

# Unitarian Society of Hartford Annual Report

For Fiscal Year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023



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# Annual Meeting Agenda

The Unitarian Society of Hartford, May 21, 2023

12 pm.

**In Person and via Zoom**

## **Introduction**

Dana Donovan, *President-Elect*

## **Opening Words, Greeting, and Message**

Eve Pech, *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 2022-2023/ Priorities for 2023-2024**

David Newton, Building and Grounds

Paul Cipriano, Project and Grant Updates

Tina Davies, Council on Community Within

Peter Meny, Music and RE Programs

## **Stewardship and Our Budget**

Carolyn Carlson, Stewardship Chair and Jon Covault, *Treasurer*

## **Congregational Voting:**

- On Good Neighbor Offering
- On advancement of Article II at the UUA General Assembly
- On USH constitutional changes recommended by the Governance Committee
  - On our slate of nominations for the Board of Directors

Dana Donovan – President

Nancy Kemmerer – President Elect

Gloria Mengual – Secretary

Judy Sullivan- Council on Social Justice

Rick Tsukada – Chair of Council on Spiritual Life

Laurie Kelleher – Chair of the Council on Membership

Jim Venneman– Chair of the Council on Finance (1 year term)

## **Volunteer Recognition Awards**

Eve Pech, *President*

# Proposed Slate for the Board

*Presented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee  
Rob Spector, 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 21, 2023. The Nominees are:*

*President – Dana Donovan for a one-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2024*

*President-Elect – Nancy Kemmerer for a one-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2024*

*Secretary – Gloria Francesca Mengual for a two-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2025*

*Chair, Spiritual Life – Rick Tsukada for a two-year term 7.01.23 to 6.30.2025*

*Chair, Social Justice Council – Judy Sullivan for a two-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2025*

*\*Chair, Council on Membership – Laurie Kelliher for a two-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2025*

*\*Chair, Council on Finance – Jim Venneman for a one-year term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2024*

*\*If the USH Constitution changes are approved*

*Note: In addition to the above nominees for open positions, the 2023/24 USH Board will also include the following current board members who have completed the first year of their respective two-year terms:*

*Treasurer – Jon Covault*

*Chair, Council on Administration – Paul Cipriano*

*Chair, Council on Community Within – Christina Davies*

**Dana Donovan** (President, Term: 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2024) Dana feels that he has been on a lifelong spiritual journey, attending several different churches, as well as, living in a Christian community for 7 years. He eventually became a practicing pagan 25 years ago. Dana and his granddaughter, Aaliyah, first stepped foot in USH in the fall of 2017. They knew right away that they had found a spiritual home. He 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 9 great grandchildren. At USH Dana has served on the Welcome Committee, the RE Committee and the Nominating Committee. He has also served as the Social Justice Chair, and this last year as the President-Elect

**Nancy Kemmerer** (President-Elect, Term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2024) Nancy first attended USH in 2018. She knew immediately she wanted to become a member of this welcoming, vibrant, talented and liberal congregation. Nancy grew up in Bennington VT where she met her husband Stan in Sunday School. She lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, working for IBM in various management positions for 20 years. Her last position was Area Security Manager for the 11 Western States. Stan and Nancy married in 2000 and now live in Burlington. Nancy enjoys traveling, reading, and being with her friends at Lunch Bunch, Pizza and a Movie, Caring Network, Yoga, UUSpirit Life, Connection Circle and Sunday services.

**Gloria Francesca Mengual** (Secretary, Term: 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2025) Gloria is the Diversity & Inclusion Specialist for the Capitol Region Education Council's Open Choice program. She provides professional development sessions to educators and youth in many of the 27 school districts that accept Hartford youth into their school systems, in the hope of reducing the inequities they experience while attending suburban schools. Previously, she was a program officer for the Paul J. Aicher Foundation's Everyday Democracy program, where she worked with communities to address challenges through large-scale dialogues that included diverse residents' voices and actions, with the goal of impacting public policy. She provided technical assistance throughout the country in community organizing, dialogue facilitation and action idea implementation. Gloria joined USH 8 years ago and served on the USH board as the chair of social justice for two years. She has facilitated race dialogues and storytelling sessions at USH, co-facilitated Beloved Conversations, and when COVID hit, facilitated via Zoom multiple discussions, based on reading and/or listening to the 1619 Project podcasts. When she is not at work, she enjoys gardening, reading, attending theatre, hiking, hanging out at the beach and spending time with her daughter, Sam, and Sam's husband, David, at their home in Gorham, ME. So far, she is 'grandmother' to their German Shephard and hopes that someday, the grandchild list will grow to a two-legged critter.

**Rick Tsukada** (Chair of Spiritual Life, 7.01.2023 - 6.30.2025) Rick Tsukada is a lifelong Unitarian, growing up in the White Plains (NY) Unitarian Church. He was a national Unitarian youth leader in LRY (Liberal Religious Youth). He has also been active at UU Rowe Camp in the Berkshires. After an early career as a lighting designer for theater, dance and rock performances, Rick became a social worker and psychotherapist, finishing his career at Middlesex Hospital. Upon retirement he joined USH and has served as a Worship Associate most of that time. Rick is a big picture, often out of the box, thinker and a creative spirit.

**Judy Sullivan** (Chair, Social Justice Council, Term 7.01.2023 to 6.30.2025) 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 for one year now, and is nominated to serve a second term.

**Jim Venneman** (Chair of proposed Finance Committee, Term: 7.01.2023 - 6.30.2024) Ellie and I joined USH in the late 1980s, I was on the Board throughout the 1990s, as a Board member, Vice President, President, and Treasurer. After a long rest from leadership positions, I was Chair of the Endowment Committee from 2014 to 2017. Ellie and I had a great time when we taught the Polliwogs (what the Sunday School class for 3-year-olds was then called) for about 15 years. I have also enjoyed my association with the Building and Grounds group at USH. Ellie and I find many of our current friends are people we met through USH.

**Listed below is the current Board member whose 2<sup>nd</sup> contiguous term continues until 2024:**

**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, Josie.

**Tina Davies** (Chair of Community Within, Term: 7.01.2022 - 6.30.2024) Tina Davies first became acquainted with Unitarianism while serving on Rowe Camp and Conference Center's Board of Trustees in the 1990s. Upon seeing a poster with the UU Principles, she started investigating and discovered religion did not have to be somber and punitive. After 12 years at Universalist West Hartford she came to USH in 2008, singing in the former choir and serving several terms on the board. She lives in Avon with her cat, Isabelle.

**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 Diana, 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 4<sup>th</sup> season.

# Annual Meeting May 22, 2022 Review

*Submitted by Sarah McKenzie, Secretary*

11:43 Annual Meeting called to order by Eve Pech, President-Elect.

At least 20 members participating via Zoom

11:48 – Greetings and personnel update from Rob Spector, President. Last year at this time we are all remote, the Annual Meeting last year and in 2020 were held only via Zoom. There is lots of good information on our progress in the past year. Important to emphasize that Love is the Spirit of this Church, and not to jump to conclusions without all the information, and not to make assumptions. Rob gave a summary of the occurrences of the past 2 months. Rob received a report from the UUA Trauma Ministry regarding two complaints which had been made to them. The UUA does not control this church, they support the Board and the congregation. The Board put together a fact-finding team to investigate. On May 12, their confidential report was presented to the Board. On May 17, the Board met in executive session, and the Board voted unanimously to negotiate a resignation with Rev. Terry. The Board met with Rev. Terry, her Good Officer, and a UUA representative, and her resignation agreement will be fully negotiated over the next few weeks. We have made several positive changes under her guidance and benefitted greatly from her leadership. The Board's focus was on the health of the congregation. The Board concluded that trust has been sufficiently broken, and that we should look forward and not back. We are concerned with the whole of the staff team, and the needs of the congregation. Rev. Terry asked Rob to convey to you that she supports the Board's decision and will be in touch with the congregation to say goodbye. Our next steps: Worship Associates have planned services through the end of the church year, and through the summer. We will have pastoral care throughout the summer, and the Board will work with the UUA to hire a minister for the fall.

12:00 – Approval of 2021 minutes, congregation voted to approve the minutes of last year's annual meeting. We certified 200 members to the UUA as of February this year. We welcomed 5 new members this year and offered a moment of silence for the two members we have lost in the past year: Jeannette Angelbeck and Valerie Klokow; may their memories be a blessing.

12:02 – Sue Smolski thanked the Worship Associates and everybody who has stepped up to help over the past few months, and all the people it takes to put together a service every week. Sue gave us an update on the plans for Summer. Living Fully is the theme for this summer. We're in good shape, even with the extra Sundays to fill prior to the actual summer. Services will be held in Fellowship Hall this summer, with one camera instead of three.

12:06 – David Newton gave Building & Grounds highlights. We acquired new electronic equipment for streaming hybrid services, refrigerator and freezer have been replaced, flooding in Fellowship Hall has been fixed. The lights have been installed (but not the controls yet), and carpeting is being replaced in some of the ambulatory classrooms.

12:11 – Jon Covault gave an update on the Council on Administration. Our comcast contract had to be renegotiated to get more bandwidth to allow us to be able to stream our hybrid services effectively.

12:12 – Tina Davies gave an update on Communications. Communication council is working on updating the website, as well as streamlining the eNews.

12:15 – Dana Donovan gave an update on Social Justice and Good Neighbor Offering. UUA recommendation is that congregations collect for GNO every week, and each collection is a 50/50 split between the GNO and the church. This does not affect pledges, only what is collected in the offering baskets during the service. Congregations who have switched have found that the total amount of giving has gone up. Dana asked the congregation to take a vote to try this for the next year. This month's recipient is our local PFLAG office. There were a few questions regarding the change.

The majority voted yes, there were 4 Nays and 2 Abstentions. Motion carries.

Dana gave an update as to how the GNO recipients are selected. Social Justice would like the congregation to weigh in on future recipients. There are boards set up in Fellowship Hall for congregants to help make the choice for upcoming GNO recipients.

Last Thursday, Rev. AJ Johnson (our GHIAA contact) reached out to Dana regarding a special meeting of clergy, and Dana let him know that Rev. Terry was on leave. Dana attended for our congregation, and there have been threats made to congregations of color, synagogues, and a mosque who are GHIAA members. Police do not seem supportive. These congregations are very fearful, some have even faced bomb threats.

12:29 – Volunteer Recognition Awards: Recipients: Diane Cadrain, Marye Gail Harrison, Helen David, Ginny Hedrick, and Joe Rubin.

12:37 – Joe Rubin, Stewardship update. As of May 5, we had pledges from 77 households totaling about \$255,000, which is roughly where we were at this time last year. If you have not pledged, please get your pledges in as soon as possible.

12:40 – Budget update from Bob Hewey – It was also an eventful year for the treasurer with Brian Mullen's retirement. Expenses are expected to end the year \$45,000 under budget. Projected income is also down approximately \$43,000 (\$41,000 of which is related to NOT using our reserves). Stewardship is looking good, fundraisers came in well above budget as well. We are in good shape.

12:42 – Vote on the Slate of Board Members for 2022-2023

Eve Pech – President, 1 year

Dana Donovan – President-Elect, 1 year

Jon Covault – Treasurer, 2 years

Tina Davies – Chair, Council on Community Within, 2 years

Judy Sullivan – Chair, Social Justice, 1 year (finishing Dana's Term)

Paul Cipriano – Chair, Administration, 2 years

Congregation voted yes, 0 Nays, 0 abstentions

Motion Carries

12:44 – The meeting was adjourned.



# President's Report

*Eve Pech*

I think we can all agree that this has been a year of extraordinary challenges and extraordinary accomplishments. In the closing months of the last church year, the Board of Directors decided that it was not in the best interests of USH that Reverend Terry Cummings continue to serve the second year of her two-year contract and unanimously voted to effect a negotiated resignation. Simply put, the fact that we have been without the leadership of a minister has been our biggest challenge. Despite that fact, we can look back on this past year and congratulate ourselves for a good number of successes. It is a testament to the mettle of our membership that USH continued to be a vital source of spiritual sustenance and community. Special recognition goes out to the dedication and skill of our Worship Associates who have consistently filled our pulpit Sunday after Sunday. As a result, the Board of Directors knew we could take the necessary time to choose the minister who was the best fit for us and happily we are looking forward to the shared ministry of Reverend Bob Janis- Dillon who will be assuming his role as our contract minister for the next year, beginning on July 1.

## Accomplishments

In addition to our successful search for a minister, we can look to other positive developments since last July.

- For some years now, there had been discussion about funding an office administrator position that would involve more paid hours, require advanced computer literacy and greater coordination of staff. So, in addition to the time and effort spent in the search for a new minister, the USH Board of Directors hired our new office administrator, Karolina Wojtysko, who began to work for us in the last weeks of 2022.
- The board has been receptive to requests from our members for more transparency. Once a month, a board member gives an update on business from the pulpit and once a month we meet for discussion “under the stairs” after Sunday services. The week before board meetings, a preliminary agenda is posted and minutes of our meetings are made available within a week.
- Thanks to the hard work of our task forces on historic designation and security we have secured two grants this year. One is to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the other is to provide greater safety to our members and friends. Already steps have been made to safeguard our building: emergency pull alarms, sensors for fire water and cold systems, and upgrading of emergency lights.
- Since 2019, there have been efforts to improve the lighting in the Sanctuary. What a good beginning and positive sign it was when these new lights, dedicated to the memory of David Venneman, were installed at our Ingathering this September.

## Appreciation

Finally, we need to acknowledge the importance of so many people who have offered their energy, skills, and dedication to our USH community. I will repeat what we have recognized over the last year: our thanks to the efforts of our Worship Associates. They are our heroes! We offer our deep

appreciation to the guest ministers who have graced our pulpit. I want to offer our special gratitude to Reverend Stephen Kendrick and Reverend Aaron Payson, who have offered us valuable counsel, advocated on our behalf, helped us to recognize our best assets, and steered us out of troubled waters. I want to call our attention to the steadfastness and commitment of our Board of Directors who have shouldered the added responsibilities inherent in a year without ministerial leadership. Special thanks go out to Sarah McKenzie and Peter Meny who will be stepping down from the board at the end of June. Sarah has served as Board Secretary for six years now. She told me recently that despite her wish to step down, she accepted an additional term so as to ensure someone with board history would be on the board. She has been integral to providing historical context, ensuring that we observe USH protocols, serving on search committees, and so much more, including taking great notes! Peter Meny has served USH in so many capacities including President of the Board of Directors for two non- consecutive terms. He is a master at bringing people together, building consensus, and has clear vision as to the nature of our USH community. Dana Donovan will be assuming his role (upon your vote today) as President of the Board of Directors. We will be in good hands. Dana has vital connections to the religious community of Greater Hartford which will serve us well, and he has a very big and loving heart dedicated to keeping USH a welcoming community. Finally, I want to thank those of you who have taken the time over this past year to offer words of support and encouragement to me and to the board. It has been a year of exceptional challenges and there have been times when it has seemed overwhelming. The thing to remember is that our community has not been alone. Other religious communities have had to struggle with some of the same issues that we have faced. We have met these challenges with resolve and promise. As I close, I ask you to remember that a word of encouragement goes a long way in energizing the people who volunteer to serve USH. Our future success depends on continued commitment to our USH covenant: "... love is the spirit of this church and service is its law..." Let us commit ourselves to voicing support and expressing appreciation for the volunteers of USH who serve on its committees, councils, and board and are our best insurance for the future.

## **Planning for the Future**

As we look forward, we need to address our fiscal status and determine what it can sustain. Our short-term financial health is good: a full year without having to pay a minister's salary has been a big part of that. Our stewardship drive this year has not yet reached its goal though efforts will be made through June to get all the pledges in. As we begin a new church year with our new minister, it would be wise to capitalize on the hope and excitement that will accompany this development with new initiatives for fundraising. The board recognizes that we must engage our membership in a discussion over the growth of both our music program and our religious education programs. But any meaningful program development in these two areas will require additional funding. New board structure will hopefully contribute to effective planning. The Governance Task Force is putting forward a proposal at this year's Annual Meeting to amend the number of USH Board of Directors so as to add two additional council chairs: Membership and Finance. Adoption of this constitutional amendment should serve to better focus and support board leadership.

# Secretary's Report

*Sarah Harmon McKenzie, Secretary*

As of February 1, of this year, USH certified 136 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association, a 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.

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

Richard Groothuis  
Barbara Saltzberger  
Gary Bent  
Clara Horn  
Katie Doyle  
Stu Spence  
Barbara Thornburg

We have welcomed 3 new members during the past year; Marilyn Hackett, Michael Michaud, and Judy Hopkins.

**Secretary, Sarah McKenzie.** Sarah first began attending services at USH in August of 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 sixth grade (with a long break when she lived in Vermont). Since coming here to USH, she has been involved with the Choir, Meetinghouse, and is currently serving 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.

# Treasurer's Report

*Jon Covault, Treasurer*

USH currently has a strong financial balance sheet in part due to reduced minister expense this year, with cash on hand of \$94,000 as of April 30. The current 22-23 budget year ending June 30 is anticipated to have a surplus of over \$40,000. Additionally, during the past year we reduced use of the endowment to support the operating budget by \$36,000 compared with prior 2 years due to reduced ministerial expense for 22-23. Non-endowment unrestricted reserves including accumulated prior years' operating budget surplus and remaining COVID grant funds total \$106,000. It is anticipated that we will need to draw on these reserves to balance the 23-24 budget.

Stewardship – For the current 22-23 church year, we received pledges from 94 families/individuals totaling \$297,000. Pledge giving has been excellent, as of April 30, our 22-23 pledge giving totaled \$279,700, or 94% of pledge total.

For the current 2023-2024 stewardship appeal, as of April 30 we have received pledges from 87 families/individuals totaling \$270,714 which is 15% short of our \$318,000 goal and 9% less than total pledges for 2022-2024. We are hopeful that we will receive additional pledges in the weeks ahead. It is anticipated that we will need to make a substantial draw on reserve funds to balance the 23-24 budget. A fall special Stewardship appeal could help reduce the amount reserves required.

## Endowment Committee

*David Newton, Chair*

*Members: Cris Noble, Jim Venneman*

Report prepared by Jim Venneman with thanks.

**Mission:** The Endowment Committee is responsible for the prudent and socially responsible investment of Endowment Funds, which will make the USH Endowment more attractive to those considering memorial and other bequests. 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 \$1,302,707 at December 31, 2022, which is held with our investment adviser, UBS. It is invested in two portfolios at UBS, with \$1,164,329 in the regular portfolio and \$138,378 in a separate portfolio that can be used to fund special projects approved by the Board. The \$1,302,707 represents a decrease of \$193,130 since December 31, 2021, or 12.9%. For comparison, the S&P 500 decreased by 18.1% in 2022. The lower decrease of USH's portfolio relative to the S&P benchmark is largely attributed to the conservative nature of USH's portfolio, for about one-third is invested in fixed assets like bonds.

Donations consisted of \$10,804 in the regular portfolio and \$50,871 in the separate portfolio. Withdrawals, including investment fees, consisted of \$47,872 from the regular portfolio and \$34,257 from the separate portfolio. In October the USH Treasurer suspended the regular monthly draw that went to the USH operating bank account, for he found that these funds were not currently needed. This change left more money in the Endowment, where it will be available when needed in the future.

During the past several years a substantial effort was made to inform governance-involved members that the operating budget drain on the endowment must be reduced to conserve funds for capital improvements. The Treasurer's ability to suspend the monthly draw in October, when he found the funds were not currently needed, is evidence that the Board is able to reduce its reliance on the Endowment for current expenses when it has sufficient operating funds due to lower than anticipated operating expenses. Of course, such a suspension is unlikely when USH again has a full-time minister.

Most endowments strive to disburse, or draw, about 4% of the average balance. For 2022, the draw from the regular portfolio was only 3.9% of the average balance, largely due to the Treasurer being able to suspend the monthly draw in October.

**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).

## Staff Reports

### Coordinator of Religious Education

*Annie Witzler*

It is the goal of the Religious Education Sub-Council of USH that our children find community and connection at the Meeting House, that they feel loved, respected, and heard, and that we give them the guidance to find their own answers to their most deeply felt concerns. We are ourselves guided by the words of 19th Century Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing: "The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own; not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own; Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs. In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life."

#### **Goals for the 2022-2023 Church Year:**

- Reestablish distinct age-oriented programming on Sunday mornings with dedicated staff and volunteers.
- Create a more prominent online presence to reach new families within the Greater Hartford area.
- Continue our Youth Soup service project with our Youth Group in connection with Church Street Eats and other Hartford soup kitchens.

#### **Structure for the 22-23 Church Year:**

The USH Sprouts Nursery: A calm, playful environment for ages infant through kindergarten with plenty of toys, books, space for our youngest to grow freely. We also featured the upstairs service streamed live every Sunday for any parents or volunteers who wished to listen as they facilitated. The average number of participants was 2 per Sunday.

The Chalice Clubhouse: An energetic and open class for ages Kindergarten through 6th grade with a weekly theme reflective of the adult service. We begin with a story and then have a craft or activity

based upon the story, tying it back to our Seven UU Principles. On third Sundays, our activities revolved around preparing Fellowship Hall for Soup Sundays by cleaning and decorating the space. The average number of participants was 4 per Sunday.

The USH Youth Group: A laid-back and deep-thinking class for ages 6th through 12th grade where different discussions and games were held to give youths a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings on different topics. With the Seven Principles and covenant of their own creation as their guiding compass, our Youth Group discussed everything from the nature of Good vs. Evil, to why there is a difference between dry and wet ginger ale. They also continued our Youth Soup service project, making and serving soup for the Meeting House on third Sundays and providing to soup kitchens across Hartford.

### **Accomplishments:**

Successfully relaunched three age-oriented programs for Sunday mornings with dedicated staff and volunteers that have run from September to June with only a two week break at the start of the new year in January.

Attracted half a dozen new families to the Meeting House via our ongoing presence online; the e-News and Facebook; and the friendly and dedicated personnel present on Sunday mornings.

Achieved between a 100% to 275% increase in attendance for Sunday morning classes. Our lowest turnout was only 2 participants, our largest was 16 participants, with an average weekly turnout of 8-9 participants. There was never a Sunday without the presence of children or youth this last year, a sharp contrast with last year's turnout which ranged from 0-6 participants, with an average of 2 on any given Sunday.

Made over 100 gallons of soup with our Youth Group for those in need in and around the city of Hartford and also served at Church Street Eats for the first time in three years.

Hosted over 100 guests for our annual Easter Egg Hunt, including over 60 children, shattering all previous records.

A heartfelt thank you to all our staff and volunteers who made our RE Year the most successful since the pandemic: Nani Perez, Bryant Moore, Paula Matzke, Evan Williams, and John Bengtson.

### **Plans for New Year:**

Building upon our first successful year since the pandemic, offering a more open, welcoming experience for the community with more than just Sunday morning classes available. Our Unitarian Universalist principles and sources will continue to be the guiding message behind all our programming but presented in more subtle ways outside of Sunday's worship. By reaching out to our community, we are inviting more people to get to know us, thus making us a known option for a spiritual home for families. Below are several possible new additions to our pre-existing lineup of offerings in addition to our Sunday RE classes, which are currently being considered by the Board of Directors:

Storytime Theater Wednesdays: A bimonthly offering advertised within the local family and homeschooling circles, aimed at appealing to families with children ages 3-12. There would be two “showings” of the story, one at 10:00 am and another at 2:00 pm, with a small craft or activity following. Stories selected would be seasonal, thematic, and always have a moral lesson in mind reflective of Unitarian Universalist values. The idea behind having two showings is to cater to both homeschooled families and to public school families, as Wednesday is an early release day for most local schools.

RPG Meets at USH: A monthly offering advertised within the local family and homeschooling circles aimed at older children and their families, especially youth ages 12 thru 18. Offered would be several role-playing-themed games such as Dungeons and Dragons, Magic: The Gathering, and more, within a relaxed, open atmosphere. This likely would occur on a Friday night of each month from 5 PM to 9 PM.

Special Public Events: A quarterly offering advertised to the general public to coincide with seasonal holidays such as Halloween and Autumn Celebrations, Christmas and Winter Celebrations, Easter and Spring Celebrations, and Independence Day and Summer Celebrations. The activity offered would be something like a haunted maze, an easter egg hunt, or a kite flying day.



# Church Office

*Karolina Wojtysko, Office Administrator*

I started my employment with the Unitarian Society of Hartford mid-December of 2022. In the short four months I have been in place, I dived in looking for innovative solutions to various administrative issues. My first goal upon arriving was to compile crucial information pertaining to USH and have them readily available in both digital and paper format. Implementing a digital and paper organizational system has helped to retrieve information faster, assisting board members and sub-council committee chairs. I will continue the effort so that in a years' time, I will have implemented a new standard procedure for record keeping to assist the board and sub-council chairs in an efficient way.

A longstanding issue with the outdated church newsletter had been corrected. With help from Tina Davies, we have moved away from USH's Emma e-newsletter provider to a more cost effective and updated e-newsletter provider, Constant Contact. The transition has been a success. Current members who did not receive the weekly e-news for some time are now receiving the newsletter with ease, and a door of possibilities to deliver USH news to new outlets has opened. I am excited to see where this door leads, and the audience we reach in the future.

Something I had noticed right away when I started was the need for updated material. Signs posted around the building needed current information, large bulletin boards located under the stairs required some tending, and the welcome table material desired a fresh new look. I have completed an overhaul of the bulletin boards, which is now an information highway for church members and visitors. The outdated signs have been removed and replaced with current information, and I am working with Laurie Kelliher of the Welcoming Committee to create new welcome material.

## **Plans for the New Year:**

Further develop our online presence, continue updating material for the Welcome Team, implement new standard procedures for the office, and assist the Membership Chair in crafting new ways to invite visitors to the church and turn them into members.

# Building Rentals

*Rentals Manager: Karolina Wojtysko*

Upon review of the current rental policy, I suggested to the Board of Directors an update is necessary. Price increase on rentals due to inflation should be considered. New marketing materials and photos of the spaces available to rent are needed to update the current information on the website. Rental information should also be available for walk-ins, Sunday service welcome packets, and e-mail requests. The staff service charge for non-member rentals has been approved, but will need to be added to current rental forms and brochures.

A recent change to rental inquires from non-member and member rentals will now include the Boards input and or approval if needed. Former practices left all requests solely on the Rental Manager at their discretion. If any unique situation should arise, the Board will review. In addition, current and pending rental information will be made available upon request from the Rental Manager.



The current renters of the building are:

Hartford Gay Mens Chorus

AA Meetings (Currently Offsite)

Sathya Sai

Private Ballroom Dancing Lessons

**Plans for the New Year:**

After updating the foundation materials needed for rentals, I would like to advertise the space locally with print material, and online through social media. I believe we could increase rental revenue for special occasions in this way.

## **Council on Administration**

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

Administration Council (Paul Cipriano)

Building and Grounds (David Newton)

Ambulatory Art (Diane Cadrain)

Archives (Larry Lunden)

Stewardship (Carolyn Carlson)- Report included with Treasurers Report

## **Administration Report**

*Chair: Paul Cipriano*

In 2022-23 The Administrative Council worked on security as its focus.

Over the past year we had security response planning workshops with Cressy Goodwin who is FEMA trained in emergency response planning.

Members of USH's Security Response Committee attended an Active Shooter Training Seminar sponsored by the Hartford Police Department.

A Detective from the Hartford Police Department visited the Meeting House to evaluate the security of the building. The Detective felt that USH was doing what we should do to make a public building as secure as it can be. He also informed us that Hartford has equipment placed around the city that can track gunfire heard in the city in real time and alert the police when and where it is occurring.

With our greeter's and welcome table fully staffed on Sunday we are doing what the Hartford Police Department, FEMA, and our insurer Church Mutual would recommend. Using the power of hello to connect with those who enter our Meeting House.

USH also took advantage of our insurers free security equipment program to obtain an Active Shooter Alarm along with a water and heat sensor that Church Mutual monitors for us at no charge.

Lastly, we applied for and were awarded a grant from the Connecticut Department of Homeland Security to enhance security in the Meeting House. We are in the process of purchasing security cameras, a monitor station, camera doorbell and buzzer and keyless entry system for our main lobby entrance.

Plans include putting planters in front of the main lobby to protect the entrance from accidental damage by vehicles and to protect those who are present in the lobby from injury.

We also implemented a policy of closing the side entrances of the building when Sunday services start so visitors must use the main entrances which are monitored as to who is entering the Meeting House. We strongly encourage users of the building not to prop doors open that are unattended to enable us to be better aware of who enters and leaves the building.

**Our goal is to enhance security in the building while not forgetting we are welcoming congregation to all who enter our doors.**

I wish to recognize for their support David and Janice Newton. David and Janice wear many hats at USH including the Caring Connection and Building and Grounds to name just a couple. What they do behind the scenes at USH is amazing and much appreciated.

David has been a tremendous resource in planning for security enhancements to the Meeting House and negotiating with contractors regarding the security equipment installation.

Thanks also to members of the security committee for their efforts: Cressy Goodwin, Fred Louis, Sue Smolski, Margaret Leicach, Diana Heymann, Laura Cipriano, Mike Covault, Karolina Wojtysko, Kevin Girouard, Annie Witzler, Laurie Kelliher, Lu Giammatteo, and Larry Lunden.

## **Building & Grounds Sub-Council**

*Chair: David Newton*

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

*Friends of B&G: Ed Sax, Janice Newton, Tina Davies, Jon Covault, Susan Hope*

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

*Submitted by David Newton, Chair, Building and Grounds*

We recognize the loss of Stuart Spence (Stu) who was Co-Chair/Chair of B&G from the late 90s until his death on March 27, 2023. We valued his good nature and quiet expertise available to all of us during his extended service to the Unitarian Society of Hartford and especially, to the Building and Grounds Sub-Council.

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

During FY 22-23

The long-delayed sanctuary lighting project was completed with the arrival of the new LED lights, their installation and programming. The aesthetic improvement was enormous as the improvements to the ceiling coupled with the new lights created an aesthetic vision Victor Lundy must have had in mind but was never previously realized because of the roof-related difficulties.

New carpet has now been installed in most of the peripheral rooms around the ambulatory as well as in the nursery off Fellowship Hall. The improvement in the look of the newly carpeted spaces are enormously improved as the old carpeting appears to have lost its attachment to the floors with attendant wrinkling, etc. Thus, the efforts to recarpet the Meeting House are now complete.

After a period of serious study, a B&G subcommittee led by Toni Gold recommended going forward in the process of seeking recognition of the Meeting House on the National Register of Historic Places. There turns out to be a special interest in so recognizing buildings now of about 50 years of age. We applied for a grant to cover the expense of employing a specialized and qualified writer to prepare our nomination documents and were successful in obtaining the full grant (\$16,700) to cover the expense rather than half the expense in the customary matching arrangement. At this writing, an RFP is in circulation to the stable of writers approved for this kind of work.

Necessary hardware was obtained called the Walker System for Hanging Art making periodic changes to ambulatory art shows, banner displays, etc., much better.

Churches have been urged to increase their security. A subcommittee on security is working under the leadership of Board Member and B&G member Paul Cipriano to develop appropriate disaster plans, institute training as necessary and seek support for acquisition of related safety equipment. To this end, we sought and were awarded a grant (\$25,400) to acquire various items of equipment to improve security. At this writing, procedures to obtain the grant funds for prescribed reimbursements are being followed. The equipment will permit remote observation of entrance activity, improve assigned access to the building and various other functions. These will be in addition to certain equipment provided by our church insurer, Church Mutual, that will alert us to flooding, fire, and provide active shooter response by Hartford Police. Activities related to these matters are in progress.

During the summer and fall, the roof was completely cleaned and restored to its original white color by power washing to remove accumulated mold growth.

There is a constant need to maintain the external grounds including gardens and trees. This year Evan Williams and Susan Hope have become the grounds part of B&G pursuing this important and difficult task. The trees, shrubs and gardens approve!

During the year, so called comfort height modern toilets were installed replacing all eight older original ones increasing dependability and significantly reducing the amount of water used.

We learned from the Village next door, their plans for construction of a fence about the entire property. We had a discussion with them as they solicited our support before the Zoning Board. They

agreed to place a gate at the Northwest corner of the fence so, with permission, we could use the areas adjacent to USH for various field events. They also agreed in writing to avoid planting trees and shrubs to the south of our solar panel array.

At this writing, a contract has been concluded for repaving the north and south driveways along with the parking areas and access to the West entrance. It is anticipated the drainage will be improved by careful grading of the areas adjacent to the catch basin in front of the west entrance.

We continue to pursue various energy conserving initiatives and available funding sources from federal programs recently enacted.

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 on request to help 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.

## **Current Status on National Register of Historic Places**

*Toni Gold*

In 2022 the USH church building (1964, Victor Lundy architect), having attained the age of 50 years, qualified for consideration for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation.

Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. Having been accepted by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation office for consideration for the National Register, along with a \$15,000 grant to pay for the research, the building will undergo a rigorous research effort to fully document its historical and architectural significance.

A subcommittee of the Building and Grounds Committee, made up of Toni Gold, Jim Venneman and Laura Cipriano, has been charged with overseeing this effort. The subcommittee has hired Mary Falvey of the nonprofit Hartford Preservation Alliance to steer the complicated process. A request for proposals has gone out to possible consultants; one response has been received so far, with another possible one on the horizon. In ten to twelve months the research should be complete, and the building is expected to become officially listed.

# Ambulatory Art

*Diane Cadrain, Chair*

The Ambulatory Art Sub-council has been very busy this year, picking up where our departed Sarah Sturges, our former capable and productive ambulatory art manager, left off. We have:

- Formulated a document of instructions and information for any artist who is considering mounting an exhibit in the Ambulatory. This document is available hanging in the Ambulatory itself, near the door to the sanctuary. We intend also to post the information on the USH Website and on the USH Facebook page.
- Purchased a new state of the art hanging system which will make our exhibits appear more professional and be easier to hang
- Mounted three exhibits: One by Stuart Williams, father of congregant Evan Williams; one by congregant Martha Bradley; and one by congregant Diane Cadrain
- Planned upcoming exhibits, including one by the Artist's Way group; one by photographer John Benford, son of congregant Marye Gail Harrison; one by congregant Joann Gaffron Hargrove; and one by congregational friend Anne Sheffield.

The Ambulatory Art Sub-council continues to meet regularly to offer original art, a valuable enhancement to our congregational life.

## USH Archives Annual Report

**Chair:** Larry Lunden.

**Members:** Sue Smolski

**Our mission:** The Archives: Serves as the institutional memory of USH. Identifies, acquires, and maintains records of enduring value that chronicle the development of the church. Preserves essential evidence of the church, including day to day records that have permanent significance. Gives future generations a place to research the church's history.

### **Our accomplishments this year:**

Started working with the National Historical Register committee. Many of our architectural records can document the uniqueness of our building.

We received a request for our incorporation papers. Nothing was found. No records were sent to us to be saved.

We received a request for the marriage record of a former member. The Hartford city registry did not have a record of it. We found a record in Nat Lauriat's records. We don't have any rite of passage records since Jon Loupa left in 1999, so we would not be able to respond to any requests. Marriage records are our most frequent requests.

We received a request for information on a former member, Dr. Alan Hart. An author is writing a play about his life. We sent a few records we found.

We received a request for the history of the organ. We shared the extensive file we have, and it was used in a service.

The USH Banner Project 2022-2023 was completed by Evan Williams and Sue Smolski. Now there is a paper catalogue of all our banners and fiber art, with names, colored photographs, and as much provenance as we could gather given our resources. The catalog is designed so that as new fabric art is created information can easily be added. Chancel Artists have a duplicate copy of the Project Catalog. An electronic version will be posted on our website in the near future. This project cataloged, organized, and expanded information about this significant part of the Meeting House.

We are receiving the eNews and orders of service, which I file. We continue discussing the challenges of running the archives.

**Our plans for next year:**

Continue to accept new records and file them in an organized manner.

Continue to work with the National Historic Register project.

Discuss collecting the ongoing minutes with the incoming president.

Find ways to bring the archival materials to the attention of the congregation.

## **Council on Community Within**

*Chair: Tina Davies*

This year witnessed continued ‘recovery’ from the isolation visited upon USH (and society, in general) by the Covid-19 pandemic. We could not magically “restart” all of the opportunities for connection which brought people together in congenial settings which were abruptly halted in March 2020 — reduced, resources, wariness of proximity, and other factors listed what was practical. The Council threw its efforts toward supporting the most viable projects, anticipating that each success would pave the way for additional initiatives.

Here are some highlights, according to sub-council or program area:

### **Caring Network**

The Caring Network remained active through pandemic shutdown, sending notes and calling members to stay in touch with USH members and friends. As we returned to in-person worship and activities, the Network resumed its support for those needing rides or other help, and facilitating communications with Rev. Aaron Payson (Worcester) who had generously offered his help for anyone in need of pastoral counsel while USH operated without a minister. Chair Janice Newton’s thorough report is appended below.

### **Communications**

Laura Cipriano, as Chair, oversaw the primary traditional vehicles for communication and also functioned as webmaster for our website. The site is undergoing a gradual review; outdated artifacts are removed while fresh material is provided. See Laura’s full report below for additional detail.

The USH E-news (Tina Davies, primary editor and Buffie Pinney/Karolina Wojtysko, production and tech leads) maintained a weekly publication schedule and, recently, migrated from the e-mail marketing platform “Emma” to “Constant Contact”, a more versatile and capable vehicle which has the added bonus of cost savings. The eNews can be accessed from our Facebook account, enabling public viewing. We are still in a teething process. Early reviews among readers appear positive. Thanks to frequent contributors David and Janice Newton, Judy Robbins, Sue Smolski, Toni Gold, and Annie Witzler for their reports and editorial guidance.

### **Membership**

With its lead position vacant, focus on membership-related activities was reduced at the year’s start. Thanks to an organizing app (***Sign-Up Genius***) our office administrator was able to monitor availability of volunteers for greeting, ushering, and staffing the welcome table at Sunday services. Yet a concentrated focus on newcomers was felt. This was remedied when **Laurie Kelliher** agreed to serve as Membership chair. See Laurie’s complete sub-council report below for a complete review.

### **Meeting House Presents**

MHP offered a shorter lineup of concerts this year — the Covid aftermath continues to play havoc with performers and audiences — but the concerts presented were received enthusiastically. Most were groups performing on a “donation” basis; MHP did not need to cover a minimum for the band in most instances. The largest draw came with ***Calan***, a Welsh group touring on the east coast and available to us through some overlaps between USH and the Welsh Society of Western New England. This co-production drew an audience of greater than 100.

### **Programs**

Some familiar opportunities for learning and socializing were revived, and a new offering has attracted a following. The Book Group and Artist’s Way group, both of which remained active on Zoom during the pandemic, continued (largely on Zoom, with some in-person meetings) bringing people together for discussion about artistic process and interesting books. One evident benefit of these Zoom gatherings is their inclusion of participants otherwise unable to be together.

Connection Circles returned to fall and spring series. The Lunch Bunch was faced with relocation: the monthly meeting place advised their incapability to serve our group, owing to restaurant staffing shortages, and the group now brown-bags lunch and meets in Fellowship Hall. This will continue for at least the near future. “Pizza and Movie”, a monthly Friday night supper/movie gathering, has drawn well. And Lucille Giammatteo introduced a weekly Gentle Yoga session which has attracted regular attendance. All these help create the “connective tissue” that holds a community together.

## **Coffee Hours and Gatherings**

Following the 2022 Annual Meeting, USH members and friends converged in Fellowship Hall for a catered lunch — the first inside “party” since before March, 2020. In September, we started the year with a pot-luck cook-out: people contributed cold dishes and USH provided hot dogs and burgers.

At other times, often linked with a holiday or other celebration (Hallowe’en, Valentine’s Day) “enhanced coffee hours” with treats enticed people to stay and chat following Sunday worship. And the Youth Group revived its practice of making and selling soup to fund food donations to local shelters — thanks to John Bengtson and Annie Witzler, among others. Also, we note and thank the guardians of the Used Book Cart for sorting and displaying donated books for purchase; the books consistently offer a focus for browsing and commenting. Several home gardeners brought in surplus vegetables during August, asking that any ‘donations’ for a ripe squash or juicy tomato be channeled to the stewardship line item. All of these small contributions illustrate how community support can also bring people together through camaraderie and shared interests.

## **Plans for the New Year**

Next year, Community Within will continue working to re-establish and expand "connective tissue" within our society, helping foster caring, fellowship, and friendships. Coffee Hour "enhancements", pot lucks, celebrations, and gatherings help connect members, friends, and folks from the wider community. We would like to explore building a "social team" (with a better name) to help plan and organize occasions and are willing to show up to help when there's a pot luck or pancake breakfast on the calendar.

# **Membership Sub-Council**

*Chair: Laurie Kelliher*

Welcoming and retaining visitors is critical to USH growth. Over the past 18 months 57 visitors have been identified. It is likely that more have visited but did not stop at the welcome table or declined to sign-in.

The Welcome team has been formalized and now meets quarterly. Karolina Wojtysko has vastly improved the sign-up for team volunteers. Each Sunday the Welcome team consists of 2 greeters, 2 ushers and 1 person at the welcome table. Encouraging newcomers to sign our welcome sheet is an important access point to encourage further contact. Each person from that list receives an email, face-to-face contact or phone call inviting them to attend First Connections where the conversation is informal and relaxed.

In the last 5 months 22 people have attended a First Connections session.

Happily, USH is seeing an uptick in attendance at Sunday morning services. During much of the winter 52-66 people were in the pews and 14-16 on-line. However, this spring in-person attendance has averaged 60-84 with an outstanding Sunday arriving for Rev. Josh Pawelek and the Hartford Gay Men’s Chorus when 94 people attended.



In the past year 3 new members have joined USH and we are anticipating another 3-4 this spring.

USH continues to see a mismatch between the number of identified members and members actively attending (in the pews or on-line) services. A request was put out to various USH committees and groups asking that they identify members who have been missing and make a personal call or other contact letting the missing know that they are, in fact, missed.

To improve membership and robust participation in church life USH needs several actions. Everyone can be aware of new faces. A personal hello or greeting is critical to newcomers' belief that they have entered a safe space.

We need families and an expanded Religious Education program. Families with children come as visitors but then do not return (presumably because our program is very small and has a schoolhouse model rather than active classrooms). Families mean a younger congregation and younger newcomers recognize peers.

We will be welcoming a new minister and we need to both celebrate and pass the word. Attendance increases when a minister is speaking.

We need a choir. The congregation has been wildly joyous on the recent occasions where a choir is singing. Singing that fills our beautiful space with music makes the Meeting house sound like a church. And for that music we need dedicated funding.

-Laurie Kelliher

## **Communications Sub-Council**

*Chair - Laura Cipriano*

**Members** - Tina Davies, Paul Cipriano, Mike Covault, Jon Covault, Toni Gold, Brian Harvey, Bruce Robbins, David Newton, Janice Newton

Communications Sub-Council Supporters -Judy Robbins, and Joanne Orlando

As we moved back to in-person services we had frequent updates about covid precautions and protocol. Streaming Sunday services have become hybrid services, allowing people to attend live or online.

Peter Meny, Paul Cipriano, and Judy Sullivan produced a FAQ pamphlet similar to the sabbatical pamphlet for the welcome table.

This year, the communications sub-council continued to review and refresh the USH webpage, fixing broken links, correcting obsolete information, and generally making the content and appearance fresher. Particular attention has been given to the front welcome page, the RE page, updating board members and staff named on the web site, and the newly renamed USH Internal Affairs (formerly Members) section.

Tina Davies and Karolina Wojtysko, our new office administrator, replaced the problematic Emma email software with Constant Contact. The new and improved eNews has been received enthusiastically.

Other communication ideas include “Five Faces” to look for during coffee hour if you have any questions. Welcome table upstairs before church and downstairs after church. Newcomers’ Connections Under the Stairs with Laurie Kelliher and Brian Harvey. Board members under the stairs - 4th Sundays during coffee hour. Board email address – email to this address is first read by the office administrator, then forwarded to board members.

Let us know your ideas for improved communication. Would you like an eNews text link? Maybe a table of contents with clickable links to the details?

## Caring Network Sub-Council

*Chair: Janice Newton*

**Active Members:** **Chair:** Janice Newton **Members:** Laura Cipriano, Lucille Giammatteo, Louise Harmon, Ginny Hedrick, Nancy Kemmerer, Rachel Mintell, Yakhonda Mwenelupembe, David Newton, Eve Pech, Nancy Reed, Mimi Stevenson, Marilyn Stockton. In addition, there are many supporting members whom we can call on when help is needed. We are very grateful for this help.

This year has been very different since we did not have a minister. We have been able request help from Rev. Aaron Payson, Senior Minister (Worcester, MA, UU), Rev. Joy Christi Przeworski, Fern Street Pastoral Care and Community Minister, and Rev. Stephen Kendrick (retired - Boston and Fern Street) - and now living in Farmington. We are extremely grateful for their help, support, and advice. We are looking forward to working with Rev. Bob in the future.

This year we have numerous contacts with members and friends. We have contacted folks we have not seen for a while and those who have lost loved ones and those who are lonely and need to know we are here to listen and help.

We are always looking for folks who would be available to drive members to and/or from Sunday services. Please contact me if you would be able to help. Contact me at [janicecnewton@gmail.com](mailto:janicecnewton@gmail.com) or 860-212-6923.

We have arranged and given rides to appointments and to services at the Meeting House. We have supplied some meals.

We had or helped arrange three Memorial services and three interments in our Memorial Garden. We have at least two Memorial services and Receptions that will occur after Rev. Bob is with us.

We continue to knit (rather slowly) Comfort Shawls. We sort of fell behind during the pandemic and other turmoil in the distributing of them. If you, or someone you know, needs a Comfort Shawl, please contact Nancy Reed or me. We have distributed 308 shawls. There is a “Community Shawl” in a tray

by the bench in the lobby. Feel free to knit some on it. Be sure to add your name to the list of knitters in the note pad in the tray.

We have had several people take interest in the care of the Memorial Garden. Our older selves are extremely grateful! We have joined Building and Grounds on their workdays to weed and care for the two Memorial Gardens. We are very grateful to the Building and Grounds Sub-Council for their help. We have replaced all the engraved plates on the benches on the Memorial Garden. The old ones were no longer readable.

The Caring Network has a table set up in Fellowship Hall during Fellowship Hour. Each Sunday we are there to meet new folks and to be available if personal contact is desired.

During the year we have continued to have monthly meetings in person as well and on ZOOM. Anyone interested in learning more about the Caring Network is urged to speak to a member and attend one of our meetings. We generally meet at 12:15 PM on the second Sunday on the month in Murray. Our meetings generally are 1 hour. All are welcome. Our goal is to be a Caring Community and we are anxiously looking forward to working with Rev. Bob to make this even more of a reality.

## **Council on Social Justice**

*Chair: Judy Sullivan*

This has been a rebuilding year for Social Justice. We have continued monthly meetings via Zoom, and concentrated on re-evaluating the focus of the committee. Our intention is to support local organizations with the energy and interests of the USH community.

### **Good Neighbor Offerings (GNO)**

The “Share the Plate” program was introduced last year at the annual meeting and was approved by the congregation as a trial for September through June, 2022-23 fiscal year. The GNO donations are now collected every Sunday and split 50/50 with USH unless otherwise designated. The results are a significant increase in giving to local organizations and a noticeable increase in the USH amount collected. Suggestions for local organizations come from the USH members and have added enthusiasm to the Sunday offering ritual. Speakers for the selected organizations give us insight into the mission and specific programs that we help to fund. The emphasis on building relationships strengthens our giving as a spiritual practice.

### **Reproductive Rights Worship Service**

Last fall, USH members trained with the UUA Uplift Action, the new campaign organizing for LGBTQIA+, Gender and Reproductive Justice. In February, we then served as Sunday pulpit guests and presented the values of UU’s regarding Reproductive Justice. The worship service highlighted our central belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people, which includes a belief in the sacredness of all bodies, and the importance of self-determination and human agency.

That day, a speaker from the REACH (Reproductive Equity, Access and Choice) board spoke as the representative of that month’s GNO.

## **LGBTQIA+ Justice**

In June USH shared a table at the West Hartford Pride Festival and plan to do so again this year. The Hartford Pride date is in September and we plan to participate there also.

In addition, PFLAG Hartford has been designated as a GNO with a speaker participating in September.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

### **The Village for Families and Children**

USH continues our dedication to our closest neighbor organization. Although opportunities for in-person volunteering remain limited, we enjoy updates from their board and are always most excited and gracious to support them as a GNO. *A full Village report follows.*

### **Community Organizing**

As a founding member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), USH remains deeply committed to the work of the group of 51 faith congregations and organizations. Currently in the second campaign centered on gun violence prevention, affordable housing, environmental justice, health benefits and educational equity we have lobbied for legislative action and are developing strong relationships with legislators. *A full GHIAA report follows.*

### **Fern Street Food Ministries**

USH members now volunteer at the Universalist Church of West Hartford Backpack Program and Food Pantry. These are two of the five well established programs offered and we are fortunate to partner with our UU neighbor.

### **Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry**

Food donations are collected in the USH lobby and delivered weekly to the food pantry on the corner of Albany Avenue and Vine Street in Hartford – about two miles from our meeting house.

USH has continued to support the **Noah Webster Partnership**, tutoring on a weekly basis. We also continue to represent USH at meetings of the **Upper Albany NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone)**.

## **The Village for Families and Children**

*Joanne Orlando, Liaison*

The Unitarian Society of Hartford continued its unwavering support of The Village for Families and Children during the past year. The summer of 2022 was the tenth year that USH participated in the Annual School Uniform Fundraiser at The Village. This year's contribution was the largest made to date; \$2,260. The Village for Families and Children was the recipient of the March 2023 Good Neighbor Offering of \$1,158.74. On March 12, 2023 Derek Slap, Vice President for Development at The Village for Families and Children was a guest speaker at Sunday morning's service. He brought an insider's perspective to our understanding of The Village. The combined giving from USH to The Village brought USH into a higher giving category in the honor roll of donors recognized in the Village for Families' and Children's Annual Report. I represented USH at the Champions for Children: Village for Families and Children Annual Meeting, learning more about The Village and helping others to learn more about USH.

# 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!

## The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)

*By Judy Sullivan, Diana Heymann*

In December 2022, we chose the 2023 Issue Slate.

**Mental Health:** We have partnered with HUSKY 4 Immigrants to expand health care coverage for adolescents regardless of immigration status.

Status: HB 6616 was voted out of committee with coverage up to age 19. The

Appropriations Committee knocked it back to age 16. We are still working to raise the age back to 19.

**Environmental Racism:** We are fighting for the remaining MIRA (Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority) funds to be put toward proper remediation of the trash-to-energy plant in the South End of Hartford.

Status: HB 6664 addresses some of the state's ongoing trash problems. However, we support the bill with amendments -

- At least 50% of the board Hartford residents
- Remediation of the South End plant won't be limited by MIRA's current reserves.

**Educational Equity:** In a state where 50% of K-12 students are individuals of color, CT spends \$720 million more to educate school districts that are 75% white students than they do on school districts that are at least 25% students of color. We are demanding funding equity in partnership with Faith Acts and CONECT.

Status: HB 5003 is in front of the House for a full vote.

**Housing and Homelessness:** We have joined with Open Communities Alliance to fight for zoning reform for affordable housing and call on suburban towns to join with Hartford to address regional homelessness.

Status: HB 6633 (Fair Share Zoning Reform) was voted out of the Housing Committee.

**Gun Violence Prevention:** We are fighting for increased resources for organizations working directly toward gun violence prevention in urban areas.

**Status:** The Appropriations Committee allocated \$17 million for this issue. We requested \$20 million.

These issues are ongoing as the legislative process continues through the month of May with final outcomes in June, 2023.

## **Council on Spiritual Life**

*Chair: Peter Meny*

The Council on Spiritual Life encompasses Religious Education, Worship Associates, Music Ministry, Chancel Art, and SpiritLife. Together these ministries provide opportunities for our members to experience spirituality in a variety of ways that enriches their own lives and the lives of others.

This year our Worship Associates chose the theme 'Love in Action' to be the focus during the year. We were blessed with Sunday services which were varied and rich and delved deeply into this theme.

Our R.E. program has continued to rebound from the impact of the Covid pandemic. Attendance has recovered slightly with an average weekly attendance of approximately 8 children and Youth. There have been a few encouraging spikes when we had 15 children so we hope we can continue to grow the program. One highlight I'd like to mention is the amazing Easter Egg hunt we had after the service on Easter Sunday. Over 100 people (60 children and 40 parent/caregivers), many of them members of the Hartford community who were at the Meeting House for the first time, came and enjoyed the excitement and fun. Annie Witzler, our Interim RE coordinator, has provided continuity, leadership, and creativity during the year.

Looking ahead, the Board is planning to lead a comprehensive review of the RE program during the next church year. This will include an assessment of the current state of RE and a study of how it can adapt to meet current and future needs. Preliminary research and discussions have determined that RE has been changing dramatically in recent years, even before Covid. Other denominations have also witnessed these challenges and have seen a significant drop in attendance by children and youth. As a result, many UU congregations are restructuring and redirecting their RE programs to meet current realities (see the Spring/Summer 2023 edition of the UU World).

The Board is committed to creating an Interim RE committee for the coming church year. This group will not only support Annie in developing RE goals and plans but also help the Board, with input from Rev. Bob, determine what our RE program will look like in the future. We welcome all USH members to consider volunteering for this important work. Those interested please contact Peter Meny by phone or email.

Next year Annie plans to build upon the foundation laid this year. She hopes to offer more than just Sunday morning classes. Our Unitarian Universalist principles and sources will continue to be the guiding message behind all our programming but presented in more subtle ways outside of Sunday worship. By reaching out to our community, we hope to have more people get to know what USH can offer as a spiritual home for families.

**Music Ministry** – Sam has continued to provide a varied and rich music program using their many skills as musician, composer, and tech expert. We have all been delighted to see the USH choir return after a long absence due to Covid. In the Spring the choir sang at two Sunday services. Next year, however, Sam intends to build on the current foundation adding more voices (both members and choral ‘scholars’) as well as aiming at singing two Sundays a month. At other times we will rely on a combination of home-grown talent as well as guest musicians and singers to grace our chancel. We hope that the group Meeting House and the Hartford Gay Men’s Choir will return.

We also heard our organ on two occasions during the Spring. For many it was a happy occasion to hear this beautiful instrument again. Two different organists were hired for these occasions but Sam hopes to work on his organ playing skills over the summer so that he can play hymns, preludes, and postludes.

While there were many musical highlights during the year, one service deserves special mention. Sam’s tribute to Chet Baker was remarkable not only for its soulful jazz duets but also for Sam’s description of his spiritual journey and how Chet Baker’s example helped him to deal with adversity.

**SpiritLife** - Submitted by Judy Robbins

Now in its 6th year, the *UUSpiritLife* program continues to provide spiritually oriented programs to the three area UU churches. In 2022-23, we offered monthly *SpiritLife Conversations*, a series of drop-in zoom programs focused around various spiritual topics. These conversations continue to be stimulating and often surprising as participants bring a wide range of spiritual experience. The programs are also welcoming to the spiritually curious and typically a few attendees choose to just listen to the discussion. Approximately 30 people participated including 10-12 from USH. Because this is a drop-in program, not everyone attends each session but typically there are 15-18 participants on screen. This year we had a goal to develop new session leaders; we now have one new session leader and we will extend that goal to the 2023-24 season.

Judy Robbins ran a pilot program in April to test the waters for a weekly zoom meditation. The pilot got good reviews so plans are underway to offer a mid-week morning zoom meditation. If enough volunteers come forward, we anticipate starting in late September.

The four trustees of *UUSpiritLife* are: Judy Robbins, Rick Tsukada (USH), Dave Gonci and Tom Gervais (UCWH). Judy and Rick have been participating in an ecumenical UU-run year-long program on Congregation-Based Spiritual Development which has provided many new ideas that can be applied to *UUSpiritLife*. Tom is currently studying to be a chaplain in addition to his hospice and hospital visits with Gabby, his therapy dog. Dave runs the national *UUMystics* program and is active in men’s spiritual development.

# Worship Associates Annual Report

*Members: Laurie Kelliher, Margaret Leicach, Peter Meny, Michael Michaud, Judy Robbins, Carol Simpson, Sue Smolski -Coordinator, Rick Tsukada*

## Worship Services:

Throughout this church year, the Worship Associates have continued to create and lead consistently high-quality worship services without the presence of a USH minister and to create the Orders of Service.

By the end of June, there will have been 54 worship services. In addition to Sunday Services, there were two-week day evening services, Winter Solstice and Christmas Eve.

Unusual December Worship Calendar: Christmas and New Years were on Sundays this year. With the congregation in mind, the Worship Associates led five services in two weeks at the end of December. This phenomenon will not happen again until 2033, for which we are grateful.

The majority of our worship services will have had USH Worship Associates or USH members as the pulpit guest. Eighteen (18) services will have been with outside pulpit guests- ministers (15) and lay people (3); one service with lay leaders from USH and UUSE in Manchester; one service with the Director of Music Ministries; and the final service of the year will be the livestreamed Sunday Service from the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association with Dana Donovan as host.

New Worship Associate: Michael Michaud, a new member and an experienced worship leader, was warmly welcomed in October.

## New Initiatives:

Worship Forums: Judy Robbins created a format for worship services which invites congregation participation. It was piloted successfully last summer and has continued intermittently and successfully throughout the church year.

Worship Associate Manual: Last summer the process to organize our resource materials into a manual began. The original documents have been reviewed, revised, and edited. Additional information is being written. The goal is to complete a manual, by the end of July, which can easily be updated. We are grateful that Karolina Wojtysko, our office administrator, is now actively involved in this project.

Sharing Lay Pulpit Resources with UUSE in Manchester: Carol Simpson has been our liaison with UUSE. This summer there will be two pulpit guest sharing services at each church. The home church's worship associate will lead the service. Plan: After evaluating this pilot, extending this sharing throughout the coming church year will become the focus.

On-line Worship Calendar: This tool was revised and has been used by the members of the worship team to foster timely communication with the people who create any given worship service.

Order of Service Inserts: The Worship Coordinator has been editing the weekly insert with the Office Administrator.



Worship Associate Representatives to USH Committees:

Safety Committee: Margaret Leicach

Contract Minister Application Review Committee: Judy Robbins, also the chair

Soul Matters, USH interface: Laurie Kelliher

The Coordinator of the Worship Associates communicated ongoingly with Chancel Artists, Social Justice Chair, Director of Music Ministries, Director of Religious Education, the Tech Team, Chair of Spirit Life Council, our Office Administrator, our President, and made the initial contacts to the pulpit guests who were not our members or staff.

Goals for 2023-2024:

1. Joyfully welcome Rev Bob Janis-Dillion and further develop shared ministry at USH
2. Explore developing a Worship Committee
3. Continue to expand the number of lay pulpit guests from our congregation
4. Increase the number of Worship Associates
5. Complete the Worship Associate Manual

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Smolski, Worship Associate Coordinator

## **Strategic Plan Update for 2023**

The Strategic Planning Committee met monthly in 2021-22 and in 2022-23.

2021-22 Chair – Rob Spector

2022-23 Chair – Laura Cipriano

Members – Eve Pech, Beverly Spence, Diana Heymann, Nancy Kemmerer, Gloria Mengual, Brian Harvey, Sue Tenorio

We decided to focus on the USH Governance Structure and identified two areas of concern – finance and membership. Our recommendation is to create two new councils to give these concerns a voice, with Council Chairs serving on the Board.

Work with Brian Harvey to update the pie-chart diagram to reflect the new council structure, either before the vote or wait for approval.

Remaining work – revisit the 2016 Strategic Planning recommendations, which were tabled in 2021.

What was recommended? Which of the recommendations have been implemented? Were they successful? Which recommendations have not been implemented? Should they be or have our needs changed? If you want to help with this task, contact Laura Cipriano, Beverly Spence, or Nancy Kemmerer.

May 2023 Proposed Changes to the Unitarian Society of Hartford Constitution

1. Increase the number of Councils and Council Chairs from 4 to 6, which will increase the board from 8 to 10.
2. Quorum - Increase the number of voting board members present from 5 to 6 to constitute a quorum.
3. Formalize the Board's power to set policy guidelines for the Ministers Discretionary Fund.
4. Add to Administration Council Sub-council - Emergency preparedness and security sub-council.

5. Duties now under the Council on Administration shall be divided between the Council on Administration and the new Council on Finance.
6. Duties now under the Council on Community Within shall be divided between the Council on Community Within and the new Council on Membership.
7. The Chair of the New Membership Council shall serve as Chair of the Nominating Committee. The immediate past-president shall have no formal duties.
8. The president of the Endowment Committee may not concurrently serve as an officer, an at-large member of the Board of Directors, or a Council chair.
9. Add a Dissolution Clause - In the unlikely event that the Unitarian Society of Hartford ceases to exist, all funds shall be ultimately deposited or used for tax exempt purposes as outlined in the draft constitution.

## **USH honored with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual+ Liberation Stained Glass Memorial Donation**

*Adapted from an eNews contribution by Michael Michaud*

On April 15, 2023, a Celebration of Life for Crispin Hollings was held at USH. Crispin, though not a member, was a key leader in the LGBTQI+ civil rights movement in Connecticut and served two terms as Co-Director for the then-Connecticut Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. His work contributed to the passage of Connecticut's first comprehensive civil rights law for the lesbian and gay community. He was a key player in Hartford's progressive activism.

Crispin passed away unexpectedly on November 10, 2022, in San Francisco where he had lived for many years. Michael Michaud, USH member and long-time friend of Mr. Hollings, organized this moving East Coast memorial service for Crispin's many Hartford-area friends.

A Stained Glass Memorial (created by noted glass artist Dennis Peabody) now resides over the window by the front entrance of USH. The stained glass has been donated by Hartford activist John Bonelli in loving memory of Victor D'Lugin, Crispin Hollings, Shawn Lang, and all those who came before and continue the struggle for freedom and love.

USH has been an ardent supporter of LGBTQI+ rights. It's hoped that, as a religious organization, hosting this memorial will inspire other institutions, both civic and spiritual, to embrace the cause. The memorial provides a physical symbol for the struggles and challenges experienced by LGBTQI+ individuals. It will serve as a reminder of how individuals and communities can rise up and speak truth to ignorance and bias. The memorial will showcase a movement which, past and continuing currently, has organized and mobilized for equality, freedom, justice, and liberation. USH is deeply honored with this donation.



*Pictured: Michael Michaud (Left), John Bonelli (Right)*

# Report On the UUA Article II Revision

*Submitted by Judy Robbins*

*At this time USH does not have an active Denominational Affairs Committee, so this report is submitted "ad hoc."*

The bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) require an examination every 15 years to be sure they are still timely and meaningful. Article II is the section under consideration this year; it's a key section that deals with: 1) the purpose of the UUA and 2) the Seven Principles and Six Sources that have guided our religion. In 2020, the UUA Board charged a Study Commission to evaluate and make changes to Article II. The Commission consisted of six people: Dr. Paula Cole-Jones, a workshop leader on institutional change who chaired the Commission, two ministers: Cheryl Walker and Rob Spirko, a Religious Educator: Becky Brooks and two youth: Maya Waller and Satya Mamdani. Key elements of the charge to this Commission:

... Our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is love in action, and should be centered in any revision of Article II. Finally, the Principles and Purposes should lead us into the second quarter of the 21st Century, while honoring the historic roots of our liberal, progressive faith.

We therefore charge this commission to root its work in Love as a principal guide in its work; attending particularly to the ways that we (and our root traditions) have understood and articulated Love, and how we have acted out of Love.

As it conducts its work, the Commission shall seek to engage the active participation of UUs across all demographics, identities, and theological/philosophical beliefs. The Commission shall be open and transparent in its work, communicating progress frequently with UUs through as many channels and communication media as possible. Further, the Commission shall de-center habitual practices that reinforce white supremacy culture....

The Commission is charged with reviewing all sections of Article II, and is free to revise, replace, or restructure them as needed to meet the objectives stated above. There is nothing sacred about the number of principles or sources, nor their specific wordings, nor in the way that Article II is laid out. We encourage creativity. The Board would like to see an Article II that is inspirational, memorable and poetic. The language should be inclusive and welcoming, and explicitly anti-racist.

The complete charge can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/charge>. Of the total 135,000 American UUs, the Commission reports that they got feedback via several methods from approximately 10,000 members. They also extensively relied on input from General Assemblies (GA) and the submitted "certification" data from UU churches across the country. This outreach proved inadequate. Many congregations felt blindsided reading the Revision Draft when it was released in the fall of 2022. This first draft completely deleted the Seven Principles and Six Sources and changed the purpose of the UUA.

The present purpose of the UUA is:

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.

The proposed purpose is:

The Unitarian Universalist Association will devote its resources to and use its organizational powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. Its primary purposes are to assist congregations in their vital ministries, support and train leaders both lay and professional, to foster lifelong faith formation, to heal historic injustices, and to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world. The purpose of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.

The change in purpose and deletion of the Principles and Sources in favor of a value system surprised UUs across the country and the Commission was flooded with negative response. The Commission responded with a second draft and submitted it to the UUA Board in January 2023. The new draft inserted language from the existing Principles. **The complete revision can be found here:** <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-02/article-II-study-report-2021-23.pdf>. See particularly page 19.

At USH, Judy Robbins had been following the events leading up to the creation of the Commission. When the first draft was released, she and Laura Cipriano ran an Information Session on November 20, 2022 in Fellowship Hall after the regular Sunday service. Approximately 80 people attended. Since then, several articles have appeared in the weekly USH e-news with links to informative articles and videos both in favor and opposed to the Revision. On April 16, 2023, wren Bellavance-Grace, a representative of the UUA's New England Region, was our pulpit guest. She agreed to stay after the service for a Question/Answer session. Judy had solicited questions from the congregation and edited the questions to eliminate duplicates. This one-hour program gave congregants more information so they could decide whether they were for or against these major changes.

On May 21, 2023 at the USH annual meeting, there will be a chance to revisit this important issue. Congregants will be able to vote their preference: For the Revision, Against or Abstain. The information will be collated and shared with this year's GA delegates. At GA, a vote will take place to decide whether to adopt the Revision. Our delegates to GA are: Judy Robbins, Laura Cipriano, and Dana Donovan with Tina Davies serving as the alternate. Delegates have traditionally voted their conscience but this year, it feels important that the delegates know where the congregants stand.

### Opinions

Until a vote is taken May 21 at the annual meeting, there is no codifiable evidence how our USH congregation is leaning, but anecdotal evidence abounds and it is largely against these sweeping changes.

The following is a list of some of the major concerns heard at USH:

- The UUA has not put forth a compelling reason for such a large change.

- The change in purpose flips the balance of power between the UUA and its member congregations. Instead of serving its member churches, the UUA would now “assist, support and train” us to “heal historic injustices and advance UU values,” to “transform the world with Liberating Love.”
- In this Revision, the UUA has chosen dismantling racism as our mission. Many feel this is too narrow a focus; there are countless other missions equally worthy. UUs, who are used to independence, bristle at being told what to do.
- *Any* social justice mission, worthy though it may be, should not be the definition of a religion. A religion is a *much* larger institution.
- With only 135,000 members nationwide and today’s advanced technology, any UU with a cell phone could have easily been brought in on these changes right from the start. Instead, a small number of people were largely responsible for sweeping changes.
- The language in the current Seven Principles and Six Sources is universally understood and concise. It is the reason many are drawn to UUism. The new language is confusing, peppered with buzz words and not quickly grasped.
- There is an excessive use of covenants. Our current covenants are a few global promises of mutual trust and support. The new covenants come with *accountability*. Until now, UUs have been accountable to our own conscience. No external judge has determined if we are “out of covenant.” UUs judging other UUs is a very divisive idea.
- The threat of accountability stifles honest dialog and discourages non-conformers.
- The current leadership of the UUA assumes that UUism is a *covenantal* religion. Not all UUs agree on this. It might be better understood as a *liberal* religion.
- In the Justice value, we “covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression.” Is it reasonable to hold UUs accountable to such a massive, indeterminate goal?
- The issue of racism could have been tagged as “an area of critical concern” without changing the principles. An 8<sup>th</sup> Principle on racism could be considered denomination-wide.
- In the Inclusion section (C-2.4) the wording has been changed from “...congregations that truly welcome all persons...” to “...welcome all persons *who share our values*.” This closes the door on potential new members who may not yet share our values.
- Several felt the logo was silly and facile demonstrating how so many people have devolved into simplistic thinking.

I stress that the above are *opinions* of various congregants. On the positive side, the most concise advocacy in favor of these changes is included in the UUAs Frequently Asked Questions. The FAQs are located here: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/blog/faq>

# USH Board of Directors and Staff

## USH Board of Directors 2022-2023



**President**  
Eve Pech  
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**Spiritual Life Council Chair**  
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**President Elect**  
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**Community Within Council Chair**  
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**Secretary**  
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**Social Justice Council Chair**  
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**Treasurer**  
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## USH Staff 2022-2023



**interim Minister**  
Open



**Religious Ed. Coordinator**  
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**Office Administrator**  
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**Sexton**  
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**Director of Music Ministries**  
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**Fellowship Sexton**  
Jazaira Perez-Acevedo



**Bookkeeper**  
Patty Peck



**Custodian**  
Briana Bittel  
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# USH Council Personnel

**Endowment Committee -**  
Steve Basche (2020-22)  
Eve Pech (2020-22)

**Safer Congregations -** Joe Rubin,  
Susan Hope

**Board of Directors (Elected)**  
**President -** Eve Pech  
**President-elect -** Dana Donovan  
**Treasurer -** Jon Covault  
**Secretary -** Sarah Harmon MacKenzie  
**Administration -** Paul Cipriano  
**Spiritual Life -** Peter Meny  
**Community Within -** Tina Davies  
**Social Justice -** Judy Sullivan  
  
**Mtgs: Monthly 2nd Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 PM**

**Nominating Committee -**  
Chair: Rob Spector

**Audit Committee -** (year-to-year term)  
Miriam Byroade, Laura Cipriano,  
Sherry Manetta

**Strategic Planning -** Inactive for now

**Council on Administration -** Chair: Paul Cipriano

**Building & Grounds -** Chair: David Newton; Paul Cipriano, Laura Cipriano, Toni Gold, Lu Giammatteo, Fred Louis, Peter Meny, David Newton, Hugh Schweitzer, Ron Sexton, Bill Simmons, Jim Venneman, Kevin Girouard (staff)

**Archives -** Co-Chairs: Larry Lunden, Brian Matzke

**Library -** Open

**Art -** Contact: Evan Williams

**Stewardship -** Chair: Carolyn Carlson

**Finance -** Chair: Jon Covault, Jim Venneman, David Newton, Steve Basche

**Human Resources -** Chair: Greg Nickett;

**Council on Spiritual Life -** Chair: Peter Meny

**Worship Associates -** Coordinator: Sue Smolski

**Music Ministries -** Sam Moffett (staff liaison)

**Chancel Art -** Chair: Paula Bleck

**Religious Education -** Annie Witzler (staff liaison)

**SpiritLife -** Contact: Judy Robbins

**Council on Community Within -** Chair: Tina Davies

**Communications -** Co-Chairs: Laura Cipriano, Mike Covault; Paul Cipriano, Jon Covault, Tina Davies, Toni Gold, Brian Harvey, David Newton, Joanne Orlando. Bruce Robbins, Judy Robbins

**Membership -** Chair: Laurie Kelliher

**Caring Network -** Chair: Janice Newton

**Seabury -** Contact: Marye Gail Harrison

**Programs for Adults & Families -** Open

**Connection Circles Steering Committee -** Chair: Martha Bradley

**Festival of the Season -** On hold

**Meeting House Presents -**  
Chairs: Paul Cipriano & Laura Stewart Cipriano

**Council on Social Justice -** Chair: Judy Sullivan

**Community Partners**

- The Village for Families & Children -** Chair: Joanne Orlando
- Noah Webster Partnership -** Chair: Diana Heymann
- Food Pantries -** Diana Heymann
- GHIAA -** Contact: Judy Sullivan
- Race Matters -** Chair: Gloria Francesca Mengual

**UUA**

- Green Sanctuary -** Co-Chairs: Mary Sherwin, Jeff Howard
- Equal Access/ AIM (Accessibility & Inclusion Ministry) -** Chair: Gloria Bent