

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting December 12, 2023

Location: Zoom & USH Meeting House

Quorum NO ___ YES X

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan	David Newton	Paul Cipriano
Nancy Kemmerer	Janice Newton	
Jon Covault	Beverly Spence (Zoom)	
Rick Tsukada	Susan Hope (Zoom)	
Gloria F. Mengual		
Jim Venneman		
Judy Sullivan		
Tina Davies		
Laurie Kelliher		
Rev. Bob Janis – Board Member, Ex Officio		

Orders of Business

6:37 p.m. **Dana** - called the meeting to order. Check-in.

- I. **Approval of November 2023 Board Meeting Minutes – Judy made Motion to approve November Board meeting minutes. Jim seconded. Unanimous approval.**

- II. **National Registry Update – Nancy Kemmerer**
 - Addition of USH to National Registry of Historic Places – pending with the state; next step: federal recognition
 - Proposing celebration/tours/media coverage, once approved.
 - October 6 or 14: potential tour/celebration dates honoring historic designation. Maybe our youth as docents providing tours. Ideas: publicize in UU World; create a 10-minute video of our history.
 - Building Conservation Associates* – consultants we hired to work on our national historic designation.

III. Building & Grounds Update – David Newton

B&G has several working groups – Aesthetics, Security (which finished camera installations), National Registry, and Energy group. The Energy Group is working on infrastructure funding; outreach to Representative Larson is in progress. Other B&G groups include: Chancel Lighting Phase two, Grounds and Trees, and a group focused on digital matters.

Motion to approve David’s report, including accounting of Berm and Sewer Pump Project: Jim Second: Tina. Unanimous approval

IV. Update on HR Concerns- – Gloria F Mengual

- a. HIPAA & Sexual Harassment Training for USH Staff –**
Identified a training available through CHRO that USH staff could complete and submit proof of compliance to HR. On-line HIPAA training is tailored to medical settings. HIPAA discussion between staff and supervisor of the importance of confidentiality should be sufficient.
- b. Incident Report Form –** The need for a form to document incidents that take place, whether they be staff/staff staff/members or members’ children was brought up.
- c. Update on HR Policies –** Existing USH personnel policies are very dated (2007). Gloria is reviewing and has shared sample employee handbooks from UU and United Church of Christ with HR subgroup members.

NEW BUSINESS

V. MINISTER’S QUESTIONS - Rev. Bob Janis

- a. Time off for Rev. Bob & Karolina – 12/24/23 - 1/2/24-** Karolina off. Rev. Bob taking vacation week in February and another week in May for study leave. In December, Rev. Bob will be working off-site; not on campus, but on call.
- b. Gift cards for staff during holidays –** This was provided last year for staff. Suggested amount: \$50.00 to each staff member. Jon will identify line item this fits under to cover the \$450.00 expense **Motion made by Rick to show staff appreciation with gift cards. Second: Tina. Unanimous approval.**
- c. Tech Concerns**
--Library ZOOM – not reliable, choppy reception

-- **Sanctuary video feed** – computer stops. RAM chips were replaced by Jon, working with a consultant. Seems to be working well now.

--**Allworks – Addressing cell phone bugs** – Calls transferred from Rev. Bob’s USH phone to his cell phone sometimes work; sometimes not.

VI. VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION – *Tina Davies*

- a. Laying groundwork for a May 2024 **Board volunteer recognition**. USH Board nominations to be requested early 2024. When nominating individual, please include the ‘why’ – what they’ve done that warrants recognition. Max of 5 volunteers to be recognized. Disqualifier: previous year recognition. Request: Please come with potential honoree names to January meeting.

VII. Winter weather advisory policy – Board President, Karolina, Kevin and Rev. Bob will check in when weather incident is pending and decide on potential cancellation of service. Decision to be made by 7:00 a.m. regarding Sunday service and other activities scheduled for that day. For meetings at USH scheduled other days, person leading that meeting would send notification out regarding weather circumstances and impact on meeting.

VIII. Welcome Team Update – *Laurie Kelliher*

- a. Welcome Team has 20 listed members, with six attending regularly. Laurie is thinking of distributing Welcome table responsibilities among members. The door greeter, ushers (collect and count money and do head count) and Welcome table person make up this team. Welcome Team members will continue providing the actual Welcome table coverage. The door greeter should identify new (or fairly new) folk and invite them to stop by the Welcome table. A second welcome table downstairs makes sense to continue the welcoming process. Laurie’s ask: Board involvement in taking role on door greeter or usher role. **Request:** Please use Signup Genius to register as a volunteer for a Welcome responsibility.

IX. Updates from Board Chair – *Dana Donovan*

- a. **Motion to not rent to dog trainers. Jim made motion; Judy seconded. Unanimous vote in favor of this decision.**
- b. We received a UUA Letter regarding our annual pledge, which USH Board voted to reduce to \$15,000. We will finalize 2024 pledge amount with UUA in February.

- c. **Digital security webinar:** \$100 for up to 5 USH attendees. Webinar will cover how to Zoom hacking, etc. Rev. Bob will ask Diana and Karolina if they are interested in attending. **Judy made motion to spend on webinar; Jim seconded; one abstention; remainder voted in favor.**
- d. **Weddings** – USH should keep a copy of ministerial wedding certificates, for the record. **Motion: made by Jim; seconded by Tina. Unanimous vote in favor.**

X. COUNCIL CHAIR REPORTS

1. Community Within Report– *Tina Davies*

The Magdalen Circle would like to use USH building Saturday afternoons; Lisa, person making request was USH member and has family here who were long-time members. Rather than a rental rate, group was asked to make a donation and open their group to any interested USH members; Lisa would communicate with interested USH folks first to determine participation appropriateness. When they are meeting and something else is scheduled at USH, mindful of the other occupants, this group will tailor their meeting so as not to create any interference with the other event.

2. Finance Report– *Jon Covault* *(See addendum below for complete report)

3. Membership Report– *Laurie Kelliher*

Have been averaging 75 -90 attendees (including Zoom, which averages nine -12 folks), nearly 25 – 30% higher than one year ago. Averaging one – five new visitors each Sunday. About 50 people have been new visitors during the past year. Approximately 15 have kept attending. Visitors with children don't tend to return.

Thinking of reaching out to former 20s-30s group to ask them to visit again. Roughly 15 young adults used to attend. In June two new people became members. Hoping for a Spring 2024 new membership service Spr

At least three people who used to attend have returned somewhat regularly. Some from Fern Street came to the regifting after their service. Smattering of folks with UU backgrounds from elsewhere are visiting as well.

4. Social Justice Report– *Judy Sullivan*

(See addendum below for complete report)

1. Gloria Bent write-up re: handicapped access issues at USH.
2. The Sum of Us – all promo write-ups have been completed.
3. USH folks continue to volunteer with Fern Street food ministry efforts

5. Spiritual Life Report– *Rick Tsukada*

(See addendum below for complete report)

- a. **Looking to form an RE committee** of church members to lay out USH's direction in this area
- b. **Music exists within USH independent of each other.** Sam is not responsible for: Meeting House Presents, USH singing group and other music events that happen here. Would be nice to interconnect them somehow.
- c. **Worship Associates** – looking for summer sermon volunteers
- d. **Chancel Arts** – visibility issues related to chancel art Ideas needed around improving visibility.
- e. **Spirit Life Group** – Recent in-person workshops have moved into areas folk want to engage in beyond UU concepts

GUEST COMMENTS - None

MOTION TO ADJOURN – Tina made motion to adjourn at 9:09 p.m: Nancy seconded motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

***9:10 p.m. – Executive Board Meeting begins.**

Addendums – December 2023 Reports

1. Board Email Vote on Donation to USH

The Board took a vote via email and on 12/20/23, unanimously accepted an anonymous donation to the USH endowment of \$250,000.00 a year, which was received for 2023 and will continue to be received each year during 2024, 2025 and 2026.

2. USH Ministerial Board Report from Rev. Bob Janis, 12.12.23

"It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more." – Dr. Seuss

Happy holidays, friends, in whatever forms it comes!

Sundays & Special Services

I feel like we have a good, reliable, "Sunday morning experience" happening, from the greeting to the service to the warmth of the community in coffee hour. Always more we can do, but a great base to work on! Planning Christmas Eve and solstice services, as well as evening services starting in January.

Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage

Two more funerals coming up in December and January; my gratitude to Karolina, Janice, Sam, and everyone for rallying to care for these grieving families. I'm honored to perform them. I'm also aware that these rites of passage, if there's a spate of them in a short period, can slightly take away from my work and time in other areas, such as ordinary pastoral care or committee meetings. But we'll all do what we can.

Programming and Social Justice

-Had a good GHIAA clergy meeting and with our social justice meetings here, getting the lay of the land and ways I can be involved.
-Continuing the "Tuesday morning hangouts" at least through June 2023, and the poetry workshops through March 2023. Looking into other programming possibilities, to start over time.

Foundations and Behind the Scenes

-Grateful for the work of volunteers and staff over this calendar year. Celebrate, you've earned it!
-A reminder that Karolina is **off December 24th - January 2nd**. I am not off – I'm unlikely to be in the office much (I'm leading services December 24th, 31st (pulpit swap), and January 6th & 7th) but I can pop in if need be, and I'm on call throughout. So if anything comes up that week and you think, "oh, I'll just give Karolina a quick call/email, give them to me, please!!! If it's not an emergency, it shouldn't go to Karolina until January 3rd, and if it is an emergency, it should go to me...makes sense, right?
-I still have a little vacation/study leave left this year – having used a lot of it in August – and I'd like to request the following time off:

FEBRUARY 16 – 23 vacation
MAY 19 -MAY 26 study leave

3. Building & Grounds Reports – David Newton, Chair, Building & Grounds

I. Berm Project Final Report - 12/12/23

During the extraordinary rains, that included one flooding event into the West Entrance this summer, it became evident the water retaining lake that retains the runoff from the lawn area and slowly releases the "lake" subsequently was helpful but insufficient to prevent occasional flooding of the Meeting House.

Consequently, a contract was signed to deepen and somewhat widen the berm to increase the volume of retained water during short periods of very heavy precipitation. The contractor did the work later than planned. Recent experience suggests the additional "lake" capacity will be helpful as intended.

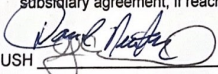
Following, you will find the contract negotiated and final bill in the amount of \$2,500 which has been paid from the Small Projects Fund.

Agreed

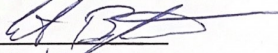
The Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH) and Pyquag Landscaping (Pyquag) agree as follows:

1. The job is to remove soil creating a larger containment for water during periods of excessive precipitation West of the current Berm on the western edge of the pavement outside the West Entrance of the Meeting House.
2. Said soil, and especially associated turf to be added to the current berm structure such that the berm is increased in height to the extent of the excavated soil and sod to reach a level height for the length of the berm.
3. To maintain drainage to the designated exit of a pipe that will drain the reservoir of water after accumulations from storms preventing creation of a swamp. This will involve creation of minimal slope from berm outward after removal of soil to the west of the berm of approximately six feet followed by a reasonable further grade upward to the existing lawn line at that point. (See diagram of cross section of proposed work.)
4. The length of the area of construction is the approximately the same as the current adjacent blacktop.
5. After suitable grading of the finished reservoir area, said exposed soil shall be grass seeded for prompt growth before winter.
6. Said work to occur as soon as possible, but not later than two weeks from the date of this Agreement.
7. USH Agrees to payment not to exceed \$2,500 for this work and will make good faith efforts to assist in direction and to clarify any aspects of this Agreement. Said payment to made not later than 30 days from notice of satisfactory completion of said construction.
8. The parties to this Agreement stipulate they may engage in a subsidiary agreement involving straightening the USH sign on Bloomington Avenue. Such subsidiary agreement, if reached, shall be separate and unrelated to this one.

For USH



For Pyquag



Date

10/5/23

Date

10/5/23

Associated Diagram included by reference.

II. Meeting House Sewer Pump Repair Completed Project Completed Report to the Board 12/12/23

The sewer project described below has been completed by Eastern Water Solutions at a total cost of \$21,274.50 covered by the Endowment Capital Improvement Account. A copy of the bills received are part of this report for the record and are part of this PDF.

As many of our faithful readers remember, we had a situation where one of the pumps existing in a sewer pit in a storage room on the west side of Fellowship Hall failed. Alerted to this fact, we summoned Eastern Water Solutions that specializes in repairs of that sort to make necessary repairs.

Because there are two pumps in such a pit, and their purpose is to periodically empty the pit of accumulated wastewater from the building, failure of one pump leaves an urgent situation, because, if the second one also failed, sewage would soon be flowing into places you would not wish to find it!

The contractor did a good job of extracting the dead pump from the pit. However, the replacement pumps obtained for replacement purposes were constructed to run on a three-phase voltage different than what we happen to have in the building. We add parenthetically here, the error was caused because a voltage label on the existing equipment was not accurate, thus, the presumed voltage was not actually in use.

Therefore, there was a delay while the one working pump continued its faithful pumping while new pumps were ordered for the actual voltage available. The pumps arrived, were installed, and tested. They worked well. Then in the silence when they stopped working, the sewage in the piping rising to street level could be heard swishing back through the old check valve the purpose of which is to prevent that from happening.

EASTERN

WATER SOLUTIONS

5 BENSON ROAD
OXFORD, CT 06478

Invoice

DATE	INVOICE #
11/20/2023	100173

BILL TO
UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD ATTN: DAVID NEWTON 50 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE HARTFORD CT 06105

SHIP TO
UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD ATTN: DAVID NEWTON 50 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE HARTFORD, CT 06105

QTY	DESCRIPTION	TECH	AMOUNT
	11/14/2023 - TWO NEW PUMPS AND DISCHARGE PIPES WERE INSTALLED. PIT WAS VACUUMED TO THE BOTTOM. A NEW CONTROLLER WAS INSTALLED AND WIRED BACK UP. SYSTEM IS RUNNING ON THE EXISTING STAINLESS STEEL BALL FLOATS AND PRESSURE SWITCHES. ENTIRE SYSTEM WAS TESTED AND WORKS FINE.	TP/GJ/GL ENLY	16,218.30
1	DUPLEX GOULDS CONTROLLER 4 FLOAT OPERATION, HIGH LEVEL, LIGHT AND HORN. LEAD-LEG OPERATION		
2	LIBERTY SEWAGE PUMPS 1 HP, 3 PHZ MODEL LEH103M3-2 208-230 V 9 FLA		
2	3" SCH 80 PVC MALE ADAPTOR		
2	3X4 SCH80 REDUCER BUSHING		
3	4" SCH 80 PVC COUPLING		
15	4" SCH 80 PVC PIPE		
4	3/4" WATERTIGHT CORD CONNECTOR		
2	1/2" NM CORD CONNECTOR		
2	3" SCH 80 PVC PIPE		
2	1/2" NM CORD CONNECTOR		

WATER SOLUTIONS

5 BENSON ROAD
OXFORD, CT 06478

DATE	INVOICE #
11/20/2023	100171

BILL TO
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SHIP TO
UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD ATTN: DAVID NEWTON 50 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE HARTFORD, CT 06105

QTY	DESCRIPTION	TECH	AMOUNT
	1/8/2023 - UPON ARRIVAL CONTROLLER WAS TURNED OFF. VALVES WERE CLOSED. THE EXISTING CHECK VALVES WERE REMOVED AND DISCARDED BY EASTERN WATER. TWO NEW CHECK VALVES AND BOLT PACKS WERE INSTALLED. SYSTEM WAS TESTED UPON COMPLETION.	TP/SGJ/GL EN	1,000.00
2	FLOWMATIC CHECK VALVES 4" PART # 2383		3,950.60
4	4" RED RUBBER GASKET PACKS		105.60
LABOR - 30 DAYS FROM DATE OF SERVICE PARTS - 90 DAYS FROM DATE OF SERVICE CT LICENSES: SHANE GRANT, W1-0609115, J1-0208952, HIC.0547744		Sales Tax (6.35%)	50.00
		Payments/Credits	\$0.00
		Balance Due	\$5,056.20

4. Treasurer's Report – Jon Covault, 12.12.23

-2023-2024 budget: Pledge giving received as of Dec 8, 2023 totals \$169,176 or 60% of pledge total (\$279,135). One-time income for current budget year includes \$41,000 from COVID paycheck protection grant and \$23,000 from prior budget year(s) surplus (totaling \$62,000). These amounts could be reduced related to UUA giving this year and income from year end stewardship appeal, the budget included \$5,000 income from auction/regifting. The expected additional expense for changing Office Manager from 30 to 40 hours/week would be \$7,000 for Jan-June 2024 and additional \$14,000 for next FY 12-month budget.

-Stewardship: Regifting sale raised \$ 1,123. December year end stewardship appeal letters sent out last week, gifts from 4 members already received.

-Capital projects –Replacement of sewer pumps and affiliated equipment has been completed with a total cost of \$21,274.50 endowment funds will be used to pay for this capital expense.

The rain retention berm/pond adjacent to handicapped parking recently enlarged in size/depth to reduce risk of entrance flooding – \$2,500 cost will be charged to B&G small projects budget line item.

-UBS Endowment - \$1,150 in endowment memorial gifts received in November. Withdrawals for November were the monthly support of our annual budget (\$4,454).

-Schwab savings account –

Interest income of \$401. No withdrawals in November.

-Monthly GNO giving for October and November:

October – Hawkwing \$1,519

November – IRIS. \$1,507

5. Spirit Life Report – Rick Tsukada, 12.23

In general the areas that fall under the Spirit Life Council seem to be doing mostly well. The areas are Music, Chancel Arts, Worship Associates, Religious Education and the independent Spirit Life Program.

All of the programs seem to be showing up with increased energy and imagination as we continue to both come out of covid and into a church with a full time minister. As an observation, it seems like some folks are rediscovering USH, having left and now considering returning. The overall sense is that we have changed in the last 3 years or so.

The simple feeling is that our community has re-animated and a dynamic of “life has found a way” (From the Movie...Jurassic Park) has been making its way through the Society.

More specifically:

-Religious Education

Religious Education seems to have mostly stabilized in attendance between 10 and 15 participants a Sunday. And there is a noticeable uptick of families checking us out. The youth program is now utilizing congregants as guest presenters and I believe this will also increase interest in more adult participation in the program. I am still not convinced that there is a larger population that is looking for a liberal religious Sunday school nor am I convinced that we have a “brand” of liberal

educational approach that differentiates us from Manchester East and the Fern Street Universalist church. This may be a task that can now be investigated - that of understanding what "brand" we are in our approach to RE, as our church life moves closer to being and feeling stable. I am considering forming an Ad Hoc Committee of seasoned Educators from our church to help define "What we are" as a RE center.

-Music

This is a very visible element of our spiritual life of our church. I for one really appreciate the unique kind of Sunday Music we have here. Sam's capacity as a musician...in particular his comfort with his jazz training and ear allows for very creative stuff to happen on Sundays. In addition, the "choir" seems to be finding a way to get back on the risers and they are very enjoyable to hear and watch.

Now that we are "up and running," I have noticed that music in our church has a much larger presence than just Sunday. I am aware that other events and activities in the world of music are part of our church's life but not necessarily in a coordinated way. Specifically Sam is not in charge of the total music footprint of USH. This year since September has given our congregation an organ concert sponsored by the Hall family, who was missing the sound and presence of organ music in our church...A free piano concert by Mr. Dix that I missed...a couple of Meeting House Presents offerings...and Memorial Services, that of which music plays an important part, and Pei Shun was once again heard on our wonderful piano.

There is a Saturday song-gathering; I am totally ignorant of who they are and what they do...but it does show an interest in making music as part of their spiritual practice.

I am wanting to take the idea of a shared ministry and our congregational pulpit guests expand that idea to having guest musicians from the congregation make musical offerings. Who are the musicians in our church family that would like to do a number on a Sunday?

I have begun a conversation with Sam around two possibilities. One is a jazz concert with professional musicians that will allow us to have an expanded experience of Sam and music in our church. The second is the idea of doing a "workshop" that would again take advantage of his musicianship and musical knowledge. More to come after the holiday season concludes.

-Worship Associates

This program is one of the most stable and strongest programs in our church's life. It is foundational in many ways to our church's spiritual life, especially now that our minister is in the pulpit twice a month and the WA's are responsible for the other half of the Sunday services... The now have a budget to bring into our church other ministers, in addition to having congregants step into the pulpit.

I am looking for ideas of how to generate more congregational pulpit guest sermons as well as generating more WA's, which are much needed every Sunday, regardless

of who is at the pulpit. The range of subjects and personalities that show up at our pulpit reflects on our brand of being a "liberal" church and the variety of those pulpit guest services help define our unique brand of Unitarian Universalism...our particular voice.

Perhaps a workshop on Lay Ministers at the Pulpit...or Lay Ministry in Our Church...is warranted.

-Chancel Arts

Again this group of creative folks continue to surprise me with their diction to "job". From my point of view...they are under appreciated in part because the visual stage upon which they perform needs "elevating." That is a huge space to fill and it is often blocked by the piano...so how can "I" improve their visibility to the congregation. One aspect is lighting. Another is elevation, so that sight lines to the pews can be improved. The physical issue is that most things on our chancel blocks the display...even on sitting in chair can cut off fully half of the arrangements.

There is a reason that the "crosses" are set high above the heads of the celebrants...it is because then they can be seen from the pews. The work...beautiful...creative...inspiring work deserves being elevated into our service.

-Spirit Life Program

This is an independent program group that is open to the three area churches whose mission statement is to bring opportunities to the three area Unitarian Universalist church's congregations and their friend programming and activities that reflect a focus on spiritual development in a more focused way than the Sunday Service. They utilize both contemporary authors and thinkers, as well as those pulling from spiritual practices well outside of the expected UU fair as stimulating and growth-filled aspects to the search for meaning and truth. Recently they have presented opportunities for having a workshop and conversations with a local spiritual teacher.

In Closing: Chair Observation and Thoughts

The range of our churches spiritual life is becoming expanded now that we are meeting in person and have a very creative and accessible minister...in part I would say that there is a growing awareness that USH is playful...fun...and a dynamic (alive) congregation...much if not all of this is due to having Rev. Bob Janis as our minister. He is shaping and making room for us to discover what we are and how we express ourselves to each other and to the outside world...We are, in way of thinking...becoming an interesting...entertaining...and a comfortable place for certain kinds of folks especially folks that might want a place to become engaged with other people...we are increasingly becoming a church in which we reflect a relational religious practice as a foundational practice to our brand of UUism...

6. Social Justice Report – Judy Sullivan

I. Observations from the EqUual Accessibility team

The EqUual Accessibility team conducted a walk-through of the building using resource sheets from UUA to identify accessibility issues in each area. It was heartening to see how the basic design of a building constructed pre-ADA made so many of the spaces accessible and to further note the results of congregants' advocacy for increasing accessibility over the course of time.

These are the few issues we noted and our recommendations:

Entryway

The accessible door at the main entry to the building needs to be manually activated.

- Do people using the building know this must be done and how to do it? If this is not included in a use of space information sheet, can it be?

The control to open the accessible door for exit is barely visible under a shelf and has boxes placed in front of it.

- Move the control next to the door at accessible height.

Large print hymnals and orders of worship are available in the entryway, not the Sanctuary. There is a sign on the welcome table, but one needs to know to go to the welcome table to see it.

- Place a larger sign on the wall behind the welcome table.

Refer to Buildings and Grounds, Aesthetics, Rentals

Sanctuary

While we make armed chairs available to accommodate the need for extra legroom or more support when standing, the use of armed chairs seems to be increasing.

- Increase the number of armed chairs.

The chancel is accessible via a lift on the right side of the sanctuary. When we attempted to operate it, it functioned inconsistently. It seems to need maintenance.

We learned the key and instructions are kept in the office.

- Have lift serviced.
- Place a second key in the sanctuary near the controls. Place clear instructions nearby and/or in the pulpit.
- Offer training sessions on lift operation to increase the number of people who know how to operate the lift.

There is no handrail on the left side of the stairs at the lift.

There is no handrail on the choir side of the chancel.

The opening down to the organ with the chain across it is a concern.

The choir area is not accessible but could be via the lift.

- Consider rearranging the chancel so that the choir space is adjacent to the lift and the pulpit and piano are rearranged accordingly.

The railings on the chancel steps do not meet ADA standards.

- The height of the railing should be 34 inches. Use of the handrail should be available with the first step. Now the railing does not begin until the second step, going up.

The adhesive strips to warn of staircases are faded and no longer brightly colored.

- Replace them with more visible strips.

Refer to Minister, Music Director, Worship Associates, Buildings and Grounds, Aesthetic Committee

Interior Movement

Only the two accessible bathroom doors have handles that can be opened with a fist.

- As door handles are replaced upgrade to accessible handles.
Refer to Buildings and Grounds

Signage

Braille signs for room doors are high, as is the sign on the accessible bathroom outside the sanctuary.

- Can they be lowered to accommodate a blind child? At a 48-inch level?

No flashing lights with the fire alarm system.

- Develop a protocol for exiting the building in an emergency and include directions for attendees to be mindful of participants who are hearing impaired.
- Publish and/or call attention to the protocol on an established schedule.
- Add directional signage to the entryway, indicating the way to the elevator, the chapel, the accessible bathroom, the office, the minister's office.

Refer to Aesthetics Committee, Buildings and Grounds

Elevator

The motion-controlled light in the fellowship entry way from the elevator is not working properly.

- Needs to be checked.

The light switches just inside Fellowship Hall on the elevator side are hard to find.

- Add signs to indicate where they are.

Refer to Buildings and Grounds

II. The Sum of Us – Podcast Series/Discussions

Join Us for a Zoom Discussion Series: 'The Sum of Us' Podcasts – Stories filled with Hope, Collaboration and Stronger Communities

Heather McGhee, an economist who for decades worked to address inequality in the U.S. economy, shifted her focus from economics to storytelling through her book, [*The Sum of Us*](#). The book argues that Americans have been fed a "zero-sum story" that says progress for people of color will take away what white Americans already have. McGhee uses the book to explain that racism actually costs **all** Americans and misinformation keeps us separated.

"We went from an era of shared prosperity to the era of inequality. Why would the country have done that to itself?" asks McGhee. "It didn't feel like the economics orthodoxy had an answer." McGhee instead found the answer in people's stories; they described people in power turning white, Black and brown people against one

another by telling them that one group's success would come at the expense of another – a pattern that ended up hurting everyone.

McGhee found exceptions to the 'divide and conquer' mentality so prevalent in our country today—people in so many places working together to create a shared vision, a good that benefits **all**.

USH extends an invitation to all to listen to these hope-filled podcasts on your own, then attend Zoom discussions to reflect on the shared stories. The hope is to have local people with first-hand experiences related to the podcast topic to share their experiences with the podcast topic during the first 10 minutes of the ZOOM sessions.

All USH-hosted Zoom sessions will take place between 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Attend one, some or all of them. Dates and topics for each session include:

January 18 Memphis, TN: Environmental Racism & The Right to Clean Water – The 'sacrifice zones' – threats to drinking water in Black neighborhoods

February 8 Orlando, Florida – The Land of Second Chances – Returning the right to vote to formerly incarcerated people who served their time

February 22 Kansas City, Missouri: Flipping Burgers – The battle to fight poverty and earn a living wage

March 21 Lewiston, Maine: A New Crop – How immigrants strengthened one area's local farms and strengthen the overall economy nationwide

April 4 Minden, Nevada: The Last Sundown Siren – How people of color once had to leave suburban towns (including in CT) before nightfall or face dangerous consequences

May 16 Dallas, TX to Albuquerque, NM –Journey of Faith for Reproductive Rights – How faith leaders were a linchpin of abortion access before Roe vs. Wade, and how attacks on abortion rights are being addressed today.

June 6 Manhattan Beach, California: Swimming Together – The return of prime beachfront property to ancestors of a Black family who had it taken from them

June 20 The America that's Becoming – Taking Action Locally – Lessons we learn from each other and local actions we can take