

# UNITARIAN SOCIETY *of* HARTFORD



09.08.2013  
*Ingathering*

01.12.2014  
*Spandrels*

02.09.2014  
*Chocolate*

02.23.2014  
*Landscapes of Ministry*

04.20.2014  
*Easter*

## ANNUAL REPORT

*For Fiscal Year July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014*

Photo taken by Dan Burns, March 2014 (danburnsphotos.com). Order of Service cover art with date and service theme from this past fiscal year.



**Annual Meeting**  
of the  
**Unitarian Society of Hartford**  
May 18, 2014 - 11:45 a.m.

AGENDA

Call the Meeting to Order & Welcome - **Bill LaPorte-Bryan, President**

Opening Words - **Rev. Dave Johnson**

Approval of the Minutes from the May 19, 2013 Annual Meeting

Approval of the Minutes from the May 4, 2014 Congregational Meeting

State of the Unitarian Society of Hartford:

Report from the President - **Bill LaPorte-Bryan**

Report from the Secretary - **Virginia de Lima**

Report from the Treasurer - **Louise Schmoll**

Report from the Endowment - **Jim Venneman**

Presentation of the Proposed Slate for the Board - **Peter Meny**

Bill LaPorte-Bryan - *President*

Virginia de Lima - *President-Elect*

Louise Schmoll - *Treasurer*

Patrice Fitzgerald - *Secretary*

John Clapp - *Chair - Administration*

Christina Davies - *Chair - Community Within*

Mike Winterfield - *Chair - Social Justice*

Ginny Allen - *Chair - Spiritual Life*

Congregational Vote on Proposed Slate

Other Business

Meeting Adjourned - **Bill LaPorte-Bryan**

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## Proposed Slate for the Board

*Presented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee - Peter Meny, Chair  
Members: John Clapp, Rachel Gibson, Carol Sexton*

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce the slate of candidates for election at the Annual Meeting on May 18, 2014. This year all Board openings are unopposed. We are fortunate to have such talented, qualified, and committed members willing to assume leadership responsibilities. The candidates' names and bios are shown below. We are grateful to the entire Board for their service to the congregation this year, and send a special thanks to Diana Heymann and Joe Rubin, who are completing their service. The Chair also wishes to thank the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee for their hard work.

Bill LaPorte-Bryan - *President*  
Virginia de Lima - *President-Elect*  
Louise Schmoll - *Treasurer*  
Patrice Fitzgerald - *Secretary*

John Clapp - *Chair - Administration*  
Christina Davies - *Chair - Community Within*  
Mike Winterfield - *Chair - Social Justice*  
Ginny Allen - *Chair - Spiritual Life*

**Bill LaPorte-Bryan** (*President, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2015*) first visited USH in 2003 when Bart Bracken, his son-in-law was President to be followed in that position by his daughter, Rebecca Bryan. Since then he has been the team leader of the Welcome Team, Chair of the Membership Sub-Council, Chair of the Council on Community Within, Chair of the Council on Social Justice, Chair of the Council on Spiritual Life, President-Elect and was appointed by the Board in September 2013 to complete Peter Olguin's term as President. Bill has enjoyed serving on many USH Boards which were led by six different Presidents.

Bill is retired from a lengthy career with IBM which was highlighted by three years as a teacher in the Executive Development Center and the hour he spent talking with Nelson Mandela. He currently volunteers as a fourth grade math tutor at Noah Webster School in Hartford.

Bill wants to continue giving something back to USH, the church that has given so much to him and his extended family, including his wife Ann whom he met at Fellowship Hour the first time he visited the Meeting House, and his step-children, Zaike and Zuri.

**Virginia de Lima** (*President-Elect, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2015*) has been active at USH since 1998, when she noticed the sign in front of "that interesting building" one Sunday morning and, on the spur of the moment, drove in and was captivated by Jon Luopa's service. Before that, she did not even know there was a faith called UU! Virginia recently retired from a long career with the U.S. Geological Survey where she served as a scientist and manager in several offices in New England, most recently as Director of the USGS Connecticut Water Science Center. As a life-long environmentalist (her father made her part of the "park department" picking up road-side trash, starting around age 6), she is active with the Green Sanctuary Sub-Council. USH has become an important part of her life and she looks forward to making a contribution and giving back.

**Louise Schmoll** (*Treasurer, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2016*) has called USH home for over 40 years. It has provided her with endless moments of happiness, pleasure and fulfillment. In particular, her years with the choir and the Women's Alliance have been a constant asset to her life. Louise has served as Clerk of the Council in the 1970's and on the Board of Trustees for nine years. She also chaired the successful Capital Campaign in the 1990's. Her Alliance duties included many years as treasurer, so Louise felt she could fill the Treasurer spot successfully. (And her University of Wisconsin degree was in statistics and business). Her husband, Ralph, is a retired physician and has taken over much of the gardening and half of the cooking. Their two children are grown and live out of state so Louise is left with time for other ventures and the time has been right to take on this her role in our Society as Treasurer.

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## Proposed Slate for the Board

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**Patrice Fitzgerald** (*Secretary, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2015*) has been a member of USH since 1996. She has been Chair of the Performing Arts Sub-Council, active with the Music Committee, and served on the Search Committee for Rev. Dave. For three years she was a paid section leader/soloist for the choir, and currently volunteers as a singer. She chaired the Festival of the Season once and helped plan the coffeehouse for several years, and has coordinated and spoken at several unique worship services.

She was recently president of The Schubert Club of Fairfield County, a musical club with an endowment of about \$200,000. As a member for two years of the Unitarian Church in Westport, active in three choirs, and the Chair of their Odyssey Program (equivalent to our Programs for Adults and Families), Patrice was in a position to watch the way things were done at another church. Her background includes a law degree and fifteen years practicing intellectual property law. She is currently a writer and runs a micro press. Patrice thinks this is an exciting time to be a part of USH and she is looking forward with great anticipation to the next steps in our journey together.

**John Clapp** (*Chair - Administration, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2016*) has been a member of the Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH) since 1992. His two boys (Jeremy and Corey) went through USH's religious education program in the 1990's and have gone onto independent adult lives. John's recent participation in USH is through the Dharma group, ushering, Nominating Committee, Finance Sub-Council and occasional ad hoc committee work.

Outside of USH he served as Director of UCONN's Center for Real Estate and Urban Economic Studies from 2009 – 2012. He is currently a fellow of the Weimer School for Advanced Studies in West Palm Beach, where he serves on the School's governing body. He is Chair of the Shared Parenting Council of Connecticut and he has been actively involved in the shared parenting movement for 15 years.

He is a Professor of Finance and Real Estate at UConn. He lives in West Hartford with his wife Jane and enjoys close proximity with his two year old granddaughter, Eva and her parents.

**Christina Davies** (*Chair - Community Within, Term: 07.01.2014 - 06.30.2016*) has been a member since late 2008, affiliating with USH after a dozen years at another local UU congregation. Her primary involvement here was with the choir as it was constituted prior to 2011. Tina has participated in: several SGMs; the book group; Great Decisions/Discussions; the search for an Interim Music Director in 2011; served on the Nominating Committee; was Board Secretary; is wrapping up her duties on the current Ministerial Search Committee.

She graduated from Bucknell University when it was still affordable; then received her MA in Economics from Trinity and MSW from UCONN. Her work life may be viewed as a journey through downward mobility — starting with employee benefits underwriting, administration, and management, she moved into flight instruction, corporate aviation, non-profit program directorships, teaching community college economics, producing video programs for non-profit groups, charter flying, pet sitting, and school bus driving. Tina has served on the boards of UU Rowe Camp and Conference Center (8+ years: treasurer, finance chair, VP), her condominium association (7+ years: at-large, VP, and president), and the Welsh Society of Western New England (4 years: treasurer). Tina lives in Avon with her 5 cats, and enjoys reading, quilting, music, and travel.

**Mike Winterfield** (*Chair - Social Justice, Term: 07.01.2013 - 06.30.2015*) has been a USH member for 18 years. Mike has had a lifelong passion for Social Justice. He has immersed himself into a broad range of Social Justice activities since he retired from the corporate world in 2003. He is especially concerned about the growing gap between the rich and poor and the continued oppression of so many minority groups.

Mike has actively participated in the new Social Justice initiatives that USH has taken on during the last church year. These include: a Climate Stewardship Summit spearheaded by our Green Sanctuary Sub-Council; the Tree of Life Conference held in our Meeting House; Race Dialogues.

Mike's previous USH leadership roles focused on Stewardship. He was proud to Co-Chair the 2012 – 2013 Pledge Drive and Chair the 2013 – 2014 Drive.

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## Proposed Slate for the Board

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**Ginny Allen** (*Chair - Spiritual Life, Term: 07.01.2013 - 06.30.2015*) has been a member of USH since 2009. During this time, she has served on the Worship Arts, Music and Membership Sub-Councils. She has also had more limited association with the Performing Arts and Adult Programs Sub-Councils. She came to USH having spent her entire previous life with deep involvement in the Quaker faith. She appreciates the common philosophies that UUs and Quakers share and has achieved a comfort level with the structure and organization at USH.

Ginny is a musician (violin and viola), a bi-coastal grandmother (6 grandchildren between CA and RI), a retired nurse, a good friend, and someone who loves to laugh. She feels honored to be filling the position of Spiritual Life chair and sees it as an opportunity for her continuing growth while, at the same time, giving back to the USH community.

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 19, 2013

Peter Olguin, President-Elect, called the meeting to order at 11:40 am. He read the following statement from President Peter Meny, who is at his daughter Olivia's graduation from Clark University today:

*Good morning. Today Deb and I are at Olivia's graduation at Clark University so Peter Olguin has generously agreed to fill in for me at this Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford. As you can see by the Annual Report, this has been an active and eventful year at USH. Our staff, the Board, and numerous volunteers have done an exceptional job of providing inspiring worship services, stimulating educational programs, supportive pastoral care, and meaningful outreach to the community beyond our walls. In addition, we have laid the groundwork to find our next settled minister by examining and updating our policies and procedures, filling key staff positions, and selecting our Ministerial Search Committee.*

*I want to thank our staff; Rev. Dave, Brian Mullen, Rayla Mattson, Douglas-Jayd Burn, Helen David, John Bengston, and Dan Olguin for their service to the Society. We are blessed to have these outstanding individuals working on our behalf.*

*I am also grateful to all the members and friends who have volunteered countless hours and shared their skills and resources, financial and otherwise, to do good works for our Society.*

*Finally, as I finish my term as Board President June 30, I express my deepest appreciation to our Board members, President-Elect Peter Olguin, Treasurer Louise Schmoll, Secretary Christina Davies, and Council Chairs Diana Heymann, Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Joe Rubin, and Ed Savage. Their vision, commitment, energy, and wisdom have been steady throughout this year. Although I am looking forward to having a little more free time as I step down from the Board, I will miss the camaraderie and sense of purpose we shared this year.*

Rev. Dave Johnson furnished opening words of blessing and benediction.

Minutes from the 5/20/2012 Annual Meeting were moved, seconded, and approved unanimously; the motion passed.

Minutes from the 4/28/2013 Congregational Meeting were moved, seconded, and approved unanimously; the motion passed.

The President (via Peter Olguin) highlighted points of the President's report: farewell to Katie Lee Crane and welcome to Dave Johnson, both of whom are huge blessings to us, Dave particularly has been working with us to help us present ourselves well as we look for a settled minister next year; Board priorities, family-friendly strategy; reviewing and updating human resources policies, publications, procedures, and practices; enhancing our technological capabilities; emphasizing transparency in operations; characterized USH as "The Little Congregation that Could" — it is amazing how much we accomplish with the number of people we have.

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## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 19, 2013

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**Secretary Report** — *Christina Davies*. The official membership, as reported to the UUA, currently stands at 166 members. This year has seen about as many new members as departing ones.

**Treasurer Report** — *Louise Schmoll*. She spoke of deciding, after 45 years, to do some board service... what better than a 40+ year member with an empty nest and a husband who cooks? Louise thanks Brian Mullen who has everything ready when it needs to be, and has an enormous institutional memory. She emphasizes, from a financial standpoint, the need to know, with some certainty, what our income will be (just like a household), and the pledge process through Stewardship is the center of that.

**Endowment** — *Al Herzog*. Al credits Louise Schmoll and Jane Christensen for identifying and clarifying the track of individual bequests over the years.

**Audit** — *Jim Venneman and Carol Sexton*. They thank Louise and Brian who make the auditing job much easier. For the first time this year, the audit team used an audit guide recommended by UUA; no material problems were discovered. One facet is making sure our insurance needs, which for churches tend to be somewhat unusual, are covered.

Peter Olguin then turned to the process of introducing the prospective slate of officers and council members. He explained that candidates would be introduced but not voted on today: to conform with constitutional guidelines, this year it is necessary to defer the vote, and this vote will occur on June 9, 2013.

Cedric Woods, chair of the Nominating Committee, listed the slate. He noted that one reason for the 1-month interval (between publicizing the slate, and the vote on that slate) is to provide opportunity for petitioning candidates to present themselves.

Hence, there was a call for a motion to recess to June 9, 2013 at 11:30 am The recess was so moved, seconded, & passed, and the meeting recessed as described.

### June 9, 2013 Continuation

The 2013 Annual Meeting was called out of recess by Peter Meny, President, at 11:30 am on Sunday, June 9, 2013.

The President noted that congregants, having had time to review the Annual Report since its distribution, might have questions, and asked if anyone did have specific questions on any Annual Report contents. No responses were elicited.

Peter Meny also noted that questions on finances and the proposed budget be deferred to Sunday, June 23, 2013 when Treasurer Louise Scholl would be available in a "Fourth Sunday Under the Stairs" meet-the-board session. At that point the 2013-2014 budget is anticipated to have been adopted, and specific areas could be addressed and explained.

The slate of candidates for USH Board of Directors, 2013-2014, as listed in the Notice of Annual Meeting, was presented. No petitioning candidates had come forth, and a motion was made and seconded to adopt the slate as it stood. A voice vote affirming the slate and election of candidates produced a decisive "yea"; there were no "no"s or abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Davies, Secretary

## Minutes of the Congregational Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 4, 2014

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 11:45 am.

**One purpose of the meeting:** to call Cathy and Heather Rion Starr as called, settled co-ministers. "Settled" means no predetermined time to their end with us. Last as long as they and we want it to. Search committee asked to stand and enthusiastically thanked.

Motion to vote was made and seconded.  
No discussion.

Ann Stowe and Carolyn Halsted played the last movement of Caesar Franck's violin sonata during the voting and counting of ballots.

Announcements, while waiting for ballots to be counted: Annual Meeting in two weeks; next week, Annual Report will be available; stewardship drive received \$260,000 (median increase of 11%); May 17, 2014 new play reading by Jacques Lamarre, "The Binder".

**Results:** Yes 120; No 1; Abstain 3.

Motion has passed!  
Congregation asked to stay in their seats for just a minute.

Heather, Cathy, and Robin (their daughter) returned to sanctuary to great acclaim.  
Dave Johnson accompanied them.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia de Lima, Secretary

### President's Report

*Bill LaPorte-Bryan*

Thanks to the efforts of our wonderful Search Committee, 2013 – 2014 was a year capped off by the calling of Cathy and Heather Rion Starr to be our settled Co-Ministers.

It took a lot of hard work and determination by many people in our congregation to get there, but we could not have done it without a lot of help from many others. Let me mention a few. Rev. Dave Johnson, our Interim Minister, guided us through the process with his experience and wisdom, punctuated by inspiring worship services Sunday after Sunday. The UUA Transitions Office was at our side all along the way. The staff of our Clara Barton District watched over us with their keen, caring eyes and helped us find the right path. And then there were the devoted, hard-working, capable people on our own staff ... Brian Mullen, Rayla Mattson, Douglas-Jayd Burn, John Bengtson, Briana Bittel, Helen David, Dominique Bourgeois, Taylor Braidich, Yamel Fernandez, Kevin Girouard, and Crystal Cruz. Everybody did their part to get us where we are today.

The excitement and joy abounding in the Meeting House is heart-warming for me and seeing it in the eyes and faces of so many others just completes the picture. It was a long, tough slog, but we made it and, dare I say it, we deserve it! It is time to smell the roses.

The Board started the year knowing that there would be changes, as there always are, but soon found out that they were happening faster than we had expected. In September 2013, Peter Olguin, our elected President, wisely decided to step down to focus on health issues, and when I was appointed to replace him it meant that we ended up spending the entire year without a President-Elect.

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## President's Report

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A few months later Rich Charbonneau decided to step down, also wisely, to focus on other aspects of his busy life and we appointed Virginia de Lima to replace him. Significant changes indeed, but we managed to get through them smoothly.

Early on, the Board established three priorities that focused and guided our deliberations the entire year: Supporting the Search Committee in its mission; supporting congregation membership growth and seeking increased diversity in our membership; supporting the Sub-Councils and Committees to ensure they have the resources to do their work.

While those priorities kept the Board on track, I have known for a long time that the "real work" of planning and running the programs, events and activities that make up the life-blood of USH is done by the volunteers from our congregation who are members of the Committees and Sub-Councils working with the members of our paid staff ... in other words, by YOU who are reading these words. So please take a bow and pat yourself on the back. You did it! Without your dedication and commitment it could not have happened. I and everyone else in our Society are very grateful for what you have done.

Now ... on to the future! Let us see what happens and enjoy it as it unfolds. Whatever it brings, it will be fun.

## Interim Minister's Report

*Rev. Dave Johnson*

**Overview: Sauntering Along the Yellow-Brick Road.** I am writing this summary from my Kansas home – the land of Dorothy and Toto, wizards and wicked witches, scarecrows and tin-men and cowardly lions. *The Wizard of Oz* wins my nomination as the best foundational story / myth representing Unitarian Universalist values. The story brings the good news that conscientious effort and a little help from our friends will pay off in the end, and faith is its own reward. The most important thing to have faith in is our selves. When Dorothy and her friends receive their hearts' desire, it is essentially a do-it-yourself operation. Their joy emerges not beyond the walls of the world, but within our world – and close to home.

Where is "home"? Home is not in fanciful Lands of Oz where all things are possible. Home is in ordinary places such as Kansas and Connecticut -- where never yet has a camel squeezed through the eye of a needle. And what of wizards who promise to save our world? Such folks are like the little bald man behind the screen. He is not much of a wizard. His eloquence may touch our hearts and illumine our darkness. Although our lives may remain largely untransformed, he is wizard enough to set us dreaming of a world more poignant than grief. At times we may believe that it is only a dream. After all, we are practical and down to earth, dwelling in earthy places such as Kansas and Connecticut. But contingency and grace DO appear, usually without our predicting or deserving. And they are the pacemakers of transformation. In the wise words of Garrison Keillor: *Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted, but getting what you have -- which, once you have it, you may be smart enough to see is what you would have wanted -- had you known.*

I will list a few highlights of our shared ministries during 2013-2014:

**Consultations with USH Board of Directors.** I have met regularly with the Board President and with the Board Executive Committee to review current activities of each of the four Councils, and to prioritize information-items and action-items for upcoming Board meetings.

**Consultations with UUA Staff.** I have communicated with and met personally with the UUA Transitions Director (Keith Kron), CBD District Executive (Sue Phillips), and director of Ministries and Faith Development (Sarah Lammert) to review challenges / opportunities for strengthening USH congregational life. On-site consultation visits of UUA staff (Sue and Keith) during the fall of 2013 were compelling, inspiring, and re-assuring that USH is on track to attract and retain high-caliber ministerial leadership in the future.

**Consultations with USH Transition Team.** Regular dinner meetings and extended conversations with Carolyn Cartland, John Stowe, Mike Roy, and Marye Gail Harrison have been essential in providing navigational reference points and a solid basis for setting priorities. The entire service on June 1, 2014 will be led by the Transition Team, and will consider the challenges of leaving well: Why are closures in a minister-congregation relationship so difficult, and yet so necessary?

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## Interim Minister's Report

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**Consultations with USH Ministerial Search Committee.** I have met with the Ministerial Search Committee and responded to their questions about their work. Particular emphasis has been upon trust-building and the relational dimensions of ministry. Ministerial Settlement Representative Rev. Georganne Greene has provided on-site consultations in support of the timely completion of the tasks associated with ministerial search.

**Program Planning for Sunday worship services, 2013-2014.** Preparing and leading high quality Sunday worship has remained a top priority. Music Director, RE Director, and Worship Associates continue to play a key role in worship leadership.

**Staff Team Development and Human Resources.** Completed Annual Performance Reviews. Convened Staff Team regularly; developed Staff Team's Covenant of Right Relations. Prepared updated / signed Employment Agreements for all employees. Continuing to update Job Descriptions for all employees. Revision of USH Human Resources Handbook remains a priority.

**UUA District-Sponsored Workshops, fall 2013.** September 21, 2013: Gathering of the Boards (Manchester CT). October 5 & 6, 2013: Adaptive Leadership 202 (Rev. John Millsbaugh). November 8 & 9, 2013: Theology for Our Secular Age / Faith Out Loud (Rev. Galen Guengerich). December 7, 2013: Transforming Congregational Conflict (Dr. Eben Weitzman).

### Workshops for Congregational and Staff Team Development

**Monday Morning Workshop / Seminar Series, "The Balancing Act" (10:30 am to 12:00 noon):** Began in September 2013 and continued through May 2014. Topics included: Surviving or Thriving; Listening to Experience; Theology for a Secular Age; Imagineering Soul; Beyond Categorical Thinking; The Balancing Act; Breakthrough Congregations; The Necessity of Virtue.

**Wednesday Mid-Day Workshop for USH staff, "I Need More Adroit" (12 noon to 1:00 pm):** Six Wednesdays, February through April of 2014; based on all-day consultation by Rabbi Edwin Friedman with Unitarian Universalist leaders.

**Sunday Mid-Day Workshop Series, "The Best of What We Know" (11:45 am to 1:15 pm):** Twelve Sundays, early January through mid-April 2014. Topics included: The Deep History of a Living Planet, and Our Fascination with Mars; Building Scientific Knowledge: The Unifying Theory of Plate Tectonics; Our Earth's Climate: Back to the Future; Climate Change, Organized Denialism, and Political Brinkmanship; The Unifying Theory of Evolution: Fossils, Genes, & Mousetraps, Part I; Evolution: Fossils, Genes, and Mousetraps, Part II; Science and Religion Theology for Our Secular Age: A Process-Relational Vision.

**The Road Ahead.** In my Annual Report for 2012-2013 I suggested one topic that will merit thoughtful discernment on the road ahead. It remains compelling this week as Cathy and Heather engage the activities of candidating week, and the congregation anticipates the upcoming vote to call them as your settled co-ministers. My question is: How shall USH wisely utilize rapidly-evolving electronic communications so as to foster *links that matter*?

This topic is, of course, an adaptive challenge rather than a technical problem. Every congregation must ask the question: "How shall we be **IN** this world, yet not **OF** the world?" How shall we engage and wisely employ social media and other communication resources so as to further our mission, open our doors and hearts, and continue to make our values real in central Connecticut? How shall we foster relationships that endure amidst a culture wherein relationships are initiated (or terminated) at the speed of light – with a tap on a smart-phone? Avalanches of Tweets, Instagrams, and Facebook-posts inundate us in a chaotic mélange of facts and rumors, thoughtful reflection and snap judgments, appreciations and bullying, spiritual depth and bland superficiality. The genie is out of the bottle, and it wields a double-edged sword -- both of opportunity, and of danger. Wherein shall true wisdom emerge? How shall healthy limits emerge? I encourage you to be part of the conversations.

This week I begin the search for my next interim ministry opportunity. Just as with the search for settled ministers, my search will take as long as needed in order to find a good match. I look forward to the coming weeks of intense conversations / negotiations as the next chapters unfold for all of us.

My thanks for the privilege of serving you during these engaging, transformative times. All good wishes on the road ahead.

## Music Director's Report

*Douglas-Jayd Burn*

As this fiscal year comes to a close, it is with joy and excitement that I wish you all a farewell to begin my doctoral studies at the University of Arizona and take the next step in my journey as a musician. Change has surrounded us and is subtly moving time forward like an ever rolling stream...it is at times like these that we should remember what it has taken to bring such excitement!

Our success stories range from two Music Sundays which involved collaboration with the Universalist Church of West Hartford Choir and their director Ted Hine and tackling the majestic literature of Benjamin Britten and Franz Schubert, presenting the work of our *third* Composer-in-Residence Andrey Stolyarov whose music varies from mystical to triumphant, and hosting the Clara Barton District Choral Festival for the second year in a row! It is truly amazing to see how far the program has come in such a short span of time and what we have been able to accomplish.

During the past two and a half years, I have had a wide diversity of experiences in services, rehearsals and meetings that have given me a perspective on responsibility. Responsibility takes trust, trust is built through consistency, consistency is built through dedication which is ultimately a choice. While I rejoice and congratulate all for the accomplishments of USH's Music Program, I will never forget those who stood their ground in the darkest of times and it is them who have helped bring this program to the soaring heights it has so recently enjoyed. I do not wish to dwell in all that can be improved (since after all, there are committees for that sort of thing!), but I must acknowledge the responsibility of those who join us in the pews week after week and are transported by the music.

On any "normal" Sunday (that is, non-Music Sundays and any time that is not Christmas or Easter), there is an average of sixteen minutes of keyboard music (including the prelude, hymns and postlude) and six to eight minutes of choral music *if* the Chancel Choir sings during the offertory which totals to about twenty-five minutes of music in the service! It is perhaps easy to gloss over this fact during the service due to the incredible sensitivity of those on the chancel that make the transitions seamless, but this is an impressive feat considering that the music is different *every week*.

Perhaps what is even more daunting is the factor of time consuming practice and rehearsal...the Chancel Choir meets from 7 pm to 9 pm every Wednesday night and on Sunday mornings from 9:20 - 10 am, a total of two and a half hours a week to prepare (and polish) the anthems and offertories each week! In the grand scheme of things and in consideration of the difficulty of excellent repertoire, this is no time at all. However, it is through enthusiasm, laughter and dedication that the aspects of ensemble and teamwork come into play to make this short amount of time a goldmine of productivity.

I have been blessed with an excellent memory and an aptitude for sight-reading and the experiences that have allowed me to share my diverse repertoire as a pianist, organist and a conductor; priceless are these experiences as I put my professional skills to work and prepare music each week. Like all musicians, I put several hours of practice into my music as it is my *job*. The preparation of music is not trivial and is taxing on physical, mental and emotional energies of the artist whether that person sits in the first violin section of the Boston Symphony or if they are a Baritone Choral Scholar at USH. Each Sunday dawns and the final product is presented in service: from Schubert, Britten, the Beatles, Billy Joel, Rogers and Hammerstein, Gershwin, Ives, Hindemith, Bach and compositions by our Composer-in-Residence, diversity and flexibility are demonstrated with sensitivity to the services each week.

It is here that I must be direct in telling you that it is the responsibility of *all* USH congregants to preserve the quality of our Music Program. The hours spent are all naught without the resources that compensate our Choral Scholars, tunings, guest musicians and any additional sheet music that are provided by *you*. It is through your generosity and enthusiasm towards the Music Program that we are able to present quality music each Sunday and urge you to remember this especially at this time of transition. Music is the thread that ties the basis of our services and provides the seamless nature of transition and it should not be taken for granted given how much it takes to not only prepare this music, but to prepare it well.

I hope you will consider my thoughts as you transition into an exciting time with your settled ministers and your new music director. Quality, regardless what field of focus, requires support and commitment from those who desire its consistency and it is you, the congregation, that allow the music to sing at USH. You have my deepest gratitude for an exciting two years that have taught me much and brought me joy. My best wishes as we continue our journeys!

## **Secretary's Report**

*Virginia de Lima*

As of February 1, 2014, the membership of the Unitarian Society of Hartford as reported to the UUA was 145. During the past twelve months we joyfully accepted the following individuals into membership: Edith Barrett; Virginia de Lima; Jeff Howard; Larry Lunden; Judy Sullivan. Over the last twelve months, these individuals, dear to the hearts of our Society, passed away: Adrian Bronk; John Passalacqua, Emil Salzberger; Joan Sereda; Ser Seskevich; Chris Smith; Jeanette Smith. Additionally, the last fiscal year saw the following individuals transition from membership at USH: Jeff Blanchette; Donna Ferber; Karl Peters; Doug Williams; Robert Wysocki.

## **Treasurer's Report**

*Louise Schmoll*

This fiscal year has been a challenge and to reach June 30, 2014 in good shape it will take great effort by all of us. We have had additional expenses for our Search Committee but, so far, we have not had to use Endowment funds. Relocation and installation expenses will have to be allocated from our Endowment.

For our Society budget to come close to its goal it will take 100% effort from all of us to fulfill our commitment for the current fiscal year. Even with that, the budget was balanced only with the availability of unspent money from prior years. That will soon run out and we will be faced with a new reality.

Our day to day number crunching is done by our business manager, Brian Mullen. He keeps us very well informed and is always ready to help, not only with finances, but in any way asked. His eleven plus years with us make him our senior staff member and he is an invaluable asset.

Our stewardship drive was very successful even though our membership number has dropped to 145. We are currently working on a 2014-2015 budget which will include a small salary increase for our wonderful staff. It is long overdue.

Our "fun"draining efforts should be greatly increased. Except for the Performing Arts Group, we have not had any major events to enrich our coffers. With the anonymous matching grant, it is imperative we have such an event next year and the Finance Sub-Council is planning a silent auction in October 2014 so please say yes when you are asked to help. And begin now to decide what items you can contribute. Although the matching offer is for up to \$20,000 per year, we have not come close to that figure. We should redouble our efforts for maximum benefit.

Thanks to the Finance Sub-Council for helping keep us all on track and to all of you for your continued efforts for the Society.

## **Audit Committee**

*Submitted by Bill LaPorte-Bryan*

The Board did not appoint an Audit Committee this fiscal year. The Board believes our financial processes are sound. As the primary people (Treasurer & Business Manager) involved in carrying out these processes has not changed from the previous fiscal year, the Board opted not to undergo the task of completing an internal audit. The Board's current plan is to put in place an Audit Committee for next fiscal year.

## **Endowment Committee**

*Jim Venneman, Chair*

*Members: Ellen Erway, Jean Groothuis, David Newton, Ed Stockton*

**Our Mission:** is to be responsible for the prudent investment of Endowment Funds. It takes into consideration the current needs of the Society, preservation of the worth of permanent funds, the original restrictions on gifts and bequests, the economic climate and the outlook for the future.

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## Endowment Committee

*continued*

**Accomplishments:** The Endowment had a balance of \$1,012,825 at December 31, 2013. This represents an increase of \$90,093 during the calendar year. It contributed \$47,203 to the support of USH during 2013. The overall rate-of-return was 13.5%. Our Endowment is managed by TFC, a professional money management firm. As of 2013 year-end, 32% was in fixed income investments and 68% in equities, which is a typical allocation for a conservatively managed fund designed to provide long-term income with reasonable preservation of capital.

With the help of Louise Schmoll, Treasurer, a formal policy was developed to ensure that income from special purpose funds will be available each year to USH as designated by the donors.

USH was asked by the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB), a young UU congregation, to hold a mortgage on their first church building. This is an example of "Doing Well By Doing Good." USH will get a higher rate-of-return on a part of its fixed income assets, and UUMSB will be paying less than what the bank charges. This loan will be less than 5% of the Endowment, which minimizes risk to USH.

The Board asked the Endowment Committee to review a suggestion from the Green Sanctuary Sub-Council to evaluate the effect and possible ramifications of disposing of investments in fossil fuel companies. The review was not completed when this report was written.

**Plans for Next Year:** The Endowment Committee will continue to review the investment advisor and investments to ensure they are appropriate to meet the needs of the Society. Last year the Endowment Committee authorized a Planned Giving Initiative from USH members to grow the endowment. The Endowment Committee suggested we should aim for an endowment of \$3-5 million with endowment income to be used for USH capital improvements and/or social justice project (s). This initiative will be continued.

Since 1925, 45 individuals/families have given a total of \$758,662 to the USH Endowment. Their generous gifts have greatly benefited USH and are remembered here. We thank these people for their foresight and generosity which help us all today.

Donor	Established	Amount	Donor	Established	Amount
Frank S. Sumner	1925	\$5000	Rev. Gilbert C. Meyer	1980	\$500
Charles N. Robinson	1927	\$200	Renata Armstrong	1980	\$2,000
Charles H. Field	1928	\$5,000	Yvonne d'Elvert Pilpel	1981	\$1,000
Katherine Cornwall Husband	1934	\$4,423	Alan L. Hart MD & Edna Ruddick Hart	1982	\$5,000
Marion B. Pepion	1939	\$1,000	Jane Lyman Smith	1983	\$500
Estelle Loveland Noerr	1939	\$1,000	Arthur G. Engstrom	1987	\$2,000
William H. Honiss	1941	\$9,000	Ruth Dieffenbach	1992	\$264,489
D. S. Boas Family	1942	\$13,575	Helen L. Herrick	1992	\$19,940
Grace A. Bissell	1948	\$9,281	Helen L. Herrick	1994	\$16,315
Mabel T. Koch	1950	\$8,065	Virginia Delaney	1994	\$35,028
Maude Hayes	1953	\$2,061	Freeman Meyer	1996	\$6,765
Frank Lester	1958	\$250	Ann Bailey	1997	\$1,893
Alice Bacon	1958	\$13,582	Sigmund Aune	1997	\$115,406

*continued*

## Endowment Committee

*continued*

Donor	Established	Amount	Donor	Established	Amount
Roy S. Mason	1961	\$1,000	Toni Thomas	2000	\$20,000
Hortense Hahn Guett & Monroe Guett	1963	\$40,780	Frances Davenport	2000	\$1,000
Gladys Crane	1967	\$9,313	Verona Cook	2000	\$10,000
Paul Dorweiler	1970	\$7,200	Lois Stowe	2000	\$46,151
William Harris	1972	\$789	David Schur	2001	\$24,320
Edith M. Arborio	1974	\$5,000	Joyce E. (Jones) Bauer	2011	\$3,500
Freida R. Smith	1977	\$505	Helen M. Skinner	2012	\$26,000
Frances C. Altenberg	1980	\$500	Charles Huntington	2013	\$14,521
Helen C. Borden	1980	\$500	Rosie Rindfleisch	2014	\$4,310

## Council on Administration

### Building & Grounds Sub-Council

*Edward Sax, Stuart Spence, Co-Chairs*

*Members: Roy Cook, Vincent Hall, Peter Magistri, Peter Meny, David Newton, Ron Sexton, Jim Venneman  
Friends of B & G: Carol Sexton, Bill Westervelt. Staff: John Bengtson, Briana Bittel, Kevin Girouard*

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

**Accomplishments:** Since the last Annual Report the air conditioning equipment has been put into good use for Fellowship Hall and the Chapel. There have been several work days purposed to clean up and maintain the gardens and grounds in general, and improve various Meeting House spaces. These efforts continue with an emphasis on the public spaces including the Library, David's Den and Servetus. A new BOSE portable sound system was acquired and has been used successfully, particularly in Fellowship Hall. In order to fully utilize the Chapel air conditioning, various pews removed from the Chapel in recent years were returned increasing the seating capacity accordingly.

Efforts to document procedures for opening and closing the building, preparing the Sanctuary sound system for use, and detailing the Sunday Sexton duties continued during the year. The south side hose attachment valve was replaced and unfortunately the work created a new leak in the downstairs Men's restroom when we have significant rain. Efforts to correct this situation are planned for the spring/summer season of 2014.

A good deal of thought and some experimentation has gone into efforts to improve sanctuary lighting. We expect this effort to begin to yield results during the summer of 2014. A new emergency system to catch roof water dripping into the Sanctuary was developed and is stored in standby mode. In addition, installation of a sound loop to help those who use hearing aids is under discussion as well as replacement of our somewhat antiquated phone system.

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

*continued*

We said goodbye with thanks to Dan Olguin, our Sunday Sexton of several years, and welcomed Crystal Cruz, as our new one. B & G extends its thanks to volunteers and employees who helped in many different ways during the year including attendance at workdays scheduled for spring and fall and at various ad hoc times.

**Plans for Next Year:** Recognizing our building is without mortgage, but requiring maintenance given its age, we intend to continue efforts to repair, refurbish, and improve the building and grounds.

## **Church Office**

*Brian Mullen, Business Manager*

This past fiscal year represented one of staff stability. Rev. Dave began a regular schedule of all staff meetings and guided us through the exercise of crafting a Staff Covenant (which was read at each of these gatherings). I worked with Rev. Dave and the Human Resources Sub-Council (Greg Nickett & Ron Sexton) on updating job descriptions, and hiring letters. Performance reviews were completed after several years of them not being done. I would like to personally thank Rev. Dave for his efforts in unifying our staff team, one thing that had been missing for a few years. I believe the staff is now in an excellent position to welcome our new Chiefs of Staff, the Revs. Cathy & Heather Rion Starr.

This past year at the Meeting House office (my eleventh) flew by! I continue to: staff the office; maintain the office computers and supplies; interact with building maintenance vendors; support the Stewardship Sub-Council (canvass mailings and record keeping); support the Treasurer and Finance Sub-Council (monthly budget review documents, giving statements, budget preparation); support the Performing Arts Sub-Council (programs and tickets); maintain the membership database (with the help of Administrative Assistant Helen David and Membership Sub-Council Chair Brian Harvey); layout and preparation of the weekly order of service and insert (with the help of Sarah Gilligan and Esther McKone); paying the bills; generating payroll; interacting with non-USH renters of the building; maintaining the online USH calendar (click on the link from our homepage); editing and layout of this Annual Report.

Helen David continues to work hard on Membership Sub-Council tasks. She is in the office on Monday & Wednesday. A thank you to Rachel Gibson, who during the fall of 2013, while Helen was overseas due to the birth of a grandchild, picked up most of Helen's tasks. Brian Harvey, as Chair of the Membership Sub-Council and active participant on the Communications Sub-Council, spends a good deal of time in the Society office. He is a regular participant in our all staff meetings and is a wizard with EXCEL! Brian has been directly responsible for the creation of the Member & Friends Photo Directory, which now includes organizational graphics (who does what) and a great map of our Neighborhood Networks. Thank you Brian for ALL that you do.

I am looking forward to helping our new ministry team get acclimated to life at USH. It is going to be time to upgrade a computer or two in the Society office. The phone system needs to be evaluated for its continued usefulness in comparison to current technologies.

Thank you for your continued support and appreciation of my efforts here at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. A special thank you to Treasurer Louise Schmoll, who has agreed to a second term. We work well together and I am pleased that she will to continue and very appreciative of her support.

## Human Resources Sub-Council

*Greg Nickett, Chair*

*Members: Ron Sexton*

**Mission:** To assist the board and minister(s) with personnel administration and to ensure compliance with state and federal employment laws and regulations.

**Accomplishments:** Assisted with preparation of the agreements for staff members; reviewing and updating USH Human Resources Policies; provided advice with respect to completion of USH employee 2013 performance evaluations and job descriptions.

**Plans for Next Year:** Provide assistance as requested for onboarding settled ministers. Continue work updating USH Human Resources Policies and job descriptions. Acquire a third person to serve on the USH Human Resources Sub-Council.

## Stewardship Sub-Council

*Peter Meny, Chair*

*Members: Richard Groothuis, Deb Meny, Tom Richardson, Joe Rubin, Mike Winterfield*

**Mission:** To raise the funds necessary to operate USH programs, maintain our property, and compensate our staff.

**Accomplishments:** The goal of this year's Stewardship campaign was to bring a positive, upbeat message emphasizing the many positives at our Society and the bright possibilities for its future. Towards this end we declared March to be a 'Month of Thanks' to acknowledge our members and friends for the ways in which they are stewards of USH.

The Stewardship Sub-Council hosted four after-service gatherings to recognize people for their financial support, volunteer efforts, and other forms of community-building and outreach. We asked people what they felt passionate about in regards to USH and to share one or two initiatives they would like to see next year. We also stressed how church finances (and thus our 2014-15 Stewardship drive) would set a tone for our new settled minister(s).

While we did not specify a financial target for our pledge campaign, our hope was to raise as much as last year (\$250,000). Many people felt this would be difficult due to the demographics of our society including the deaths or relocation of several key donors.

We are pleased to announce that as of May 1, 2014 we have received \$257,690 in pledges from 111 members and friends. This represents an 11% increase from this group of pledgers in comparison to last year. Approximately two-thirds of this number increased their pledge. We anticipate we will receive more pledges so that our final total may reach \$265,000.

For those of you interested in a more detailed breakdown here are the numbers: the mean (average) pledge was \$2,322; the median (mid-point of all pledgers) was \$1,350; the pledges of the top quartile (28 members) ranged from \$3,000-20,000 amounting to \$162,700 or 62% of the total; the pledges of the second quartile (28 members) ranged from \$1,350-3,000 amounting to \$56,930 or 22% of the total; the pledges of the third quartile (28 members) ranged from \$600-1,250 amounting to \$27,025 or 10% of the total; the pledges of the fourth quartile (27 members) ranged from \$150-600 amounting to \$11,035 or 6% of the total.

A big thank you and hug to all for making this year's pledge drive a success!

**Plans for Next Year:** We must substantially increase our overall pledges to meet ongoing Budget needs and fund new initiatives. The primary component is more members; the second component is higher pledging from those who are with us.

Stewardship's role is largely limited to the second component. As discussed above, we have achieved an extraordinary average pledge level. However, we must recognize that USH is increasingly top-heavy with its pledging. The top 25 pledges represent about 60% of total pledges. This is problematic. We must develop new tools to encourage more members to contribute at the UUA fair share guidelines of 2% to 5% of income.

## Council on Community Within

### Art Committee

*Sara Sturges, Chair*

*Members: Roy Cook*

The Meeting House, home of the Unitarian Society of Hartford, is a unique, striking building paying homage to the distant Berkshire Hills. The interior with its paneled ambulatory walls offers an inviting space for visiting artists to exhibit their work.

The aim of the Arts Committee is to bring artists of a variety of styles and materials to enhance the building aesthetically and possibly educate, even challenge, the congregation.

Artists are drawn from all over Connecticut and neighboring states. Local artists, some lesser known, are given an opportunity to reach a larger audience. Publicized exhibits serve to introduce and welcome visitors to the Meeting House and congregation.

### Caring Network Sub-Council

*David Newton, Janice Newton, Co-Chairs*

*Members: Briana Bittel, Carolyn Cartland, Kayla Costenoble, Ron Friedman, Nita Hansen*

*Ginny Hedrick, Diana Heymann, Rev. Dave Johnson, Nancy Reed*

*Tom Reed, Ellie Revill, Laurie Rollins, Marilyn Stockton, Sherry Williams*

**Mission:** To provide, as needed, comfort and assistance, facilitated by the generosity of volunteers, to those within the Unitarian Society of Hartford community.

**Accomplishments:** We have joined with Rev. Dave to encourage the maintenance of the confidential “Final Desires” file. The form is available on the USH website under “Policy Docs and Forms” from the Administration pull-down menu. We have provided meals, rides to appointments, services and events at the Meeting House and help with errands. We continue to maintain our network of frequent contacts (visits and phone calls) with members who are unable to join us at the Meeting House for services and other activities. We provide support to our members and friends in times of need through phone calls, notes and visits. We are extremely grateful for the visits and calls made by Rev. Dave. This year we had two Memorial Services. The Comfort Shawl Knitters continue to knit shawls. This year we distributed 6 shawls for a total of 248 since the Comfort Shawl Ministry was established in 2002. We would like to have more knitters. Please remember to stop by the table next to the Programs Table during Fellowship Hour where you can send a card to a member or friend. If the table is not out, ask us! Help us keep in touch with members and friends of our community.

**Plans for Next Year:** We will continue to keep in touch with those who are no longer able to attend our services and activities and to provide support in times of need. We will evaluate the need for a Contact Information Card, and “Aging Gracefully” pamphlets, and how to make available to members and friends information that might be of value to them in planning for their future needs. We look forward to working with our new Minister(s) to make our community a caring community for all.

### Communications Sub-Council

*David Newton, Chair*

*Members: Roy Cook, Kayla Costenoble, Helen David, Tina Davies, Rachel Gibson, Sarah Gilligan, Brian Harvey,*

*Brian Mullen, Janice Newton, Nancy Reed, Tom Reed, Ed Savage, Bev Spence*

**Mission:** To enhance communications among groups, members and friends within USH, and to foster effective communication with external groups and individuals in the greater Hartford community.

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## Communications Sub-Council

*continued*

**Accomplishments:** During this fiscal year, we have continued to see Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH) members, friends and outside potential visitors as individuals with different preferred communication gateways to their minds. Accordingly, we post information on a sandwich board on Bloomfield Avenue, in the Meeting House lobby and Fellowship Hall on kiosks and bulletin boards in poster or other format, or as TV loops. We issue the USH E-News, a weekly webpage devoted to USH business, and inform people of its publication by email message most Wednesday evenings. We also send email messages as necessary carrying some information best not published on the web.

The USH E-News weekly web page is normally published Wednesday evening; by Friday, we publish a *Happenings* PDF on the web linked to the home page. Similar information is posted on the downstairs bulletin boards and a summary published as a one-sheet insert in the Sunday *Order of Service*. Service information on the web is also condensed as necessary and placed on the USH Facebook page, in the Hartford Courant and in the West Hartford Patch. Following a Sunday service, most services in audio format become available on the password-protected area of the web in MP3 format as well as becoming available on CD to those placing orders. In addition, written sermons are published on the web and summarized in a column in the USH E-News published the following week. A calendar of all USH activities is maintained and constantly updated on the web. We continue to publish and distribute about 30 paper copies of the USH E-News for those with no computer resources and receive positive feedback for these efforts.

The web itself is a repository of policy and history. USH attitudes about open government have resulted in prompt publication on the web of financial documents, Board Meeting minutes and articles about Board activities. No complaints have been received about access to the details of governance and financial matters in recent years, and we believe that we are exemplary in the UUA congregations for the transparency of our documented collaboration.

To enhance internal communication, a number of listservs, or restricted email groups, are maintained for various groups with common interests. We do our very best to support the Social Justice, Performing Arts and Non-Violent Communications efforts by promoting their public events in the local media.

Our wifi system makes web resources, including all the USH records on the web, immediately available to computers and smart phones in the Meeting House and elsewhere.

Perhaps of most importance, a chain of voluntary cooperators has been established to report and pass along various event notices and stories about activities through submission to editor(s), and subsequent production and distribution, truly a team effort.

This year we completed a survey of our consumers and in general found them satisfied with their chosen communication channel for informing themselves of USH activities.

USH is closely monitoring and enhancing welcoming activity as visitors arrive, including welcoming letters, and email solicitation of interest in receiving the weekly notice of newsletter web publication.

**Plans for Next Year:** These efforts will continue and evolve as our collective age-ability level changes during the next year. We will continue to emphasize electronic communications because of their “green” nature and low cost when compared to paper and stamps.

## Festival of the Season

*Submitted by: A. J. Garbalosa*

**Mission:** The Festival of Season is a great community event in many ways. First off it is so diverse that it takes a community of people to plan and staff it. It then helps to bind the Meeting House community with a fun seasonal evening. Lastly we have moved it to reach out to the local community by advertising and inviting new people to come and enjoy the evening. As one evening does so much and touches so many it also includes all seven of our principles in a fun, educational, and tradition making way.

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## Festival of the Season

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**Accomplishments:** Festival of the Season had ninety-five paying participants. This does not include those let in for free from the Village or others. Nor does it include the workers who did not have to pay. We made \$495 at the door and \$560 in the craft fair. We had expenses of \$450 for the musicians and helpers.

**Plans for Next Year:** We have plans to meet again in June 2014 to have a tarp cleaning and organizing party. This is when we will start looking into more ways to promote volunteer participation in addition to the reaching out we have already done. We are changing the time of the event in 2014 to start at 2 pm and supper at 5 pm. This is an attempt to make the event more available to families with younger children and older people who do not want to be driving so late. We are also combining the coffee house and service to a more cabaret type event with musicians and poems and reflections. More planning for this is coming.

## Membership Sub-Council

*Brian Harvey, Chair*

*Members: Ginny Allen, Helen David, Ron Friedman, Zean Gassmann, Rachel Gibson, Sarah Gilligan  
Richard Groothuis, Diana Heymann, Esther McKone, Bruce Robbins, Sherry Williams*

**Mission:** to promote the growth of the Society by: providing a congregation-wide culture of warmth and welcome to all visitors, newcomers and members; finding ways to make each person who seeks out and enters the Meeting House feel welcome and respected; providing information and orientation to visitors and new members; facilitating involvement of newcomers in Society activities.

**Accomplishments:**

**WELCOME VOLUNTEERS:** In the last year, about fifty USH members have taken part in our Sunday Welcoming effort, serving as ushers, greeters, and hosts at the Welcome and Visitors Tables. Helen David takes care of the weekly “reminders” and “thank you’s,” with help from Rachel Gibson when Helen is away. Helen and Brian Harvey produced the quarterly schedule of these assignments. We receive many comments from visitors and newcomers regarding how welcome they feel attending our worship services.

**NEWCOMER OUTREACH:** Rev. Johnson, Brian Mullen, Helen David, Brian Harvey and Rayla Mattson meet weekly to discuss our contacts with visitors and newcomers. Helen David sends an email welcome to each visitor who signs the guest register. Rev. Johnson also sends a hand-written note and additional follow-up. The contact information is stored in our members and guests database.

Esther McKone works as an office volunteer, and among other things, produces the laminated nametags for those who request them, as well as for our new members.

We conduct monthly First Sunday Connections sessions following the service, which visitors are encouraged to attend and which provide them with an opportunity to have small group conversation and learn more about USH. Membership Sub-Council hosts have facilitated these sessions. Rev. Johnson also hosted “Meet the Minister” and “The Best of What We Know” series on Sundays after the worship service. Both of these sessions are targeted to newcomers.

We work with the Communications Sub-Council to use the big screen TV in Fellowship Hall and rotating kiosks in the lobby and Fellowship Hall to disseminate information to visitors about the church activities and the Path to Membership.

We conducted a winter series on membership called UU, USH & You. This program consists of three 90-minute sessions that introduce the principles and history of our congregation and larger faith community. This workshop also provides newcomers with opportunities to meet church leaders and learn more about activities that would appeal to them.

We started a mailing program to introduce our church to area home and condo buyers. We sent out mailings in July, September and November of 2013, and in February of 2014 and will continue to review our messages and response rate.

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## Membership Sub-Council

*continued*

We produce USH brochures that are available for visitors, both upstairs and down. These include the following: *Welcome to USH; About the Meeting House; Becoming Connected at USH; Becoming a Member; Small Group Ministry; Programs for Children and Youth*; newly added *Religious Education FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)*. Our Welcome Table hosts pass out *Newcomer Welcome Packs* that contain information about our church and becoming a member.

Numerous pamphlets published by the UUA are also available, and Laurie Rollins has worked with the Membership Sub-Council to keep the Lobby and Fellowship Hall display racks stocked and relevant.

A number of students and families from Noah Webster MicroSociety Magnet School and children from The Village for Families and Children attended the *Festival of the Season* as our invited guests.

Virginia de Lima, Jeff Howard & Edith Barrett, Larry Lunden, Joan & John Nicoll-Senft, and Judy Sullivan have become church members during the last year.

**ASSIMILATION and COMMUNITY BUILDING:** We have worked with other USH Sub-Councils and Committees to have newcomers mix with established members in church-wide events. These activities included the Festival of the Season in December 2013, pancake breakfasts in November 2013 and March 2014, and the annual church picnic in June 2014.

We have expanded the annual potluck in May 2014 to include newcomers, in addition to those members who have joined in the last five years. This continues to be a popular event.

We worked in cooperation with the Communications Sub-Council to produce our updated color USH Member & Friends Photo Directory in January of 2014. The directory also included an organizational diagram of all Sub-Councils, Board and Staff information and Neighborhood Network Map. This directory was published in both electronic and hardcopy versions.

**Plans for Next year:** Work with our new minister(s) to develop initiatives for attracting newcomers, especially families and young adults. Continue our welcoming and outreach efforts and assimilation opportunities. Work with Communications Sub-Council to find additional ways to “get the word out” about USH. Monitor our new home and condo buyers mailing initiative. Attend UUA seminars, GA sessions in Providence RI, and webinars related to membership growth.

## Performing Arts Sub-Council

*Patrice Fitzgerald, Chair*

*Members: Mattie Banzhaf, Tina Davies, Nancy Mandly  
Mary-Anne Mulholland, Ed Savage, Edith Savage, Carol Sexton*

**Mission:** To plan for a variety of performance events throughout the year; provide opportunities for people from the wider community to come into the Meeting House; welcome those new to the Meeting House into our building and make available to them, if desired, information about USH; plan carefully so as to raise money for USH or at least to break even so that no expenses are incurred; send music out into the universe.

**Accomplishments:** It has been an exciting but challenging year for the Performing Arts Sub-Council. We have accomplished much in terms of hosting wonderful events, welcoming folks into our beautiful building, and making money in the process. However, the weather was difficult, causing the cancellation of two events, and there have been other unexpected changes to our original plans for the series.

As of this point in the season, we have earned more than \$4,000. We anticipate that the 2013-2014 proceeds will reach approximately \$5,000, which will be matched by an anonymous donor to make a grand total of \$10,000 contributed to the General Fund of USH.

Highlights from the Performing Arts events this season included the following popular performances: Holly Near and emma’s revolution – a robust crowd welcomed this internationally famous singer and social activist to our Meeting House; former USH soprano soloist Katie and her husband John Jesensky, a composer and our former Assistant Music Director, brought in fans and friends for a successful January 2014 concert that was both musically impressive and good for the

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## Performing Arts Sub-Council

*continued*

bottom line; USH Music Director Douglas-Jayd Burn gave us another spectacular evening of violin and piano pieces.

**STILL TO COME IN THIS YEAR'S LINEUP:** The first reading of a brand-new comedy by rising playwright and USH friend Jacques Lamarre, to be followed by a talk-back with the entire cast and a reception; The Clara Barton District UU Choir Festival, which involves seven UU choirs and ninety voices, with proceeds going to local charities (an event we also hosted last year).

**Plans for Next Year:** Next year the Society will have a new minister(s), new Music Director, and largely new Board. Therefore, rather than lining up a full series by August or September, we intend to remain strategically nimble. This allows us to entertain opportunities that come up during the year and respond to the new energy brought in by these pivotal folks.

In light also of several major events that will be happening next year, including the anticipated installation of the new settled minister(s), the Fiftieth anniversary celebration of our iconic building, and a possible community-wide auction, the Performing Arts Sub-Council will probably program a lighter season of concerts for next year. This will keep us available to support or add musical or other dimensions to these ambitious activities.

We look forward to exploring the possibilities.

## Unitarian Alliance Ministry to Women

*The UAMW is steered by a cabinet of 6-8 women who meet bi monthly to plan activities. They rotate convening duties and contact other women to help with programs, as needed.*

**Mission:** Minister to women in the Unitarian Society of Hartford, by creating opportunities to promote friendship and sisterhood, particularly among mature women, and to provide programs that will strengthen ties within the Society and the Community. The Alliance has a history of over 100 years at USH.

**Accomplishments:** Unlike most Sub-Councils, we get no funds from the Society. Most of our activities are self-funded, but, following the tradition of our foremother, the Women's Alliance, we do hold bake sales, generally twice a year. Once a year we ask interested women for contributions to fund our activities and our Educational Grant program. We maintain a group membership in the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation to support their programs.

During this past year we enjoyed a June 2013 picnic at a beach in West Hartford. We held our annual baking day to prepare for the December 2013 bake sale. We also organized the following educational and social programs: a Christmas party potluck (combined with the Lunch Bunch) with gifts for Interval House (facility for battered women); Sunday afternoon programs, with popcorn and lemonade, open to all USH men and women. Sunday programs this season featured USH members and friends. Marilyn and Ed Stockton shared impressions from their recent trip to Cuba, just-opened for educational group travel. Virginia de Lima, along with a Hartford Habitat organizer, spoke about her experiences working with the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Center in Haiti. Bill Shoemaker attracted another crowd for his talk on "Psychopaths in Your Neighborhood". Reverend Dave used his usual stories, quotes, humor, and music to entertain and inform about religious rhetoric. A special Mother's Day Tea at Senexet House in Woodstock, CT, is planned as a May 2014 afternoon outing; a traditional English tea will be offered, with a special exhibit of antique gowns and accessories used by vintage ballroom dancers.

We plan once again to send flowers to Alliance members who, because of infirmities, can no longer attend our gatherings. We contributed to the mailing costs of the printed copies of the weekly USH E-News, since many of the recipients are former active Alliance members. We will again award Educational Grant(s) in June 2014, small sums of money to women pursuing additional education beyond high school; these grants have been awarded for more than 40 years. We continue to support memorial receptions and also make small donations to worthy causes focusing on women's issues. We also contribute \$100 annually to the Society, more than the suggested 5 % of our profits.

**Plans for Next Year:** Events stressing "sisterhood" will always be on our agenda, and we plan to continue our traditional annual events and programs. Next fall we will resume our annual retreat weekend at Senexet. We encourage all women to take part in our activities, and we would love to hear your ideas for new exciting events. Thanks for the continued support!

## **Council on Social Justice**

*Mike Winterfield, Chair*

*Members: EqUual Access, Green Sanctuary, Information and Advocacy, Interweave  
Israel / Palestine Peacemaking, Noah Webster / Rawson School Tutoring Project, Race Dialogues  
Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative, The Village for Families and Children*

**Mission:** To actively engage USH Members and Friends in the various Social Justice branches: Service; Education; Witness; Advocacy. We place an equal emphasis on Social Justice both within and outside the walls of the Meeting House.

**Accomplishments:** We are very proud of the new leadership initiatives that USH has taken on during the last church year. At the same time, we are very pleased with our ongoing activities in the various Sub-Councils.

Our Green Sanctuary team is a recognized leader in the growing Climate Change movement. GS members Jeff Howard and Peter Magistri helped to establish the Planning Group for a highly successful November 2013 Climate Stewardship Summit at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church; about 200 folks attended. During the last year, GS conducted two services and a Sunday afternoon film series on climate change and divestment. GS members are also leading two Great Decision discussions this spring. GS (in concert with the Chair of Social Justice) has proposed to the Endowment Committee and Board of Directors that USH consider divesting our Endowment Fund from fossil fuel holdings.

USH hosted a deeply connective Tree of Life Conference. Close to 200 folks filled Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary for our October 28, 2013 Conference: "Voices of Conscience and Resistance from Israel and Palestine". Mike Winterfield traveled to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in March 2014 and is sharing his experiences with a number of religious communities.

Gloria Francesca Mengual is facilitating a brand new Race Dialogues initiative. The first set of dialogues involving about twelve participants has begun. The six session process begins with sharing personal stories, then moves into an analysis of the outcomes of racism, and then calls for us to develop ideas for action and change. As Gloria says, we need to "start small", but there is a lot of shared enthusiasm about our embarking on this new journey. The Race Dialogues are jointly sponsored by Social Justice and Non-Violent Communications. We are now embarking on a brand new Race Dialogues program. The Race Dialogues have three integrated segments: sharing our personal stories, gaining an understanding of institutional racism, and developing ideas for action and change.

As another new initiative, Ed Savage has been participating in the ongoing meetings of the Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative. UANC provides a range of family services. UANC also works with the Upper Albany Revitalization Zone to consider appropriate community redevelopment.

An ad-hoc EqUual Access and Building & Grounds committee is making great headway in having some areas of the building looped for enhanced sound reception for those with hearing issues.

Joanne Orlando has been building strong relations with our good neighbors at The Village for Families and Children. Rebekah Castagno set up a table during a Fellowship Hour to explain their wide range of services. A number of USH folks have signed up for educational tours at The Village. We also raised over \$1,000 during the summer of 2013 for The Village's annual Backpack and School Uniform program.

Diana Heymann and Brian Harvey are coordinating our USH tutoring efforts at Noah Webster and Rawson Schools. We have five current tutors. Many other Greater Hartford Area congregations are providing tutors as well. The overall tutoring program falls under the leadership of the Christian Activities Council in Hartford.

We are grateful to Rev. Dave Johnson for his commitment to Social Justice services. Rev. Dave and Bill LaPorte-Bryan led a joint Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela commemoration. Cedric Woods and Ed Savage led an important service to honor our Native American culture.

This year's Good Neighbor Offerings have included: Noah Webster and Rawson School Tutoring Project; True Colors; My Sisters' Place; Ebony Horsewomen; Horace Bushnell Food Pantry; Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network; Upper Albany Neighborhood Collective; Zizzo House.

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## Council on Social Justice

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We are also thankful to John Bengtson and the Youth Group for continuing to make soup for Church Street Eats, for helping with our pancake breakfasts, and for their annual sleep-out (which includes fundraising for My Sisters' Place).

And, last but not least, we want to recognize Deb Meny, Jane Christensen, and Laurie Rollins for continuing to deliver the donated food items to the Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry.

**Plans for Next Year:** A top priority is to encourage more USH folks to participate in a specific Social Justice activity that resonates with them. We are eager to expand our Race Dialogues and link up with other congregations (e.g., an Upper Albany church of color). We would like to work with our new co-ministers to rejuvenate our Interweave activities.

## Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

*Bev Prager, Chair*

*Members: Brianna Bittel, Virginia de Lima, Jeff Howard, Peter Magistri, Laurie Rollins  
Ed Sax, Mary Sherwin, Mike Winterfield*

**Mission:** To help our congregation live in harmony with and create a healthier world environment by spearheading activities that will educate and engender greater awareness of our impact on the environment and how we can bring forth positive change in personal lifestyle choices, congregational activities and the broader community.

**Accomplishments:** After hosting an open meeting in the spring of 2013 with 350.org to bring together people in the area who wanted to act on climate change, a group was formed to organize a Climate Stewardship Summit. Jeff Howard and Peter Magistri played prominent organizing roles. About 200 people attended the highly successful November 2013 conference at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church. Leaders from the various faith traditions in the area discussed the moral imperative to act on the climate change threat upon us. A second summit is in the works and actively involves two of our Green Sanctuary members.

We conducted two USH services this year: one on Climate Change in November 2013 that included "eight ways you can help fight climate change", as well as our annual Earth Day Service in April 2014 with guest speaker Michael Prager on "Sustainability".

In December 2013 we ran the fifth annual re-gifting sale to help reuse like-new items and raise money for green initiatives at USH.

We proposed to the Endowment Committee and Board of Directors that USH consider divesting our Endowment Fund from fossil fuel companies. Jeff published a series of articles that explained the concept and reasoning behind the Divestment Movement in E-News. We also conducted a Sunday afternoon film series and discussion on Climate Change and Divestment as we continued to promote education to the larger congregation regarding these issues. Peter and Jeff are leading two Great Decision discussions on Climate Change during the spring of 2014.

Throughout the year we continued to offer to the congregation during Fellowship Hour, green cleaning and paper products at our Green Table, as well as frequent submissions to E-News to provide further education and support of green living.

**Plans for Next Year:** We plan to continue to provide education and support of congregants to understand the importance of action regarding climate change and the connection to our Seventh UU principle - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## **Race Dialogues at USH: Step One Toward Dialogues With Diverse Congregations in Hartford**

*Gloria Francesca Mengual, Facilitator*

*Joint Team Support: Diana Heymann (Non-Violent Communication), Mike Winterfield (Social Justice)*

How does the Unitarian Society of Hartford fit within community in this increasingly diverse twenty-first century world? Past race dialogues that USH participated in ended with the last conversation. Rather than talk for the sake of talk, the race dialogues that started during the spring of 2014 hope to serve as a starting point to reaching out to other, more diverse houses of worship for joint dialogues and collaborative action.

Dialogue-to-change efforts such as the race dialogues at USH embody an approach to community change that brings different kinds of people together around a public concern, and through agreed-upon guidelines, create a space that enables constructive, respectful conversation. A group of ten to twelve participants meets over a period of weeks, with people developing trusting relationships, as well as a shared understanding of the issue under discussion.

Using discussion materials which set up a framework for the conversation, facilitators guide the discussion, making room for all voices. People begin by sharing their personal stories during the first two sessions, then move to an analysis of the outcomes of racism. Following this examination of racism from many points of view, participants then consider possible approaches to addressing existing challenges, and ultimately, develop ideas for action and change. The key to success in taking action: start small and over time, build upon your actions.

USH recognizes that racial equity issues must be addressed beyond the individual level -- from an institutional perspective - if we as a country are going to move toward systemic change. USH's internal dialogue will serve as the start point as we prepare to reach out into Hartford to continue the race dialogues, with the goal of working together with city residents and institutions to address racial inequities.

## **Tree of Life: Israel /Palestine Peacemaking**

*Mike Winterfield, Coordinator*

*Supporters: Ron Friedman, Ed Savage*

**Mission:** Established by the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme in 2002. TOLEF conducts conferences and leads annual trips to Israel and Palestine to raise consciousness about the growing oppression of the Palestinians and seek an appropriate path to justice for both Israelis and Palestinians.

**Accomplishments:** Close to 200 folks (including forty-five USH Members and Friends) filled Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary for our October 28, 2013 Conference: "Voices of Conscience & Resistance from Israel & Palestine". We were one of sixteen Tree of Life venues ranging from Portland, ME to Atlanta, GA, and to Milwaukie, OR. All of our speakers (two Israelis and two Palestinians) were profiles in courage and tireless advocates for non-violent transformation.

Mike and Jane Winterfield were two of the forty-one interfaith participants in the March 2014 Tree of Life trip to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Mike is sharing the shattering images from his trip with a number of church groups.

Twenty-seven USH members have already added their signatures to TOLEF's "A Petition for a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine".

**Plans for Next Year:** USH is helping to identify future venues for the fall of 2014 TOLEF conferences. We will continue to share our experiences with the Greater Hartford interfaith community. We will also continue our petition work and we will work with other TOLEF folks to schedule meetings with our legislators.

Mike will also link up with UUJME (Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East). There are opportunities to make Israel/Palestine Peacemaking a UUA Study Issue.

## **The Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative**

*Submitted by: Ed Savage*

*CHARTING A POOR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE SINCE 1991:* In the Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative (UANC) there have been business people and homeowners, a nurse and a police officer, people who live on Social Security and formerly, the president of Hartford's Board of Education. There is the owner of a body repair shop, who is also coach and mentor to the 360 teen-agers of the Martin Luther King Soccer League, small business owners, and landlords. Together they are following an ambitious plan developed with the support of the Ford Foundation to restore one of Hartford's poorest neighborhoods, Upper Albany, and improve life for the 10,000 people who live there.

While many of the Foundation's renewal programs vanished with shifting funding priorities, UANC has marched on, albeit at a much reduced pace.

The UANC benefits the community by providing a variety of services, including family assistance activities, free income tax return preparation, opportunities for volunteering, introductory computer training for seniors, participation in the Knox Foundation's Weed and Seed program, numerous community building events, a Thanksgiving food program, and a Christmas gift program. It maintains a training facility at 1229 Albany Avenue, and collaborates with the Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone in commenting on Hartford's city plans for the area.

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

*Joanne Orlando, Liaison*

The goal of our program is to develop a relationship between the Unitarian Society of Hartford and The Village for Families and Children; given their proximity to us they truly are our neighbors.

During the past year, we raised over \$1,000 to help fund The Village Backpack and Uniform program. Children from The Village enjoyed our Festival of Season in December 2013. On Sunday March 30, 2014, Rebekah Castagno, Development Coordinator at The Village for Families and Children, came to the Meeting House. She had brochures explaining the programs The Village offers, was available to answer questions and had sign up sheets for tours of The Village. To date five people have either taken or signed up for tours. Plans are underway to include children from The Village in our annual Society picnic in June 2014.

Next year, we hope to continue our work with The Village. The Village receives most of its funding from the Department of Children and Families. We plan on holding the backpack and uniform fund raiser again during the summer of 2014, as well as some other possible fund raising. We will continue to invite the children from The Village to our celebrations.

The new goal for the coming year is to develop a deeper relationship. We hope that some of our members take the opportunity to volunteer at The Village, either on a long term basis or a number of short term events. Volunteering gives us the opportunity to get to know The Village. Going to The Village, as well as their kids coming to our events, creates a more reciprocal relationship which we hope will continue to grow.

## **Council on Spiritual Life**

*Ginny Allen, Chair*

*Members: Nina Elgo (RE), Kathy Ferguson (Chancel Arts)*

*Margaret Leicach (Worship Arts), Esther McKone (SGM), Mary-Anne Mulholland (Music)*

*Janice Newton (Programs for Adults & Families), Betsy Olquin (RE), Bill Shoemaker (SGM), Bev Spence (SGM)*

**Mission:** To support and coordinate the work of the Sub-Councils and Committees enhancing the spiritual life of every member, friend and visitor to the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

**Accomplishments:** The words that come to mind in describing this past year are collaboration, expansion, growth and transparency. *Collaboration* was foremost, as Worship Arts, Music, and Religious Education, worked together to plan and

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## Council on Spiritual Life

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provide unified services that ran smoothly. We even reached across Councils to the Membership Sub-Council to accomplish this goal. *Expansion* was needed in the nursery, as an influx of infants and toddlers has created the need for more space. *Growth* was evident at the Adult Programs table, which was busy each Sunday with people signing up not only for the recurrent programs but for many new offerings as well. Although Small Group Ministry saw a decline in overall participation this year, a new group, Young Adult SGM, was added in the Fall of 2013. And *transparency* has been a thread throughout. Each Sub-Council has reported its activities in detail to the congregation, either through reports at Board meetings or by articles in the E-News.

**Plans for Next Year:** This coming year will be one of excitement, adventure and challenge. Members of all Sub-Councils are eagerly awaiting the arrival of our new ministers. As we continue with the familiar and comfortable, we will also open ourselves to adventure, keeping an open mind and willingness to try something new. There will be challenges. We are welcoming new ministers and a new music director at the same time. As each Sub-Council makes plans to move forward, we will keep all seven of our principles in mind, but will especially focus on acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

### Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

*Janice Newton, Chair*

*Members: Ginny Allen, Briana Bittel, Helen David, Nancy Reed, Bev Spence*

**Mission:** To provide lectures, classes, workshops and other offerings for continued spiritual growth, religious learning and community fellowship. Programs are intended to be of broad appeal while meeting the needs of particular groups where practical and appropriate. The sponsors of these classes, programs and events affirm the Society's anti-discriminatory position by offering them at a range of times and in accessible locations, accommodating special needs as a standard practice and welcoming individuals and families of all kinds.

**Accomplishments:** This has been a busy and successful year for the Programs for Adults and Families Sub-Council. Rev. Dave has facilitated "The Balancing Act" on Monday mornings and "The Best of What We know" Sundays after the service. We have been delighted with the offerings facilitated by Rev. Dave and we thank him for all his support and work!

Our returning Pizza and Movie nights have had even higher attendance this year. This year we offered the Pizza movie nights through the summer of 2013. They were well attended. The Tai Chi, Non-Violent Communication and Meditation Programs continue to be popular. Two Compassionate Communication weekend workshops facilitated by Pan Vera were held. Dinner With the Buddha was a success.

This spring we had several new programs. Card Making, DreamWorks and Introduction to SoulCollage® were successful. An eight-week Ballroom Dancing program came to The Meeting House and had many attendees. There have been requests to repeat this next year.

Small Group Ministry sessions were held in the fall of 2013, winter-spring (2013-2014) and summer of 2013. The ever-popular Spirituality-SGM was offered in the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014. We were pleased to have new members and friends, as well as longtime members join the SGM groups.

Great Discussions and Great Decisions were offered again this year. Enthusiastic readers continue to attend the Book Club meetings. In the fall of 2013, folks enjoyed meals and conversation with new and old friends. The Artist's Way presented "Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain."

We continue to offer a place to register for programs, learn about USH and be welcomed during Fellowship Hour. We have welcomed many visitors as well as members and friends of USH at the Programs Table as they stop by to check out the Book Cart, sign up for the Pancake Breakfasts and Potlucks, learn about or register for a program, or purchase tickets for the Performing Arts programs or just visit.

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## Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

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**Plans for Next Year:** We plan to work with all Sub-Councils and interested members and friends in order to offer a variety of programs. We will continue to work with Brian Mullen to coordinate offerings to avoid scheduling conflicts. We will work with the Religious Education Sub-Council to extend our offerings to families and youth. We would like to increase our Sub-Council membership in order to have more folks available to staff the Programs Table during Fellowship Hour. We have meetings only when necessary and are friendly and welcoming! Wouldn you like to join us?

### Chancel Arts

*Kathy Ferguson, Chair*

*Members: Diane Cadrain, Tina Davies, Linda Ericson-Ebel, Ann LaPorte-Bryan, Deb Meny*

**Mission:** To provide décor for the Chancel which helps to create an atmosphere for worship.

**Accomplishments:** Throughout the year provided décor for the Chancel.

**Plans for Next Year:** To continue providing décor for the Chancel. Would like to have more people on our Sub-Council to share the work.

### Music Committee

*Mary-Anne Mulholland, Chair*

*MISSION STATEMENT AOPTED IN JUNE 2012:* to develop strategy and policy that supports and provides for delivery of high quality music for Sunday worship services and other church events or programs that support congregational objectives. The idea behind the formation of the committee was stated to be "to make it possible for the Music Director to keep the hours specified while others do a lot the behind the scene to support him/her".

Much of 2013-2014 has been spent on the search for a new Music Director as Douglas-Jayd Burn moves on to a doctorate program after June 2014. Discussions started prior to September of 2013 with reviews of the job descriptions, discussions about the possibility of hiring two persons (Music Director and an organist/pianist), and researching current similar positions in the area. Advertisements went out in late December 2013 /early January 2014. As of the writing of this report in April of 2014 auditions are being scheduled with the applicants for the position of Music Director.

The Composer-in-Residence program through Hartt continued for a third year. Procedures for this program were formalized. The program now runs for just the spring semester with candidates being solicited and screened in the fall. Our 2014 composer in residence was Andrey Stolyarov who composed a number of choral and instrumental pieces for USH. He has left us a book of approximately eight instrumental pieces composed especially for USH. We will formally acknowledge his contributions on May 18, 2014.

The Choral Scholars program continued this year greatly enhancing the choral music options for Sunday services. With the help of the Choral Scholars the Chancel Choir presented selections from Broadway to Brahms, from South African freedom songs to a traditional requiem, and even a selection calling for surprising vocal percussions. (Think animal noises and foot stomping) The tradition of combining choirs with the Fern Street church continued for two Music Sundays, one in the fall of 2013 with music by Britten and one in the spring of 2014, the Schubert Mass. The children's message given by our Music Director at the spring 2014 Music Sunday was particularly well received according to feedback from our Director of Religious Education.

As in previous years, the Sunday Music program drew approximately 25% of the actual operating expenses from the Friends of Music Fund. These contributions from the Special Sunday Music programs just covered the gap between the actual costs and the budgeted amount received from the general funds. Through the year Douglas-Jayd Burn, Music Director, stretched the budget by engaging many student instrumentalists at no cost to USH.

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## **Music Committee**

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Our grateful thanks go to Douglas-Jayd Burn for his many contributions to USH during his tenure. Faced with budget and personnel limitations in the choir Douglas developed the Choral Scholars program. In an effort to rekindle the bonds between USH and the Hartt School, Douglas initiated, with great success, the Composer-in-Residence program. Douglas has been very active with the Performing Arts series often giving solo concerts or accompanying others while asking for no additional compensation. His efforts have resulted in funds raised not just for the Friends of Music Fund but also contributed significantly to the general fund. We will celebrate his time with us on June 21, 2014 when Douglas gives his final concert at USH. At his request, he asks that a collection be taken at the concert for the Music program at USH.

## **Non-Violent Communication**

*Jan Bennett, Contact*

**Mission:** to enhance our understanding and usage of the NVC components. By “practicing” with each other using such activities as readings, exercises, humor, and sharing personal experiences, our intention together is to share, improve and hone our connection skills.

**Accomplishments:** The program runs all year on a weekly basis. Facilitation is rotated among interested people who wish to hone their facilitating skills. At present this includes Herb Gerjuoy, Rachana Katkar, Mark Friedman, and Jan Bennett.

The main accomplishments for this year have been increased participation in the weekly practice group, and two well-attended workshop trainings in NVC offered to the USH community and the public at large. The first was held November 16-17, 2013, and the second one was held April 5-6, 2014. Widely known NVC presenter, Pan Vera led both workshops. Both workshop programs ran at a profit, the Fall event netting \$478.50 with thirty-four attendees, and the April 2014 event netting \$395.00 with thirty-one attendees. These events qualify for the matching gift from a generous donor; the two events combined collected net profit of \$1,747.00 for USH.

As a result of these workshops, the Wednesday practice group has grown in size. We presently have sixteen active participants, and an additional nine folks who are currently away from the group for personal reasons, but want to stay in touch/or may return. In addition, on Wednesday, April 9, 2014, four new people from the most recent April workshop, attended the Wednesday practice session.

We continue to offer a presence to the USH community and to the public by offering the Wednesday evening practice group, which goes by the name, Authentic Connection and Communication Practice Group. We are a group of diverse people who are committed to authentic connection, both to oneself and to others, as a vehicle to promote greater understanding and connection among all peoples. We believe Non-Violent Communication, in the Marshall Rosenberg model, leads to greater understanding of others and ourselves, promoting peace and conflict resolution.

**Plans for Next Year:** We are planning to offer another workshop/training in Non-Violent Communication with Pan Vera sometime in the fall of 2014. Details are formulating.

## **Religious Education Sub-Council**

*Rayla Mattson, Director of Religious Education*

*Nina Elgo, Besty Olguin, Co-Chairs*

*Members: John Stowe*

**Mission:** to assist youth and children in the following ways: in gaining a respect and appreciation for themselves, others, all living things and the environment; to help them become integral parts of our Meeting House family; to develop an awareness of, and appreciation for, our Judeo-Christian heritage and other world religions that influence the formation of our religious beliefs; experience the joy and inspiration of music and the arts; become responsible persons who are able to make ethical decisions in which they show their care and concern for all humanity. We welcome all children, including those with special needs, and will make every effort to accommodate all children into our program.

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## Religious Education Sub-Council

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**Accomplishments:** This year our program has once again seen growth in our number of participants. We began the year with a core group of students from our efforts to rebuild the program the previous year. The program began with the registration of thirteen youth and children. To date, we have now had over seventy youth and children come through our program. We were able to build upon our flourishing and active program from last year's re-build.

In addition to maintaining our Religious Education program, we have expanded two of our programs: the Youth Group and the Nursery. This year we continued our very successful Chapel service which happens once a month and is during the first fifteen minutes of the worship service. The Director of Religious Education leads the youth and children in a separate worship service. The youth and children assist in doing readings, singing, playing instruments and designing the flow and order of the service. It is also a chance for them to check in with one another and bring any areas of discussion or concern directly to the DRE.

Making connections with the other organizations within our community was a priority this year. The biggest connections were made with the Green Sanctuary and Membership Sub-Councils. Each of these Sub-Councils meet specifically with the DRE and the children and youth to make stronger connections.

This year also saw growth in our youngest members of the congregation. Last year the Nursery began showing growth. This year we have had to hire additional nursery assistants and this group has seen the largest growth of all our age groups. We even had to relocate the nursery to a larger classroom to accommodate this increase.

The Youth Group logged over fifty hours of outreach work making soup, preparing lunch, and doing a holiday stocking stuffer/toiletries drive for the homeless at Church Street Eats, raising funds of over \$800 for My Sisters' Place during its November 2013 Sleeping Out in Boxes event. They have begun to develop leadership skills in choosing subjects of interest and concern to them and facilitating group discussions. They invited a facilitator/counselor from Bridge Family Center to speak with them about stress and healthy coping skills. They are planning a visit to Ebony Horsewomen Stables in addition to planning their annual Youth Group service.

Our middle school students took the year to focus on learning through coming of age movies. They also took more of a direct role in the direction of the discussions and in picking and sharing movies that impacted them. Although this is our smallest class, this group grew in size as well and will have a number of fifth graders moving up into this class next year.

The pre-k to second graders and the third to fifth graders experienced a year of stability. These two groups saw more cohesiveness in the participants as they had the previous year to acclimate themselves to new members and adjust to the teachers and assistant teachers. Both programs consist of engaging hands on activities that constantly re-visit our congregation's & UU Principles through fun and enlightening activities, stories and crafts. These two groups have maintained their students for a number of years and will each have several students moving on to the next age appropriate class.

**Plans for Next Year:** We plan to continue to improve the curriculum for meaningful, relevant programming that helps the children and youth connect with each other, the congregation and develop to their own sense of their place and purpose in the larger world. We will also continue to grow our program as the congregation continues its outreach to the greater Hartford community.

Another one of our goals is to involve the youth and children more in music. We have reached out to several groups inside and outside of the USH community for assistance. The hope is to begin something during the summer of 2014.

Finally, the Religious Education Sub-Council is continuing our efforts to make more meaningful connections with groups here within the congregation as we expand on the connections and interactions we established this year. Other Sub-Councils that have expressed interest in working directly with the children and youth are: Art; Worship Arts; Information & Advocacy; Performing Arts. We are bridging the gaps for all to come together.

## **Small Group Ministry**

*Esther McKone, Bill Shoemaker, Co-Chairs*

*Steering Committee Members: Martha Bradley, Linda Ericson-Ebel, Bruce Robbins, Bev Spence*

This past year our Small Group Ministry offerings were a vital part of spiritual life at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. We had eight different SGM groups running throughout the year (Summer 2013, Fall/Winter and Spring 2014) that included approximately sixty-two participants. Although we had fewer than the number of groups offered last year, we did have a continuation of the Spirituality SGM facilitated by Marye Gail Harrison. Additionally a daytime SGM met at the Meeting House which was especially convenient for folks who do not like to drive at night and/or were available during the day. Also offered was a group that met in the evenings at the Meeting House.

In keeping with the policy of the SGM Steering committee our goal is to offer something for everyone, sessions on different days of the week and at different times, afternoon sessions for those who prefer not to drive at night, as well as evening sessions. The number and variety of SGM sessions offered depends, of course, on the availability of trained facilitators and the interest of USH members and friends. We strive to offer a variety of approaches to SGM; i.e. spirituality-themed groups, family friendly groups that include an informal dinner before the discussion on topics relevant to young families. We continue to see the success of this approach in that many congregants ask for a specific SGM that suits their needs.

As in the past, we have everyone enrolled fill out an evaluation form for the SGM they are currently attending (typically we do this at the seventh of the eight sessions). We continue to receive high scores from participants regarding the quality of their experience in the SGM. The feedback we receive has been consistently positive proving that the covenant groups are a meaningful and valued part of spiritual life at USH for many members and friends. Esther McKone replaced Kayla Costenoble as SGM co-chair and continues in this position.

Our plan for the summer of 2014 is to offer abbreviated SGM sessions (four meetings) as we did last year. These will be held at the Meeting House. Martha Bradley will facilitate one of the summertime SGMs as she did last year. It is possible that we will have two groups this summer.

Our plans for next year are to continue to offer several SGM experiences for friends and members of the congregation. Facilitator Training sessions will be arranged for all current facilitators and for those considering becoming a facilitator. The minister's testimonial from the pulpit has raised awareness of the vital role SGMs plays in the spiritual life of USH. We invite and encourage ministerial input at our annual wintertime meeting and at other meetings throughout the year. Testimonials from the pulpit are ideal for raising the profile of SGM and it's value to our members and friends.

## **Worship Arts Sub-Council**

*Margaret Leicach, Chair*

*Members: Ginny Allen, Zean Gassmann, Rev. Dave Johnson, Laurie Kelliher  
Ann LaPorte-Bryan, Edith Savage, Sue Smolski*

**Mission:** To assist the Minister in creating, year round, a meaningful worship experience that is responsive to the needs of our congregation, offers spiritual renewal, and reflects our Unitarian Universalist traditions.

**Accomplishments:** The Reverend David Johnson is coming to the close of his time as our Interim Minister with no diminution of his energy and devotion to our worship services and to the life of this congregation. The Worship Arts Sub-Council has been blessed by: his ability and willingness to plan worship services and to communicate details and responsibilities well in advance; his active participation in the Sub-Council with important perspectives and mistake-saving advice and counsel; and his seemingly seamless ability to collaborated with all of the 'cast' of a worship service – music, RE, worship associate, guests, testimonial-givers....

At USH, Worship Arts has historically had primary responsibility for one service per month, September through June and eight or nine services over the summer for a total of eighteen or nineteen services – about one third of the services each calendar year. This year we became increasingly pro-active in this endeavor, giving Worship Associates (WAs) more time to plan services and enabling us to more consistently book quality guest speakers and guest musicians.

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## Worship Arts Sub-Council

*continued*

This fiscal year, at the request of the Board of Directors, the Worship Arts Sub-Council developed a five year plan which addressed: the vitality of WAs to adapt with flexibility to the goals and style of our next settled minister(s); support for spiritual paths other than Sunday morning worship; the integrity of the Sunday morning congregational worship; expansion of the 'range' of Sunday morning congregational worship; alternative worship opportunities at times other than Sunday morning; increased access to all worship opportunities; worship opportunities for children of all ages in Sunday morning service. We made some progress on most of these goals but left enough incomplete to keep us busy for at least another year.

With awareness that the congregation is moving forward into a new phase of our evolution, we collectively brainstormed our Vision for worship at USH which includes ensuring that every worship service: provides a deeply spiritual experience; provides opportunities for quiet meditation; nurtures inner peace; has a ritual framework that the congregation can rely on; preserves a sense of safety for congregants; is of awesome quality, including music, sermon, etc.; reinforces our UU identity – all while moving our worship forward into the twenty-first Century!

**Plans for Next Year:** These goals will undoubtedly evolve in collaboration with our new settled minister(s), but for now we are aware that we want to: rapidly learn the style and preferences of our new settled minister(s) and build a mutually supportive and collaborative working relationship; continue to work toward the seven goals from last year; increase transparency to the congregation about what the Worship Arts Sub-Council does and how it does it and expand our ability to incorporate feedback; expand the number of members who participate in worship services, whether as a WA or in other ways that take advantage of their unique talents; retain an acute awareness of the role the Sunday morning worship service plays in attracting and engaging new members; continue to build on our collaboration with Sub-Councils on Membership, Music and Religious Education.

