



Unitarian Society of Hartford Annual Report

For Fiscal Year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

Table of Contents

Annual Meeting Agenda	1
Proposed Slate for the Board.....	2
Annual Meeting May 16, 2021 Review	4
President’s Report.....	7
<i>Leadership and our Board.....</i>	7
<i>Impact of COVID</i>	8
<i>Volunteer Energy and Action</i>	8
<i>Staffing</i>	9
<i>Planning for the Future.....</i>	9
Secretary’s Report.....	9
Treasurer’s Report	10
Staff Reports.....	11
<i>Coordinator of Religious Education</i>	11
<i>Church Office</i>	12
<i>Building Rentals</i>	13
Council on Administration	13
<i>Stewardship Sub-Council.....</i>	13
<i>Building & Grounds Sub-Council</i>	14
<i>Human Resources Sub-Council.....</i>	16
Council on Community Within	16
<i>Membership.....</i>	16
<i>Adult Programs.....</i>	17
<i>Communications</i>	17
<i>Caring Network Sub-Council</i>	18
<i>Meeting House Presents</i>	19
Council on Social Justice	20
<i>The Village for Families and Children.....</i>	21
<i>Noah Webster Micromagnet Society School Ministry.....</i>	22
<i>Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry (AIM)</i>	22
<i>Green Sanctuary Sub-Council.....</i>	22
<i>The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).....</i>	23
Council on Spiritual Life	24
<i>Religious Education.....</i>	24
<i>Music Ministry</i>	25
<i>Worship Associates</i>	25
<i>SpiritLife</i>	25
Strategic Plan Update for 2022	25
USH Board of Directors and Staff.....	26
USH Council Personnel.....	27

Annual Meeting Agenda

The Unitarian Society of Hartford, May 22, 2022
11:30 am (or immediately following the Worship Service)

In Person and via Zoom

Introduction

Eve Pech, *President-Elect*

Opening Words, Greeting, and Update on Personnel

Robert Spector, *President*

Report from our Secretary, Approval of Last Year's Minutes

Sarah Harmon McKenzie, *Secretary*

Our Summer Schedule of Services

Sue Smolski, *Worship Associate Coordinator*

Highlights from 2021-22

David Newton, *Buildings and Grounds*

Jon Covault, *Chair of the Council on Administration*

Laura Cipriano, *Communications*

Good Neighbor Offering

Dana Donovan, *Chair of the Council on Social Justice*

Volunteer Recognition Awards

Robert Spector, *President*

Stewardship and Our Budget

Joe Rubin, *Stewardship Chair* and Bob Hewey, *Treasurer*

Voting on our new slate of Board Members

Congregation

Eve Pech – *President*

Dana Donovan – *President Elect*

Jon Covault – *Treasurer*

Judy Sullivan – *Chair of the Council on Social Justice*

Tina Davies – *Chair of the Council on Community Within*

Paul Cipriano – *Chair of the Council on Administration*

Proposed Slate for the Board

*Presented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee
Martha Bradley, Chair*

The Nominating Committee has provided the following slate of nominations for the Board of Directors, to be voted on at the Annual Meeting on May 22, 2022. The Nominees are:

President – Eve Pech for a one-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023

President-Elect – Dana Donovan for a one-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023

Treasurer – Jon Covault for a two-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2024

Chair, Community Within Council – Tina Davies for a two-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2024

Chair, Administration Council – Paul Cipriano for a two-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2024

Chair, Social Justice Council – Judy Sullivan for a one-year term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023 (to complete Dana’s term)

Eve Pech (President, Term: 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023) I’ve been a member of USH for 35 years, singing in the choir long ago and more recently chair of the Caring Network and my term as the USH Board President-Elect. My husband and I joined USH after our first child was born because we wanted to have our children learn about religion from an all-embracing point of view. Now that they are grown, we value USH for its inspiration, solace, and community. My professional background is in global education.

Dana Donovan (President-Elect, Term: 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023) Dana first stepped foot in USH in the fall of 2017. At present he serves as the chair for the Social Justice Council. Dana has been on a lifelong spiritual journey. He became a practicing pagan 25 years ago. Dana spent the last 45 years as a professional woodworker, specializing in designing and building staircases in homes and public buildings throughout New England and New York. His greatest joy is his 9 children, 24 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren.

Jon Covault (Treasurer, Term: 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2024) Jon has been a member of UU congregations for the past 20 years including in Provincetown, Northampton, and Springfield where he served as auditor for 1 year. For the past 9 years he and his husband Michael have attended the Unitarian Society of Hartford. Jon is a long-time New England transplant to New England from Iowa where he grew up attending Lutheran services. He enjoys spending time in the summer with Mike at their rustic camp in Maine on Moosehead Lake and when at home in Simsbury, time in the garden and walking the Ethel Walker School Trails with Mike and their dog, Rocky.

Tina Davies (Chair of Community Within, Term: 7.01.2022 - 6.30.2024) Tina came to USH in 2008; she’s identified as a Unitarian for about 30 years now. Here, she’s often in the choir, and has served as Board Secretary (2011-13) and Chair for Community Within (2014-16). According to Wikipedia, the number “three” has religious or cultural significance in many societies, suggesting wholeness, or completion. Returning to the board for a third term of service, then, feels appropriate and well, complete. Tina is now fully retired, barring unforeseen enticements, and enjoys spending time in nature, playing with fabric, reading, and enjoying the antics of her cats.

Paul Cipriano (Chair, Administration Council, Term: 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2024) Paul was born and raised in Connecticut. Paul met his wife Laura while attending Central Connecticut State University. They have two children, Catharine and David, now grown. Paul works in marketing for Cumberland Farms and when he is not working enjoys reading, gardening and trying to play guitar. Music has been an important part of Laura and Paul's married life. They have volunteered together at many different music festivals including Clearwater and Falcon Ridge. They volunteered and served on the board of directors for The Sounding Board Coffeehouse in West Hartford. Since joining USH, Paul and Laura have been co-chairs of Meeting House Presents which is in its 4th season.

Judy Sullivan (Chair, Social Justice Council, Term 7.01.2022 to 6.30.2023) Judy moved to CT from MA in 2013 and now lives in West Hartford. She has a BA from Wilkes University and received her RN from Albany Medical Center School of Nursing. She is a past board member for United Way, former state representative for National Patient Advocacy Foundation, lobbying on state and federal levels for healthcare issues, and past board member for PA Oncology Hematology Management Society. She has been a foster child care program volunteer mentor and volunteer for Hospice at Hebrew Healthcare. Judy has five children and eight grandchildren in four states, and one small dog who thinks he is an only child. Judy is currently on the USH Welcoming Team and the Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee. She has served as chair of the Council on Social Justice and is now returning to serve the remainder of Dana Donovan's term.

Listed below is the current Board member whose 3rd contiguous term continues until 2023:

Sarah McKenzie (Secretary, Term: 7.01.2021 - 6.30.2023) Sarah first began attending service at USH in 2014 (although she had been here as a teen for YRUU conferences). Prior to then, she had been attending the Universalist Church of West Hartford sporadically, since she was in the sixth grade (with a long break when she lived in Vermont). Since coming here to USH, she has been involved with the choir, Meeting House, served on the Interim Search Committee, and has been a member of the Board since 2017. Along with her husband Owen, she is thrilled to have such a warm and supportive community here at USH for their family to be a part of.

Listed below is the current Board member whose 2nd contiguous term continues until 2023:

Peter Meny (Chair of Spiritual Life, 7.01.2021 - 6.30.2023) I have been a member of the Society since 1985. I grew up in Hartford and was raised as a Catholic. My professional career was spent in Glastonbury where I worked as a school psychologist for the public schools for 33 years. I continue to be a part-time consultant. At USH I've served in a variety of capacities including Board President, multiple Council Chairs, and chair of the Stewardship Committee. Presently, I'm a Worship Associate and member of the Building and Grounds Committee. My wife, Deb, and I live in West Hartford.

Annual Meeting May 16, 2021 Review

Submitted by Sarah McKenzie, Secretary

Robert Spector, President-Elect - Introduction

Martha Bradley, President – Opening Words and Greeting

This year's theme is transitions, this is our second year running our Annual Meeting on Zoom

Sarah McKenzie, Secretary's Report

In the past year, the following members have passed away:

Betty Arnold

Jane Bronk

Paul Christie

Milly Geeter

Nita Hansen

Joanne McClurg

Thomas Reed

Sharon Scully

LeRoy Spaniol (husband of USH member Susan Spaniol)

We welcomed 3 new members this year.

As of February 1, of this year, USH certified 200 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association, a slight decrease over last year. In previous years, this number would determine our "fair share" contribution to the UUA, but as of 2018 the "fair share" contribution is calculated as a percentage of operating expenses rather than based on the number of members.

Bob Hewey, Treasurer's Report

Looking like we will have a surplus of \$2,000 rather than a \$10,000 deficit. Our reductions in pledge income have been offset in a reduction in expenses due to decreased use of the building during the pandemic shutdown. Knox foundation has paid for water actually used in their community gardens. Budget summary is available on the USH website. Bottom line is that we are in pretty good shape. Some challenges in re-opening the Meeting House. Stewardship has been lagging a little so far this year, board members have been making follow-up calls.

Laurie Kelliher, Summer Schedule of Services

GA will mark the beginning of USH summer services on May 30. 4th of July will be joint with the New London congregation. Summer theme is Embracing and Releasing. Ingathering is planned for in-person on September 12.

Tina Davies – Recovering from Covid-19 and Reopening the Meeting House

Meeting House is open for meetings in accordance with State of CT guidelines. Please schedule with Buffie and Rayla, please do not drop in with a large group. Thanked the following people: Carolyn Carlson in Membership for coordinating the Inquirer series. Eve Pech and the Caring Network for keeping in touch with members of the congregation. Groups will be moving back into the Meeting

House in the fall. We now have a chance to remake or make anew some of the gatherings that function as connective tissue for USH – small groups, etc. Let’s see what we can create.

Jon Covault – Hybrid Service update

Three remote controlled cameras are mounted on the back wall, production desk is in the office. A 51” tv with a high-quality webcam for hybrid-style meetings as well. Rob shared his screen with a video of how it may look in the fall.

Sarah McKenzie – Interim Minister Search Update

Search process is ongoing, tomorrow is the date we give the UUA our ranked list, and the ministers give the UUA their ranked lists. UUA will make matches based on that. Search Committee will have an update once all negotiations are concluded with the selected candidate.

Rob Spector – Stewardship Update

Encouraged by the number of pledges, but we haven’t received enough, and not enough of the people who pledged last year have pledged yet this year. USH has been through a few transitions since 1997, we will be just fine. This church is much more about the individuals that make up the congregation as a whole. Lots of things to look forward to. Technology is allowing us to bring people in who otherwise may not have been able to attend.

Tara Cote – Reflections on our past year

This year at USH has been a challenging year, but we’ve made it, and we’ve made it with grace. Fellowship hour has been so special. Felt truly able to meet and interact with members of our congregation that otherwise wouldn’t have. Broke down generational barriers. Looking forward to in-person gatherings, as well as continuing with the virtual meetings which allow people who live further out to easily participate.

Board Voting

Robert Spector – President

Eve Pech – President-Elect

Sarah McKenzie – Secretary

Peter Meny – Spiritual Life Chair Dana Donovan – Social Justice Chair

Vote on slate of Board Candidates:

Aye – 49

Nay – 1

Abstain – 10

Any General Questions of Comments from the Congregation?

Marye Gail Harrison - Sign of Strength that many programs continue regardless of ministerial presence, keeps vital congregational life going.

Carolyn Carlson – Is there any consideration of in-person services during the summer, or are we still aiming for September. Laurie – In-gathering will be the first time we will be meeting in person. Summer Services will be online, with perhaps the worship being led from the pulpit.

Doris Maldonado – What incoming Board will be working on diversifying USH, including Board members, subcommittees, etc. making sure we are living our mission. Rob - Short answer is we don't know. Board meetings will continue to be via zoom. Doris also doesn't know what's been going on with the POC group, or if it is still on-going. Rayla will talk separately with Doris about the POC group. Rob asked that Doris email he and Martha and we will add it to the June Agenda.

Joe Rubin – Looking for the results of the Board Vote. 49 – yes, 1 – no, 10 – abstain.

Tina Davies – forgot to mention earlier was the volunteer recognition award. Fell through the cracks this year, plan is for the current board to consider, and make an announcement when we reconvene in September.

Carolyn Carlson – What is the current status of the campaign, other than it isn't enough. What is current # pledged. Rob – 72 pledges so far, for a total of \$258,000. Also – did we qualify for a second PPP loan. Bob – we did not apply for a second loan. We did get a \$5,000 grant from the State of CT being used to help pay for the technology for hybrid services.

Tara Cote – wanted to clarify that the Meeting House can now be used for in-person gatherings.

Rick Tsukada and Judy Robbins – during the course of the year, there are probably tons of decisions that fall to the minister. How are those things going to be handled during this interim period? Rob – Interim Minister goal start date is August 1, we have pastoral coverage over the summer. Martha – if there are personnel issues, there's an HR committee to advise the board, Worship Associates covering summer services. There will certainly be unanticipated things, so there may be some improvisation, but we are pretty well set. Rob – How things will operate under Interim Minister – short answer is that we'll have to wait and see what that person's individual style is.

Dana Donovan – As far as Interim Minister goes – the people we have interviewed and references we have checked; they all have strong administrative and organizational skills. Volunteers – there is great need for new volunteers across all committees and councils. Please bring your ideas and enthusiasm!

Eve Pech – had sound problem, will enter in chat. Wanted to point out the David Brooks column in the Courant today.

Tara Cote – Advertised the afternoon hike at 3pm at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown, bring a raincoat just in case it rains!

The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 12:08pm.

President's Report

Robert Spector

This has been a very active and productive year. In May 2021, we were still operating remotely and had not gathered in person for over a year. We had recently learned that our ministers were moving on and had to prepare for hiring a new minister and shifting back to in-person services. One year later, we have accomplished so much. We have been gathering in person since ingathering in September 2021. All of our services are live-streamed to reach those who are unable to attend at the Meeting House. We have hired an interim minister through August 2023 and already begun discussions of our transition to a settled minister. Our committees are once again active, and our volunteers have stepped up over and over again to support the important work of our church.

Leadership and our Board

We were presented with a difficult situation in May 2021, when we had to recruit both a President and a President-Elect to step into Board positions at a time when we were not meeting in person, all services were still remote and our ministers had just resigned. This was a difficult time. Despite this challenge, the nominating committee was successful and found two individuals who were new to the Board but long-time members of the church. The Board quickly developed a strong working relationship, and the Board benefited from a group of hardworking members dedicated to navigating the congregation through the challenges of COVID and transitioning from our settled ministers. Several members and Board members immediately volunteered to join the search team for an interim minister and spent the summer reviewing applications and interviewing candidates, culminating with the Board's decision to hire Rev. Terry Cummings as our interim minister for a two-year term ending in August 2023. The Board met for an all-day retreat in August 2021 at Martha Bradley's home and, led by our new interim minister, Rev. Terry, participated in an introspective and thought-provoking planning session for our coming year. With Rev. Terry's help, we started to better understand that several members had strong feelings about our prior ministers' term and that we had to spend time listening to members and hearing about their concerns and experiences over the past several years. As a result of that meeting, we implemented Listening Circles to provide members an opportunity to share with Rev. Terry and Board members their thoughts and feelings, in small group settings, about the departure of our ministers. We also decided to present a Board update during the first Sunday service of each month so that members could hear regular presentations from Board members about the ongoing work that the Board was undertaking. At the request of our staff and Rev. Terry, we began reviewing some of the policies and procedures that were in place during the previous ministry to see what changes might encourage a more open and productive relationship between the congregation and the staff, the Board and the staff, and the staff and the minister. Also at the suggestion of Rev. Terry, we assembled a Governance Task Force to review our current Strategic Plan and church structure and recommend changes to the Board, some of which will be presented to the Board prior to the start of our next church year. And, most importantly, we engaged in deep discussions about our transition to a settled minister and when that search should begin, culminating with a both another Board retreat at the Meeting House in December 2021 and an all-congregation meeting in January 2022 regarding that important decision.

We move into 2022/23 with an exciting Board slate, welcoming two new members to the Board, a new Treasurer and a new President-Elect, and welcoming back several other Board members who have graciously offered to continue to serve.

Impact of COVID

Starting in the summer of 2021, we began permitting staff members and volunteers to return to the Meeting House. At the same time, due to the dedicated work of several volunteers, at least one Board member and our Buildings and Ground Sub-council, we were able to install the technology to allow for live-streaming of our Sunday church service through Zoom. With two video cameras allowing for two views of the sanctuary, and wide-screen televisions set up at the edges of the chancel, viewers at home and in the church are able to experience Sunday services safely and according to what they think is best for their health and well-being. Starting with Ingathering, the Meeting House has been open for in-person Sunday services. Quite an impressive accomplishment and an example of what our congregation can accomplish together. We required masks to be worn by everyone entering the church and had a vaccination requirement for staff members and volunteers. In January, we temporarily returned to online only services for a couple of weeks and then welcomed in a more limited number of in-person members, but as the Omicron wave passed, we returned in February to resume Sunday services without these limitations. As the church year comes to a close, we no longer require masks to be worn by those who are fully vaccinated.

Volunteer Energy and Action

At the start of the church year last Fall, several members organized a Volunteer Fair in Fellowship Hall to breathe life back into our sub-councils and all of the aspects of church that do not occur on Sunday mornings. Though we were concerned that it might be difficult to get people motivated and interested in participating in these activities, the congregation came back with renewed energy and a hunger for action. Our Communications sub-council started meeting regularly and had several new members join, so that the group was able to take on significant projects over the past year, including re-designing our website and taking over the management of our weekly e-News. Thanks to the work of our members on the Communications sub-council, our website is up-to-date, user-friendly and relevant to the day-to-day activities of the church. And the e-News has become such an integral part of church life, giving our members a weekly window into the activities of the church and the ways in which members can get involved. Similarly, our Buildings and Grounds sub-council has benefited from strong membership and has taken on a number of important projects, including replacing and installing improved lighting in the sanctuary, replacing worn carpet throughout the building, and purchasing and installing video cameras, microphones and televisions to help live stream our Sunday Services. They have also been investigating the possibility of having our church designated as a historical landmark. Our Worship Associates have played such an important role both in making sure we have Sunday services during the church year despite unexpected absences and in organizing our Sunday services over the Summer. These dedicated volunteers take on so much responsibility in planning the content of our services. We would be lost without them. Our Caring Network volunteers have played a similarly important role in supporting pastoral care and providing assistance to members in distress. Several times this past year, members have gone through significant medical issues, and the Caring Network has been there to

provide friendship, resources and hands-on assistance. At Rev. Terry's suggestion, we also started back up our Religious Education and Finance sub-councils to better support the work of our RE Director and our Treasurer.

Staffing

This past church year was also a time of transition. Our intern minister, Rev. Dianne Daniels, completed her term with us in December 2021, and we were very sorry to see her go, as so many members had come to rely on her, not just for her incredible contributions to Sunday services, but also for her pastoral care. We also said goodbye to Rayla Mattson, our RE Director, who resigned after working at the church for over ten years. In addition, Brian Mullen, our long-time bookkeeper, retired and moved to Florida, leaving a gaping hole for the Treasurer and Finance Sub-Council. Fortunately, we had others step in to fill these roles, and we are now benefiting from the talents of these new staff members. Transitions can be difficult, especially in the middle of a pandemic. As a result of these staffing changes and other immediate hiring needs, Rev. Terry encouraged the Board to appoint a personnel committee to take on the responsibility of drafting job descriptions, posting for job openings, interviewing candidates and making hiring decisions. The Board did so, and we have seen several positive staffing additions, with the hiring of a new Sunday morning technology support person, a new RE Coordinator, and a new bookkeeper.

Planning for the Future

As we close out FY2022, I will be stepping down from the Board to be succeeded ably (upon your vote) by Eve Pech. Eve has been an incredible support and an equal partner to me throughout this past year, and we are so fortunate to have her take over as President. She will be ably assisted by Dana Donovan, who is moving into the President-Elect role from his current Board position of Social Justice Chair. Eve and Dana and the rest of the Board will lead USH during such a crucial time. Looking ahead, we will be having many discussions about searching for a settled minister and when to begin that process. We will continue to figure out what improvements we can make in our governance structure and what pastoral needs our members have in identifying what kind of ministry might best serve the church for the next five years and beyond.

Secretary's Report

Sarah Harmon McKenzie, Secretary

As of February 1, of this year, USH certified 200 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association. In previous years, this number would determine our "fair share" contribution to the UUA, but as of 2018 the "fair share" contribution is calculated as a percentage of operating expenses rather than based on the number of members. Our current church school enrollment is 25, and we have 129 pledging units.

In the past year, the following members have passed away:

Jeannette Angelbeck

Valerie Klokow

Since May of 2021, we have welcomed 5 new members.

Treasurer's Report

Bob Hewey, Treasurer

As the USH Treasurer, my primary function is to update the Board on the current status of the budget and to coordinate the development of a new budget for the following year. Another function is to review and approve checks that are issued to pay vendors and our staff.

This effort was impacted in mid-March 2022 by the sudden resignation and move to Florida of our long-time bookkeeper, Brian Mullen, who generated all the checks and provided budget reviews, detailed draft budgets, updates on stewardship, and several other periodic reports. In response to Brian's loss, we opted to hire Payroll Matters, an agency in Manchester, CT, to handle payroll for all of our regular staff instead of relying on the bookkeeper to prepare the checks and handle taxes. Also, the accounts are not as complete in detail as they have been in past years. However, I have been able to keep the income deposited and bills paid with the assistance of a temporary bookkeeper. In late April, I hired a new bookkeeper, Patty Peck, who is expected to be able to do much of the work previously done by Brian.

I also chair the Finance Sub-Council, which brings together representatives from the Endowment Committee (Steve Basche), the Council on Administration (Jon Covault), Building & Grounds (David Newton and Jim Venneman), Stewardship (Carolyn Carlson and Joe Rubin), Personnel Committee (Greg Nicket) and the minister (Rev. Terry Cummings). Finance monitors current year income and expenses versus the budget, advises the Treasurer in developing the subsequent year's budget and provides for a forum to discuss any issues that come up throughout the year involving money. The committee determined that the money donated for sound abatement, which was found to be impractical, could be used for other capital expenditures. Two of the projects chosen so far were replacing carpeting in upstairs rooms and help with completion of the sanctuary lighting project.

Despite these impacts, I can report that the USH cashflow has been robust this fiscal year, with pledge income expected to exceed the budget and expenses expected to fall below budget. The details and projections are still in development due to the loss of Brian Mullen. I expect finances to be nearly back to normal by the end of my term on June 30, 2022.

Staff Reports

Coordinator of Religious Education

Annie Witzler

I started working within the USH RE program when I was 17 in the summer of 2015. I have usually worked with grades 3rd thru 5th but also substituted with other age groups or worked with all ages during special events and multigenerational services. I assisted with curriculum selection, preparation, and execution nearly every year alongside Rayla Matteson, the previous DRE of USH. When Rayla resigned, I was contacted as a possible replacement for the short term. After a trial period under the title of Acting Religious Education Associate, I began my term as the USH Coordinator of Religious Education on March 1st, 2022. I came into my position with the two main goals in mind: 1) Reconnecting with families with youth and children who had been active in the RE program prior to COVID, and 2) Assessing, repairing, and making plans to maintain the method through which religious education is run at USH, which includes strong and consistent communication channels, quality programming on Sunday mornings, and plans for a shift to virtual services should the pandemic require us to once again.

I have established a new Sunday morning class structure: A one-room schoolhouse model that features activities matching the Sunday service's theme, and providing a corresponding Time for All Ages, usually in the form of a story. To make the program look new and attractive to both returning families and newcomers alike, we established a new name and logo: The Chalice Clubhouse. The clubhouse has been a big success, with children and youth enjoying a variety of activities ranging from making their own robots to playing to doing cooperative riddle games.

On the organizational side of things, I made a new RE sign-in station beside the welcome table at the front of the sanctuary for easy access to parents and for effective record keeping. I file away the attendance sheets during my office hours during the week typically. I also created a new RE newsletter, which outlined upcoming Chalice Clubhouse activities and RE events upcoming at USH, which is emailed to parents currently in our records, and also made available on the USH website for any newcomers to get up to date information. Finally, I updated the online forms for new student sign-up and RE volunteer sign-up, taking them into Google Forms and making sure any results were delivered in a secure and orderly manner.

To draw attention our program I have coordinated three special RE events, two were held in April, the third and final coming on May 22nd as The Annual Meeting.

The first was our Easter Sunday celebration on April 17th, which saw the return of our beloved tradition of the Easter Egg Hunt and the new addition of a family-friendly DIY photo taking area in the Chapel. I experimented with Facebook Advertising to help spread word of the event, which resulting in two parties of newcomers attending alongside our regular families. A total of five children and youth participated in the Easter Egg Hunt, and some of the eggs and treats went downstairs to Coffee Hour for the adults to also enjoy some festive treats. The DIY photo taking area was also a hit, especially with our guests, who all expressed interest in USH and have since been added to our email listings.

The second was the Annual Workday on April 23rd, hosted jointly with the Building & Grounds Sub-council. I helped organize a breakfast buffet alongside Janice Newton for the hour before the work began, which was well attended and even inspired some baking in our congregants! For the RE projects, we weeded the overgrown flowerbed outside the nursery, washed most of the toys and playsets in the nursery, and picked up trash in the Hartford Community Garden down by the Park River.

The third, and largest venture, will be our Annual Meeting event which will take place on May 22nd, 2022. I helped find catering for the event, and donated money to the cause to ensure a fine luncheon will be available for everyone. I am also planning games, arts and crafts, and a scavenger hunt to entertain the children and youth while the meeting takes place.

I could go on... but my space here is limited. For the complete presentation of my RE ideas, stop by the RE office and I will give you the 6-page PDF complete with budgets and details. Overall, my biggest goal is helping the Congregation as a whole feel hopeful and excited for the future. I believe ours at USH will be a bright one, and I am truly honored to be able to work at such a wonderful organization.

Church Office

Buffie Pinney, Office Administrator

I came to USH via Robert Half Agency as of September of 2019, and happily remain to today. I have continued to make progress in my role here with specific focus on becoming more proficient in Church Windows, becoming the Rentals Manager and assisting the Treasurer & Bookkeeper with bringing on Nanni Acevedo as a daycare assistant and assuming a minor roll with payroll. My goals always are to continue to enhance and fine tune my responsibilities/skills here as Office Administrator while continuing to work closely to support the Minister, the Board, my team, and congregant members. I will continue to expand my knowledge base so I may better serve the community here at USH, and look forward to my continued assignment with a desire to enhance the responsibilities of this position.

Ongoing Duties. Daily management of the following:

- Mail – Emails – Phone (monitoring, distributions & requests)
- E-News/Worship Reminder/E-Briefs on EMMA
- OOS/Happenings liaison/prep
- Building utility maintenance contracts/certificates
- Stewardship mailings/prep
- ZOOM room management and instruction for member use
- Worship Associate and Volunteer Liaison
- Working with Sexton to secure building safety/security/general
- maintenance
- Maintain Church Windows Database

Building Rentals

Rentals Manager: Buffie Pinney

This role was given to me in February of 2022 and I have succeeded in updating and organizing the rental information. I have managed to continue several long term contracts and acquired two weddings for this August both paid in full. This year with our rentals, the goal will still be to increase funds coming into USH from outside sources in order to diversify/increase our income streams. The purpose of having a Rentals Manager is to facilitate the use of the building for non-church related events. Internal USH sponsored events are still handled by me as Office Administrator. I plan on working with some members who have a wide range of associates still out in the workforce for greater saturation within the surrounding communities. I would like to create a new USH brochure with fresh images and a more current professional layout that I may then distribute to the local event halls such as River's Edge and Simsbury Inn in Simsbury as well as North House and Avon Old Farms Hotel along with other facilities. I plan on reaching out to the local florists and caterers as well to increase our visibility within the surrounding towns as a wedding ceremony "destination liaison".

Council on Administration

Chair: Jon Covault

The Administration Council is composed of the following sub-councils (chairperson):

Ambulatory Art (Diane Cadrain)

Archives (Larry Lunden)

Building and Grounds (Stuart Spence and David Newton)

Finance (Bob Hewey-treasurer)

Human Resources (Greg Nickett)

Library (Open) and

Stewardship (Joe Rubin).

Stewardship Sub-Council

*Joe Rubin, Chair; Members: Carolyn Carlson, Jon Covault, Ginny Hedrick,
Jim Venneman*

We held a hybrid auction "Food, Fun, Fellowship and Treasures" auction this fall with online bidding followed by an in-person auction with Bob Hewey as auctioneer on November 14, 2021 after Sunday service complete with videos of some of our USH vocal talent. In total the 2021 auction generated \$7,170. We had 31 winning bidders for 70 items!! A few people are primed for a 2022 auction and have already left some items to bid on in the office.

2022-23 Stewardship Campaign interim report: As of May 5, 2022, we had pledges from about 77 households totaling about \$255,159. Over half of the pledges included meaningful increases or were new pledges -- obviously both positive indicators. We are very grateful to our generous and committed pledgers. Of course we have still been unable to hold large in-person Stewardship events. Overall, we are about where we were last year in our pledge drive at this time. Although there was not a formal Stewardship Committee this year, Carolyn Carlson, Jim Venneman, Ginny Hedrick and Jon Covault have all assisted our efforts.

We will provide additional reminders to those who have not yet pledged, with a goal of having enough information for the Board to budget by the beginning of June. Of course, it is possible that some people are waiting to pledge pending further word about the status of our minister. The unexpected departure of our longtime bookkeeper, Brian Mullen has posed some new transitional challenges this year, but with the help of our Treasurer, Bob Hewey, and Lisa Galinski, who has been managing our new online giving portal, we are working through them.

If anyone has questions about the receipt or status of their pledge, or other related matters, you are welcome to contact Joe Rubin directly, joerubin[at]snet.net.

Building & Grounds Sub-Council

Co-Chairs: Stu Spence & David Newton

*Members: Paul Cipriano, Laura Cipriano, Lucille Giammatteo, Toni Gold,
Bill Simmons, Peter Meny, Ron Sexton, Jim Venneman, Fred Louis, Hugh Schweitzer*

Friends of B&G: Ed Sax, Janice Newton, Tina Davies, Jon Covault;

Staff: Kevin Girouard, Briana Bittel, & Jaz Perez-Acevedo

Submitted by David Newton, Co-Chair, Building and Grounds

Our Mission: To maintain and improve the physical plant and surrounding grounds of the Meeting House of the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

During the year, because of the continuing disruptions caused by Covid, major equipment to stream services having been studied and acquired was employed as a normal part of services, at first absent congregational members, then with widely spaced attendees, and finally during services resembling what had previously been normal. Comcast service was upgraded and routers were replaced to facilitate such communications. In addition, two large TVs were placed on the chancel and used in various ways to enhance services. Also, to help mixed meetings with remote and in person attendance, a flat screen TV and associated web cam, and computer were combined as a mobile unit to be used for Zoom meetings and in a variety of other ways. This activity was effectuated by the revived Communications Sub-Council.

During Covid diminished building use, internal items were improved including changes to air circulation, addition of an electronic thermostat in Fellowship Hall and correction of some maintenance issues in the heating systems. Previously, the failing refrigerator in the kitchen had been replaced and during this period the freezer was similarly replaced along with various light fixtures. The shared use of water and associated billing with Knox Gardens was reviewed by the parties to the continuing agreement.

On June 30 USH purchased functioning solar equipment on premises after a five-year period during which it was owned by a sole proprietor member paying interest on the USH loan to purchase the equipment while taking advantage of appropriate tax incentives and depreciation for purchase and use of such systems. This activity immediately resulting in savings to USH during the five-year period ending with purchase by USH. This strategy will essentially reduce electric bills to nearly zero for the foreseeable future.

There has been a persistent problem originating in the Library Bay such that significant rain resulted in flooding of the Men's room off Fellowship Hall and adjacent spaces during and after rains. After many failures to correct the drainage from the roof, the entire drainage system was removed and reinstalled including changes to the exit drain, and the careful replacement of polyethylene sheeting for the entire length of the roof drip edge. This has been successful and ended a very stressful situation existing for several years.

The project to install lighting having been delayed for years by various frustrations, finally moved forward with the completion of architectural work by member Hugh Schweitzer, significant donations from Jim and Ellie Venneman to finance the David Venneman Memorial Lighting project, to bidding and construction by Lighthouse Enterprises including very significant carpentry by subcontractor John Bengtson assisted by Kevin Girouard. At this writing, the electrical work and wood ray repairs and preparation have been completed. Arrival of the light fixtures will permit finishing the project through hanging of the fixtures and making final switching and electrical connections.

Currently, new carpet will soon be installed in various peripheral rooms not previously carpeted when the public spaces were upgraded.

Careful consideration of a possible application for recognition on the National Registration of Historic Places is in progress.

Cleaning of the roof will soon be underway.

Maintenance of external gardens and lawns continues as necessary.

Building and Grounds extends its thanks to volunteers and employees who helped in different ways during the year including attendance at workdays scheduled for spring and fall and at various ad hoc times. When problems arise with the building, we are blessed by employees and volunteers who show up to help on request with little or no prior notice.

Our plans for next year: We will continue to work on existing unfinished tasks and such new ones as arise.

Human Resources Sub-Council

Greg Nickett, Chair; Members: Ron Sexton

Mission: To assist the board and minister with personnel administration and to ensure compliance with state and federal employment laws and regulations in a fair and equitable manner.

Accomplishments: Outsourced payroll. 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 to work on updating USH HR Policies.

Council on Community Within

Chair: Tina Davies

We could categorize the year approaching its close with a sports analogy — it's been a "rebuilding season". From mid-March 2020 to September 2021, there literally was no "within" to Community Within. When pandemic closure drove activities online, some groups were able to adapt quickly while others struggled. Artist's Way and the Book Group shifted quickly onto Zoom, and continue to thrive in hybrid mode. NVC and Tai Chi met, though in alternative format. Other groups, more dependent on face-to-face gatherings, essentially closed their doors for the duration. The Lunch Bunch and Saturday Sing-Alongs have revived; Dinner-and-Movie has yet to reconstitute. There's more work to do, making welcoming space for groups and gatherings which foster a sense of human connection and mutual care... that 'glue' which holds us together as a community. Some sub-council points of interest are below:

Membership

Carolyn Carlson is stepping away from leading the Membership Sub-council but will be available as a resource. She has contributed several recommendations, including a briefer, more concise "introduction" for newcomers; delegating events to discrete teams of volunteers to produce "one-off" activities (rather than an ongoing effort of the membership group); and splitting off the Welcome Volunteers into their own team. (This last has been fairly well accomplished this year, using Sign-Up Genius online scheduling and monitoring by office staff to ensure people available to serve.) Since USH has reopened for "in person" services, we have had a good supply of greeters, ushers, and welcome table volunteers offering friendly welcomes to visitors, friends, and members on Sunday mornings.

Caring Network

Through and beyond the pandemic, the Network has maintained contact with the congregation, reaching out particularly to those who are observed to have drawn back from more active participation. Cards and phone calls have helped members stay in touch. They've continued to offer and give rides to appointments and have visited more isolated members. One major effort included cleaning out the apartment of a USH member after her death, The Network also assisted in reviewing a guidance document related to historically acceptable uses for the Minister's Discretionary Fund; this will be helpful for any future USH minister curious about how funds have traditionally been used to assist congregants.

Adult Programs

Much concerning the Adult Programs subcouncil was incorporated in the first paragraph of this council report. We have a core of folks very interested in reviving Dinner and Movie nights, and are seeking someone to coordinate these. We would welcome new activities: one of last fall's auction items, a yoga class, was well received and the instructor, Lu Giannimatteo, would be happy to lead yoga as an ongoing activity if interest and scheduling were to align. There are other previously active (pre-Covid) small groups which could foster a sense of community, if interested people were to step forth to organize them... Connection Circles, meditation, circle dinners, and more. Numerous possibilities exist... let's talk about them!

Communications

Several areas of progress here: this subcouncil was resurrected, beginning in April 2021, following several years of dormancy. At an autumn volunteer fair, prospective participants and contributors were sought, and that reconstituted group formally announced its presence late in 2021. It is currently co-chaired by Mike Covault and Laura Stewart Cipriano. Work to update the USH website is ongoing, endeavoring to bring the site to currency and accuracy. Laura Stewart Cipriano has been the primary webmaster here. David Newton and Tina Davies have worked with staff representative Buffie Pinney in nudging our weekly eNews toward a more readable, better-organized publication — while contending with the vagaries of our e-mail marketing platform "Emma".

The society's email "listservs", meanwhile, were decommissioned... this method of organizing email groupings according to council, committee, or area of interest had been useful in earlier days of online communication, but recently presented difficulties. With a "@ushartford.com" domain as their base, emails issued through these lists were increasingly becoming candidates for rejection (as spam) by the large domains: gmail, comcast, etc. Several months of lead time was provided for all staff (and anyone else still using a ".ushartford.com" account) to shift their society-related communications to gmail or other domain. Concurrently, our former (and, given our noncommercial status as an organization), the domain of "ushartford.org" became newly available. Effective October 1, 2021, USH could once again be found on the web at "ushartford.org".

Also, our online “presence” has extended to Vimeo and other means of video archiving; Sunday services and other presentations are routinely available for future viewing. On any given Sunday, one can view a service via Facebook Live, Vimeo, or Zoom, and YouTube also stores some files as well. Mike Covault is the lead co-chair for this digital effort. We note that our digital extension also falls quite appropriately under the Council for Administration; as with many of our society’s activities, many people and many resources are engaged, and cross-pollination transpires freely.

Caring Network Sub-Council

Chair: Janice Newton

Sub-Council Members: Virginia Hedrick, David Newton, Marilyn Stockton, Eve Pech, Janice Newton, Nancy Reed, Yakhonda Mwenelupembe, Louise Harmon, Mimi Stevenson, Judith Hopkins, Lucille Giammatteo, Nancy Kemmerer

Supporting Members: Carolyn Carlson, Helen David, Kayla Costenoble, Tina Davies, Katie Doyle, Ron Friedman, Lisa Galinski, Susan Hope, Joan Kemble, Peter Magistri, Rachel Mintell, Kit Northup, Bev Spence

Our 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.

Our accomplishments this year:

We continue to arrange rides to services and activities at the Meeting House, doctor’s appointments, and day surgeries.

We contacted those in our Directory several times through the Pandemic by phone, email, and notes to check on how they were doing and to enhance and support their sense of belonging and sense of community.

We continue to knit Comfort Shawls. Since the inception of the USH Comfort Shawl Ministry in 2002, we have given 307 shawls! We need more knitters. We would love to have you join us!

We are grateful to Rev. Terry for the calls and member visits she has made. We also appreciate her visits to Seabury. Elsie Rickard has agreed to be the Caring Network’s contact at Seabury.

Thanks to Buffie, notification of the deaths of members of our USH community are promptly acknowledged in communications to the Congregation.

Our plans for next year:

We will continue to work to foster being a Caring Community.

We are making plans to have a Caring Network presence at Fellowship Hour.

Sadly, during the Pandemic we lost four of our members: Tom Reed, Nita Hansen, Valerie Klokow, and JoAnne Bauer. They are greatly missed.

Meeting House Presents

Chair: Paul Cipriano and Laura Cipriano

Meeting House Presents, is in its 4th season. These concerts are only possible because of continued strong volunteer support from Janice Newton, David Newton, Deb Meny, Peter Meny, Diana Heymann, Fred Lewis, Tina Davies, Bob Hewey, Carol Simpson, Dana Donovan, Brian Harvey, Sarah McKenzie, Carolyn Carlson, Ed Savage, Ginny Hedrick, Bruce Robbins, Mimi Stephenson, and so many more. Season tickets were \$100 this year. Nineteen people subscribed to the season, a new record. Thank-you to all who supported Meeting House Presents by coming to the concerts and a special thanks to season ticket holders and volunteers.

Our first show was May 2017. We took a break from April 2020 through May 2021 due to COVID-19 precautions. The 2020-21 season was shorter. Most of the performers were rescheduled from the cancelled shows in 2020-21. We didn't schedule shows from January through March due to anticipated Covid concerns but scheduled three concerts in April and May 2022. COVID-19 is an unpredictable influence on attendance, and we are uncertain about moving forward. The 2022-23 season will be scaled down, but we are happy to announce we are working with the Welsh Society of western New England to present the Welsh band Calan in October 2022. MHP had seven shows at USH between September 2021 and May 2022. Six in the regular season and a late addition, Susan Werner, on April 30. This report was written before the last two shows. Projected year-end figures are a total of over 350 attendees. USH will make a profit, but the amount will be determined by attendance at the last two shows. \$3500 was approved by the USH Board (but unspent) to back guarantees for performers.

Performers in 2021-22 were:

Friday, Sept. 17, 2021	Abbie Gardner
Friday, October 15, 2021	Scott Cook
Friday, November 19, 2021	Vance Gilbert
Friday, December 17, 2021	Reggie Harris and Pat Victor
Friday, April 22, 2022	Mad Agnes
Saturday, April 30, 2022	Susan Werner
Friday, May 13, 2022	Seán Heely and Beth Patterson

MeetingHousePresents@gmail.com - Submitted by Laura and Paul Cipriano

Council on Social Justice

Chair: Dana Donovan

The last couple years have mostly been inactive due to the COVID pandemic. The main exception to that has been USH's involvement in GHIAA during this time. This year the Social Justice Council has come back to life. Since September we have been meeting each month and the attendance has been steadily growing. The meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend. At present we have eleven active members. It appears that people are glad to be actively involved in social justice after two years of inactivity. Currently there are ten Social Justice Sub-Councils:

The Village for Families & Children	Chair, Joanne Orlando
Noah Webster Partnership	Chair, Diana Heymann
Food Pantries	Chairs, Deb Meny, John Bengtson
Upper Albany, NRZ	Chair, Ed Savage
Race Matters	Chair, Gloria Francesca Mengual
Refugee Resettlement	Chair, open
Knox, Inc.	Chair, open
Green Sanctuary – UUA program	Chairs, Mary Sherwin, Jeff Howard
EqUUal Access, AIM – UUA program	Chair, open
GHIAA, Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance	Chair, Judy Sullivan

One of the goals in the coming months will be to look at each of the Sub-Councils to see if there are areas where we could combine some of the groups.

Racial Justice

Racial Justice continues to be one of the primary concerns of the Social Justice Council. During the pandemic, the UU program *Beloved Conversations* moved from in person meetings at USH to an online zoom forum run by the UUA. New sessions begin every six months. In addition, several members of USH have taken the CORE training provided by GHIAA and remained involved in GHIAA activities.

Immigrant Justice – Refugee Resettlement

The Covid pandemic and the change in administrations has put the question of USH becoming a sanctuary congregation on the back burner, at least for the time being. At present the Sub-Council for Refugee Resettlement does not have a chair and has been inactive. However, several members of the congregation have been involved in various ways in refugee resettlement. They are working with the West End Welcome, WEW, group to help settle Afghan refugees in the Hartford area.

LGBTQ Justice

West Hartford Pride has scheduled a series of events to be held during the month of June. On June 25th they are holding the main *Pride Festival*. The Social Justice Council has been in contact with the Fern St Universalist Church in hopes of having a booth at the festival. In September, *Hartford Pride* is planning to hold their festival, although the date has not been announced yet. This month our good neighbor offering will be donated to *PFLAG Hartford*: parents, families, friends, and allies united with LGBTQ+. We hope to have one of their representatives give a presentation at an upcoming service.

Community Organizing

In October of 2019, USH joined with over 50 interfaith organizations in the newly formed *Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)*. This faith-based organizing provides a vehicle for religious institutions to have power to make their common values more of a force in society, and its methods strengthen the congregations who engage in it. They provide ongoing training in racial justice as well as organizing skills. GHIAA is very successfully involved with lobbying the state legislation and governor on various issues involving social and racial justice. They are also involved in several neighborhood issues and programs within greater Hartford.

Social Justice at USH

One of the main topics of discussion at the SJ meeting the last few months is how to make the work of the Social Justice Council more open and transparent to the greater USH members. In this regard the SJ committee will be presenting two changes at the annual meeting. The first is to allow the entire congregation to have a say in who the monthly GNOs will be donated to. The second is to propose and vote on a change in the way that the GNO is collected.

The Village for Families and Children

Joanne Orlando, Liaison

During the past year The Unitarian Society of Hartford continued its support and caring for The Village for Families and Children.

- In the summer of 2021, The Village for Families and Children held its annual Uniform Fundraiser. For the ninth year USH contributed to the Fundraiser. With our donation of \$1,541 USH was recognized as an Honor society in The Village Annual Report. On October 24, 2021
- I represented USH at The Champions for Children: Village Annual Meeting, where I learned more about the programs and people of The Village.
- On October 30, 2021 children from The Village happily enjoyed candy donated by members of USH.
- The Village for Families and Children was the recipient of January 2022 Good Neighbor Offering at USH.
- On March 9, 2022, at the invitation of the Communications Committee, The Village was highlighted in the eNews.
- Throughout the year there were eNews articles about the services offered by The Village. If USH members are educated about The Village, they can become better teachers in our support of The Village.

Noah Webster Micromagnet Society School Ministry

Chair: Diana Heymann; Members: Peter Meny, Diana Heymann

Mission: We bring our loving connections and skills to a school in our neighborhood.

Accomplishments: This year, we tried to spend at least one hour weekly in classrooms with teachers and students who welcome our assistance. We volunteer in kindergarten, and grade 3 and assist with reading, writing, and math.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to provide our services to teachers and students at NWMSS. Come join us!

Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry (AIM)

Chair: Doris Maldonado

Gloria Bent hosts the monthly disability zoom mtgs:

USH Disability Support Group meets on line the first Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. The zoom link is sent a few days prior to the meeting. In this group participants discuss the challenges of physical disability (chronic illness, chronic pain, impaired senses, impaired mobility) and emotional pain (loss, mental illness) and the stresses of caretaking a loved one. What is said in the group stays in the group.

Email Gloria Bent for more information at bentgloria@gmail.com or call at 860 904-7768

Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

Co-Chairs: Mary Sherwin and Jeff Howard

Members/Followers: *Edith Barrett, Gary Bent, Carolyn Carlson, Virginia de Lima, Dana Donovan, Ginny Hedrick, Don Hope, Susan Hope, Sherry Manetta, Bill Simmons, Jim Venneman, Bev Prager (emeritus)*

Our mission: To help our congregation live in harmony with and create a healthier world environment by spearheading continued 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.

In 2017, USH was recertified by UUA's review committee as a Green Sanctuary, one of only a handful of UU congregations that have qualified for this step. Certification (and recertification), revolving in part around a 5-year action plan, is granted to UU congregations actively engaged in environmentally-oriented activities in Worship and Religious Education and in activities focusing on Sustainable Living and Environmental Justice.

Our activities in the past year: GSS carried out the annual Holiday Re-Gifting Sale that netted the Meeting House \$900 and contributed to the Meeting House's holiday cheer.

Our plans for next year: GSS has been inactive during COVID. GSS will work to gain financial support from USH for climate justice groups that we have supported in the past, including the Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network (IREJN) and the CT Roundtable on Climate and Jobs.

The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)

Coordinator: Judy Sullivan

The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance has grown to include 50 diverse multi-faith communities and allied institutions throughout Greater Hartford. USH is proud to be among the founding members committed to organizing together for justice.

Although the pandemic certainly presented challenges to our first slate of issues, we celebrate significant legislative successes of the past year.

- **Repeal of Welfare Liens in CT:**

On March 4, 2021, Gov. Lamont signed the law releasing all real property liens that have been filed to recover the cost of cash assistance and/or Medicaid assistance.

Connecticut, one of the wealthiest states in the nation with the greatest income disparity was one of the few remaining states enforcing this lifetime debt. GHIAA worked with CT Speaker of the House, Matt Ritter, to bring attention the program, which lacked transparency, both to the recipients, the public and even our state representatives.

- On June 10, 2021, Gov. Lamont signed the “**Clean Slate Act of 2021**” into law. This will automatically clear records of past convictions of those formerly incarcerated after a period of 7 – 10 years, depending on the severity of the crime. It covers misdemeanors and some class D and E felonies.

Studies show that a very small percentage of those previously incarcerated become repeat offenders, but carry the burden of their record for the rest of their lives – a burden that falls disproportionately on people of color. Without a criminal record it becomes easier to find a job, secure housing, go to school or obtain a professional license and therefore drastically alter the quality of life of those who have paid their debt to society.

- A bill declaring **Racism a Public Health Crisis** passed the State Senate and House in bipartisan votes and was signed into law on June 29, 2021.

Among its many provisions:

- Establishes a commission to study racism and its effect on vulnerable populations and make recommendations to reduce that impact.
- Study ways that overt or insidious racism impacts health care.
- Creates new studies and reporting requirements for health and mental health issues including gun violence prevention, breast cancer screening, and the recruitment and retention of health care workers of color.
- Requires the Public Health Department to report to the legislature on the state’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to develop tool to help employers meet the mental health needs of employees.
 - Hospitals required to train employees to recognize “implicit bias” to ensure that all patients receive equal treatment regardless of their race, age, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- **Coordinated response to state Judiciary Committee regarding Youth Justice legislation.**
GHIAA members participated in written and oral testimony in response to 8 bills that were introduced regarding the “Rise in Crime” rhetoric targeting juveniles. Only two were voted out of committee and have a chance to become law. We expect this issue will be back in force next session.

Other ongoing works in progress from the first slate of actions include:

- **Education Committee** working with 10 CT school districts in developing district wide anti-racism training for teachers and administrators.
- **Health Committee** collaborating with local health care and state legislators to create a local low-cost pharmacy for the uninsured and under insured. The plan is to collect unused single packed medication from nursing homes to eliminate waste and provide the community with low cost or free alternatives.

Council on Spiritual Life

Chair: Peter Meny

Religious Education

Our R.E. program continues to be affected by parental concerns due to Covid. Just when we think it is over, a new wave hits and we’re back to square one. Attendance has been low on Sundays although we have continued to provide the monthly soup kitchen led by John Bengtson and the Youth group.

In January, long-time member Annie Witzler took the position of Interim R.E. Coordinator to fill the gap created by Rayla Mattson’s resignation in December. Annie has brought energy, warmth, creativity, and organizational skills to her new role. She organized an Easter Egg hunt in April and has other activities planned to encourage families to come back to the Meeting House. In the meantime, the Board is looking at filling a permanent R.E. Director’s position and hopes to have that person ready to begin in September. We are optimistic that we will be able to rebuild the program and attract more families with children next year.

Music Ministry – Sam has continued to provide a varied and rich music program using their many skills as musician, composer, and tech expert. In addition, the purchase of two large screen TVs located on the chancel has provided the option of streaming musical selections from around the world. This has added another dimension to our musical offerings during worship. In the meantime, Sam is looking forward to rebuilding the choir when it is safe to do so.

Worship Associates

Our Worship Associates have been an invaluable resource this year as they have had to adjust to the challenges of hybrid services and filling in when Rev. Terry was unavailable. Sue Smolski, the chair of the WA's, has done an extraordinary job of coordinating their efforts to make sure that every Sunday has a WA to either support Rev Terry, a guest speaker, or to create and lead the worship service. As a result, though we have seen a number of different persons in the pulpit, the quality and richness of each service continues to inspire, educate, and uplift us.

As is often the case, we can always use more WA volunteers so if this may be a calling for you, please contact Sue to explore this unique opportunity.

SpiritLife

SpiritLife Conversations is a program of facilitated zoom conversations on spiritual topics offered on the fourth Saturday each month. It is an outgrowth of its very successful precursor, SpiritLife, a year-long program in faith development. Persons who had participated in that program wanted an opportunity to continue their explorations with a new approach. As a result, SpiritLife was born. It is open to members of the three Hartford area UU churches on a drop-in basis. The program has attracted not only previous participants in SpiritLife, but also newcomers. For example, twenty-four folks attended a March 26 zoom SpiritLife conversation on redefining prayer.

Strategic Plan Update for 2022

The formation of a task force to review our governance structure coalesced in December. Members of the Governance Task Force are Laura Cipriano, Brian Harvey, Gloria Mengual, Eve Pech, Rob Spector, Bev Spence, Sue Tenorio and Rev. Terry. Meetings are monthly and have focused on researching other UU Board structures, reviewing past USH Strategic Plans, and studying our current council structure to determine its accuracy in reflecting current dynamics. The committee recognizes that fallout from Covid has impacted progress on the most recent Strategic Plan and may continue to be a factor as we project future changes. The most recent focus of the Governance Task is to draw up a recommendation to the USH Board for structural changes to its composition in order to improve the functioning of USH.

USH Board of Directors and Staff

USH Board of Directors 2021-2022



President
Rob Spector
203/627-6721



President Elect
Eve Pech
860/309-5267
elpech@sbcglobal.net



Secretary
Sarah Harmon McKenzie
860/966-8104
sharmon349@yahoo.com



Treasurer
Bob Hewey
BoltonBob@aol.com



Spiritual Life Council Chair
Peter Meny
860/523-7396
plmeny9@gmail.com



Administration Council Chair
Jon Covault
860/651-3091
jncovault@hotmail.com



Community Within Council Chair
Tina Davies
860/677-2944
daviesush@gmail.com



Social Justice Council Chair
Dana Donovan
860/754-7513
danadonovan@sbcglobal.net

USH Staff 2021-2022



Interim Minister
Rev. Terry Cummings
revterryush@gmail.com
973/951-9904 (cell)



Sexton
Kevin Girouard
860/508-5604
sexton@ushartford.com



Coordinator of Religious Education
Annie Witzler
860/233-9897
re4ush@gmail.com



Office Administrator
Buffie Pinney
860/233-9897 x100
hartfordusociety@gmail.com



Fellowship Sexton
Jazaira Perez-Acevedo



Nursery Staff
Nani Perez



Director of Music Ministries
Sam Moffett
860/371-8880
smoffett@ushartford.com



Custodian
Briana Bittel
860/205-8568
everafr33@gmail.com



Nursery Staff
Nichole Segar



Bookkeeper
Patty Peck
860/233-9897 x102
bmullen@ushartford.com



Nursery Staff
Sol Arvisu

USH Council Personnel

Unitarian Society of Hartford - Council Personnel

Nourishing spirit, building community, working for justice

