proposed. Increases in hourly pay from \$10 to \$11 or \$12 were considered for Custodian, Nursery and Sunday Sexton. The Director of Music was proposed to go from \$15 to \$17. USH policy is to pay a share of retirement pension at 20 hours and health benefits at 30 hours. A proposal was made to pay both to DRE at 20 hours/week.

Action was taken on the installation of 132 solar panels on the grounds providing the entire power needs of USH. The panels began operation on Thursday, March 24, 2016. The initiative was funded by donations of \$138,593 from 86 identifiable donors, with an additional \$292 from anonymous congregation members and by a loan from the endowment. A press release stated: **"This achievement is the culmination of a sustained effort by congregation members and friends over the last several months, including seeking a vendor, raising funds, and meeting the relevant Hartford building requirements,"** said Rev. Heather Rion Starr. **"It represents our Unitarian Universalist commitment to significantly reduce the impact we have on our shared planet."**

The solar project was made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers who were involved in many meetings over approximately a six month period – a very rapid roll out for a project of this magnitude. The scope of their work included meetings with the town, with the contractor and with EverSource, as well as numerous meetings internal to USH. These volunteers and their roles are listed here in no particular order because they were all essential to the project:

continued

continued

jeff.howard.29@gmail.com (Jeff Howard) (from Green Sanctuary, etc DEEP Familiar person)
ellielooncove@gmail.com (Jim & Ellie Venneman) (Accounting, tax understanding, etc.)
vadelima@yahoo.com (Virginia de Lima) (Board President, liaison to the Board)
rgroopofus@icloud.com (Richard Groothuis) (Legal skills, research about other efforts elsewhere)
jag74@comcast.net (Jean Groothuis) (Fund raising and related communications)
stuartspence@att.net (Stuart Spence) (Building and Grounds, Expertise in Engineering, electrical matters)
janicecnewton@gmail.com (Janice Newton) (Helper in all things)
dcnewton999@gmail.com (David Newton) (coordination, communication)

Full text of the Solar Project press release:

Unitarian Society of Hartford Announces Solar Installation

An array of 132 solar panels installed at the Unitarian Society of Hartford’s iconic building in the city’s west end began generating electricity on Thursday. “This achievement is the culmination of a sustained effort by congregation members and friends over the last several months, including seeking a vendor, raising funds, and meeting the relevant Hartford building requirements,” said Rev. Heather Rion Starr. “It represents our Unitarian Universalist commitment to significantly reduce the impact we have on our shared planet.” Rev. Cathy Rion Starr added, “We call on all congregations to work together to protect the world’s climate system for the benefit of future generations.”

The ground-mounted panels were installed behind the congregation’s striking white, tent-like Meeting House. The array is expected to produce all of the electricity the Meeting House requires, approximately 46,000 kilowatt hours annually. The congregation expects to save significant money over the two or more decades the system will generate energy.

The array will prevent emission of as much as 42 tons of carbon dioxide annually. Carbon dioxide is an important contributor to global warming. The system was designed and installed by BeFree Solar of Madison, Connecticut. The initial work was completed in eight days, and the electrical work required seven additional days. According to David Newton, “The installation team was requested to perform the work during the winter-spring season and did an exemplary job of maintaining the desired schedule under at times adverse weather conditions.”

Federal, state, and city laws encourage production of clean energy. Like other customers who generate solar power, the congregation will export excess electricity to the regional grid during much of the year, including hot, sunny days when the grid needs it most. Eversource will account for the exported energy and credit it against the congregation’s electricity use in winter months.

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process, within our congregations and in society at large; the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

For further information, contact Rev. Heather Rion Starr (541-390-6052), Board President Virginia de Lima (860-214-1006) or David Newton (860-335-3742). BeFree Solar may be reached at 888-596-2922.

Church Office

Brian Mullen, Business Manager/Bookkeeper; Linda Clark, Office Administrator

This past year (my thirteenth with USH) represented some significant transitions for me personally. In August 2015, after more than two years of medical consultations and non-surgical procedures, it was determined necessary by my neurosurgeon that I have surgery to locate and repair a perceived tear on my spinal column. The hope was that this repair would alleviate what had become the regular occurrence of debilitating headaches. Thankfully the surgery was a success and I have been headache free (excluding those caused by sinus or tension) since August 2015! I extend a very humble thank you to Nancy Reed and the Caring Network Sub-Council. Nancy coordinated the delivery of meals to our home prepared by USH folk. What a comfort to have those meals during the first two weeks of my recuperation.

In October of 2015, I began working two eight hour days at USH. This began the final step in a transition that would change my full-time employer from the Unitarian Society of Hartford to GEM Advertising, one of the companies I have been doing part-time work for since 2001.

In January of 2016, my title officially changed from Business Manager to Bookkeeper. I have two hours of scheduled time at the USH office, presently they are from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm on Thursdays. I have been working approximately 12 to 14 hours each week on USH activities, mostly from home. But, do not be surprised to run into me at the Meeting House some weekday evening or Saturday morning. Email is the preferred way to contact me (bmullen@ushartford.com) but you could also leave a message at the USH office.

My tasks now are limited to the financial aspects of USH which include: keeping the bills paid, the offerings and contributions counted and the staff paid; support of the Stewardship Sub-Council (canvass mailings and record keeping); supporting the Treasurer and Finance Sub-Council (regular budget review documents, giving statements, budget preparation); a consultative **role with maintaining the membership database. I must acknowledge Louise Schmoll's tenure as Treasurer (which concludes at the end of this fiscal year).** I have very much appreciated the kindnesses she has extended to me and have enjoyed working with her. I look forward to establishing a good working relationship with incoming Treasurer, Phil Gardner.

Some of the other tasks that I was responsible for as Business Manager have been ably taken over by Office Administrator Linda Clark, which I will let her tell you about below. Thank you for continuing to be supportive of and showing appreciation for my efforts at USH! -Brian Mullen

From Linda: As I celebrate my first full year at USH, I have come to truly appreciate the people and look forward to growing into this always evolving job as Office Administrator. My duties have expanded to include creating the E-news, the Order of Service and updating the calendar, upcoming services and posting sermons on the website. I have a wonderful staff of office volunteers that are so very helpful in keeping the office running smoothly. I continue to work with Brian Harvey in coordinating the Sunday Volunteer Welcome Team. I also continue to update data base, keep printed materials updated and available and many other things too numerous to list here. I look forward to the future and continued growth of myself and USH as a whole. -Linda Clark

Human Resources Sub-Council

Greg Nickett, Chair

Members: Ron Sexton

Mission: *To assist the board and minister(s) with personnel administration and to ensure compliance with state and federal employment laws and regulations.*

Accomplishments: Assisted with preparation of the agreements for staff members. Reviewing and updating USH HR Policies. Provided advice with respect to completion of USH employee performance evaluations and job descriptions.

Plans For Next Year: Continue work updating USH HR Policies and job descriptions.

Stewardship Sub-Council

Peter Meny, Chair

Members: Peter Meny (Chair), Ginny Hedrick, Laurie Kelliher, Deb Meny, Joe Rubin, Rev. Heather Rion Starr

The role of the Stewardship committee is to encourage members and friends to actively participate in activities that further our mission and provide financial support so that the Society can continue to meet its obligations and expand its mission.

Towards this end the committee hosted three after-service gatherings in February/March to recognize people for their financial support, volunteer efforts, and other forms of community building and outreach. In addition, we provided information about the financial needs and goals of USH.

On Stewardship Sunday March 20 we launched the annual pledge drive. The goal was to collect \$300,000 in pledges to enable the Society to take steps toward three important goals. These include paying all our staff a living wage, improving our lighting and sound systems, and having the finances to attract the best possible musical talent to support our Choir Director and accompanist.

We are pleased to announce that as of April 14 we have received \$223,000 in pledges from 95 members and friends. This represents a 4% increase from the same pledgers in comparison to last year. Eleven new members and friends were very generous pledging over \$10,000 as a group. We anticipate we will receive more pledges so that our final total may reach the \$300,000 goal. If you have not yet made your pledge, please do so as soon as possible!

A big thank you and hug to all for making this year's pledge drive a success!

Archives

Chair: Zac Mirecki

Members: Larry Lunden, Kayla Costenoble, Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Mission: To preserve and maintain archival materials from the Unitarian Society of Hartford for the benefit of future generations.

This newly constituted Archives Committee began meeting in November 2015. Thanks to Building and Grounds Committee for moving the Archives from the more-public library into the more-private, potentially secure-able Margaret Fuller Room. The USH Board passed a resolution (see below) in March 2016 in support of our efforts managing the Archives. A temperature/humidity monitor was donated by Larry Lunden which now helps us to track moisture in the Margaret Fuller Room.

The Archives Committee is in need of equipment to safely play (and potentially record/transfer) audio found on numerous cassette tapes, magnetic reel-to-reel tapes, and LPs. It appears the last time anything was done to the tapes was around 1995 and they are deteriorating. It is doubtful these lectures/sermons/events have been recorded elsewhere.

We are doing our best to pick up Margaret Sax's (1924-2015) incredible efforts organizing USH historical materials. Your participation is most welcome! Ways you could help: join us for our monthly meeting acquainting ourselves with the existing archives, sorting unarchived material, identifying needs and projects, sort through what you have at home and bring in archival material to be stored, contribute equipment or materials (letter-size file cabinets, file folders, high quality CD player, cassette deck, reel-to-reel player, etc.)

We hope to consider, at some point, a "next" History Panel for the Meeting House Foyer for the years of 1994-20..? This invites some great questions, like: How do we collectively tell the story of the past 15+ years at USH? We will at some point circulate a Timeline and invite input to that Timeline—keep an eye out for that. What do you feel like is important to highlight at USH for the years since 1994?

Policy considered, voted on, and approved by USH Board on March 1, 2016:

The Unitarian Society of Hartford Board of Directors encourages and affirms the work of the Archives Committee in preserving, organizing, disposing of, and maintaining archival materials, as appropriate, from the Unitarian Society of Hartford for the benefit of future generations.

Council on Community Within

Christina Davies, Chair

Please see sub-council reports from **Caring Network, Communications, Adult Programs, Performing Arts, and Women's Alliance** for details on the activities of each of these groups. Some highlights of the year include:

Relocation of the Adult Programs sub-council from Spiritual Life to Community Within: it can be argued endlessly whether the focus of AP is more spiritually or community based. Spirit and community are entwined, and AP requested the shift, so with the blessing of both council chairs, the move was accomplished.

Communications (aka Do-Stuffers) **launched USH's new website, featuring a more updated look. Work continues to review and update material on the site. One consequence is budgetary: while "in kind" services were previously provided by the webmaster, the new arrangement entails outside professional development and consulting work.**

Another lively Festival of the Seasons celebrated the cluster of December holidays. Guests from our neighbor, the Village for Families and Children, enjoyed afternoon activities and food, and Sid Garvais, who for years contributed marvelous piano soundtrack for the dinner, was honored with a certificate of love and thanks for his gifts.

Membership continued its work of actively fostering a welcoming culture for the Meeting House. The Welcome Volunteers were celebrated at an appreciation dinner hosted by the committee — **this has been "on the list" for several years, and in 2016 the dinner came together.** The value of these volunteers cannot be overestimated — newcomers so often mention how welcomed they felt here — and are a big piece of USH continuing to attract and retain new friends. This year saw about 30 individuals become new or reactivated members (this report is compiled before the May New Member Sunday, so a precise count isn't attainable).

The Caring Network continues to provide rides, contact homebound members, arrange for food via a sign-up website, knit shawls, and keep in touch with people who need a little bit of outreach. Recently, a project to gather emergency contact information on members attained fruition: many people submitted their information on yellow cards, to be maintained in a secure-but-accessible file for when this data is needed on short notice. The project was begun during Barbara **Jamestone's tenure. Congratulations to the Caring Network for overseeing this! Last, the Newtons are stepping down as co-chairs but anticipate continuing to work with the group.**

Performing Arts mounted another season of music, talent/no-talent shows, and play readings, and raised an appreciable **amount of money for the Society in the process. It's uncertain whether the shift to "free-will donation" from "ticket" will produce greater or less income; that is an experiment for this semester, and we shall see what transpires.** PA was also asked to help with two additional events — one, a benefit concert for refugees, spearheaded by Sarah Puckett (our former accompanist), which attracted a variety of musical performers and a good audience. The second event was a **performance of Amahl and the Night Visitors by one of Hartt's performance groups... they sought a venue to perform for their families and friends.** The performance was delightful and well-received, and all proceeds were donated to USH. Patrice Fitzgerald is stepping down as head of this sub-council after several years as chair.

The Women's Alliance held its annual retreat at Senexet House in November; this attracted about a half-dozen more women (some new attendees) than had been present in recent years, and will have held 2 fund-raising bake sales by the end of this fiscal year. The Alliance's custom of post-service programs of interest is hoped to resume next year, and there's a possibility of a springtime Senexet retreat as well.

Another structural change is the inclusion of several "affinity groups" — the 20's – 30's group, Seabury connections, etc. — **under Community Within's scope, according to the chart in the directory. The council chair thus can serve as a link to the board for these groups, presenting any requests or questions that might arise from their activities.**

I would like to express my gratitude for being able to serve as Council Chair these past two years, and anticipate that the activities of all these sub-councils will continue to be valuable, inspiring, and productive.

Caring Network Sub-Council

David Newton, Janice Newton, Co-Chairs

Members: Carolyn Cartland, Kayla Costenoble, Katie Doyle, Ron Friedman, Nita Hansen, Ginny Hedrick, Diana Heymann, Joan Kemble, Valerie Klokow, David Newton, Janice Newton, Eve Pech, Kit Northup, Nancy Reed, Tom Reed, Ellie Revill, Laurie Rollins, Marilyn Stockton; Rev. Heather Rion Starr and Rev. Cathy Rion Starr: ex-officio members.

Mission: *Our mission, facilitated by the generosity of volunteers, is to provide comfort and assistance as needed, to those within the Unitarian Society of Hartford community.*

Accomplishments: During the year we have continued to keep in touch with members and friends who are no longer able to join us at the Meeting House for services and other activities. We have arranged transportation for two members to **almost all Sunday services**. **We have given support through calls, notes, cards and visits.** Rides to doctor's appointments, etc., have been provided.

We have developed an "Emergency Contact Information" card for members and friends to fill out. These cards will be on file in the Office to be used in case of an emergency.

During the year we had three Memorial Receptions.

We continue to knit Comfort Shawls. Since the inception of the USH Comfort Shawl Ministry we have given 261 shawls!

We have helped several families with meals using the website, "Take Them A Meal." This website has worked out very well and makes it easy for friends and members to participate. The Youth Group keeps us supplied with containers of delicious soup (in the freezer). Thank you to them!!

We are grateful to Rev. Cathy and Rev. Heather for many calls and visits they have made. We also appreciate their monthly visits to Seabury. Those visits mean a great deal to all our members who have made Seabury their home.

Often on Sunday we hear about a member or friend needing a card or other contact. We have a supply of cards and envelopes at the Programs Table during Fellowship Hour that can be used to meet that need. Choose a card, add a note and address it using the USH photo directory that we also have at the Programs Table so that when you get home, it will be all ready to mail!

Plans for Next Year: We look forward to continuing to reach out to our members and friends with love, caring and support. We will be able to do this with help and support from those within our community. We hope to be able to **coordinate with AIM and the Women's Alliance for a program on a Sunday during Fellowship Hour in the fall.**

If you would like to join us on the Caring Network Sub-Council, please let one of the members know. You would be most welcome.

If you have a need or see a need, let us know!

Communications Sub-Council

David Newton, Chair

Bruce Robbins, Linda Clark, Kayla Costenoble, Tina Davies, Sarah Gilligan, Brian Harvey, David Newton, Janice Newton, Nancy Reed, Tom Reed, Ed Savage, Bev Spence, Richard Leslie, Rev. Heather Rion Starr.

Mission: *To enhance communications among groups, members and friends within Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH), and to foster effective communication with external groups and individuals in the Greater Hartford community and beyond.*

Members of the Communications Sub-Council take this opportunity to recognize the recent loss of one of our group, Roy Cook. Ever interested in many facets of USH life, Roy took particular pride in advertising our presence in the community with a sandwich board he proudly set out adjacent to Bloomfield Ave in front of the Meeting House with a new message each Sunday. **We will miss Roy's efforts and long participation in USH affairs.**

continued

Communications Sub-Council

continued

Accomplishments: During this fiscal year, we have continued to see Unitarian Society of Hartford members, friends and outside potential visitors as individuals with different preferred communication modes. Accordingly, we post information in the Meeting House lobby and Fellowship Hall on kiosks and bulletin boards in poster or other format, or as TV loops. We issue the USH-Enews, an email publication devoted to USH coverage and post sandwich boards on Bloomfield Avenue as well as placing Sunday service notices in the Hartford Courant. We also send email messages as necessary carrying urgent messages. We maintain the USH Facebook pages and prepare the weekly order of service inserts as well as service/sermon summaries. In addition, we have increased our efforts in social media tweeting from church events, meetings, etc. We have integrated church audio from sermons with slides into videos posted on Facebook and Google Plus. Community events from North Albany and Blue Hills are posted on Meeting House bulletin boards and social media.

This year we were happy to bring into production a new website, maintained by a group of editors and including a calendar of coming events. We are particularly blessed by one of our members who wrote a manual to instruct others in editing the **web. Also, the USH archives are being reorganized and "improved" as we consider communication with the future members and friends of USH.**

We continue to publish and distribute approximately 20 paper copies of the USH-Enews for those with no computer resources and receive positive feedback for these efforts.

To enhance internal communication, a number of listservs, or restricted email groups, are maintained for various groups with common interests. We support the Social Justice, Programs for Adults and Families, Performing Arts, Non-Violent Communications, Green and other interests by promoting their public events.

Our wifi system makes web resources, including the USH records on the web, immediately available to computers and smart phones in the Meeting House and elsewhere.

We are pleased to have electronic communications functioning internally enabling a chain or participants to perform individual tasks from conceiving an idea to its eventual publication.

Plans for Next Year: With the remarkable sedulous efforts of the Communications Sub-Council group known unofficially as Dostuffers, we will continue to consolidate our hard won gains and extend our activities.

Festival of the Season

Submitted by: Patrice Fitzgerald, Chair

The 38th Annual Festival of the Season was fabulous! We crafted, we sang, we worshipped, we ate, and we had a lot of fun with children and grown-ups of all ages. It was great to see Santa Claus in our lobby again. We got a healthy crowd of folks for the craft portion of the day as well as the potluck, and we estimate that more than 150 people participated overall.

There was a wonderful turnout from friends old and new... and we are already talking about how to make the event even more exciting in 2016. One of the fun features premiered this year was the celebration of the winter solstice and the return of the sun, inspired in large part by Marye Gail Harrison, assisted by the Youth and Nina Elgo.

Sid Garvais, 90 years young, was honored for his many years of piano playing and participation in prior Festivals. We sang **"For He's A Jolly Good Fellow,"** and Sid was given a certificate of thanks.

SO many folks helped create this spectacular event! Here are some of them who deserve our thanks. Janice Newton for chairing the Potluck portion of the evening, and Crystal Acevedo-Cruz and her sister for their essential help. David Newton for helping all of them. John Bengtson and Kevin Girouard for tarps and tables and the tree. Rocco Orlando for graham cracker architecture. Joanne Orlando for connecting us with our friends and neighbors from the Village. Diana Heymann for wonderful stories. Brian Harvey for inspiring signage. Ann Laporte-Bryan for wreaths. Helen David for refreshments and the Holiday Boutique. Jim and Ellie Venneman for delectable cookies. Larry Lunden, Sarah McKenzie, and Helen Koulidobrova for music. Oh, and Richard Leslie!

Deb and Peter Meny for a variety of tasks including buying candy and bagging. Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Joe Rubin, Tina Davies, and Edith Savage for greeting and handling the money. Rev. Cathy for the message of the season! Bob and Kerry White for **undercover duties that cannot be disclosed. John Stowe, who stoically led our infamous rendition of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" despite a hoarse voice and a creaky knee. And so many more in view and behind the scenes! Too many to list.**

continued

Festival of the Season

Continued

Rev. Cathy's enactment of the history of humans dealing with the dark and cold united us all in the sanctuary with a message of generosity and hope. And of course a profusion of colorful mittens and hats showed up on the tree in the lobby. Some lucky children at the Village were warmer this winter because of USH.

Plus... we had enough graham crackers left over to feed an army.

All that and we earned money! The income was \$1,482 (\$775 for FOS tickets and \$707 from sales at the Holiday Boutique), expenses were only \$167, and the net result came to \$1,315 for the General Fund, which will be doubled when matched by our amazing anonymous donor.

Think of joining the 2016 Festival of the Season committee, which will be gearing up in the fall. Nina Elgo has been compiling a list of useful information from last year to help us learn from prior Festivals. FOS is one of the biggest and best events we put on at USH all year, and we have a great time doing it!

By the way... we're looking for a new Chair. Maybe that's you? Speak up!

Membership Sub-Council

Sub-Council Members: Brian Harvey (Chair), Ginny Allen, Ron Friedman, Zean Gassmann, Richard Groothuis, Esther McKone, Edith Mwenelupembe, Bruce Robbins, Judy Sullivan. Council chair: Tina Davies.

Lead Co-Minister: Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Mission: *To support the growth of the Society by: 1) promoting a congregation-wide culture of warmth and welcome to all visitors, newcomers and members; 2) fostering acceptance and respect for each person who enters the Meeting House; 3) providing information and orientation to visitors and new members about our faith and values; and 4) facilitating spiritual growth and community through involvement of newcomers and members in Society activities.*

Accomplishments:

EXTENDING OUR WELCOME

During the last year, about 50 USH members have taken part in our Sunday Welcoming effort, serving as ushers, greeters, and hosts at the Welcome and Visitors Tables. Linda Clark takes care of the weekly reminders and thank you notes. Linda and Brian Harvey produce the quarterly schedule of these assignments. We receive many comments from visitors and newcomers regarding how welcome they feel attending our worship services. In April of 2016, we hosted a recognition Dinner for the Welcome Volunteers to share our appreciation for their valuable contribution to our congregation.

We made numerous brochures and pamphlets available to newcomers that answer all kinds of questions on a broad spectrum of topics. This information is both purchased from the Unitarian Universalist Association and produced by our staff and volunteers.

We actively reached out to The Village for Families and Children and enjoyed the participation and enthusiasm of the children and their supervisors at the *Festival of the Season* and the *Annual Picnic*.

We acquired an additional 24"x 36" roadside A-frame sign holder and had a set of 30 messages printed, which we rotate on a weekly basis to welcome those who walk or drive past our location.

NEWCOMER FOLLOW-UP

Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Linda Clark, Brian Harvey and Rayla Mattson meet weekly to discuss our contacts with visitors and newcomers. Linda sends an email welcome to each visitor who signs the guest register. Rev. Heather and Membership SC members reach out with additional follow-up where appropriate. The contact information is stored in our members and guests database.

MSC members host monthly First Sunday Connections sessions following the service, which visitors are encouraged to attend and which provide them with an opportunity to have small group conversation and learn more about USH. These sessions are joined by Revs. Heather or Cathy and have grown into a small fellowship that serves as a starting point to encourage further engagement.

We worked with the Communications Sub-Council to use the big screen TV in Fellowship Hall and rotating kiosks in the lobby and Fellowship Hall to disseminate information to visitors about the church activities and our Path to Membership series called UU, USH & You.

Membership Sub-Council

Continued

UU, USH & YOU

With the support of Rev. Heather, we continued to enhance UU, USH & You and offered the program in October-November 2015 and February-March 2016. This series consists of three 90-minute sessions that introduce the principles and history of our congregation and larger faith community and how they translate into ongoing church activities and practice. These workshops also provide newcomers the opportunity to begin to forge bonds and share new perspectives.

Following these courses, in December 2015 we recognized 13 new members. In May 2016, we welcomed 13 more new or returning members.

ASSIMILATION and COMMUNITY BUILDING

We worked with other USH sub-councils and committees to have newcomers mix with established members in church-wide events. These activities included the Festival of the Season in December; pancake breakfasts in November and March; a Game Night in February, a Newcomer/New Member Potluck in May; and the annual church picnic in June.

We coordinated with the Communications Sub-Council to produce our updated color USH Member & Friends Photo Directory in December 2015. This directory was published in both electronic and hardcopy versions and serves as a great tool for building connection within our congregation.

Plans For Next year

We will continue to integrate more newcomers, new members and young adults into Membership SC related activities including: joining Sunday Welcome Volunteers, helping with pancake breakfasts and potlucks; and feedback regarding their experiences in becoming familiar with USH. We will revisit UU, USH and You course materials. Support future game nights and Welcome Volunteer dinners.

Performing Arts Sub-Council

Patrice Fitzgerald, Chair

*Members: Mattie Banzhaf, Tina Davies, Diana Heymann, Nancy Mandly
Mary-Anne Mulholland, Ed Savage, Edith Savage, Carol Sexton, Ron Sexton*

Mission:

- *To plan for a variety of performance events throughout the year*
- *Provide opportunities for people from the wider community to come into the Meeting House*
- *Welcome those new to the Meeting House into our building and make available to them, if desired, information about USH*
- *Plan carefully so as to raise money for the USH General Fund, or to break even so that no expenses are incurred*
- *Send creativity out into the universe*

Accomplishments: It has been a wonderful year for the Performing Arts Sub-Council. We hosted a number of successful programs, bringing folks in from the outside community while entertaining members of the congregation and contributing to the General Fund.

This year's Performing Arts events have brought profits of more than \$4,225. Everything earned will be matched by our anonymous donor so that a total of at least \$8,450 will be contributed to the USH General Fund.

Events of the 2015-2016 Performing Arts year

On October 3rd, we kicked off the year with a lively presentation from the Greater Hartford Opera Ensemble, which graced our sanctuary with beautiful arias, opera choruses, and fun Gilbert & Sullivan songs. GHOE was kind enough to donate its talents as a benefit concert for USH.

continued

Performing Arts Sub-Council

continued

For Halloween on October 31st, we held the first USH Masked Ballroom Dance. Kit Northup provided amazing decorations and an outrageous cake, Ron Friedman organized the dance classes, and professional dance instructor Wendy Nielsen of Arthur Murray Studio in New Britain gave a lesson, choreographed dance demos, and led us in free dancing. From tango to swing to foxtrot to merengue, the feet were flashing and the hips were swaying. Revs. Heather and Cathy both attended, along with Robin. The plan is to do it again next year!

On November 7th, we hosted **“Hot Jazz on a Cool Night,” another USH Benefit. It was a grand night for singing (and playing) downstairs** in Fellowship Hall when jazz phenom Alex Nakhimovsky, accompanied by two young men from Simsbury High on bass and drums, backed up four accomplished singers. Our own Acting Choir Director, Rebecca Pacuk, performed a couple of standards, followed by Liz Schorr, another wonderful singer from Hartt. Richard Leslie sang and played trumpet and Patrice Fitzgerald contributed to the musical doings with both solos and a duet.

January 2nd brought out an enthusiastic crowd of lucky listeners to hear old USH friends John and Katie (LaPorta) Jesensky in another benefit concert. They were joined by Katie's talented soprano twin Megan Sherry and fabulous mezzo Mia Scarpa in tunes that ranged from Broadway showstoppers to stunning opera arias. John also sang for us for the first time in years, sharing some Elton John and Simon & Garfunkel.

On Sunday, February 21st, a crowd gathered downstairs in Fellowship Hall to enjoy one of our fabled **“Family Share Talent/No Talent Shows.”** Rev. Cathy made some magic for us, Richard Leslie did imitations and played musical cheek, Fred Louis sang a crowd-pleasing rendition of a classic Elvis tune, and two lively numbers were performed by the Meeting House Folk.

On March 5th we held the Concert Pro Femina, inspired by the annual Hartford Festival of Women Composers, which is now in its 16th year. A number of outstanding performers presented glorious music, all written by women. A spellbinding rendition of French composer Paule Maurice's "Tableaux de Provence" by husband-and-wife duo Tony Gibbs on saxophone and Benita Rose on piano was a highlight. The last set was something different for this typically classical concert—vocalist Nicole Grondahl sang some Adele and Dolly Parton, wrapping up with Carol King's "Natural Woman," accompanied by her husband Jeff on Chapman Stick.

Immediately after services on Sunday, March 20th, we had a **“matinee” concert and farewell for Acting Accompanist Sarah Puckett.** Sarah played the stunning Haydn Sonata in Eb Major for us. She also accompanied classical and Broadway songs featuring our bass Choral Scholar Andrew Schad, mezzo-soprano Patrice Fitzgerald, and baritone Richard Leslie.

On April 16th, our sanctuary hosted a lively crowd of about 75 people as USH friend and nationally-known playwright Jacques Lamarre's premiere reading of his new play "Betty Jo's Fan Club" was presented by the talented Virginia Wolf. All involved donated their time; this was a benefit for USH. Afterward, folks mingled and munched at a delicious reception in the Library.

Plans for Next Year: The Performing Arts Committee is going to be reconfigured next year. We'd love to hear from folks who are interested in participating, particularly those in the Twenties & Thirties group, Youth members, and families with children. What would you like to see happen at the Meeting House next season?

Unitarian Alliance Ministry to Women

Submitted by: Louise Schmoll

The UAMW, aka The Alliance, is steered by a small group of women planning events as needed. Our activities have been fewer in number with many of our long time members no longer able to participate. Our notable activities have continued as described below.

Our Mission: remains the same: To Minister to women in the Unitarian Society of Hartford, by creating opportunities to promote friendship and sisterhood, and to provide programs that will strengthen ties within the Society and the Community. The Alliance dates back to 1894.

Activities: In October we held our traditional retreat at Senexet House in Woodstock, CT. The Rev. Cathy Rion Starr led us in several contemplative spiritual practices with our voices, with our hands and with our bodies. We created meditation beads to help us center down deep and remind us of who we are and how we wish to be in the world. This is always a

continued

Unitarian Alliance Ministry to Women

continued

wonderful event and we encourage all women to join us for our next retreat. In December we coordinated a combined holiday luncheon for the Alliance and the Lunch Bunch. We collected gifts for Interval House and The Open Hearth. And **for more than 35 years we have shared “A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS TO A LIBERATED HOUSEHOLD” by Judith Viorst. It still brings chuckles and smiles to this special occasion.** In May we coordinated a bake sale for the benefit of the matching grant to our Society. And we will hold our annual picnic in June. We invite all women and their guests to join us for our events.

For more than 40 years we have awarded Educational Grants, small sums of money to women pursuing additional education beyond high school. Our Alliance friends make small donations to support our various causes which include annual **contributions to the Unitarian Universalist Women’s Federation, to Senexet House, to the USH for office support, and to the cost of mailing weekly newsletters to those without email access.**

Watch the Weekly ENews for our future events and join us when you can.

Small Group Ministry for 2015 - 2016

Co-Chairs: Bill Shoemaker and Esther McKone

*SGM Long-range planning is supported by a steering committee composed of the co-chairs:
Martha Bradley, Bruce Robbins, Linda Ericson-Ebel and Beverly Spence.*

This past year we welcomed three new SGM facilitators. We are delighted to include Judy Robbins who is currently leading a specialized small group ministry focusing on life transitions. This group meets at the Meeting House on Saturday mornings. Also new facilitator Gloria Francesca Mengual facilitated a group in the Fall which met at Kathie Ferguson's home in West Hartford. And finally new facilitator Paula Bleck is leading the Family Friendly Small Group ministry which is currently meeting at the Meeting House on Friday evenings with childcare provided for participants. We are thrilled to have these skillful and compassionate new facilitators added to our facilitator list.

Nine group members met at Linda Ericson-Ebel's West Hartford home during the summer; ten participants met at Esther McKone's Avon home in the Fall for a specialized SGM on Conscious Aging facilitated by Susan Spaniol; eight family friendly folks met at the meeting house for the Family Friendly Small group ministry facilitated by Ginny Allen, and eight participants met at the home of David and Janice Newton in Farmington. There was a total of 46 people participating in SGM during this 2015-2016 year which includes the groups led by Gloria Mengual and Paula Bleck.

Both Martha Bradley and Esther McKone are working on selecting meaningful readings and developing questions for our covenant groups to use when they gather for the two hour sessions.

We look forward to offering a summer SGM which will be a 4 week session and more SGM offerings in the Fall of 2016. These meetings have been significant and especially meaningful for members to share their life experiences in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Connections among members are enhanced and people are enriched in so many ways when they participate in these covenant groups.

Council on Social Justice

Gloria Mengual, Chair

From the installation of 132 solar panels to launching the effort to obtain accreditation as an AIM congregation to strong involvement in the Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone to racial justice and education efforts, the USH Social Justice (SJ) sub-groups have had an incredibly busy, productive year. USH held its first SJ fair in January, which was well-attended and drew much interest, with people signing up for our sub-councils. The 3rd – 5th grade class hosted a table at the fair, with youth explaining their involvement in social justice projects this year. A section of the library has been selected for social justice books, which are now available, with the help of a donation from a generous USH member.

Equal Access

The Accessibility Inclusion Ministry (AIM)

The AIM task force, made up of more than 20 members, is working toward meeting all the requirements of the UU certification program, which will make USH a completely accessible and inclusive congregation, welcoming to people with varying abilities. This journey has started with an assessment and includes educational sessions for the congregation. The first educational session, a performance by *The Free At Last Players*, a non-profit theater group dedicated to dispelling the myths and misconceptions that surround mental illness, took place in April. With Rev. Cathy's guidance, the team is working on identifying what needs to be done, educating USH members and planning next steps.

Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

USH celebrated the final year of its 2010-2015 initial accreditation as a Green Sanctuary (GS) certified by the UUA. The sub-council held a retreat last summer to initiate the reaccreditation application process. Thanks to Lisa Galinski's technical expertise, the GS sub-council worked much more efficiently this year, conducting much work electronically. See *Green Sanctuary report on the following page*.

Noah Webster School Tutoring

Members of the subcouncil continue weekly tutoring sessions with children at Noah Webster, making a visible impact on the lives of the young people in our neighboring school.

Race Matters

In February, Unitarian Universalists all over the country gave recognition to people or groups that have shown courageous love as part of the *Standing on the Side of Love* campaign. USH presented its first Courageous Love Award to MoralMondayCT.

SURJ-Hartford-Showing Up For Racial Justice continues to grow, with over 400 Facebook members, and is currently working on strengthening connections within the leadership team. It has participated in various direct actions in the Greater Hartford area.

USH collaborated with UU East in Manchester, UU in Meriden, and UU in New Haven in the planning of the Clusters Connection symposium. The efforts of USH Social Justice were well-represented at the event, hosted by the Unitarian Society of New Haven. Entitled "**We Are Stronger Together,**" the April gathering of those working on social justice issues had representation from UU congregations throughout the state. The USH SJ sub-councils presenting included AIM, Green Sanctuary and Race Matters, with all receiving strong reviews for their workshops.

Race Matters presented "**The Color of Justice,**" a documentary about the impact of Connecticut's juvenile justice system on black and brown youth, at USH following a service, as well as part of the Cluster Connections symposium in Hamden and at Seabury in Bloomfield. A rich discussion followed each showing.

Information and Advocacy

USH is currently involved with the Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (UANRZ), the Upper Albany Collaborative, and the Blue Hills Civic Organization in order to discern the needs of the community and opportunities for service. Ed Savage continues to be the point person for this project; he is the alternate representative to Hartford Decides (coordinating organization of NRZ which allocates 1.5 million dollars for community projects developed and voted on by the neighborhood). The second big project is the renovation of a children's playground into a multi-age playground. Ed continues both maintaining the UANRZ website, and working with Hartford's Albany Avenue library branch to explore senior citizen computer education. The library continues to seek volunteer readers to work with young children and teens. USH also participated in the Boys and Girls Club Christmas party, resulting in much fun and happy faces.

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The Village for Families and Children

The Village children attended our Festival of the Season. The Village thanked USH for its holiday giving to their children. **The gifts were appreciated, but the more important donation was watching the Village youth ‘just be kids’ – spending time with USH folk at our festival, making gingerbread houses, frosting cookies and more.**

Refugee Crisis Team

USH members moved by the refugee crisis are currently part of an interfaith project with other congregations to sponsor a refugee family. The refugee assistance effort is being planned in collaboration with IRIS. USH hosted a five-hour refugee resettlement cultural sensitivity seminar about Islam to acquaint people who will be assisting refugees who will be relocating to this part of the state. Over 100 individuals attended, including representatives from a number of faith groups in the Hartford area, including Muslim mosques. Students from Hartt School donated their musical talents for a concert fundraiser to benefit the refugee relocation efforts.

Good Neighbor Offerings

The social justice committee, in conjunction with the ministers, have reinstated the good neighbor offering, sharing our resources with:

1. UUSC and UUA (in response to the global refugee crisis)
2. EQUUAL Access (UU national)
3. Tree of Life Educational Fund
4. My Sisters' Place
5. Muslim Coalition of Connecticut
6. The Village for Families & Children
7. Split between Standing on the Side of Love (national) and Moral Monday CT

AIM Task Force

Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Chair

Members: Paula Bleck, Brianna Bittel, Stephanie Briggs, Katharine Ann Buck-Anderson, Dennis Gallant, Debi Gosselin, Flo Grieb, Mullein King, Cat Lanser, Larry Lunden, Peter Magistri, Valerie Klokow, Owen McKenzie, Tom Reed, Edith Savage

Mission: AIM, the Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry, is charged with “welcoming, integrating, and supporting people with physical or psychological disabilities and their families in our congregations” (UUA.org).

Accomplishments: The Task Force has assembled 17 members (many of whom identify as having a disability). The Task Force formed 6 subgroups: Mobility, Perception, Mental Health, Food & chemical sensitivities, Learning and intellectual disabilities, Chronic Pain & illness. In December of 2015, USH Board approval was given. In late January of 2016, the UUA Review Team approved Phase 1. The Task Force is currently in phase 2 working on inclusion checklist, offering workshops & developing projects. The Task has offered a workshop on the AIM work at the UU state conference, Cluster Connections. The Task Force has led a Sunday service focused on accessibility and inclusion entitled “Sharing Our Stories.” **The Task force has hosted the “Free at Last Players” workshop focused on reducing mental illness stigma.**

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to plan workshops and assemble the finances needed to accomplish the proposed projects. The proposed projects include the following: Reformat USH written materials on learning and intellectual disabilities; complete the MS walk, complete the Inclusion checklist; create Zines/packets for relating with people with chronic conditions, complete a professional assessment of the Meeting House, work with Religious Education (RE) on disability work; host a small group ministry for mental health and chronic disabilities; obtain sound system with hearing loop in Sanctuary; improve lighting in Sanctuary; include ASL and caption services.

Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

Jeff Howard, Mary Sherwin, Co-Chairs

Members: Lisa Galinski, Shari Lanza, Peter Magistri, Laurie Rollins, Ed Sax, Ed Savage, Edith Savage, Bill Simmons, Beverly Prager (Chair Emeritus), Virginia de Lima (on leave)

Mission: *To help our congregation live in harmony with and create a healthier world environment by spearheading activities that will educate and engender greater awareness of our impact on the environment and how we can bring forth positive change in personal lifestyle choices, congregational activities and the broader community.*

Accomplishments: USH celebrated the final year of its 5 year initial accreditation as a Green Sanctuary certified by the UUA in 2010-2015. The sub-council met in the summer of 2015 at Bev and Rich Prager's new home in MA for a retreat to initiate the reaccreditation application process. (We also enjoyed yummy potluck, solar heated tea, swimming and kayaking!) Thanks to the organizing and technical expertise of Lisa Galinski the GS sub-council has conducted much of its work using electronic capabilities this year.

The GS conducted its 6th Holiday Regifting Sale in December, raising upwards of \$1200, more than any previous sale, plus a substantial donation of leftover items to Goodwill. Designer staging as well as generous donations of high quality items contributed to the Regifting Sale success. Green Sanctuary council members also participated in the Indoor Clutter Clean-up Day, helping to redistribute significant amounts of unwanted items to reuse via Goodwill or recycling rather than unnecessarily contributing to air pollution by trashing usable items.

The climate crisis continues to propel the Green Sanctuary Sub-Council. Members Peter Magistri and Mike Winterfield participated on the organizing committee for the 3rd statewide Climate Summit held in November 2016. In addition, USH was a supporting sponsor of the summit, contributing \$250, through personal contributions of GS sub-council members. GS members also led climate discussions in Great Decisions.

The GS sub-council provided input to the Earth Day service on April 24 in conjunction with our ministerial sponsor, Reverend Heather, who conducted the service. The theme was derived from Wen Stephenson's "**What We're Fighting for Now Is Each Other: Dispatches From the Front Lines of Climate Justice.**" The GS also kicked off a renewed effort to promote car-pooling to the Meeting House, starting with Earth Day Sunday, using the Neighborhood Network system laid out in the directory.

GS also worked with the financial committee to purchase 100 percent renewable energy for the Meeting House's electricity at the most reasonable price, saving USH upwards of \$2,000 per year. This will be reviewed on a regular basis using a "tickler" reminder so that USH will always get the best rate for its renewable electricity. Jeff also worked with the Solar Team to get 132 PV panels installed on the USH grounds that will supply 100% of our needs.

Green Sanctuary is also pleased to support newly collaborative efforts between USH and KNOX Hartford. KNOX manages all the community gardens in Hartford, including the large Watkinson Garden at the base of our Meeting House parking lot. As a result of Rev. Heather's efforts, we now have a USH Community Garden plot in that Watkinson Garden (right at the front) and are working on plans to develop a plant-based labyrinth there that we can collectively tend. We also hosted one of KNOX's major annual fundraisers (in August 2015) and are pleased to support their work in other ways as possible. For more info about KNOX, check out their website at www.knoxhartford.org.

Plans for Next Year: Green Sanctuary Sub-Council (GS) will continue to work on recertification of USH as a Green Sanctuary in 2016-17. Reaccreditation will have environmental justice as a central, unifying theme. A number of projects are planned in the areas of sustainable living (recycling; energy efficiency); worship and celebration (Earth Day, solar installation); education (climate summit; film series); and environmental justice (community garden; neighborhood action).

The Village for Families and Children

Joanne Orlando, Liaison

Mission: *The Unitarian Society of Hartford aims to foster a relationship with The Village for Families and Children that is committed to supporting and caring for the children and staff of The Village in a consistent and loving manner. This continued presence in the lives of the children will help them to know that they can rely on USH in their often unreliable lives. Through specific programs and activities USH will have an impact on the lives of the children.*

Accomplishments:

- During the spring of 2015, approximately 17 duffle bags and suitcases were donated so that children could leave The Village with their belongings in real luggage, not the trash bags with which they had arrived.
- **In July and August, 2015 USH raised \$1,639 for The Village's Backpack and Uniform program, increasing giving over the past two years.**
- In October, Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr along with Joanne Orlando attended the Annual Meeting of The Village.
- In December a group of children and teens had a wonderful time at The Festival of Season. The talk among the children at The Village is that the Gingerbread House room is a highlight - and that USH serves a terrific dinner.
- In January 2016 the Festival of the Seasons committee donated hats, mittens and scarves collected on the Festival tree to The Village.
- On January 31, 2016, the Good Neighbor offering of \$660 was given to the Village. On April 24th, 2016, Mark Brinkerhoff, Associate Director for Development at The Village, will be talking about the work of The Village for Families and Children in Fellowship Hall during coffee hour.

Plans for Next Year: USH will remain a friend to the children of The Village for Families and Children by participating in the same activities as last year and looking for other opportunities to benefit the children. The children of The Village have come to feel that they can rely on USH. The staff feels confident that, when needed, they can make special requests. USH can be proud of the work that has been done and the continued support offered for the future.

Council on Spiritual Life

Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

Janice Newton, Chair

Members: Nancy Reed and Janice Newton

Mission: *The Adult Programs Sub-Council strives to provide lectures, classes, workshops and other offerings for continued spiritual growth, religious learning and community fellowship. Programs are intended to be of broad appeal while meeting the needs of particular groups where practical and appropriate.*

The sponsors of these classes, programs and events affirm the Society's anti-discriminatory position by offering them at a range of times and in accessible locations, accommodating special needs as a standard practice and welcoming individuals and families of all kinds.

Accomplishments: The Programs for Adults and Families has had a very busy and successful year! One of our longest running programs, *Great Decisions*, can be traced to well before 1982. It has thrived and offers a broad perspective on world affairs to both our congregation and the broader Hartford community. The winter/spring offering meets twice a month on Sunday mornings. During the fall, the group meets for *Great Discussions*.

Another longtime favorite is the *Friday Night Pizza and a Movie*. Not only do participants enjoy delicious pizza, good company and a great movie, but there also is the opportunity for a stimulating discussion following the movie.

The Artist's Way has explored *Visualize Your Life's Journey Through the Arts* and offered the *Creative Sharing and Mutual Inspiration Society* this year.

Small Group Ministry was been offered in several forms. We had Family Friendly SGMs, SGMs that focused on Transitions and Aging Mindfully, and the traditional Small Group Ministry.

Several brand new courses were offered this year: *Saturday Morning Salon with Rev. Heather*, *Building Your Own Theology*, *Your Written Legacy*, *The Guru and You* and a workshop, *Active Hope: Reconnecting with the Web of Life and Making a Difference*.

Council on Spiritual Life

Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

continued

Tai Chi, Meditation and Dharma Gathering, Authentic Connection and Communication, Emei Quigong Practice Group and Drum Circle have been well received.

Do you enjoy reading? Check out the monthly USH Book Club. Is Ballroom Dancing something you would like to learn? We have a group for that, too! Maybe you would like to join the monthly USH Sing-a-Long group. **If you don't find an activity that is what you are looking for, maybe you would consider developing an offering!**

We have an online catalog (frequently updated), a weekly entry on the USH Enews and handouts at the programs table describing the various programs. We are at the Programs Table most every Sunday.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work with other Sub-Councils and other community members to promote a wide variety of programs. We will work with Linda Clark to try to avoid scheduling conflicts. We would very much like to increase our sub-council membership. Would you be willing to join us once in awhile at the Programs Table on Sundays or offer a workshop or program? Stop by the table and talk to us!!

Music Committee

Patrice Fitzgerald, Chair

The Music Program at USH enjoyed tremendous success during the 2015-2016 church year under the leadership of Rebecca Pacuk, Acting Choir Director, in consultation with Rev. Cathy Rion Starr and with the input of the Music Committee.

Accomplishments:

Two spectacular Music Sundays, the second of which will take place on May 1st in collaboration with the choir of the Universalist Church of West Hartford and feature the "Missa Gaia."

Reinstatement of the Composer-in-Residence Program, for which student composer Gala Flagello was chosen with the assistance of Hartt Professor Dr. Robert Carl.

Auditioning and bringing in a full complement of Choral Scholars, one for each primary voice part.

Increasing the hours and budget for the paid music staff to start to bring them closer to recommended compensation levels.

Hiring Sarah Puckett as Acting Accompanist (who remained through March 20, 2016), and who brought us, along with many talents, the memorable Benefit Concert in support of the Refugee Settlement Crisis Project.

Initiating the search for an Accompanist for the next church year.

Hiring accomplished pianist Pi-Hsun Shih until a new accompanist is selected.

Highlights of the musical year included the exciting variety of pieces featured; from a USH-specific version of the Beatles' "Obladi, Oblada" (custom words courtesy of choir member Tina Davies) to a glorious eight-part Ave Maria, along with a Solstice Celebration, the Christmas and Easter services, and of course the Music Sundays, the first of which centered on Eric Whitacre's Five Hebrew Love Songs.

Many people assisted in examining the larger musical picture at USH as part of the Music Staff Transition Team's work during this calendar year. That committee, which was formed in the spring of 2015, wrapped up its efforts by making a report to the Board with general recommendations for long-term goals.

Next year, the Music Committee hopes to establish and support another excellent team for providing service music, continue with four Choral Scholars, present two Music Sundays, and choose another Composer-in-Residence. In terms of long-range goals, encouraging additional musical groups--particularly those for children, youth, and families--is part of our vision. We also plan to partner with the Building & Grounds Committee to move toward a 21st Century sound system for the sanctuary.

Patrice Fitzgerald will be stepping down as chair of the Music Committee at the end of June, and it is anticipated that the committee will be chaired primarily by Rebecca during the 2016-2017 church year. **Rebecca's title has been changed to Choir Director—no more "Acting"—she is now official!**

Thanks are due to the members of the Music Committee for their time and energy in supporting the Society's tremendous music program. Over the year, these have included Mary-Anne Mulholland, Tina Davies, Edith Savage, Carol Sexton, Nancy Mandly, Diana Heymann, Martha Bradley as Chair of Spiritual Life, and of course Rebecca Pacuk and Rev. Cathy Rion Starr.

Finally, thanks to the members the USH Chancel Choir who donate their talents faithfully every week... many of whom have been volunteering their musical abilities for decades.

Religious Education Sub-Council

Rayla Mattson, Director of Religious Education

Co-Chairs: Currently Vacant

Members: Paula Bleck, Rachael D'Agostino, Joan Nicoll-Senft, Diana Heymann, Kristen Pildis

Mission: *To guide our youth and children in gaining a respect and appreciation for themselves, others, all living things and the environment; becoming integral parts of our Meeting House family; developing an awareness of, and appreciation for, our Judeo-Christian heritage and other world religions that influence the formation of our religious beliefs; experiencing the joy and inspiration of music and the arts; becoming responsible persons who are able to make ethical decisions in which they show their care and concern for all humanity; to welcome all children, including those with special needs, and to make every effort to accommodate all children into our program.*

Accomplishments: The program covers children and youth from ages birth to 18. The program is supported through the collaborative efforts of our ministers, the DRE, RE staff, the RE Sub-council and over 30 Congregational volunteers.

The RE program has continued to see growth in our program. We went from having a core group of about 30 students attending weekly last year to having a core group of about 50 with an additional 30 students who attend sporadically this year.

We continued our successful Chapel service which usually takes place once a month during the first 15 minutes of the worship service. The Director of Religious Education leads a separate worship service where the children assist with doing readings, singing, playing instruments and designing the flow and order of the service. This year they will take what they have learned and lead, for the first time, a full worship service. This will take place over the summer and they have been working hard on preparing for it. The Chapel is also time for the children to check in with one another and bring any areas of discussion or concern directly to the DRE.

This year, we expanded and continued to explore ways of incorporating the children and youth into the worship service. Our all ages services as well as Christmas Eve have incorporated the children and youth more. This year, in addition to role playing, the children and youth helped narrate, plan and even played instruments during the services. They are developing new skills and they enjoy being a part of the service and sharing with the congregation.

This year the DRE continued to develop her network of colleagues, allowing for continued support and growth as well as opportunities to collaborate with other DREs. The DRE will further expand her professional development this summer by attending a weeklong RE program on Star Island thanks to a budget increase that has allowed for these very worthwhile opportunities.

The Youth Group, under the direction of John Bengtson, has once again logged over fifty hours of outreach work making soup, preparing lunch, and feeding the homeless at Church St. Eats. In November, they raised close to \$1,200 for My Sisters' Place by sleeping-out in boxes. They are developing leadership skills by choosing subjects of interest and concern to them and facilitating group discussions. This year they have hosted several Youth Groups from other CT UU congregations. The groups have joined them for Sunday morning discussions as well as soup making. They are learning the broader definition of what it means to be a UU.

Our middle school students have studied different religions this year, taking the time to visit other congregations like Faith Congregational and the Quaker Meeting House. They have had speakers come meet with them here to discuss different **beliefs and practices like the Baha'i Faith and Yoga.** The 6th graders in the group went for an evening retreat to the UU congregation in Manchester. They worked with the 6th graders there on team building and on our UU Principles. The class has continued to grow in size again this year.

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Religious Education Sub-Council

continued

The 3rd-5th grade class has focused on community outreach this year, collecting supplies and monetary donations for My Sisters' Place. **This was done over several weeks where they made and sold craft items and baked goods after service. They also visited My Sisters' Place as a class to drop off their donations and learn more about the facility.** The class has focused on learning through service. They have realized that even as children, they can make a difference. The focus was also on self led learning where the students helped make decisions about what they learned based on what was important to them. They also planned and carried out a *Time for All Ages*, sharing with the congregation what they had been working on and what was meaningful to them.

The Pre-Kindergarten through second grade class has grown exponentially this year, making it one of our larger classes. This program looked at how the students saw the world around them and then used classics from Dr. Seuss to explore Unitarian Universalism concepts. The group also learned how to deal with the challenges of having a larger group with a wide range of ages and learning styles.

The nursery group, ages birth to three, has continued to experience growth and will continue this growth into next year with the additional of at least three new infants. The program did much better this year having had their second year of the larger classroom. We continued our theme based circle time which includes working with them on introducing themselves, learning a chalice lighting with hand movements, story-telling, and an introduction to basic UU concepts and themes.

Other activities involving our children include our one room classroom where students from all grade levels work on a project or activity as a collective group, our Family Friendly SGM and our many multigenerational events.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work towards our goals outlined in the mission statement. Our most pressing needs are for an expanded Religious Education Sub-Council, new teachers and assistants as our classes are growing and there is a need to break up some of our larger groups especially our prek-2nd grade class. We will continue to update our curriculum materials to better meet our classroom needs. Our goal is to have a 3 year rotating curriculum for each grade level.

We are also expanding our offerings to meet the needs of our growing program. We will again be offering a Coming of Age program which has not been offered here in at least the last eight years. This program will focus on our 7th and 8th graders as they work on moving from being children to adulthood. They will work on more meaningful connections here at USH, dig deeper in into the UU Faith and take a closer look at themselves. In addition, we will be looking to train OWL facilitators for the coming years. OWL is a UU based curriculum that explores sexuality for our 8th grade and 9th grade students.

The DRE will continue to work on professional development and is looking forward to attending *Coming Home* next year which is a group of black UU professionals. She will also continue to develop her DRE network and continue to grow and expand her collaborative efforts with other UU congregations.

In conjunction with our Co-Ministers we will continue to involve and incorporate the youth and children in the morning worship service. The Director of Religious Education will continue making connections with other UU congregations and organizations in Connecticut and around the country as well continuing to maintain membership in LREDA and other professional groups. Finally, the Religious Education Sub-Council will continue our efforts to make more meaningful connections with groups here within the congregation as we expand on the connections and interactions we have established.

Worship Arts Sub-Council

Chair: Vacant

Members: Martha Bradley, Ann LaPorte-Bryan, Patrice Fitzgerald, Margaret Leicach, Edith Savage, Sue Smolski

*Worship Associates: Katherine Ann Anderson, John Brancato, Laurie Kelliher, Ann LaPorte-Bryan
Margaret Leicach, Sue Smolski, Susan Spaniol, Julie Grace, Lisa Galinski, Phil Gardner*

Mission: *To assist the Co-Ministers in creating, year round, a meaningful worship experience that is responsive to the needs of our congregation, offers spiritual renewal, and reflects our Unitarian Universalist traditions.*

The Worship Arts committee has been divided into two parts; Worship planning and *Worship Associates*. Worship planning is currently without a chairperson. Worship Associates is chaired by Sue Smolski. The division of responsibilities was made because it was felt that there are two distinct sets of responsibilities, and dividing these roles would allow more people to participate without feeling overburdened.

As part of the goals set for this year, Worship Arts has continued to work with our ministers to refine the worship experience, and include more congregants in the program of worship. To that end, different congregants have been included as chalice lighters each week, congregants have been included as musicians and singers in addition to the choir, and more congregants have been trained as worship associates (see Worship Associate report).

Another goal set last year was to increase communication among members of worship arts, music and religious education committees. The Spiritual Life Council held a joint meeting of these groups at the beginning of the church year, and has recommended continuing to merge the efforts of these groups in planning and preparing for worship programs throughout the year (see Music Transition Team report).

Chancel Arts has instituted a program of assigning each week's chancel arrangement to specific congregants. There is also an effort, led by Paula Bleck, to design a mural for the wall at the end of the library.

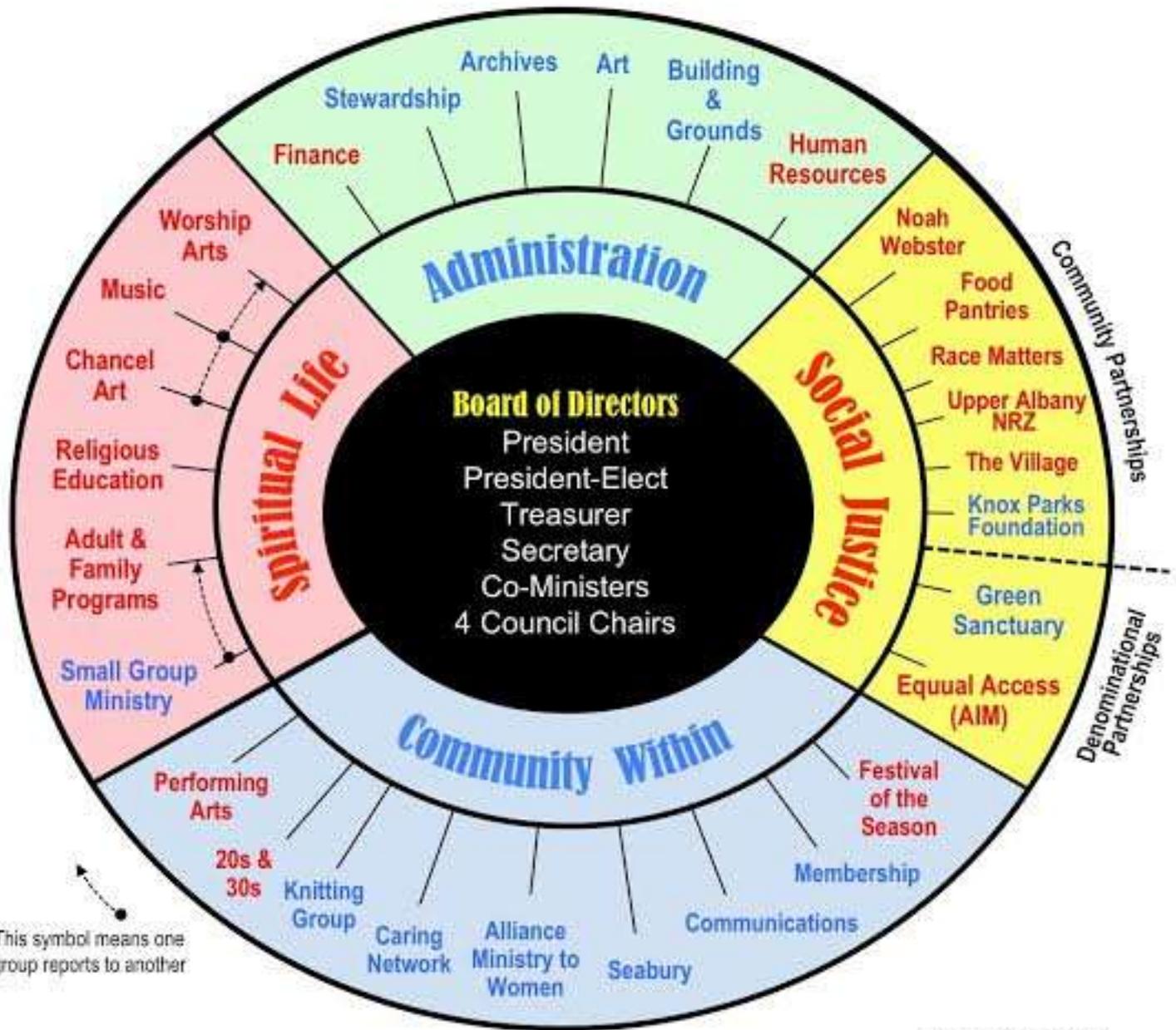
Worship Associates: The number of Worship Associates has doubled this year. After completing an initial training, our five new worship associates have shadowed an experienced worship associate and have begun to participate in services with our Co-Ministers. Our experienced worship associates have provided leadership for services with pulpit guests as well as our Co-Ministers.

In our Spring Educational Meeting, the USH Archives provided the sources for a brief and enlightening exploration of some of the history of UU liturgy, we discussed the process and responsibilities of the expanded role for a worship associate, such as when there is a pulpit guest and provided an opportunity to write and share our own meditation/prayer.

Sign Up Genius continued as the method for signing up and tracking who is the Worship Associate for each service. Summer Services for 2016 are actively being developed. The theme will be our six UU Sources.

Plans for Next Year: Continue integration of worship associated roles to maximize seamlessness of worship experience. Increase the number of worship associates who are comfortable with the expanded role. Continue to recruit new worship associates. Continue to have fall and spring training sessions for all worship associates.

Unitarian Society of Hartford - Council Structure



Updated: 10/28/2015

Committees that Report to the Board of Directors

Audit - Nominating - Endowment
 Planning - Healthy Relations

LEGEND

Red Font = Cathy is Lead Minister in this Area
 Blue Font = Heather is Lead Minister in this Area

Staff Positions

Co-Ministers
 Director of Religious Education
 Business Manager - Acting Choir Director
 Office Administrator - Custodian
 Sextons - Youth Advisor
 Nursery Staff - Sunday Sexton
 Acting Accompanist