



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
IN CHERRY HILL**

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# MISSION AND VISION

## **Mission:**

**Learning** and teaching, to know others and ourselves;

**Valuing** and embracing the richness of all our diversities;

**Serving** Others and confronting injustice, achieving more together than each can do alone.

## **Vision Statement:**

We will become a beacon of liberal-religion in Southern New Jersey.

We welcome questioning minds and growing spirits. We nurture civic, social, and environmental justice.





# REPORTS FROM THE STAFF AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
IN CHERRY HILL**

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## Report from the Developmental Minister

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**Rev. Margret A. O'Neill, [minister@uucch.org](mailto:minister@uucch.org)**

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In this final year of our 5-year Developmental Ministry I have seen the congregation's strong commitment to the developmental priorities of culture change for greater connection, trust and abundance. This has been a year of recovery and adjustment to the ongoing reality of the Covid-19 pandemic, and a time to look toward new ways of adapting to generational changes and creating church community, along with searching, hiring and preparing for your new contract-to-call minister who will begin in August 2024. It has been quite a year!

As I complete this amazing journey with such a strong and resilient congregation, I find myself reflecting on the work I do, and how it has evolved in our ministry together. In all my professional roles I have gravitated toward coaching, facilitating and supporting others into the transformation they choose for themselves. I judge my success not by my own accomplishments, but by the progress and accomplishments of those with whom I work. You will notice in my words below that my report overlaps with all the other parts of this annual report, which is as it should be. And by my own scale of assessment, I look back on these five years as a time that has yielded amazing success, as I am deeply gratified by the ministry we have created and the deep work we have done together here. For all of who you are, and who we have become together, I am grateful.

And now the report. In my congregational ministry, I serve as head of staff, supervisor and team leader for our excellent and highly professional church staff. In October, Melanie Jones joined the staff in the DLFE position, and in March, Melanie led the hiring of Shawna Dedonado for the Child Care position, enabling us to open the Nursery. I am deeply grateful for the staff leadership of Natasha Steinmacher, Julie Rigano and Melanie Jones in their various areas of church life – they bring the support, teaching and energy that makes everything work here.

My most visible area of direct responsibility for leadership is in congregational worship. I have most enjoyed creating special celebrations (Welcome Yule!) and facilitating collaborative sermons in which members of our various teams and groups share their passions and expertise in a Sunday service. This year we consolidated the Worship Associates and Worship Committee to form a more streamlined Worship Team, to support the creation of worship excellence in every role, every week.

At a broader level, I provide staff support in different ways as needed for the teams and programs in Social Justice, Congregational Relationships, Fellowship Groups, Caring, Arts & Aesthetics, Worship, Finance, Stewardship, Safety/Security, and the Endowment Trustees. I support the launch of new initiatives, such as the Earth Centered Spirituality team that began to organize in May. With the reduction in the scope of the Lifespan Faith Engagement position, I became staff support for Welcoming & Membership, the Leadership Development Nominating Committee and Leadership Council. I am a member (non-voting) of the Board of Trustees. You will find details on each of these church groups in this Annual Report.

In the portion of my work that is specifically developmental I serve as process coach, teacher and facilitator, supporting your work toward the developmental goals you set in November 2019, to create a culture of trust, connection and abundance:

- Trust: Clarity in governance and policies is fundamental to establish and maintain trust in congregational, staff and ministerial leadership, connecting effectively across the congregation.
- Connection: Well bounded covenantal relationship is fundamental to healthy and sustainable connection.

- **Abundance:** The culture of abundance is shifting in response to the changing realities of church life, preparing for an abundant future for this congregation with your next minister.

**Trust:** The Governance Advisory Committee and the Board continue to define and articulate clarity in roles and relationships, codified in the policies and procedures that provide clear direction for the church. During this year the Board clearly defined the systems of authority, responsibility and accountability that are foundational to the partnerships among the Board, Minister and Congregation. The new structures of church life are coming into place as “committees” transform into teams and groups, and the four Board Advisory Committees (Governance, Finance, Human Resources and Infrastructure) have been established, members appointed, and work begun on policy and procedure in support of the Board’s leadership. The Board Policy Book is now available to the congregation, posted on the website as a work in progress; the Employee Handbook was updated and published this year and work is ongoing on Safety/Security and Finance Handbooks.

**Connection:** Following adoption of the Congregational Covenant last year, the Congregational Relationships Team initiated a project of congregation-wide reading and discussion of the book, *Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself* by Nedra Glover Tawwab, to support structures and processes of relational accountability. The team of Listening Circles Facilitators has also proven to be a great connective asset, supporting another round of listening for the Board’s Open Question this year.

**Abundance:** Although finances remain tight in this time of generational turnover and a challenging economy, there is abundance in the energy and commitment of church members, and a significant upswing in Sunday visitors and new members. The successful Ministerial Search and a smooth transition this summer will provide a strong start in the coming year.

I continue to sustain my professional resources by actively participating in the Transitional Ministers Chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), and in the interfaith Interim Ministry Network, where I serve on the Board of Directors, the teaching Faculty, and the curriculum development and conference planning teams. I have the honor of teaching the skills of congregational transition to my colleagues, both UU and interfaith. I serve as a Coach for colleagues through the UUMA, and also as a mentor for transitional minister colleagues.

I sustain my personal and emotional resources by participating in colleague support groups with other ministers, by staying in close touch with friends and family, by reading and relaxing, and in activities that renew my spirit. Now is the time when my own transition planning bears fruit, as I downshift from full time congregational ministry and move fully into my home Hyde Park, New York, this summer.

I am grateful for this time of service with the Unitarian Universalist Church in Cherry Hill, and I have every confidence in your capacities to continue co-creating trust, connection and abundance to sustain you as you move into the bright future that lies ahead.

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## **Report from the Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement**

**Melanie Jones, [dlfe@uucch.org](mailto:dlfe@uucch.org)**

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In October 2023, I enthusiastically took on the Lifespan Faith Engagement director role. It has been a rewarding journey, getting to know our congregation's children, youth, and adults and being a part of a

vibrant and welcoming community. Over the past seven months, we have seen significant growth in our faith engagement programs for all ages, a testament to our collective efforts. We are also delighted to welcome new families regularly, further enriching our community.

### **Children & Youth Faith Engagement**

- The children heard stories on a variety of topics, from UU theology to traditions and practices from other faith traditions (Yuletide, Easter, Passover)
- The Spirit Play class provides a place for children to explore their interests, ask questions, engage in UU rituals, and learn to be in community with one another.
- The nursery opened in March 2024 for the first time in several years. We have a nursery staff member and a rotating volunteer team who provide care weekly for children ages infant to five.
- Our youth class (A Place of Wholeness) welcomed new teachers, Stevie and Jimmy Franklin, and spent the year exploring their spirituality and UU beliefs.
- Regular attendance was consistent throughout the program year in both Spirit Play and A Place of Wholeness, creating connection and community for both groups of children.
- Working with Rev. Margret to enhance engagement and connection in our multigenerational services, including activity areas in the sanctuary, fidgets and headphones for neurodivergent adults and children, and a welcome cart for children in the commons.

Several special events were held for all ages as well as age specific events, including a Halloween Dance, Christmas Party, Youth Game Night, Young'uns and Dragons (elementary age), Passover Movie Night, and Parents' Night Out.

### **Adult Faith Engagement**

Our community and relational groups are going strong! Over the past months, new groups have been forming, including the Pride Support Alliance, Yarnies (crocheting/knitting), and, most recently, Earth-centered Practices.

In January, Owning Your Religious Past was hosted by Lifespan Faith Engagement and facilitated by Rev. Margret. The class was an enriching and healing time for adults of multiple faith backgrounds to reflect on their positive experiences and make peace with the difficult experiences.

### **Other Areas**

- Hiring our nursery staff member, Shawna Dedonado.
- Working on reopening classrooms and spaces for programming.
- Formed connections with LREDA and explored UU resources and training.
- Collaborating with other teams on projects (COW, Arts & Aesthetics, Safety and Security)

### **Goals For the Coming Year**

- Expand our nursery program and incorporate UU and Montessori-based teaching for preschool children.
- Expand and update our Spirit Play catalog and enhance the classroom experience.
- Expand on youth programming to include more activities and connections with the community.
- Explore possibly facilitating Coming of Age and/or Our Whole Lives for youth.
- Create more classes and programming for adult faith engagement.

- Opportunities for fellowship and community service that bring together children, youth, and adults.
- Participate in UU trainings and LREDA.

My transition into my role has been smooth, thanks to the wonderful LFE team. I was welcomed with open arms, and they continue to share valuable information about the church's history and current church life. I appreciate their guidance and wisdom. I am grateful for all of the support, grace, and encouragement of the LFE team, teachers, and congregants at UUCCH.

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## **Report from the Director of Music Ministry**

**Natasha Steinmacher, [music@uucch.org](mailto:music@uucch.org)**

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The Music Ministry program is an integral part of the Ministry of the Arts. It has one of the most expansive reaches of the congregation's programs since everyone who attends worship experiences the energy that it generates.

This year, our music programs have grown and blossomed! Our vibrant music ministry program continues to inspire enthusiasm and commitment from our participants, as well as engagement and appreciation from our congregation. The UUCCH Choir, UUkulele Band, and Handbell Choir continue weekly rehearsals in preparation for worship services, special events, and music outreach.

This year, I worked to nurture the music program to serve the congregation and its congregants through:

- Facilitating and coordinating music for weekly worship services
- Facilitating and directing weekly rehearsals for the Choir
- Continuing to navigate the Choir through covenant honoring our shared commitments and agreements while upholding precautions to allow for safe music-making in this post-pandemic time
- Supporting the transition of Bill Charlier into leadership with the UUkulele Band and working in collaboration for successful programming. The UUkulele Band participated in the Holiday Party, Love Song Sing-Along, and musical outreach for the Artis Nursing Home and is in preparation for the Annual (Comeback) Concert on June 15, 2024.
- Supporting and collaborating with lay leader (and Music Director Emeritus) Ken Ewan for another successful year for the Handbell Choir
- Encouraging members to share their musical gifts in ways that nurture their spiritual growth and serve the congregation
- Incorporating congregation members, soloists, and instrumentalists in our Sunday service music
- Coordinating with and supervising our staff Collaborative Pianist -Mark Yurkanin
- Supporting our music program in our newly renovated Sanctuary by learning more about the audio/video capabilities and functional limits
- Developing two special All Music Sunday services that affirm our UU commitment to Beloved Community and uphold our UU sources and principles: one acknowledging the sacred season of Advent, and the other celebrating our UU tradition of Flower Communion
- Programming and facilitating music for our Holiday Party and annual Love Song Sing-Along

Event, coordinating with our Music Ministry Team for a successful event

- Researching, making connections, and introducing music from the wider community
- Entering in partnership with the *Beyond The Bars* organization for the “Spirituals Program,” as we create a meaningful relationship between the music we sing from our past and a beneficiary organization that affects our future
- Continued learning about Negro Spirituals and appropriately sharing in worship service
- Supporting partnership through the Music Ministry Team in sponsorship of the musical arts in the community -The Greater South Jersey Chorus
- Continued work with the Committee on Music Ministry Team to keep our music library legal, up-to-date, and plentiful enough for our growing choir
- Continuing to navigate and define the Music Ministry’s transition to a team leadership model
- Participating in professional development opportunities through the Unitarian Universalists Association, the Association for UU Music Ministries: Working with Trans Voices, and Singing Our Faith Workshops
- Serving the Association for UU Music Ministries as Director of Member Engagement and Choral Coordinator on the Conference Planning Committee
- Serving the UUA as Music Coordinator for the 2024 General Assembly (virtual)

The UUCCH Music Ministry program is focused on supporting transformation and connection in our congregation through music. Music serves as a vessel for our spiritual community’s experiences and initiatives. To that end, I look to support our Music Ministry in the following ways:

This Year’s Goals-

- Building deeper connections in the congregation through music for those who want to sing or play but cannot make a weekly commitment, for families with young children, for youth, in other words more flexible opportunities for music-making, e.g. the revival of the Pop-Up Choir!
- Continued use of music annotation skills within the context of the music program; creating lead sheets for the uke band, harmony sheets for the choir, and music slides for the congregation.
- Continued support of the music program in our newly renovated Sanctuary by continuing to learn the new sound system and explore integrating new video and audio techniques for progressive, dynamic hybrid worship
- Professional Development learning opportunities around conducting and competence with music notation software
- Continued participation with the UUA General Assembly and the Association for UU Music Ministries annual conferences, as well as other professional development opportunities

I am tasked with providing a professional-quality, inspiring, imaginative, and enthusiastic year-round music program that nourishes the hearts, expands the minds, and enriches the congregation’s lives.

Thank you for the continued honor and privilege of serving the music ministry at UUCCH.

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## Report from the Church Administrator

Julie Rigano, [info@uucch.org](mailto:info@uucch.org)

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I've had a successful second year here at UUCCH. While I had some health issues that took me away from church activities a bit in the fall, I was able to return in the winter with reinvigorated energy. I am thankful to everyone who helped me this year through my health issues, staff and lay leadership alike. I am proud of the work we have done together this year.

Some specific accomplishments include

- Updating our website to be more accurate, accessible, and appealing to visitors
- Utilizing our social media pages more to spread our message further
- Supporting congregational leadership with clear communication and assistance for mass communication projects such as Stewardship and Split Plate applications

My goals for continuing to serve this community include increasing our web presence and optimizing our physical space while continuing to

Some specific goals include

- Organizing the overflowing filing cabinet in the administrator's office
- Create regular content for our social media pages
- Add photos to our website to make it more engaging

My administrative and communication work support the mission, whether it is something external like creating registration forms for learning opportunities for the community, or internal like organizing the email lists to create efficient communication for the teams.

My work's biggest connection to the vision is updating the website and utilizing our social media pages. Our internet presence is our beacon to southern New Jersey and the world. This work supports our vision as we strive to be the beacon of liberal faith in New Jersey.

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## Report from the Board of Trustees

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Jennie Stone, President

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [jenco2033@verizon.net](mailto:jenco2033@verizon.net)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Karen Nowicki (1<sup>st</sup> VP), Linda Coolson (2<sup>nd</sup> VP), Kate Sloan, Barbara Barnett-Stewart, Bill Warner, Carol Suboleski

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

Governance

- Transitioned the Policy Work Group to a Governance Advisory Committee to continue to solidify the governance structure;
- Ongoing collaboration with the Governance Advisory Committee to restructure and expand our current Policy manual to better facilitate church governance consistent with our values. New policies are being created and old policies are being updated.
- Appointed Infrastructure, Finance and Human Resources Advisory Committees to assist with related Policies
- Planned and held a retreat for orientation of all Trustees in August 2023.

- Held two informational congregational forums to describe governance changes and answer congregant questions in October 2023 and March 2024
- Worked with LDNC to plan and carry out the Annual Meeting in June 2024

#### Care for the Facility

- Approved hire of an Independent contractor as part-time Property Manager
- Supported the Finance and Endowment committees through the budgeting process for the 2024-25 church year. Appointed new Endowment Trustees as needed.

#### Care for the Congregation

- Organized a set of listening circles for congregational information/input into future directions for congregational engagement in January 2024 Reported on the results to the congregation in February.
- Supported lay volunteer efforts with notes of gratitude for service, monthly Board recognition
- Organized monthly connection reflections for Sunday service by Trustees on a rotating basis
- Created call for GA Delegates and appointed delegates for 2024 virtual GA
- Worked with minister to have congregational recognition of the ministerial Search Team in service (April 2024)

#### Care for the Staff

- Supported the minister in adjusting hours/leave for Administrator as needed during time of illness
- Collaborated with Search Team and Negotiating Team to hire a new Contract-to-Call minister, Rev Eric Posa, for a 3 year Contract with option to call.
- Helped host/organize a visiting weekend for Rev Eric Posa in April 2024
- Supported Rev Margret as she prepares to complete her developmental contract with us
- Worked with minister to write annual appraisal of the developmental ministry for the UUA

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

Ongoing work with the four Advisory Committees to create a more holistic and effective Policy manual. Continue to write Policies to empower Teams, clarify roles, and guide responsibility.

Create processes that will document administrative functions/activities of the Board for better clarity, document Board decisions for better transparency,

Transition from Rev Margret as Minister to Rev Eric Posa as Minister, including planning leaving and welcoming ceremonies, transition of apartment, and onboarding activities.

Supporting Rev Posa as he orients to our congregation, governance, and staff. Work to establish a collaborative, covenantal, respectful and mutually supportive relationship. Encourage his strengths and passions within his ministry style.

Ongoing work with the new minister and Congregational Relationships Team to encourage congregational support and practice of a new covenant.

Provide ongoing recognition of volunteer contributions

Ongoing support of church teams to provide worship, religious education, music, community activism, attractive safe spaces in/around the church, working facilities, financial stability, learning programs, caring support, and all the other wonderful activities that make our community

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

Shared vision of healthy congregation

Commitment to governance evolution

Depth of experience in various aspects of church life

6/7 members are returning, so great continuity. But need to plan for Officer successors for next year.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

- We are actively **learning** about what a successful Board can do to provide vision and direction to a thriving church community through our own study of governance and policy specifically utilizing the Hotchkiss model
- We are asking congregants about what they **value**, responding to requests, and integrating understanding into our goals for the next ministry through forums, Q&A and listening circles.
- We are **servng** our congregation and community by learning how to be more welcoming, more understanding and more inclusive.
- To be a **beacon** means having a strong foundation of values and systems that supports our work and those who wish to join us. It means having a clear direction about how our light will shine into the world. The Board is actively working toward clarity around these issues so that our voice will be strong and our light will be bright.



# REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, AND TEAMS

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
IN CHERRY HILL**

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## Report from Arts & Aesthetics

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Sylvia Barclay & Pam Anderson

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [sraebarclay@gmail.com](mailto:sraebarclay@gmail.com),

**Other Committee Participants:** Heidi Bernard, Pam Anderson, Donna Mitchelson, Beth Arnold Messick, Barbara Flewelling, Nancy Hillman, Janet Horton, Denise Fox, Lynn Richter, Cathy Marsh, Linda Williams, Shirlene Abrams, Sol Drekaskot, Rosemary Dunaif, Morgan Herford, Julie Bernd, Jane Mahorter

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**Committee Accomplishments this Year.** Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.

- Gallery Displays-UU Principals Illustrated by Keith Harding
- Big Bang Art
- Quilt Display
- Words & Images
- Successful Craft show was held from 11/26-12/31.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

Continuing to mount Gallery Displays

Explore design ideas for the empty space in the stairway from the Commons to the Gallery

**Committee Strengths.** *Share committee/program's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

- A&A invites members of the congregation, as well as the outside community, to develop Gallery installations
- A&A invites crafters, both members and non-members, to participate in the Holiday Craft Fair
- A&A strives to uphold the architectural parameters of the buildings and it's furnishing
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**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The Gallery installations promote conversations and dialog among viewers, helping us learn about each other and build community. A wide variety of displays, including fine arts, crafts, everyday objects, and historical items, help viewers to see familiar objects in new ways, evoking reactions ranging from amusements and nostalgia to contemplation and appreciation.

Photos and postings of gallery activities on the church website and Facebook provide information to a wider audience.

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## Report From the Caring Committee

**Committee Co-Chairs:** Lisa Winkler and Paula Horton

**Contact Information for Co-Chairs and Rev Margret:** [caring@uucch.org](mailto:caring@uucch.org)

**Other Committee Members:** Linda Coolson, Lynda Dillon, Pat Fazio, Dawn Gardner, Deb Giffin, Marilyn Masur, Pat Naylor, Nancy Newcomer, Marion Reigle, Anne Norton, Barbara Flewelling

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**Committee Accomplishments this Year:**

We coordinated outreach to members/friends of UUCCH on an ongoing basis in the following ways:

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- **Contact with members of the congregation:**
  - Caring Committee members send cards, emails, and texts of sympathy, get well, encouragement, new baby, and birthday, based on weekly Joys and Concerns that were shared and also based on news obtained via other avenues of communication. Nancy Newcomer coordinates the card writing. Thank you Nancy! We also keep in touch by phone with members who may be isolated and alone, so they continue to be a part of our community. We also send holiday cards to this group during the year.
  - In a post-covid world, we continue in-person visits to residents of Medford Leas and others who are house-bound due to mobility issues etc.
  - Each member of the congregation was contacted by a member of the Caring Committee in the fall. Contact was made by phone if possible, with a follow-up email if the member was not reached by phone. We shared updates on church events and asked how members were doing, and identified needs that needed to be addressed.
  
- We provided **transportation** to Sunday Service and medical appointments for those who do not drive or whose ability to drive is limited due to an illness or surgery. We focused on rides to church for people who don't drive after the Sanctuary opened last April. Pat Fazio is our coordinator for rides. Thank you Pat!
- We provided **meals** to congregants in need, ordinarily due to an illness or surgery. Marilyn Masur is our meal coordinator. Thank you Marilyn!
- We arranged and hosted special celebrations: Fifteen to 20 attended both the Thanksgiving Dinner (Hosted by Marla Russell), and the Christmas Dinner (hosted by Kourtney and Ryan LaGasse). Forty-five attended the Tea & Odyssey presented by Betty Burgess in April. Attendees were both in-person in the Sanctuary and on Zoom. Thank you to our hosts and presenters!
- We hosted a **Youth Mental Health Program** which was open to the public to raise awareness about Youth Mental Health and connect people to resources that are available in our community. Approximately 30 people attended.
- We assisted with **planning and hosting of 4 Memorial Services.**
- Holiday Activities:
  - In December, we sent thank you notes to non-Committee members who have helped us in our work during the year.
  - We also sent gift cards to a few members of our congregations who are in need.
  - We deliver gifts to Medford Leas residents. This year we chose Amaryllis plants.
- Annually, we conduct a Sunday Service about a topic we believe is important for the care of our congregants.
- The Chairs of the Committee host a luncheon in June for the members of the Committee, to thank them for their service on behalf of the Committee.
- We updated and maintained a list of Resources that provides names of agencies and services available to congregants in need within Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties.
  
- **Others we want to thank:** Thank you to Deb Giffen for keeping our Dropbox up-to-date, to Lynda Dillon for being our Joys and Concerns liaison, to Pat Naylor for her extensive help with Pastoral Care and maintaining contact with Medford Leas administration and residents there. Thank you to Linda Coolsen, Marion Reigle, Marla Russell, Anne Norton, Dawn Gardner, and all our members for help with our various projects including card sending, Memorial Service reception hosting, phone calls to members, and other help, as needed. We are very grateful.

**Plans for Next Year:**

- We plan to continue making phone calls to each congregant, once a year.

- We are planning a Caring Committee Service for July. The theme will be “Hobby for Health and Happiness”.
- We plan to continue our work to care for the Congregation.

### **Committee Strengths:**

We have a committed group of Committee members, most of whom take responsibility for a particular aspect of the Committee’s work, but more importantly, they care about our members and stay in connected with them and hold information in confidence. Many members also participate in providing rides, meals, making calls, visiting, sending cards to congregants and frequently checking in on our members. We also have the help of many others in the congregation.

### **Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

UUCCH is a caring, inclusive, community and being a part of that community, the Caring Committee actively participates in its philosophy to help one another. Many congregants who aren’t members of the Committee have assisted us in our efforts to achieve our goals. Further, our committee embodies all of the UUA principles.

## **Report from Congregational Relationships Team (formerly Right Relations Committee)**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Libby Pontillo

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [pianissimo@comcast.net](mailto:pianissimo@comcast.net)

**Other Committee/Team/Task Force/Program Participants:** Pam Anderson, Cheryl Dunican-Hein, Marilyn Masur, Lynn Richter

**Group Accomplishments this Year.** Following the adoption of the revised congregational covenant at the 2023 Annual Meeting, our team turned its focus toward engaging church members in considering healthy relational boundaries. We facilitated a pilot group in July and four additional book groups between September and March, based on Nedra Glover Tawwab’s *Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself*. About three dozen church members and friends participated in these discussion groups; others who did not participate read the book. Our team is considering offering additional book group(s) in the fall of 2024.

In March 2024, we started a UUA self-guided training for Right Relations teams entitled, “Tending Covenant.” It is a self-paced course, with modules on “Covenant as Group Spiritual Practice,” “Know Your Boundaries,” “On Trauma,” “Shape a Culture of Support and Accountability,” and “Shape a Restorative Culture.” We are looking forward to continuing this training into the new church year with additional insights from Rev. Posa.

### **Plans for Next Year**

This year, two members of the congregation offered us an introduction to Restorative Practices. Learning more about this approach and helping to shape a more restorative congregational culture will be our next focus once we have completed “Tending Covenant.” We made a step in this direction this year when we invited two members who were in conflict into restorative conversations. We were able to meet with each party separately for thoughtful listening sessions. Although we were unable to get agreement from both parties to meet, so were unable to engage them in working through their conflicts together, we believe that they benefited from being heard, and that the intensity of the conflict was lowered as a result.

### **Group Strengths.**

Among the strengths of our team is our members' deep commitment to the covenantal basis of our faith. We view living peacefully in community as a spiritual practice which has the potential to extend into the larger world. We are experienced in and committed to the process of deep listening; most current team members have served many years as either facilitators or participants in Fellowship Groups. We strive to hold multiple perspectives around issues and to facilitate restorative processes, rather than try to "fix" conflicts.

Members of this team work well collaboratively and share a commitment to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the dignity of others. Rev. Margret's commitment to mentoring and coaching us in our work has been invaluable. Supporting her as she has coached our congregation toward creating a culture of greater accountability, resilience, and trust has been an essential part of our work.

### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith. Our UUA training course emphasizes the role of Relationships Teams in "tending covenant": modeling and encouraging behavior based on covenantal agreements and helping enhance the congregation's overall understanding of their importance. We encourage respectful, direct, and open communication among members of the congregation, seeking ways to engage the transformative, rather than destructive, power of conflict. We are increasingly embracing our role in shared learning, serving our community by offering additional resources for community education and understanding.

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## **Report from the Congregational Outreach Workshop (COW)**

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**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Val Sadwin and Susan Van Alstyne (Co-chairs)

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [COW@uucch.org](mailto:COW@uucch.org)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Lynda Dillon, Sue Camlin, Linda Carden, Ann Rundbaken, Sharmila Singh, Kathy Huffman, Georgiette Wordie, Patricia Murray, Linda Matznick, Regan Cranmer

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### **Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

During the 2023-24 Church year, the Community Outreach Work (COW) team has promoted UUCCH values by providing members and friends with opportunities to reach out and support communities in our area with various collections and service projects.

#### Collections drives:

- Weekend food bags for food insecure kids (in support of the Neighborhood Center in Camden)
- Winter clothing for Camden homeless (in support of Joseph's House)
- Holiday toys for children in need (through Sacred Heart Church in Camden)
- School supplies for children in need (in partnership with Unforgotten Haven)
- Feminine hygiene products collections (in support of Her Drive and The SPOT)
- Food for Cherry Hill Food Pantry (ongoing)
- New and gently used books for Book Smiles (ongoing)

#### Service Projects involving UUCCH volunteers:

- Parent's Night Out youth service project making center pieces for Cathedral Kitchen
- Working at the Cherry Hill Food Pantry

- Planting trees in Camden County with the NJ Tree Foundation
- Escorting women at the Cherry Hill Women’s Center

In addition to our collections and service projects, in the summer of 2023 COW conducted an interest survey among UUCCH members and friends to help guide our efforts.

In March of 2024, COW provided snacks for social hour as a **Thank You** to the congregation for supporting our collections and projects.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

For 2024-2025, COW plans to continue welcoming new members and seeking new and innovative ways to reach out to support communities in our region. COW will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other UUCCH teams and community organizations in the area.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group’s strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group’s leadership and succession planning.*

In the fall of 2023, COW moved to dual-platform (in person and via Zoom) evening meetings to make it easier for more UUCCH members and friends to join the team. At the beginning of the year COW had five active members. By the end of the year COW has nine regularly participating members. COW is grateful for the new ideas and energy new members have brought to the team.

**Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

COW members are deeply committed to translating the concept of social justice into tangible actions that address the effects of food insecurity, homelessness, climate change, poverty, women’s healthcare access, and other areas of concern. COW is also committed to ensuring the team itself reflects and supports UUCCH’s shared values and covenant. Toward this end, in early 2024 COW drafted and adopted a covenant to guide our team governance.

**Report from the Gift and Endowment Fund**

**Point of Contact:** Keith Spirgel

**Email for POC:** keith.spirgel@gmail.com

**Other Committee Members:** Helen Ewan, Connie Roggio, Valerie Sadwin, Paul Asman, Robert Stewart

**Group Accomplishments this Year.**

The Gift and Endowment Fund was established through the generosity of many church members and friends over time. The Gift and Endowment Fund consists of:

- (1) assets received by way of a will, a bequest, a gift, or in any other legal manner and
- (2) earnings, income, dividends, interest, and distributions from those assets.

The Trustees are mindful of our responsibilities for oversight, setting risk tolerance, acting as risk managers, making socially responsible investments.

Except for a small checking account for immediate needs, all funds are invested in the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF). The UUCEF makes investments that are aligned with UU values and seeks to achieve consistent returns within a moderate risk tolerance over the long term, sufficient to allow

Congregations to take regular distributions of 4% to 5% their investment balance each year, while maintaining the value of principal after adjustment for inflation and after all expenses.

Several years ago, the Endowment Fund advanced the church \$194,812 to help cover the cost of the sanctuary renovation. At that time, it was anticipated that the advance would be repaid through building campaign pledges by church members. To date, \$129,622 of the advance has been repaid.

- Original advance = \$194,812
- Amount repaid = \$129,622
- Uncollectable pledges = \$36,031
- Remaining advance = \$29,159

This year, there were two non-recurring events that affected the balance of the Endowment Fund:

- In July, the church repaid \$5,104 of a withdrawal the prior year that was used to pay for a new fire pump and AC compressor.
- In March, the Endowment Fund wrote off \$36,031 to account for the uncollectable building renovation pledges.

Despite the write off, the Endowment Fund, as of the end of March, has increased in value by \$26,432, or 2.5%, since the beginning of the 2023/2024 church year. Year to date through March:

- Beginning of year balance = \$1,078,166
- Plus: Interest and appreciation = \$88,481
- Less: Withdrawals to support the church operating fund = (\$31,122)
- Plus: Repayment of fire pump & AC withdrawal = \$5,104
- Less: Building advance write off = (\$36,031)
- Balance as of March EOM = \$1,104,599

The average balance of the Endowment Fund over the last four quarters ending in March was \$1,079,868. Up to 4% of that average balance, or \$3,600 monthly, is available to be used to cover monthly operating expenses for the 2024/2025 church year.

The Trustees are appointed for three-year terms with a two-term maximum. This year, we were delighted to increase our committee size to six members with the appointment of Robert Stewart in April. Bob is a long time UUCCH member who has served in many leadership roles in all areas of church. Welcome Bob!

### **Plans for Next Year.**

The UUCCH Endowment Trustees will continue its association with the UU Common Endowment Fund. We will work to assure the financial stability of the church, to assure the long-range financial future of the church, and to “fund capital needs and special projects that further the mission of the church.” (enabling document)

We will continue to be a source of support to the Board of Trustees. We will continue to encourage members to consider UUCCH in their estate planning.

### **Group Strengths.**

The strength of this Committee is in the varied experience of the members in the financial field and in their broad and deep experience in the life and history of our Church.

**Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Everything the Gift and Endowment does makes our mission and vision possible. The stewardship of this group makes sure that the care and nourishment needed for growth and stature in our area continues into the future.

The table below shows the balances in the Endowment Funds since 2019.

|                              | 6/30/19    | 6/30/20    | 4/30/21    | 4/30/22    | 3/31/23    | 3/31/24    |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Restricted Endowment Account |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Betsy Nemser                 | \$17,089   | \$10,142   | \$10,270   | \$10,287   | \$10,301   | \$10,301   |
| Piano Fund                   | \$945      | \$854      | \$864      | \$866      | \$762      | \$552      |
| Gene Draper                  | \$10,101   | \$9,947    | \$10,073   | \$8,589    | \$8,600    | \$8,600    |
| Total Restricted Endowments  | \$28,135   | \$20,942   | \$21,208   | \$19,741   | \$19,663   | \$19,453   |
| Unrestricted Endowment       | \$1,653,55 | \$1,684,01 | \$1,402,32 | \$1,199,08 | \$1,059,82 | \$1,104,59 |
| Total Endowment Balance      | \$1,681,69 | \$1,704,95 | \$1,423,53 | \$1,218,82 | \$1,079,48 | \$1,124,05 |

The table below shows the interest and appreciation of the Unrestricted Endowment for the years since 2019.

|  | FY2019     | FY2020     | FY2021     | FY2022     | FY2023     | FY2024 thru Mar |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Unrestricted Endowment                 |            |            |            |            |            |                 |
| Avg. Balance                           | \$1,122,68 | \$1,639,23 | \$1,641,92 | \$1,303,87 | \$1,051,49 | \$1,085,362     |
| Interest and Appreciation              | \$62,932   | \$20,777   | \$296,630  | -\$166,711 | \$79,233   | \$88,481        |
| % Avg. Balance                         | 5.61%      | 1.27%      | 18.51%     | -12.79%    | 7.54%      | 8.15%           |
| Distributed to UUCCH Board of Trustees | \$26,048   | \$42,030   | \$65,051   | \$64,392   | \$54,504   | \$31,122        |

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**Report from Everyday Spiritual Practice Discussion Group**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Robert Schindler

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [robert.schindler@rutgers.edu](mailto:robert.schindler@rutgers.edu)

**Other Committee/Team/Task Force/Program Participants:** Louise Marshall Kelly, Armandine Kelly, Wendy Lucas, Patty Lynn, Nancy Sue Hillman, Paul Dice, Susan Renton-Dice, Peter Knerr, Phyllis Knerr, Judy Isaacs, Steve Bier, and others

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** Each month we have discussed one of the 60 essays in the books *Everyday Spiritual Practice* (edited by Rev. Scott Alexander) and *Faithful Practices* (edited by Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom). Over the course of this year, we have discussed the essays “Walking as a Spiritual Discipline,” “Making Art,” “Balance,” “Mindfulness,” “Mealtime,” “Creating an Altar,” “Sacred Reading,” and “Gardening.”

We have continued our openness to discussing essays from other sources. This year we discussed one such essay, “The Essential Skills of Being Human,” by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks.

During this year, we have met on the third Thursday of every month from 7:30-9:00pm, in-person in the Horsch Room. We have also met over Zoom on the third Saturday of every month, from 10:00-11:30am. Attendance at these meetings has ranged from 2 to 9 people.

We have listed our meetings on the Meetup social media platform. We currently have 200 Meetup followers. In addition, we hold a monthly book table at Sunday services. At this table in the Commons, we promote the group and sell (at cost) copies of the books we are discussing during the year.

**Plans for Next Year.** During the next church year, we plan to continue to meet each month on the third Thursdays (in-person in the Horsch Room) and on the third Saturdays (via Zoom) to discuss one of the essays in *Everyday Spiritual Practice* and *Faithful Practices*. We plan to continue to be open to members' suggestions for discussion essays from other sources.

**Group Strengths.** One strength of the Everyday Spiritual Practice Discussion Group stems from the nature of essays we discuss. Each essay is of a length that enables it to be read aloud in 15-20 minutes. Similar to the length of many sermons, this seems an amount of material that can provide depth, richness, and interest without being overwhelming. The essays from *Everyday Spiritual Practice* and *Faithful Practices* are written mostly by UU clergy, with an occasional essay by an extremely experienced UU layperson. This separate authorship of the essays gives each essay a freshness of perspective that cannot be duplicated by reading multiple chapters of book written by a single author.

Further, each of the essays in *Everyday Spiritual Practice* and *Faithful Practices* is written by a religious person about his or her own personal spiritual practice. The editors of these books have skillfully commissioned the essays so that they range across many typical areas of life such as exercising, romantic relationships, parenting, grieving, preparing and eating food, buying clothes, and expressing oneself through the arts. The result of this is that each essay stands as a real-life illustration of effective spiritual practice. Each is an invitation to observe and reflect, with a gentleness and humility that is rarely present among books that claim to teach spirituality.

A second strength of the group comes from the structure of our meetings. As in the UU fellowship groups, our group uses the technique of deep listening. For each "round," a person speaks and then gives the floor to the next person. When everyone has spoken, then the next round is begun. There is no explicit responding to any one person's comments. Typically, each meeting consists of six rounds. The first round is check-in. The second round is reading aloud the month's essay; usually, each person reads two paragraphs. The third through fifth rounds involve speaking in response to stimulating questions about the essay, and the sixth round is each person's reflections, reactions, and/or anything else he/she wants to say.

We typically find that the hour-and-a-half-long meetings go by very fast. The activity of listening to other people speak from the heart is engaging, often moving. We are repeatedly struck by the depth possible in the topic and by the many dimensions and personally relevant aspects of the topic that become apparent.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:** From this group we come to more deeply know others and ourselves. The deep-listening format leads us to relax our opinions and self-concerned thoughts and draws us in an accepting way into the minds of others. This

not only increases our respect for others, but it opens our own minds. It has been, and continues to be, deeply satisfying to see the personal spiritual growth that is encouraged and facilitated by this group.

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## **Report from the Fellowship Groups**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** John Nielsen, Libby Pontillo, Larry Solow

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [jnielsen401@gmail.com](mailto:jnielsen401@gmail.com)

**Other Committee Participants:** Diane Baker-Hallowell, Lynn Richter, Jenn Snively

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### **Group Accomplishments this Year.**

Focusing on topics aligned with the church's monthly worship themes, we coordinated four Fellowship Groups (FGs) with 47 people participating. We continued to incorporate the opportunity for participants to share "What's on your heart?"—a safe space to voice feelings about themselves, the church, the country, and the world within the safe, "deep listening" environment of the FG.

We successfully managed in-person, dual-platform, and Zoom-only groups during this year. Each of these different ways to be in community was effective and created flexibility for those who wished to participate.

This year, some FG facilitators were able to utilize their facilitation skills to support invitational "Listening Circles," designed to gather input from the church community. Created as part of a church-wide process to renew our behavioral covenant, these circles asked participants to identify desired values and behaviors for today and the future.

### **Plans for Next Year**

We look forward to the arrival of our new minister and his views on how to evolve Fellowship Groups. While he gets settled, our plan is to "stay the course" in our approach and process. We will continue to link FG topics to church worship service themes or other relevant topics. We also hope to grow our facilitator ranks so we are prepared to conduct as many groups as are needed to satisfy the needs of those who wish to participate.

### **Group Strengths**

The group of facilitators works splendidly as a self-organizing team. With no defined "chair," members willingly contribute their skills and experience to get the work done without putting an undue burden on any one person.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to Rev. Margret O'Neall. Her active advocacy, support, participation, and facilitation has strengthened and enriched the Fellowship Group experience for both participants and facilitators.

### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Fellowship Groups are a fertile seedbed of right relations within our community. They are centered around the spiritual practice of being fully present to one another. As such, they are also one of the best places to gain a sense of trust and connection and to make lasting friendships within the congregation. By listening deeply, without debate, to the feelings and experiences of others, we learn from their wisdom, come to value them in the fullness of their humanity, and serve our community by building deeper connections as we recognize ourselves in one another.

The Fellowship Group's covenantal agreements, structure, and process are designed to be inclusive and

welcoming. Participants need not be members, or even “friends” of the church to attend our groups – they are open to the community at large.

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## **Report from the Finance Advisory Committee**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Committee Members Share Leadership Duties

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [FinanceAdvisoryCommittee@uucch.org](mailto:FinanceAdvisoryCommittee@uucch.org)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Linda Coolsen, John Nielsen, Dave Gift

**Staff Support:** Minister, Julie Rigano

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**Group Accomplishments this Year:** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

The Finance Advisory Committee’s role is to assist the Board in its oversight of the congregation’s finances. As a new committee, the Committee is in the process of organizing and determining how to best assist the Board in their oversight activities.

The Committee has met several times and has established a regular meeting schedule.

**Plans for Next Year:** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

The Committee plans to review established financial policies and provide appropriate feedback to the Board.

The Committee will also review current financial procedures with the goal of creating a comprehensive Finance Handbook of practical information job duties and procedures. The Handbook will serve as a central repository for UUCCH financial information – providing a knowledge resource for future staff and volunteers.

**Group Strengths:.** *Share group’s strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group’s leadership and succession planning.*

Finance Advisory Committee members possess a diversity of talent, including analytical ability, curiosity, creativity, and an ability to work together in service to the Board and the UUCCH community.

**Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The Finance Advisory Committee works to strengthen the financial structure of the Church by reviewing and suggesting possible improvements of UUCCH financial policy and procedures. This process of nurturing a sound financial foundation for the Church will ensure that UUCCH will have the necessary resources to become a beacon of liberal–religion in Southern New Jersey.

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## Report from Finance Team

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Team Members Share Leadership Duties (Cooperative Facilitation)

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [FinanceTeam@uucch.org](mailto:FinanceTeam@uucch.org)

**Other Committee Participants:** Lee Phillips, John Nielsen, Ken Slight, Nancy Newcomer, Dave Gift

**Staff Support:** Rev. Margret A. O’Neill, Julie Rigano

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

The Finance Team's focus continues to be maintaining UUCCH financial systems – ensuring the accuracy of financial reporting, safeguarding UUCCH financial assets, conducting monthly reviews of Church income and expenditures, and maintaining confidentiality of donor records.

Each year the Finance Team forecasts income and expenditures in order to develop a proposed future budget for Board consideration. The Team is currently working on next year’s budget proposal.

Earlier this year, Team members provided guidance and support to volunteer auditors in the conduct of a lay audit of UUCCH financial records and procedures – including the verification of Church assets and the accuracy of UUCCH financial reports.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

The Finance Team will continue to work on clarifying and documenting financial policies and procedures with the goal of creating a robust, flexible, and transparent financial system capable of evolving as our congregation grows.

The Team will work in consultation with the Finance Advisory Committee in reviewing UUCCH financial policy and procedures.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group’s strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group’s leadership and succession planning.*

Every member of the Team is kind, caring, and really nice!

The main strength of the Team is in the dedication of its members to work together in covenant for the good of the Congregation. Individual members contribute their unique skills and experience toward the Team’s overall goal of maintaining and improving our financial policy and procedures.

Our members have extensive experience in the financial life of this Church, including fundraising, stewardship, financial reporting, financial management, check writing, auditing,

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payroll, and contract review. The Team is able to apply a wealth of knowledge and experience in evaluating Church financial systems.

However, the Finance Team is not all work! Our previous chairperson summed it up best – the Finance Team is a “FUN” team!

### **Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The Finance Team provides financial management and review services to our Church community, allowing community members to focus on direct activities in furtherance of our Church’s vision and mission. Overall, Finance Team stewardship nurtures financial stability and confidence that Church financial resources will be available to accomplish UUCCH goals.

The Team strives to incorporate the spirit of our Church mission and vision statements in performing its work. Team members value each other’s diversities, sharing knowledge and experience to serve the UUCCH community. By working together, the Team does more than any single team member can do alone.

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## **Report from Flower Ministry Committee**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Heidi Bernard

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [heidi.bernard@verizon.net](mailto:heidi.bernard@verizon.net)

**Other Committee Participants:** Sylvia Barclay, Barbara Flewelling, Denise Fox, Gina Hertzig, Lynn Richter, Lisa Winkler, Linda Williams, Nancy Hillman Pam Anderson and Sharon Hardy

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### **Committee Accomplishments this Year**

- We were so lucky to have increased the membership of our committee with new members.
- Pam Anderson joined our committee and agreed to be our publicist and started her job off by creating a new pamphlet for us.
- We were able to provide personal items to display for services. We had a display of snowflakes on natural twigs. We also had a twig tree filled with hand knitted birds.
- All members of the committee took part in our Holiday display of greens, flowers, ribbons and bows and created a festival of lights along with a sleigh of wrapped gifts that included Santa Claus. It was such fun and brought out the child in all of us. Lynn took charge of decorating the outdoors for the season by using natural greens in making wreaths, garlands and plants. We hope to continue this tradition every year.
- Bob Messick worked with us by building a new pedestal as well as restoring the ones we already had. The old pedestals took a beating during the renovations. Thanks to Bob we now have brand new looking pedestals.
- We arranged the display for the Flower Communion service by providing many vases for flowers to be placed into.
- We continue and will continue to arrange flowers for those wishing to honor or remember someone special in their lives. This year we were able to help out with a holiday wedding,

several memorial services as well as a special birthday celebration that started with an 8 and ended with a 0.

- We work with the Minister and the Worship Committee in providing meaningful flower arrangements that honor the sermon topic.
- We pride ourselves by continuing to use flowers, branches and other materials from our Arboretum by bringing them inside for all of us to enjoy.

#### **Plans for Next Year**

- We will continue to provide beautiful and meaningful flower arrangements. We will continue to work with the Minister and the Worship Committee on the themes of the services.
- We will continue to raise our own funds by offering flower arrangements in honor or memory of a loved one at a Sunday service.
- We will continue to have flower workshops to increase our knowledge of flower arrangement. These workshops are open to all members of the congregation. There is a flower in all of us.

#### **Committee Strengths**

We are very fortunate and lucky to have a talented and artistic group of flower arrangers who are not afraid to express themselves. We work well together as a group as well as individuals. Your encouragement keeps us going and exploring all possibilities of flower arranging. Your kind words mean so much to us so keep them coming. It is fun to work with the different themes of all the Sunday services. This encourages us to use our ideas as a group as well as individuals to provide not only beautiful flower arrangements but to also use artifacts along with or without flowers. We love using whimsy like hearts on twigs and hand knitted birds in a cage. This makes us smile!

#### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

We believe that flowers are an integral part of ministry. We encourage all of you to join us on this spiritual journey of flower ministry.

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### **Report from Governance Advisory Committee (formerly the Policy Work Group)**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Barbara Barnett-Stewart

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [governanceadvisory@uucch.org](mailto:governanceadvisory@uucch.org)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Christine Denario, Bill Hallowell, Libby Pontillo (to 12/23)

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

In January 2024, the Board officially appointed the current members of the Policy Work Group as the Governance Advisory Committee (GAC), the overall purpose of which is to collaborate with and support the Board in the strategic, generative and fiduciary work of governance. This past year the group has:

- Continued to meet twice a month (once on our own and once with the Board) to review and update existing sections of the UUCCH Board Policy Book and draft new sections for Board input and approval.
- Made the working draft of the new Policy Book available on the Governance Documents page of the church website.
- Created working drafts of procedure handbooks to support these policies. Once these handbooks have been more fully developed, they will be made available on the church website.

- To support the Board's Conflict of Interest policy, significantly revised the accompanying Conflict of Interest procedures, to be implemented in the new church year.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

Plans for next year include:

- Help familiarize our new minister and new Board members with the work we and the Board have been doing.
- Continue our current process of meeting monthly, both as a committee and jointly with the Board, to further develop the Board Policy Book.
- Update the Board Policy Book as new and revised policies are approved by the Board.
- Bring the accompanying procedure handbooks closer to a point where they might be ready to share with the congregation.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

We are a small group, composed of members with widely varying backgrounds in different fields and different experiences at UUCCH. We bring a variety of viewpoints to the task and are committed to the health and vibrancy of the congregation.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Our group is committed to ensuring the future of the church through structures and systems of authority, responsibility, and accountability that will sustain it financially, nourish connections in our community, and make it possible for our congregation to pursue its mission in the larger world. Clarity is essential in establishing governance structures: Who is responsible? What authority do they have? How are they held accountable for their work? Clear policies and procedures will sustain our church over time, giving us greater freedom to do the important work that our mission calls us to do in the larger world.

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## Report from Human Resources Advisory Committee

Report not available at time of publication.

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## Report from Humanist UUs: *Embracing Science, Reason, and Humanist Values*

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Helen Ewan

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [humanist@uucch.org](mailto:humanist@uucch.org)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Charles Bittner, Linda Coolson, John DeMasi, Joseph DeMasi, Ed Erde, Ken Ewan, Sam Miller, Lud Pisapia, Connie Roggio, Val Schmid-Sadwin, Sue Wolfort

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

This year we continued to meet virtually on the first Tuesday of each month to discuss topics of interest, such as:

- The Separation of Church and State—A Humanist Approach

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- Humanism in Unitarian Universalism
- Concepts of Individualism and Group Identity in Unitarian Universalism
- Ideas from the book, *The Philosopher and the Wolf*
- Humanism in Africa
- Being an Atheist or Agnostic in Today's World

We continue to enjoy meeting virtually with Humanist UUs from this region and from other states. We have continued to meet virtually so that all participants can take part in our discussions on an equal basis.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

We will explore ways in which we can meet outside of regular meetings to enjoy social time together.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

We offer congregants, friends, and visitors an opportunity to explore the thread of non-theist Humanism that contributes significantly to the richness of Unitarian Universalism. We provide a safe environment where non-creedal beliefs can be examined and discussed.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

We welcome questioning minds.

We value the richness of Unitarian Universalism.

We are a beacon of liberal, non-creedal religion.

## Report from Infrastructure Advisory Committee

Report not available at time of publication.

## Report from Labyrinth Team

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Jenn Snively

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [labyrinth@uucch.org](mailto:labyrinth@uucch.org) or [Jenn1004@gmail.com](mailto:Jenn1004@gmail.com)

**Other Committee Participants:** Marilyn Masur, Paula Horton

**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

Presented in-person Labyrinth Info and Art Class in April. Encouraged individual and small group independent use of our UUCCH labyrinth. Encouraged online/virtual engagement with Veriditas and Labyrinth Society events via social media and regular email updates. Maintained UUCCH Labyrinth Facebook page and MeetUp Group to spread the word about activities and events, as well as enrich understanding of the variety of labyrinth activities, meditative styles, and beautiful works of art all over the world. Hosted World Labyrinth Day Walk as One event in partnership with Monroe Township

Sustainable Labyrinth Group on their outdoor labyrinth in Williamstown NJ. Put plans in place to host our 2024 series of Wednesday morning and Friday evening guided walks. These walks take place once a month May through November, for a total of 14 walk events offered by our Team. Guides have also assisted the greater community by leading walks in conjunction with UUCCH events and space rental events.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

Continue our work educating the UUCCH and greater community about use of the labyrinth as a spiritual and meditative tool. Continue to teach creative and informative labyrinth classes through Lifespan Faith Engagement. Work UUCCH Teams to incorporate use of the labyrinth more fully into the spiritual life, education, and rituals of our church. Our long-term goal is that whenever there is a milestone to celebrate, a transition to mark, or a loss to grieve, it will be our instinct as a community to turn to the labyrinth as a tool which can help us move mindfully through that time. We welcome ideas to continue creatively incorporating music, dance, or any other medium to our events which provide further encouragement to spiritual awareness and growth.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

Labyrinth Team members are dedicated, creative, and passionate about sharing the secrets of the labyrinth with others. This Team has shown an aptitude for working with other UUCCH groups and incorporating their concerns into our plans and programs, and at adapting our guided walks to fit the theme and needs of many groups and circumstances. This Team affords a wonderful opportunity to creatively introduce a type of spiritual practice which, while ancient, is personally new to many at UUCCH and in our greater community. We have new non-members attending nearly every event we host, having found our event (and by extension UUCCH), through our online presence.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The labyrinth itself is uniquely suited to further both the Mission and Vision Statement of UUCCH. Each time we walk a labyrinth, we gain deep insights into our own minds and hearts. In sharing those experiences, we learn about the others with whom we share our life's path. Through this spiritual tool we learn that although we seem at times to be going in different directions or at a wildly disparate pace, we are in fact all on the same path together as one. The labyrinth has the power to foster a feeling of community and of peace like few tools available to us in our hectic, modern times. These aspects increase the likelihood that those drawn to Labyrinth Team events will become members, and that new members will stay on. We are passionate about teaching others how to use this spiritual tool, inviting the greater community into our sacred space to join us in fostering understanding of ourselves and one another, and encouraging interfaith dialogue. This raises the profile of UUCCH as a beacon of liberal religion by putting us in a position to be a regional labyrinth pilgrimage site, raising awareness of UUism and our facility's rental potential for programs and events. We are actively seeking new Team Members who would like to learn more about labyrinth history, art, and meditation. Labyrinth Team membership is not required to become a walk event guide. Join us on the path!

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## **Report from the Leadership Development and Nominating Committee (LDNC)**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Sharon Hardy and Jane Phillips

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [sharon.hardy@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.hardy@gmail.com)

**Other Committee Participants:** Ron Enfield, Amelie Harris-McGeehan, Cathy Marsh, Lynda Odessey, Susan Druckenbrod, Diane Baker Hallowell, Brittany Lare, Rosemary White

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

- **LDNC continued to sponsor Leadership Council**
  - Meets every other month, on Zoom during winter; hybrid through fall and spring
  - In addition to team updates, topics were presented and discussed: the Hotchkiss model for governance, teams and committees, the Boundaries create Peace book discussions, Safety & Security
  - **Leadership Council Purpose statement:**
  - *The Leadership Council's purpose is to create collaborations and promote cohesion between the many committees and groups of UUCCH. We do this by creating partnerships and shared activities among Council groups and committees; participating in leadership development; and working to deepen the foundations of individual groups and committees.*
  - **Tagline: *Connection, Collaboration and Consistency***
  - Teams have found many new ways to support and collaborate with each other.
- Collaborated with Rev. Margret to develop and deliver a "Spring into Leadership" Service 3/24 with some members of LDNC offering reflections on their commitment and also qualities of leaders that we all have.
- LDNC updated/renewed their Covenant, Mission, Vision, Purpose and 5 year Goals in Sept-Oct 2023
- Created a framed poster listing Board and ODNC members with short bios which is now posted in the hall by the Commons
- LDNC members did their own leadership development at each meeting in the form of planned guidance from Rev. Margret, LDNC staff support, including the True Colors style assessment for team building and learning more about our new governance model (Hotchkiss).
- Rosemary White and Jane Phillips explored UUA online leadership courses and decided to pilot the first in the series: Centered Leadership Part 1: Beloved Community. Both found it of value and plan to invite congregants to take this in the fall and participate in some groups discussions about the content.
- Conducted a successful search for nominees to fill open positions: four new and one 2<sup>nd</sup> term in the LDNC and one new and two 2<sup>nd</sup> term renewals for the Board for the June elections.
- Preparing for a hybrid Annual Meeting with voting conducted both in person and on Zoom.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

- Continue to work with the Leadership Council; move from LDNC Chair to a co-chair model and set their own goals for this year.
- Begin to work closely with our new minister Rev Eric Posa
- Focus on leadership development within and for the congregation, to create bench strength for leadership and to support the agenda of the Board
- Continue to make best use of the google shared drives and google groups, and train other groups on how to use these tools. Continue to keep core documents updated each year.
- One of our goals for the future is to think in 5-year cycles instead of 1-year cycles.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

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This group works very collaboratively and has diverse skill sets and personalities. We have continued on Zoom for all meetings, with one in-person gathering in the summer, and have worked effectively together. We are seeking to develop a strong foundation for future LDNCs, to connect all areas of leadership in the church and help them work more collaboratively through the Leadership Council.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

**“Learn – Value – Serve” is the mission of the church.** LDNC plays a critical role in all three, providing opportunities for personal and leadership development, including furthering that growth through service to the church in elected office and making denomination connections to Leadership and Educational resources through UUA.org and the Central East Region.

We seek to develop leaders, through educating LDNC and LC members and engaging in the work of the church/Board, and to develop a strong slate of candidates for Board and future LDNC nominations. We also seek to highlight and support meaningful engagement opportunities for all members, primarily through the leadership council.

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## **Report from the Music Ministry Team**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Harry LaBelle

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [hlabelle@aol.com](mailto:hlabelle@aol.com)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Wm. Charlier, Ken Ewan, Stacy LaBelle

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.* COMM disbanded as a chartered committee in 2023 and transitioned to a collaborative team that is called on for project tasks. Bill Charlier has continued to be the nominal chair of the group to sign for Restricted Fund purchases. Stacy LaBelle has continued as Treasurer and choir music Librarian. She has also been tasked with making video recordings of the choir. Ken Ewan and Harry LaBelle do an annual inventory of the instruments. We approved the purchase of a tablet for the Ukulele Band. The Team assisted with facilitating the annual Love Song Sing-Along. The Team approved spending \$80 for a half-page advertisement in the concert program of the Greater South Jersey Chorus to highlight the music opportunities at UUCCH.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church*

The team will continue to provide support to the DMM by taking on non-musical administrative tasks. The music library is a focal point of support: Additions to the library (new music) will be ordered as will additional copies of existing music as needed to meet the needs of the growing number of choir members. The ordering process includes arranging for payment, ensuring that available discounts are taken, and recording the receipt of orders into the system. Team members will also pull and replace music for rehearsals and performances.

Knowledgeable team members will research and recommend new equipment purchases as requested by the DMM.

Team members will support any Special Events, such as the Love Song Sing-a-Long and concerts, that

support UU-related causes like gun violence prevention and LGBTQ+ equality.

A designated team member (currently Bill Charlie's) will monitor and sign off on submitted requests for payment.

Team members will support the DMM and the UUCCH Music Program with any other requests received.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.* Several members of the Team are professional or semi-professional musicians. Other members are trained administrative support professionals, and members are trained IT and managerial professionals. Thus, the Team is trained and qualified to support the DMM and the music program in all foreseeable needs.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The church's music program is a vital component of its ministry. It continues to attract new members and presents selections from a broadly diverse range of sources. Music offers a meaningful opportunity for spiritual growth in the congregation. Performances beyond the confines of the church illustrate UU principles and priorities in a form that is palatable for a wide range of people.

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## Report from the Pride Support Alliance

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Morgan Hurford and Terri Maloney

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [pride@uucch.org](mailto:pride@uucch.org)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** Lexi Bee, Kate Sloan, Melissa Firstenberg, Rosemary White, Armandine Kelly, Susan Druckenberger, Val Sadwin, Sam Miller, Ryan Roberts, and others

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

Sponsored receptions for Transgender Day of Remembrance Service and Story of Bones presentation. Presented Queer POC and Self-Compassion workshops. Collaborated with two Gender-Affirming Clothing Swaps. Gave Spring dance party. Also, as part of this church year, we are participating in the Haddon Twp. Pride Parade and Community Night, as well as hosting a Pride-Themed Service at the church.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

We have planned an Ally Workshop, a Pronoun Workshop, and additional social events, including a Masquerade Ball. We will also continue to hold support groups around the holidays. We would also like to hold a Gender-Affirming Clothing Swap of our own, keep watch over relevant legislative issues, and look for other ways of servicing the LGBTQIA+ community.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

The group's biggest strength at the moment is our willingness to collaborate with other teams in the interest of intersectionality. We continue to work to foster a safe space for members of the LGBTQIA+ community in the church by increasing our visibility and promoting supportive activities.

### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The group embraces diversity and works towards social justice through its activities. We welcome all who have questions and support them in their journey, either as members of the LGBTQIA+ community or as allies who wish to learn new avenues of support and tolerance.

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### **Report from the Property Committee**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Dan Nichols

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [dnichols@ragandesign.com](mailto:dnichols@ragandesign.com),  
[property@uucch.org](mailto:property@uucch.org)

**Other Regular Committee Participants:** Lee Phillips, Pam Anderson, Amélie Harris McGeehan, Rich McGeehan, Chris Sandy

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**Committee Activity this Year.** This year we had some big surprises: we discovered the 19<sup>th</sup> century water well from the Coles' farm on the embankment along the driveway between Hillside and the main building. The 36' deep x 28" diameter brick lined well was immediately and professionally filled in per the Camden County Health Department requirements. The church's John Deere garden tractor had a fire and burned down to a green and yellow hulk...thankfully Lee escaped unscathed. On the brighter side, UUCCH has enlisted the services of a professional Facilities Manager to oversee general maintenance and inspections of the buildings and their systems.

**Plans for Next Year.** Plans are in the works for continued removal or strong pruning of woody plants and viney others that are crowding the buildings. Over time river washed stone will be placed around the building perimeters to allow some breathing room for the buildings. Significant components of our now 24 year old facility are coming due for significant maintenance or replacement. Preventative maintenance initiatives are working to extend the service life of systems and reduce the incidence of surprise failures, but still all items eventually wear out and we must address them.

Property and Grounds continues to rely solely upon volunteers to mow the lawns on the UUCCH campus. We express our thanks to Lee, Chris Sandy and others who have braved heat, conflagration, bugs, and rash inducing vines to keep our lawns in check. Speaking of weeds and vines, the Arb Work Group has done a stellar job over the last year(s) in facilitating the reemergence of the woody and flowering beauty of the Arb, which had gradually become obscured by vines and other invasive plants...many thanks all around.

**Committee Strengths.** The Property Committee is bolstered by a group of committed members, each with their own areas of knowledge and talent who work well together at finding solutions to issues that arise, who come together once a month for a lively, enlightening, productive, and very often, entertaining Zoomed roundtable meeting. As is our custom we will continue our program of fix it when it breaks; mow it when it grows; pull it if it offends; shovel, blow, or plow it if it accumulates; and diagnose what confounds.

### **Report from Subcommittee Arboretum Work Group (ArbWG)**

**Subcommittee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:**

- **Points of Contact:** Rotating, [arbcomm@uucch.org](mailto:arbcomm@uucch.org)

- Chair/Leader: Different members facilitate the Arboretum Work Group meetings each quarter of the year.

**Subcommittee participants:** am Anderson, Susan Carroll, Denise Fox, Patty Lynn, Amélie and Rich McGeehan, Lynn Richter, Chris Sandy, Susan Van Alstyne

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.**

- We hired a landscaper to remove vegetation in selected areas of the church building, namely around the perimeter of Fellowship Hall; then landscape cloth and rocks were installed to minimize maintenance. Large rocks were added up the slope from Fellowship Hall to the East Terrace.
- Members of the WG added wood chips under the beauty bushes and hydrangeas, and those plants were pruned appropriately in early spring 2024.
- During part of a landscape redesign, a well was uncovered and was then decommissioned per NJ regulations.
- Patty Lynn reported on the transfer of online records from Plantsmap to the new company, Plantsoon. The QR codes are working again.
- Volunteers continue to work on areas to clear out honeysuckle and unwanted volunteer trees, as well as maintaining their areas of responsibility

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

- Revise website page
- Update plant collection policy
- Establish regular meeting schedule with possible themes/educational opportunities for meetings

**Group Strengths:**

The strength of the group is the dedication of its membership in giving their time and energy to the maintenance and improvement of our shared outdoor surroundings.

**Describe how the group’s activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

The Arboretum Work Group has worked on site steadily this year. Sometimes alone, other times in groups, we keep up the practice of visiting regularly and offering our service. The AWG welcomes others interested in joining the team, either officially or sporadically, on the grounds, as time permits. All contributions of time, energy, and encouragement are appreciated as we continue this important work that benefits both members and guests.

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**Report from the Safety and Security Team**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Larry Solow and Cheryl Dunican-Hein

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [duet1356@gmail.com](mailto:duet1356@gmail.com), [cdunhein@gmail.com](mailto:cdunhein@gmail.com)

**Other Committee Participants: Active:** Lexi Bee, Lynn Richter, Chris Sandy, Mike Williams

**Honorable mentions:** Connie Roggio, Mary Cregan, Rev. Margret O’Neill

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**Group Accomplishments This Year**

The Safety/Security Team was formed in the Spring. Rev. Margret asked for volunteers to chair and Larry and Cheryl agreed to co-chair. The summer was spent creating a safety framework that is “right-sized” for UUCCH. The 10 principles were shared at a worship service held in the Fall.

We are proud of several accomplishments including holding first aid/CPR/AED overview classes, and updating and distributing first aid kits, including creating a monthly monitoring process for those kits. We also introduced a safety announcement at the beginning of each Sunday service and identified sextons who make sure the facility is secure at the end of the day on Sunday.

We have used UUA, Office of Homeland Security, and FEMA resources to identify potential training opportunities for church leaders and members. We are looking forward to a third-party, on-site safety and security assessment to provide additional guidance.

### **Plans for Next Year**

We expect the on-site assessment to help establish our safety and security priorities for the coming year. We are also looking forward to Rev. Eric Posa's arrival and his views on church safety and security.

We are aware of several challenges facing us in the coming year. They include limited financial resources (there may be grant money available – completing the on-site assessment is a prerequisite for application for many of them), finding committed people, and addressing the “gray” areas between this team, the Congregational Relations Team, and the Caring Team.

### **Group Strengths**

Rev. Margaret's commitment, insights, and resources were instrumental in starting the team and keeping us moving throughout the year. The co-chairs work together well. Church members have responded when asked for help – Mike Williams with first aid training, Lynn, Sandy, and Lexi with first aid kit monitoring, and Connie and Mary with sharing resources from their prior involvement in this area.

### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that physical safety must be assured before other needs and wants can be addressed. Members, friends, and visitors deserve a secure, physical space in which to worship. The UU value of interdependence reinforces that it is everyone's job to keep themselves and each other safe.

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## **Annual Report from the Sanctuary Team**

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Terry Berge

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [revterranceberge@juno.com](mailto:revterranceberge@juno.com)

**Other Committee/Team/Task Force/Program Participants:** ohn Nielsen, Jennie Stone, Libby Pontillo, Nancy Newcomer, Greg Newcomer, Mary Cregan, Pam Anderson, Wendy Lucas, Barbara Flewelling, Sandy Koch, Lexi Bee, Ryan Roberts, Rich Cunliffe

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**Committee Accomplishments this Year.** To begin, Sanctuary entered its 2023-2024 program year with a change in leadership. Following Libby Pontillo's stepping down as Chair after ten years of service in that position, Terry Berge stepped in to assume the leadership position. As many of our church members will tell you, one, two, or three years in any committee/group leadership position is exhausting. Libby led Sanctuary long before the pandemic, through the pandemic (as the church learned what it meant to be “hybrid”), and afterward. This was no small task. Sanctuary is forever grateful to Libby Pontillo for her indefatigable decade of leadership. Thank you, Libby!

This year, Sanctuary had its first split program year. The first half of the year, we engaged the book *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship* by Ellen Brandenburg, which we voted on last Summer for the upcoming 2023-2024 program year. It is a wonderful resource and discussion springboard, with each chapter highlighting one of our seven Principles from seven ministers' perspectives, that also includes

worship materials (e.g. opening words, prayers, benedictions). The book inspired wonderfully deep discussions, providing a reflective look at the Principles that bind us as UU's and their meaning to us personally, and was well-received by all. The first half ended with a wonderful piece of original artwork inspired by our Seventh Principle created by Pam Anderson.

The second half of the year was termed the "eclectic" half of year, during which we engaged in various non-church related/unusual expressions of spiritual themes. These were things that might not be considered "typical" when thinking about spirituality, or even religion (e.g. a church, worship, prayer, denominations). These included a lithograph, a group member's vast personal collection of seashells, a guided meditation, and a walk in our Labyrinth. Each of the presentations included deeply personal sharing by each presenter and by those gathered.

**Plans for Next Year.** For our next program year, we will be returning to our usual format of choosing a book as our sole focus for the year and discussing it with different members leading each month's discussion. The voting for which book we will choose will take place in July 2024.

**Committee Strengths.** One of Sanctuary's greatest strengths remains its members. Those who are regular attendees and those who attend less frequently all contribute to discussions and when they present with equal amounts of energy and integrity. Deep, thoughtful, meaningful, and profound sharing and questions are a regular feature of our monthly gatherings. It is a group where community, intelligence, heart, and mindfulness combine for a monthly dose of thoughtful, provocative, and moving gatherings. All of this is possible because of our loyal and dedicated members.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

For over three decades, Sanctuary has been and remains a safe environment to learn and to teach. We learn from each another and, by extension, we learn about ourselves in the process. Many times, those who lead a session share that they learned something they didn't know during their preparation. More frequently, members learn something cognitive or about themselves in the process. We value and encourage teaching via members leading monthly gatherings. Knowledge shared and knowledge gained is the norm.

To say that diversity is a given within Sanctuary is both correct and, at times, an understatement. Our members come from diverse backgrounds, including lifelong UU's, former members of various denominations, and those relatively unchurched.

The books we chose to discuss each program year are typically under the Spiritual or Religious categories. Our discussions encompass other faiths and beliefs as we understand them as well stemming from our liberal Unitarian Universalist tradition and sensibilities. Whether we agree or disagree is not the focus. Rather, our focus is learning and growing both as a group and individually.

Our members could be described as religious, spiritual, theistic, and agnostic (and perhaps more). Past religious/spiritual experiences and personal life experiences make the richness of our group very deep, and we welcome all of it.

## Social Justice Council

Report not available at time of publication

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### Report from Environmental Team (under Social Justice Council)

**Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Sharon Hardy & Walt Nadolny

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [Sharon.hardy@gmail.com](mailto:Sharon.hardy@gmail.com) or [greenship@gmail.com](mailto:greenship@gmail.com)

**Other Committee/Team/TaskForce/Program Participants:** There are 42 on our google email list

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#### Group Accomplishments this Year

- Formed a google group and have 42 members as of 5/13/24. The group sends out action items and alerts on local environmental issues. We post the link to the NJFA EJT newsletter monthly, and promote Scott Billie's podcasts and monthly movie nights as well as NJFA's monthly Action Friday opportunities to take action together.
- Members have attended several educational forums and council/commissioner meetings to raise concerns and make comments. Presented a petition to BAN GAS POWERED LEAF BLOWERS on 5/13 to Cherry Hill Town Council.
- Collaborated to hold two services focused on the environment in Oct and April (Earth Day). Members contributed reflections, poems and songs.
- Conducted a Green Amendment Postcard campaign in conjunction with NJ Faith Action EJT. Developed mailing labels for state legislators in congregant districts and UUCCH mailed 400 cards asking legislators to co-sponsor and promote moving the GA to a vote. 1900 postcards total were provided to all UU congregations who were willing to participate.
- Led bird walk in the Arboretum for earth Day and documented 21 bird species, and plan a second walk on 5/18.
- Sharon attended the UUA Green Sanctuary 2020 orientation program
- Lisa Winkler, Carol Subolewski and a small team led two initiatives to help members recycle plastics that the town does not collect. Following a successful pilot, these are ongoing. One is that members/friends can bring #5 polypropylene plastics and put them in the blue bin at church. Second is the TREX recycle program, run in partnership with Christ Our Light. They published these weekly in the newsgram and are very much appreciated!

#### Plans for Next Year

We do not plan to hold regular meetings, but to work through posting opportunities to take action locally in person or through petitions, letters, political lobbying or other online actions.

Working closely with the EJTF of NJ Faith Action, Sharon has co-chaired the sub team to work on getting the Green Amendment passed in NJ Legislative session for 2024 or 2025. She and Walt also attend weekly strategy and planning meeting with David Pringle (environmental lobbyist) and Maya Van Rossum, founder of the movement and Delaware Riverkeepers Network. They are also active in NJFA EJT monthly meetings and support the work of other teams, particularly supporting the development of the NJ Master Energy Plan this year.

Sharon will share the Green Sanctuary goals and process with the team and with Rev Posa once he arrives, to see if this is something to engage with over the next several years. The process is much simplified, and the group has a lot of resources.

We will continue to work on the initiative to BAN gas-powered leaf blowers in Cherry Hill. Next step is to attend the Environment Board meeting 6/2/24, following bringing the petition with 70 signatures to the Town Council 5/13.

#### **Group Strengths.**

Walt has a strong background in environmental policy issues and we work closely with the NJ Faith Action EJT leadership. Sharon is maintaining admin/communications for the google group; members are invited to take action and share concerns and initiatives. The group has many long term committed activists who do post opportunities and take actions on what is shared.

#### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

We serve the mission though **“Serving Others and confronting injustice, achieving more together than each can do alone”**. We serve the vision by **“nurturing civic, social, and environmental justice.”**

We seek to make it easy to keep congregants and friends informed of issues and make taking action easy.

### **Report from Racial Justice Team (under Social Justice Council)**

**Report not available at time of publication.**

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### **Report from the Stewardship Team**

**Report not available at time of publication.**

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### **Report from the Tech CRUU**

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Larry Solow

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [duet1356@gmail.com](mailto:duet1356@gmail.com)

**Other Committee Participants: Active:** Shirley Chirico, Sarah Allred, Ron, Enfield Stacy Love, Ken Slight, Tom Snively **Honorable mentions:** Bill Warner

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#### **Group Accomplishments this Year**

We have provided sound and video support for in-person and dual-platform services held in the new Sanctuary. We have also supported other church events such as meetings, concerts, weddings, memorial services, and rentals. We have been able to respond to a variety of A/V needs in each context.

We have supported Rev. Margret, Worship Associates, and other presenters at the podium, small and large choirs, ukuleles, handbells, and instrumentalists. We've mastered the use of a variety of computers, microphones, cameras, and computer technology.

We expanded the number of Tech CrUU members! Stacy Love, Ron Enfield, and Sarah Allred continue to learn and are doing great work. This eases the burden for the other members of the CrUU. As Chair, I am thrilled to be able to attend a Sunday worship service as a participant!

We continue to learn about and expand the capabilities of our hardware and software. We added a third camera mounted on a tripod, enriching the visual experience for those viewing. We learned to incorporate showing the words to hymns as they are being performed, and showing other graphics (sometimes in split-screen with the speaker).

We successfully handled adversity along the way. New technology did not work at all, or as expected. Settings that worked one week did not the next. Our small but mighty group dealt with it all. To provide context, there are approximately 125 steps required to set up the technology for a typical Sunday service.

### **Plans for Next Year**

We look forward to the arrival of our new minister and to learning from him how we can best support his vision of the worship experience at UUCCH.

We continue to seek new members for the Tech CrUU. It takes three people each week to support a Sunday service (two in the Sanctuary and one who can be remote). We have many roles available – several can be performed from the comfort of your own home within a reasonable window of time. **Please contact Larry Solow or any member of the Tech CrUU to learn more. We need you!**

### **Group Strengths**

Our biggest strengths are teamwork, adaptability, and resilience. Everyone pitches in. Besides getting the actual work done, we look out for each other as people.

We'd like to give a special "shout-out" to Bill Warner. Bill stepped away from the Tech CrUU in December to focus on being the best Board of Trustee member he could be. We appreciate his dedication and commitment to the Tech CrUU and are happy to welcome him back if and when he chooses to return.

We also express our appreciation to Rev. Margret O'Neall. She supported the Tech CrUU in countless ways, providing financial resources, sage advice, moral support, and endless encouragement and recognition for our efforts.

### **Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

Clear audio and visual information enable UUCCH to more effectively accomplish all aspects of its mission and vision. Tech CrUU members are like plumbers. When we do our job well, no one knows we're there. So whenever there is a group of people – for a Sunday service, Social Justice event, or social gathering – we work hard to make sure the audience can take hearing and seeing clearly for granted.

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## **Report from Welcoming and Membership (W&M)**

**Report not available at time of publication.**

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## **Report from Womyn & Religion**

**Report not available at time of publication.**



# REPORTS FROM TASK FORCES

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
IN CHERRY HILL**

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## Report from the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force (GVP)

**Committee/Program Point of Contact/Chair/Leader:** Helen Ewan

**Email/contact information for POC/Chair/Leader:** [gvp@uucch.org](mailto:gvp@uucch.org)

**Other Committee Participants:** Diane Baker-Hallowell, Julia Gandy, Linda Matznick, Amelie Harris-McGeehan, Rich McGeehan, Linda Odessey, Jane Phillips, Kate Sloan, Carol Suboleski, Lisa Windler

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**Group Accomplishments this Year.** *Illustrative/important items, need not be an exhaustive list.*

In 2023-2024, the GVP Task Force:

- Sponsored a vigil with other groups in response to shootings in Lewiston, Maine, on October 25, 2023.
- Created and delivered a Sunday service on June 2, 2024 to recognize Gun Violence Awareness/Wear Orange weekend and to encourage GVP work as a faith commitment.
- Attended meetings with the UU Faith Action NJ GVP Task Force, Cease Fire NJ, and other GVP programs.
- Supported gun safety legislation in NJ to maintain our state's proactive stance on gun safety and continue to implement measures to reduce gun violence.
- Networked with GVP groups of other faith communities, as well as with March for Our Lives, Brady, and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and have educated our members about Extreme Risk Protective Orders and causes of gun violence.

**Plans for Next Year.** *Describe what significant things your group hopes to work on or accomplish for the next church year.*

- To remain a vital part of the UUCCH Social Justice Program.
- To examine ways to increase participation in GVP work among UUCCH members and friends.
- To support legislation to keep New Jerseyans safe.
- To focus our efforts on suicide, the leading cause of gun death in the U.S.
- To continue to network with like-minded organizations.

**Group Strengths.** *Share group's strengths and key opportunities; include specific tasks or topics you are inviting others to become involved in or plans to advance the group's leadership and succession planning.*

The Mission of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force is to Educate, Advocate and Legislate.

As we are a small task force, we have aligned ourselves with other like-minded groups to end gun violence. We have partnerships with CeaseFire NJ, Brady, The Coalition for Peace Action, Moms Demand Action for Gun Violence in America, March for Our Lives, and the Gun Violence Prevention Task for of UU Faith Action NJ.

GVP Task Force members are committed and action-oriented. They want to increase their knowledge about gun violence with the aim of doing something about it. Members readily help with projects aimed at raising awareness of gun safety issues and supporting gun safety legislation.

**Describe how the group's activities connect to our church's vision and mission:**

GVP Task Force members learn about the causes of gun violence and possible solutions to this social justice issue. We nurture social justice by bearing witness to the great harm resulting from

gun violence and working to support gun safety legislation as well as other solutions to this problem. We encourage GVP work as a faith commitment.

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