

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting

February 13, 2024

Location: Zoom

Quorum NO ___ YES X

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan	David Newton	Jon Covault
Nancy Kemmerer	Janice Newton	
Rick Tsukada	Beverly Spence	
Paul Cipriano	Evan Williams	
Gloria F. Mengual		
Jim Venneman		
Judy Sullivan		
Tina Davies		
Laurie Kelliher		
Rev. Bob Janis		

Orders of Business

6:30 p.m. *Dana Donovan* - Called the meeting to order. Welcome, check-in, reading, chalice lighting, opening words

- I. Approval of January 2024 Board Meeting Minutes – Tina made Motion to approve** January Board meeting minutes. **Judy seconded. Unanimous approval.**

UPDATES

II. RE Subcouncil –Rick Tsukada

- Search committee is working on RE job description, capturing the skill set, interests that would be good to have in this position. Owen M., Rob S., Rick T. ,Miriam B., Gloria M. and Rev. Bob serve on this committee. Letter requesting input has been sent to families; announcement was made during last Sunday’s service. Noted: person will be branching out into adult education as well. We discussed starting PT and expanding to FT. Rick: we have between 10 – 15 youth. Teens: 5 -8 kids. Others younger.

III. Community Within – Tina Davies

- June 9th USH picnic date. Typically, it has been second Sunday of the month. June 23 is GA Sunday. June 30 is beginning of summer services. Options that work best are June 2, 9 or 16. Nancy: I would favor June 9th, when Rev Bob is here. Several others expressed support for June 9th. No vote taken.

IV. CT UU Social Justice Gathering -Dana Donovan

Dana: last month he attended UU social justice gathering in New Haven UU. Goal: for UU congregations to work together on UU SJ efforts. In Fairfield, UUs work together via Connect. In Hartford we work together via GHIAA. They are hoping to extend beyond regional efforts in CT to statewide efforts. Ex: GHIAA won't take stand on abortion, given how some congregations feel. As solely UUs, we can take a stand on things more strongly. Laurie: we should very seriously look at this. If we can present ourselves as larger mass, it creates a curiosity about our faith. Rick: even within individual UU congregations, there are differing opinions, like in wider world. Something to consider. Rev. Bob: have worked with groups like this in NY and elsewhere. To have rallies with all UU congregations with most active UUs involved and including other UUs over time is effective.

V. USH Member Vote Meeting - Continuation of Rev. Bob's Ministry – Rev. Bob and Dana Donovan --

Dana has reached out to people who are not members, asking them to reach out to Rev. Bob. E-voting for those not physically present needs to be clarified. **Laurie:** there is precedent with nonmembers wishing to be part of the vote. **Dana:** section 2 of bylaws on membership- read this aloud, noting that they have to sign the book before voting. **Tina:** people need to make an identifiable financial contribution to the society. **Jim:** In 2015 it was established that in order to vote, person need to make a financial contribution. **Rev. Bob:** Laurie and I have been discussing new member classes. Many coming have past UU experience and are asking if they really need a new member orientation. He feels it's good for them to connect with others new to congregation. **Nancy:** anyone, beyond Melissa, should be able to join; they need to talk to Rev. Bob.

VI. Treasurer's Report (See complete report in addendum below)

Dana – need to clarify expanding Karolina's hours as well as Rick's comment on getting funds for potential future efforts.

Jim: endowment has grown early in 2024. See Jim's report in addendum. **Rick:** We need to think of ourselves as a small church, regardless of contributions. **Nancy:** we should think of ourselves as a

growing church, not a small church. When growing sometimes you need to spend more in certain areas. We discussed RE a while ago. Last year, many Sundays did not see a child here. The aesthetics group is going to need some funding. Not sure how much extra will be raised in stewardship campaign. Need to consider other options for raising funds. National registry of historic places, hopefully happening this fall, should be used to highlight USH. **Dana:** endowment committee came up with recommendation of \$57,000 from unrestricted funds for this year – 4.5% of budget. I would like to see us up the draw to 5% - \$63,000. We are in a growth mode. Do we want to grow or keep it same as it is, all the while remaining fiscally responsible? **Jim:** I want to remind all it is \$57,000 plus the \$10,000 more, as noted. We still need to be prudent. **Tina:** if we had progressed a different direction a few years ago, we would have spent \$12,000 for search and another \$8,000 or so for installation. Having encountered Rev. Bob, we saved ourselves a decent chunk of change. We are in a better position as result of that financially. What exactly are we thinking of using more money for? **Jim:** we have fixed expenses: staff, building... After we get national recognition, we can get \$100,000 per year for building upkeep expenses.

VII. Building & Grounds Update -David Newton (See complete report in addendum below)

Building & Grounds - Our process for seeking listing on the National Register of Historical Places is moving along nicely. Building Conservation Associates, the outfit preparing the nomination under our grant, submitted its finished work to Jenny Scofield from the State Historical Preservation Office, SHPO, for final edits. The Aesthetics Subgroup of Building and Grounds continues its work under the direction of Evan Williams. Efforts of the Security Sub-Ground continue (see *Paul's Administrative Council Report*)

Endowment - The Endowment Committee is functioning and currently working on the planning for an Endowment Campaign for next summer and fall. The Endowment Committee will be holding securities as an escrow matching fund source. Accordingly, in keeping with the AD Agreement, we will seek formal approval for setting up the Escrow account to hold the donated securities. Details to follow.

NEW BUSINESS – Council Chair Reports

1. MINISTER'S REPORT - Rev. Bob Janis *(See addendum below for complete report). Topics covered in report:

- Sundays & Special Services

- Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage
- Programming and Social Justice
- Foundations and Behind the Scenes

2. ADMINISTRATION – *Paul Cipriano* – *(See addendum below for complete report) Larry reached out regarding the archives. He asked for help with this; too much for one person to manage. **Janice** – I don't mind sharing the Board minutes with Larry; not sure what else he is talking about. Paul will forward the information Larry requested to Janice.

Security Committee – working on various emergency response plans, including fire reponse. Grant money for 2024 will be coming in from the State. Looking at outdoor lighting for front of building and parking lot after people attend evening events. Have existing funds we would like to allocate for needs we have. Still waiting for reimbursement of the \$13,000 we already spent. We applied for \$3,000 for intercom system. Approved funds must be spent first.

3. COMMUNITY WITHIN – *Tina Davies* *(See addendum below for complete report) Tina asked if there were any questions on report she submitted in advance of the meeting; there were none. Topics covered in report:

- Programs and activities: monthly pizza/movie nights, book group, Artist's Way group, sing-along and gentle yoga all have regular attendance.
- Activities hosted by Rev. Bob: First Tuesday hangouts and Lunchtime Poetry.
- Groundhog Day Pot-Luck drew a good crowd — 60+ people. Our Sunday sextons, Jaz and Nonie, capably and genially accommodate our requests for table placements, food arrangements, and keeping the coffee flowing.
- Caring Network Update: *Caring Network Chair Janice Newton provided a more detailed description of their work – see addendum.* After a long period of memorial receptions and multiple concerns, we are in a quiet time.

4. FINANCE – *Jon Covault* *(See addendum below for complete report, highlighting:

- **2023-2024 budget:** Pledge giving received as of January 31, 2024 totals \$219,609 or 79% of pledge total (\$279,135). Expenses have generally been in line with the approved budget for most categories.

Staff expenses are projected to be \$3-4,000 over budget. Other areas (RE, music, worship and social justice expenses) are projected to be under budget. More about elevator maintenance, health care cost increases and more noted in addendum below.

- **Stewardship:** Plans underway for March annual appeal
- **UBS Endowment** – No USH withdrawals in January.
- **Schwab savings account** – Interest income of \$418. No USH withdrawals in January.
- **Monthly GNO** giving for January: Operation fuel: \$1,030
- **2024-2025 budget:** Initial draft budget based on current year expenses has been sent recently to Finance Committee chair.

5. MEMBERSHIP – Laurie Kelliher *(See addendum below for complete report) Topics covered:

- **Attendance:** Church members and visitor attendance
- **New Visitor Cups for Coffee Hour**
- **New Member Ceremony:** Tentatively planned for late May
- **Other:** Joining the Welcome Team, signage for the Fellowship Hall Welcome table

6. SOCIAL JUSTICE – Judy Sullivan *(See addendum below for complete report) SJ did not meet in January – conflicted with GHIAA meeting.

- Judy described house meetings being planned by each GHIAA congregation; USH will be host location for meeting in March.
- Other focus areas included in addendum:
 - **Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)**
 - **Anti-Racism Programming: The Sum of Us Podcast Discussions**
 - **EqUual Access and Disability Justice**
 - **Horace Bushnell Children’s Food Pantry**
 - **Fern Street Food Ministry**
 - **Noah Webster Tutoring**

7. SPIRITUAL LIFE - Rick Tsukada – submitted report. *(See addendum below for complete report)

We are undergoing a Renaissance at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. As a congregation we are undergoing an exciting and creative moment. Focus of highlights in addendum:

- **Music**
- **Worship Associates**
- **Religious Education**

- **Chancel Arts**
- **General activity statement**

FURTHER NEW BUSINESS

- **Paul**-Meeting House Presents – wish list – promotions budget and hospitality budget (Laura and Paul now fund the hospitality portion on their own – buy dinner for musicians performing that night; put them up for the night. A budget for these things would be helpful).
- **Nancy** – are we all set for the Sunday meeting? Dana- you (Nancy) are going to present on October historical designation celebration, and I would like the council chairs to provide a 1 -2 minute update on their council efforts. People are voting on extending Rev. Bob’s contract to 5 years. Rev. Bob: is there a parliamentarian for the vote? Or if someone wants to sign in on the spot to vote, how would that be handled? Tina: Laurie will be there to help address such situations.

GUEST COMMENTS –

David Newton: The most precious thing we have at USH is volunteers. Their involvement is key. *Example:* The endowment committee was close to dead for years and today is one of the most effective we have had in years. As you look around congregation, they have, like you, volunteered to share their skills. Ex: Susan Hope, Tina, Evan and others – they do what they want to do and we need to continue to encourage them. We want to diversify and the way to do so is to encourage people to step up to and into what they are interested in.

MOTION TO ADJOURN – Dana shared a closing reading. **Paul made motion to adjourn at 8:53 p.m; Jim seconded motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn.**

Addendums – February 2024 Reports

1. USH Ministerial Board Report ~ Rev. Bob Janis

Sundays & Special Services

Services in January – lots of collaborative services, which is really fun to say. Shout out to chancel art for continuing to make services visually stunning.

Coffee hour has felt particularly full and vibrant too this past Sunday – Groundhog Day potluck was a smash hit. Let’s do it again! First Thursday evening service – great turnout, think the feel of it was good. Planning the next several now.

Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage

Pastoral care ongoing – planning another trip to Seabury. I am also meeting some people I haven't spent one-on-one time with thus far.

Programming and Social Justice

Labyrinth Spring Equinox is in the works; looks to be an interesting and engaging event. I am leading Poetry Group until March, then may start something new in late spring. Leading a two-part session on crafting sermons in March. Tuesday Hangouts are ongoing. GHIAA Racial Justice training was helpful and well-run. Enjoying "Sum of Us" discussion.

Foundations and Behind the Scenes

Looking forward to the vote next Sunday! We can discuss this, any other related developments (finance/staffing/strategy etc.) at the meeting.

2a. Treasurer Report ~ Jon Covault –

2023-2024 budget: Pledge giving received as of January 31, 2024 totals \$219,609 or 79% of pledge total (\$279,135) with 40% of budget year remaining. We gratefully received a \$10,000 donation for the FY24 operating budget from an anonymous donor via the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. As noted in January report, the regifting sale and end of year stewardship appeal raised \$1,123 and \$10,294 respectively surpassing budget goal (\$5,500) by \$5,917.

Expenses have generally been in line with the approved budget for most categories. Staff expenses are projected to be \$3-4,000 over budget and RE, music, worship and social justice expenses are projected to be under budget (in total \$10,000). The service contract for our elevator has increased by approximately \$1,200 per year. Health insurance premiums increased by 14% beginning January 1, 2024.

The current budget had one-time income items of \$41,100 from remaining PPP funds and \$22,000 from prior years' budget surplus. The net positive \$16,000 in revenue and \$6,000 under budget expenses suggest we will not need to use reserve funds from prior years' surplus account.

We have unbudgeted expenses not included in estimates above, that we anticipate eventual reimbursement by State of CT grants to USH including \$15,915 for video security equipment/installation and \$7,350 for historical designation expenses.

Stewardship: Jim Venneman has started planning for the March annual appeal with consultation from Carolyn Carlson our past stewardship chair.

UBS Endowment – No USH withdrawals in January. **Schwab savings account** –

Interest income of \$418. No USH withdrawals in January.

Monthly GNO giving for January: Operation fuel: \$1,030

2024-2025 budget: Initial draft budget based on current year expenses sent recently to Finance Committee chair. The initial draft budget includes an \$16,000 contribution from prior years' surplus to maintain current resource levels. Any increase in RE budget or office

administrator hours would need to be funded by increased use of endowment funds and/or additional use of prior budget surplus rainy day fund (\$62,900 available).

2b. Finance Update ~ Jim Venneman

Thank you cards. Karolina plans to order 300 tomorrow. They will cost about \$350. I plan to use about 25 within a week to thank those who donated to the year end appeal. As Tina says, there is nothing like a personal thank you note. I also plan to use 100+ to thank those who pledge during the stewardship drive. I think these cards will be very well received. Others in the USH community can use some as well when they need to send Thank Yous or other short notes. The ones we are getting are 5" x 7".

Stewardship:

- The letter to all members is expected to go out on Feb 27. Thus, everyone should get the letter right before the official start of the campaign, which is March 3. The envelope will include the cover letter, the pledge form (Jon and I have been working on revising the section containing various payment methods), the fair giving information from the UUA, a Volunteers Needed sheet (same as last year's unless some of you offer other ideas), and a return envelope.
- Sunday, March 3 -- Sometimes we have had pancake breakfasts. However, the two who have handled these in the past expect to be away. Instead, we will have a layer cake after the service. I hope to have a special design on the top. People love to have a little bite to eat after the service. What I most like about having these cakes is that I see people mingling and talking. It helps build a feeling of a larger, caring community.
- Pulpit testimonials -- The following have agreed to present them. They are keyed to this year's theme of Seeking, Sharing, Soaring. The presenters will be Judy (seeking), Gloria (sharing), and Peter (soaring). I am working out the details of when they will be presented with Sue and Rev. Bob. Sue and I have already had several discussions. More to come.
- End of campaign celebration -- This would normally be on the last day of the campaign, which is March 31. However, March 31 is Easter. So, it will be on April 7. Again, a sheet cake. The beauty of having it a week after the official end of the campaign is we probably will have received more pledge cards.
- Will be asking several members who are willing to call those from whom pledge cards have not been received to help with the followup calls. These will begin after April 8.
- I think this campaign will go well. In his sermon this morning, John Bengston said he senses a "revival" at USH. I agree. It is a lot more fun to work when there is optimism in the air.

Budget -- Jon mentions in his report that he is working on the Budget. It will be very tight next year. As usual, most of it will be for relatively fixed costs like staff and the building. The amount that may be available for council initiatives will be unknown until we know how much the Stewardship campaign raises. However, you will want to be thinking now about what may benefit your council next year. Let's be optimistic.

3. Membership Report ~ Laurie Kelliher -

- **Attendance:** Church attendance has remained fairly steady since September, except for the holiday lulls. Visitor attendance, however, has dropped off. Hopefully numbers will improve as post-holiday busy-ness has subsided.
- **New Visitor Cups for Coffee Hour:** At January's meeting Judy Sullivan related a visit to a UU church where visitors were encouraged to use blue coffee cups so members could more readily identify visitors and engage. The coffee cup idea will be introduced at the Board Message this Sunday February 18. The coffee cups are via Penzey's spice shop where cups were donated with a purchase. Penzey's owner is very much in line with UU sensibilities and several members donated their cups. We will be starting with 6 cups.
- **New Member Ceremony:** New member ceremony is planned for late May (date TBA). Potentially 3 people been relatively regular in participation in USH life.
- **Other:** The BOD Message will also include suggestions for joining the Welcome Team and an artistic "ask" for signage for the Fellowship Hall Welcome table in Fellowship Hall to be introduced in February.

4. Social Justice Council ~ Judy Sullivan

- **Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)** -USH members participated in the GHIAA meetings, which updated the ongoing issue actions and preparation for House Meetings. The purpose of the house meeting is to ascertain the concerns of our congregations, which will directly determine the next GHIAA actions. Each House Meeting will be co-hosted by two or more GHIAA congregations/organizations. USH has offered our Meeting House for an evening meeting and will be partnering with The Urban Hope Refuge Church (Rev. AJ Johnson) and New Antioch Baptist Church (Pastor Jeff Powell). The date has not been set, but will be within the next two months.

USH GHIAA leaders have also been asked to create a Sunday worship service devoted to the work of GHIAA. The suggestion came from a congregant via Judy Robbins and Sue Smolski. The idea was well received by the social justice team and Rev. Jocelyn Gardner-Spencer (GHIAA staff) has agreed to be the pulpit guest. The date for this service is March 24.

- **Anti-Racism Programming: The Sum of Us Podcast Discussions**
Twenty-six people have registered and the first two discussions were well attended by members of USH, UUSE, The Universalist Church of West Hartford and GHIAA. The full schedule of upcoming podcasts and discussion dates can be found on the USH Social Justice website.

- **EqUual Access and Disability Justice**

Gloria Bent has invited those whose areas of ministry within the congregation focus on use of the chancel to meet immediately following the Sunday service on March 10. The focus will be on chancel accessibility and safety issues.

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

Donations have slowed since December, and after speaking with Minister LisaMarie, a special request for shelf stable foods/drinks high in protein will be sent in the weekly enews and Order of Service.

- **Fern Street Food Ministry**

The school backpack program continues to grow and USH continues to be involved. Over 100 bags are packed and delivered each week, with special attention for special diet requests, and of course, snacks and drinks all kids need and appreciate.

- **Noah Webster Tutoring**

The dedicated USH tutors carry on their twice weekly time with elementary students. The stories of the needs of the teachers and the curiosity of the children highlight this good work.

5. Community Within Council ~ Christina Davies

At this time, active programs and activities continue to offer opportunities for congenial community and personal development. Monthly Pizza/Movie Nights, the Book Group, Artist's Way group, Gentle Yoga all have regular attendance. The movies, book, sing-along, and yoga groups are easy, small gatherings which particularly enable newcomers to get to know people in a casual environment with a defined activity. The book group and Artist's Way are active on Zoom, important for those unable to participate "in person" to join in.

Rev. Bob has expanded our palette with his First Tuesday hangouts and Lunchtime Poetry. Whatever direction these ventures take in the future, they've been valuable vehicles for people to meet our minister (and vice-versa) in a small-group setting.

The Groundhog Day Pot-Luck drew a good crowd — 60+ people, at a guess — and there were practically no leftovers. Early February marks a point in the winter when people generally are eager to greet the increasingly long daylight with food and fellowship... a good time to throw a party (or, in our case, pot luck). In that connection, I want to throw a light on the two young women who serve as our Sunday sextons, Jaz and Nonie, who so capably and genially accommodate our requests for table placements, food arrangements, and keeping the coffee flowing. It would be incredibly more difficult to attempt these events without their help.

Caring Network Update:

Caring Network Chair Janice Newton provided the following, concerning CN's recent activities:

Caring Network Update: February 9, 2024 ~ We are happily in a relatively calm period, after a long period of Memorial Receptions and multiple concerns. We have sent sympathy cards, "thinking of you" cards, provided transportation, and made phone calls to check on members and friends of our community. We have a Caring Network table in Fellowship Hall during Fellowship Hour. We provide paper copies of the weekly E-News to the few members who are unable to access it on the internet. We are very grateful and amazed by Rev. Bob's attendance and participation at our monthly meetings and his prompt and caring contacts with those among us who are having difficulties or just need to know someone cares.

6. Administration Report ~ Paul Cipriano

- Building and Grounds is in the process of finishing the paving/parking lot painting project. The Security Committee led by Laura Cipriano and Lu Giamatteo is in the process of finalizing the draft of the emergency response plan in case of a fire. Also on the agenda is the 2024-25 Connecticut Security Grant application. The Security Committee is considering applying for funding for outdoor solar powered lighting for the parking lot and to illuminate the exterior of the main entrance during evening events. They are also considering whether or not to use the remaining 2023 grant funds for planters placed on the sidewalk in front of the lobby entrances, as originally planned, or see if the funds can be reallocated for more cameras and keyless entry for other entrance doors in the building. We still are awaiting reimbursement from the state for the

cameras, keyless entry and camera doorbell system installations. There is no date for when the check will be sent as the state has a backlog of checks to write.

7. Spiritual Life Report ~ Rick Tsukada

- **Overview:** In general it is my feeling that we are, as a congregation, and in the spirit of John Bengston's recent sermon...What's Love Got to Do Wit it...we are undergoing a Renaissance...here at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. I believe we are in fact in a place where as a congregation we are undergoing an exciting and creative moment in our congregations and our denominations movement into what might be considered the next age of human life on our planet. It is a time when we will explore and experiment with our leaving the mechanical age and truly entering the computer age. It is a time of perhaps holding on to ancient sources of human beliefs and values...and having our natures and very genetics being altered over the next fifty to hundred years. Finding a sense of sure footing will indeed be an adventure. Ok this is a somewhat a science fiction visionary short romp into next steps but the very visionary effort of our church's architecture and the chances our society took when saying "yes" to the design of our church set us on a path and indeed a challenge of being alive and courageous as we wrestle with who and what we are as a religion and more specificity as an individual congregation. We are in a moment of remaking ourselves and developing a flexible culture that can flourish in the coming age...a new age of Renaissance...a Liberal Reformation of Spiritual Life for the Computer Age of AI... Our challenge ...Learning to know " When Hold Them...When to Fold Them...When to Walk Away...Know When to Run " ...Kenny Rodgers on playing the game.
- **Music** - I raise the question...what is Unitarian Universalist Spiritual Music...I do this in leaning into my opening statement...I don't know anymore...I am a creature of my musical life...my exposure and experiences...I am classical (I played the french horn...sang in school choir)...I am a folk/hippie...I was a UU youth group and camper kid...I was a lover of Soul Music...and yeah...Rock music but mostly R and B and Southern Rock...but not Rap which eludes me as music but not as poetry...current POP...does not interest me...but there are some great voices out there now considered oldies I think...Lady Gaga for one...I miss the old NPR and their "classics"...who listens to this stuff now?...that stuff in entertainment...none participatory...Anyway I raise this because I currently like the blend of possibilities that our current music at the church allows for...it is not ever totally complete...never totally satisfying...never old enough...never new enough...never complete...but is it really good enough...given the age we live in...and that is hard to find in today's mix of the world. Yet...I like the way that Rev. Bob and the creativity and talent of Sam are evolving at they get to know each other...there is a wonderful opening up of the way that "music" is used in the services...including the way different hymns are being tried...and we are as a congregation...singing louder and better.
- **Worship Associates** - Again to continue the thoughts of how USH is evolving it is also true of the role and the function of the WA's as we move into the next couple of years. The WA's are tied...linked to the public (congregational) aspect of our society...they are visible...they are audible...and actors (in the very best way) in the public impression of what USH is to not only one another but also to those outside of our congregation. To be a Worship Associate at USH, and they are uniques in the UU congregational world, is to be an element in the spiritual experience of the congregation and the "job" is a place where the WA's get to practice their UU spiritual practices...it is part of creating our own theology...and one could understand it as a "calling", as a way they practice our theological love. For me...it is a model for

what so many of the volunteers do at USH...the difference is that the WA's job description activity calls for their work to reflect their spiritual UU practice. The work of the WA's serves them to deepen and strengthen their spiritual life. It raises the visionary question of how that sense of UU spiritual practice can be better supported in other "groups" and "committees" that are so crucial to the function of the church. The WA's have expanded their support of the emerging public services that are happening here at USH. Specifically in support of Memorial Services and the now launched First Thursday Night Services...they will support the facilitation of those services...in support of Rev. Bob.

- **Religious Education-** As you know we are in the process of looking for a Religious Education Director through a search committee. This is public knowledge. As the Spirit Life Council Chair I am a member of the search group. Please feel free to send me thoughts and comments and concerns regarding the project. One of such comments communicated to me has been a budgetary concern in the job description, and another is a desire to have someone who is also interested in developing an adult religious program element for the church. It should be noted given, once again the evolving nature of our religion, what is it that makes a religious learning program for our denomination in this day and age...what are the moral precepts to be imparted...what are the behaviors that support the growth and understanding of those precepts...what are the spiritual practices that allow for one to grow and develop those precepts as we age...
- **Chancel Arts-** As we have emerged from the isolation of Covid...as we get together again in person...as we see the desires and creativity of our being inspired by the mixture of our personalities and our expressions from the pulpit...the visual artist in our midst...slowly folks are seeing the Sunday displays as an important extension of the messages and the experience of the services. Especially as the camera work moves enhance the overall stimulation elements that are part of a modern screen active service. However it should be mentioned that as our Sanctuary becomes used more for memorial services, special events, and rentals...what is on the chancel may involve more attention and therefore more labor.
- **General activity statement -** part of the focus on spiritual life, of the chair has put together a small group of people who are looking at how our church's visual impression reflects the spirit and meaning of our congregation. This aesthetic group is operating within the Building and Grounds work group since it has a brick and mortar focus to its eventual outcome. To that the most visible work of this group is in the lobby, in classroom D and the accent color wall of Servetus. Other projects are in the works. These elements, which includes just cleaning up spaces, are also in service to the proposed October Event celebrating the Landmark Building Status of our USH church.

8. David Newton's Remarks ~ Remarks for the Board Meeting 02/13/24

Building & Grounds

1. Our process for seeking listing on the National Register of Historical Places is moving along nicely. Building Conservation Associates, the outfit preparing the nomination under our grant, was submitting its finished work yesterday to Jenny Scofield from the State Historical Preservation Office, SHPO, for final and probably trivial edits. Then on to the State Review Board Hearing on March 22 for consideration. Presuming approval, the National Park Service normally approves recommendations received after this process.

2. We discovered last week certain commitments made to receive DOT approval for the paving project connecting our driveways to Bloomfield Avenue. We took prompt action to straighten out the commitments. A full description is included in Paul's Administrative Council report for the month.

3. The Aesthetics Subgroup of Building and Grounds continues its work under the direction of Evan Williams improving various long neglected aspects of our peripheral rooms and Fellowship Hall. This detailed work will be continuing for some time with evident improvements. New information about the named (Luminaries) rooms has been appearing outside of each.

4. Efforts of the Security Sub-Ground continue (see Paul's Administrative Council Report)

Endowment

On the matter of the Endowment, you will realize you have had no report since you named the last member of the Endowment Committee. I am pleased to inform you the Endowment Committee is functioning and currently working on matters assigned by the Constitution and Bylaws, and more particularly on the planning for an Endowment Campaign for next summer and fall. This includes figuring out the communications and details of such a campaign and including a matching contribution to the Endowment as detailed in the agreement with AD, otherwise known as the Anonymous Doner.

By policy securities are sold when donations of securities are received. The Endowment Committee will be holding securities as an escrow matching fund source. Accordingly, in keeping with the AD Agreement, we will seek formal approval for setting up the Escrow account to hold the donated securities. Details to follow.

There was a meeting today and Jim will be reporting on some of the relevant actions.