

UNITARIAN SOCIETY *of* HARTFORD



ANNUAL REPORT

For Fiscal Year July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

Images used for (clockwise): Stewardship 'logo', Installation Invitation, Installation Banner

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Proposed Slate for the Board

Presented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee - Ron Friedman, Chair
Members: Diana Heymann, Gloria Francesca Mengual, Peter Meny, Carol Sexton

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce the slate of candidates for election at the Annual Meeting on May 17, 2015. 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 Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Patrice Fitzgerald and Marye Gail Harrison who are completing their service. The Chair also wishes to thank the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee for their hard work.

Virginia de Lima - *President*
John Brancato - *President-Elect*
Louise Schmoll - *Treasurer*
Margaret Leicach - *Secretary*

John Clapp - *Chair - Administration*
Christina Davies - *Chair - Community Within*
Gloria Francesca Mengual &
Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera - *Co-Chairs - Social Justice*
Martha Bradley - *Chair - Spiritual Life*

Virginia de Lima (*President, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2016*) 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.

John Brancato (*President-Elect, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2016*) and his husband, Thomas Richardson, were introduced to USH in 2005 by a friend and John's coworker, Laurie Kelliher, who invited them to speak to the teen group. They joined the congregation in 2006, happy to raise their children in a community with similar world views. John served on both the interim minister and settled minister search committees and recently became a Worship Associate. Originally from northern New York, John is an emergency physician at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. He and Tom are the proud parents of two beautiful daughters, Ellie and Maddalena. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to continue to give back to the congregation.

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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Margaret Leicach (*Secretary, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) first encountered USH and Unitarian Universalism when she was one of the guest speakers for a summer service. A couple of years later, in 1985, she joined USH and, coming full circle, is currently chair of the Worship Arts Sub-Council and a Worship Associate. In the thirty in between she has served in various capacities including Treasurer, Chair of the Council on Community Within, and as a member of the "USH 2000" and "Governance" Task Forces. In addition to Sunday services, her spiritual practices at USH include meditation and Tai Chi. She has 3 daughters, 2 grandchildren, 2 sons-in-law and (happily) 1 new SO.

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; served on the 2013-2014 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.

Gloria Francesca Mengual (*Co-Chair - Social Justice, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) learned about USH when she started taking part in the NVC practice program. She began attending USH during the summer of 2013, participated in a small group ministry several months later, and in 2014 facilitated a series of race dialogues attended by some USH members and others from the community.

Gloria is a Program Officer for Everyday Democracy, which aims to help create positive community change that includes all voices. Gloria provides trainings throughout the country in community organizing, dialogue facilitation and action planning to help foster that desired community change, which has a distinct focus on racial equity. Most of her previous efforts prior to her present work have focused on public relations/marketing on behalf of nonprofit organizations in the child welfare, health care and social services fields.

Vanessa Gonzalea-Rivera (*Co-Chair - Social Justice, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) is a transplant from sunny Puerto Rico. A representative of her culture, Vanessa loves food, laughter, children, ocean and heat. She welcomes the UU theology as an extension of her own liberal Catholicism. Vanessa reads a lot, dances when the time and body allow, assists others in problem solving and volunteers everywhere she can. She's the mother of Josh and Daniel and the wife of Helen Koulidobrova. One of her passions in terms of social concerns is the inequality resulting from the racial divide.

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Proposed Slate for the Board

continued

Martha Bradley (*Chair - Spiritual Life, Term: 07.01.2015 - 06.30.2017*) is a native of Michigan. She enjoyed growing up in Detroit, and attending Northwest UU church in Southfield. Most of her working life she has been an educator. Martha helped to found one of the first charter schools in Connecticut. As a lifelong UU, she has been active in several congregations. Here at USH, Martha has served most recently on the Search Committee, the SGM Steering Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Relations. As Chair of Spiritual Life, she is looking forward to continuing the transition work begun with Revs. Cathy and Heather, her Board colleagues, and the congregation at large, to help shape a bright and meaningful future for USH.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 18, 2014

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order by Bill LaPorte-Bryan at 11:44am

Opening Words – Rev. Dave Johnson quoted from *Let Me Tell You Why I Come to Church* by A. Powell Davies, Minister of All Souls Church in Washington, DC.

Some key points: I come to church—and would whether I was a preacher or not—because I fall below my own standards and need to be constantly brought back to them; I must have my conscience sharpened—to do the most thorough and responsible thinking of which I am capable; I need to be reminded that there are things I must do in the world. These happen to me in church.

Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the 2013 annual meeting and the Congregational Meeting to call our new settled co-ministers were approved unanimously.

President's Report – Bill LaPorte-Bryan read from his report in the Annual Report (see appendix).

Secretary's Report – Virginia de Lima said the Society's membership has been relatively stable: there were 7 new members and 5 members resigned. Sadly, 7 people died.

Treasurer's Report – Louise Schmoll said that although she doesn't like to talk about money, she took on the job of treasurer because she feels everyone should do their own part. The treasurer job was one she could do on her own time, in her own space, and would enable her to make a difference. She said that the proposed budget for the 2014-2015 church year shows a deficit that can be handled with carryover money from previous years.

Louise encouraged the congregation to plan a lot of fundraising fun next year to take advantage of the matching grant of up to \$20,000. She said that Brian Mullen, the USH business manager, would be cutting back his hours, so she asked that everyone step up and help out.

Endowment Committee Report – Jim Venneman said that as of May 15, the endowment had a balance of \$1,008,052 and that the building and grounds are assessed at \$3,580,400 (with no mortgage). These assets are due to the generosity of members and friends since 1830. In coming years, we will be implementing a planned Giving Initiative to grow the endowment to \$3-5 million to support USH capital improvements and/or social-justice projects.

Annual Audit Results – Bill LaPorte-Bryan said no internal audit was done this year because of the continuity of the business manager and the treasurer. An audit will be done in 2015.

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 18, 2014

continued

Presentation of Proposed Slate for the Board – Carol Sexton (for Peter Meny who was unable to attend the meeting). Two board members are continuing for the second year of a 2-year term. Tina Davies is nominated to Chair the Council of Community Within, replacing Diana Heymann, who Carol thanked for her 3 years of service. John Clapp is nominated to Chair the Council on Administration, replacing Joe Rubin, who Carol thanked for his 4 years of service. Patrice Fitzgerald is nominated to be Board Secretary, filling out the second year of a 2-year term. Louise Schmoll is nominated to be Board Treasurer, to serve a second 2-year term. Virginia de Lima is nominated to be President Elect, to serve a 1-year term, moving from interim secretary. Bill LaPorte-Bryan is nominated to be President, to serve a first duly-elected 1-year term.

Carol moved that this leadership slate be accepted in total.

Bill expressed appreciation for Joe Rubin and Diana Heymann's service.

Motion to accept the slate was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved by voice vote.

Other Business:

Mary-Anne Mulholland, chair of the music committee spoke about the challenge to fund the music activities from September to June and there have been cutbacks. She said our worship music has not been fully funded out of the general funds for several years and the hope is that we will be able to do so in the future. Music is an integral part of our worship. She encouraged the congregation to let the Board know if they think music is important. The music program is funded 75% by the general fund and 25% by Friends of Music funds (collected during the two music Sundays). She asked for donations to Friends of Music. We are moving forward with our dynamic co-ministers, have a lot of ideas, including a children's music program.

Bill responded: the Board has spent considerable time trying to find ways to appropriately fund all programs; it's been challenging.

Question from the floor: How much money is needed?

Mary-Anne responded that \$2-2,500 dollars is a bare bones budget to support choral scholars and instrumentalists for music Sundays. Additional funds would support these programs as well as a leader and instruments for the children.

Louise encouraged people to be generous to the good-will offerings on music Sundays.

Bill mentioned USH is interviewing for a new Music Director and the tight funds affects that process.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia de Lima, Secretary

Appendix to the Minutes of the Congregational Meeting of the Unitarian Society of Hartford May 18, 2014

Text of the President's Report by Bill LaPorte-Bryan from 2013-2014 Annual Report

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 couldn't have done it without a lot of help from a lot of others. Let me mention a few. Reverend Dave Johnson, our Interim Minister, guided us through the process with his experience and wisdom, punctuated by inspiring worship services Sunday after Sunday.

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**Appendix to the Minutes of the Congregational Meeting of
the Unitarian Society of Hartford
May 18, 2014
*continued***

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 Martin. Everybody did their part to get us where we are today.

The excitement and joy abounding in the Meetinghouse 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's time to smell the roses.

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

President's Report

Bill LaPorte-Bryan

What an exciting year it's been! A year that started off with the arrival of our new settled co-ministers, Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr is ending with the uplifting reports that you will hear later on in this meeting or read in the rest of this report.

Let me look back a little. Last year our focus was on doing everything we could to put our church in great shape so that we would be able to attract the attention of outstanding ministers who would want to join us for the long haul. We polished up our staff, our committees and our Meeting House so that they shined. We asked seven of our best people to devote their talents and a good portion of their lives to a search for our new minister.

This year, it all came to fruition with the arrival on August 1, 2014 of Rev. Heather, Rev. Cathy and their daughter, Robin. All of the work we had done paid off!

You might have thought that we deserved some time off to rest up but, no, the energy level in the congregation just picked up after they joined us. We all worked even harder while having even more fun trying to keep up with our new ministers and all of the exciting new things they brought to us ... wonderful, lively worship services every Sunday, a fun-

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President's Report

continued

filled 50th birthday party for our Meeting House in January 2015, an unforgettable Installation service in April 2015, more visitors and new members of all ages and all walks of life than we could have imagined ... bringing with it our accompanying energy, excitement, joy and love for them and for each other.

One of the Board's roles in all of this was to keep a steady hand on the tiller of the ship of state to make sure that all of the energy rocking our boat did not cause anybody to lose their balance and fall overboard. With a lot of help from my friends on the Board, we managed to pull it off. My deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks goes out to my nine colleagues on the Board ... Virginia de Lima, President-Elect, Louise Schmoll, Treasurer, Patrice Fitzgerald, Secretary, the four Council Chairs, John Clapp, Tina Davies, Martha Bradley and Marye Gail Harrison, respectively focused on Administration, Community Within, Spiritual Life and Social Justice, and our two ministers. And we could not have done it without Louise Schmoll, Jim Venneman and Ron Friedman, respectively the Chairs of the Finance, Endowment and Nominating Committees of the Board who led their teams as they provided us with sound and invaluable advice.

We start every monthly Board meeting by reading our covenant together. It includes these words, "... We acknowledge that our work takes place in the context of a spiritual community, one that covenants every week that 'love is the spirit of this church' ..." Those words mean a lot to us. We take them to heart, just like all of you.

So it is on to next year. Who knows what it will bring. One thing I do know ... I know it will be meaningful, fun, exciting and uplifting just like this one but I also know it will be different. So I say, "Bring it on".

Let me end on a personal note. June 30, 2015 will mark the end of my seventh year on the Board and my second year as your President. I can not tell you how much I appreciate your providing me with an opportunity to serve the church I love that has given so much to me and my family. It has been my pleasure. Thank you!

Co-Ministers' Report

Revs. Cathy & Heather Rion Starr

What a difference a year makes! A year ago, you all were just learning about "The Rion Starrs," experiencing us leading worship for the first time, and voting to call us as your new ministerS! It has been an amazing journey over the course of the past year, a journey into relationship, a journey of connecting with one another and learning about each other's concerns, styles, interests, and joys, and a collaborative journey of leadership as we all work together to tend to the present and co-create the future for this congregation.

The first year here for us has been a lot about learning how things are and have been done here at USH. As we move into and towards our second year with you, we will be looking to engage together in some deep conversations around the questions:

Where are we aiming to go, now?

What is our North Star?

What are our dreams and hopes for this congregation as we look towards the next ten or fifteen years?

2030 will be the 200th Anniversary for this congregation—what do we want to be celebrating, then?

Highlights & Appreciations: Everything we have listed below is the work of the whole community and indicates the good energy of many people. There are amazingly dedicated lay leaders here at USH, an incredibly hard-working and dedicated staff team, and we thank each and every one of you for every thing that all of you do, small and large, to help sustain and nourish this congregation. Below we list some highlights of the year for us and some things we hope to keep going with good momentum into the years ahead.

GETTING STARTED - LEADING SERVICES IN AUGUST: We definitely believe in "year-round" church and want to be present and as available as we can realistically be even during the summer months. People often "church-shop" in August and September and the onset of the church year is an important time to establish our welcoming presence and positive energy as a community.

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Co-Ministers' Report

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ART AROUND THE WEST END: Opening Reception at USH followed by a Sunday morning service on "Beauty." What a treat it was to be the venue for artists throughout Hartford's West End to gather and share their work, kicking off a weekend of home studio visiting and the savoring of locally-created visual art. We hope to get to build relationships with our West End community again through this celebration in September 2015.

DECEMBER 21, 2014 SOLSTICE SERVICE: A highlight for us and many have told us how much they appreciated the joyfulness and intergenerationalness of the service. Lively music that everyone could join in on ("Where is the light? Where is the light?"), a story told as a play involving many ages, and the celebration of the return of the sun with the cheerful Sun balloons zooming up to the Meeting House ceiling all made this a warm and soul-filling service at the outset of a long winter.

FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR THE MEETING HOUSE: January 2015 we celebrated the Fiftieth Birthday of the Meeting House with a Trivia Scavenger Hunt, fantastic cake, slideshow, Charades, All-Congregational Photo, potluck spread, toasts, special music, display of the architectural drawings and other drawings of the Meeting House, listening to the audio recording of the Building Dedication Ceremony from 50 years ago, and so much more. It was a marvelous way to gather together in January and have some fun.

REGULAR MONTHLY GATHERINGS (TWENTIES/THIRTIES GROUP, SEABURY): It has been invaluable to establish regular monthly gatherings with our newer members and friends in their 20s and 30s, and also with our older members and UU friends who live at Seabury. Both groups are regularly comprised of over a dozen people and have expressed a lot of gratitude for USH's support and ministry in gathering them together for deeper connection on a regular basis.

STAFF TRANSITIONS ARE INEVITABLE: We are grateful that Helen David's retirement after five years of dedicated service went so smoothly—thanks to all involved in that. Any staff transition takes some time and energy behind-the-scenes and we are grateful that we have found in Linda Clark someone so friendly and thoughtful to carry the work forward. The staff transition still underway is of our Music Director position; we are also deeply grateful that we have been blessed with skilled and good-hearted musicians in Pi-Hsun Shih, Rebecca Pacuk, and Cheryl Wadsworth, who have sustained the beautiful music in our worship services.

MUSIC STAFFING TRANSITION TEAM: as charged by the Board is to "Create a vision for a vibrant music program for the 21st century and recommend to the board a plan to implement it that includes staffing & volunteer structure & roles, and draws on the musical gifts and musical desires of the congregation as a whole. The process should build on work that's been done before and include congregational engagement and lots of learning." Stay tuned for ways to share your thoughts as we move toward a long-term music staff hire/s!

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICES: throughout the winter including Seven Principles Through Jazz Music Sunday, a service on Alzheimer's, a comedy improv service, some small-but-steadfast services on snowy Sundays (including one by Rev. Heather when she had laryngitis), and more!

NEW WORSHIP ASSOCIATES: We have trained over a dozen people in a worship associates training in the fall of 2014, and have a broader bench of "WAs" in rotation as a result. Many thanks to our veteran WAs for their years of service, and to our new folks joining in.

INTERACTION WITH THE MEDIA: There has been some notable press that we have been engaged with, highlighting USH this year. We responded quickly to the *Hartford Courant* piece about Victor Lundy's "Leaky Landmark" by highlighting "The Life Inside Lundy's Landmark." If you missed either of those pieces or would like to read our fuller response, all of that is available on the USH website. In preparation for the Installation service, the Installation Committee doggedly sent out press releases, and one of those resulted in the *New York Times* piece "More Married Couples, Same-Sex and Straight, Are Sharing the Job of Pastor." Being interviewed by *The New York Times* was an exciting opportunity and learning experience for us; let us hope it is the first of many such opportunities.

NEW MEMBERS: We have celebrated over thirty new members this year, each bringing new energy, gifts, hopes and vision to USH. We hope you will all take the time to get to know these new members, find out what their particular interests and stories are, and invite them to participate in activities you are involved in.

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Co-Minister's Report

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THE INSTALLATION SERVICE: was an energizing Success! The service served to spiritually ground us in this new chapter that we are building, tending carefully to our ferocious roots so they may anchor us, as we begin and continue to dream big, bold and bright, together. Rev. Katie Lee Crane, former Interim Minister, wanted us to share with you that she has ***never*** seen so many clergy show up for an Installation; let us never forget that there are many outside our walls who care about USH and about us as your co-ministers. There are too many of you to thank here - from the reception organizers and decorators, to the Chalice Lighters of all ages, to the Youth Group and their Flash Mob, each and every one of you who contributed in ways small and large to co-creating this service that marks and celebrates this new era at USH.

GETTING TO KNOW HARTFORD AND #BLACKLIVESMATTER: Michael Brown was shot and killed in Ferguson, MO just days after we began in August 2015, putting the spotlight on police shootings in Black and Brown communities around the country. Rev. Cathy has led USH's effort to engage in local #BlackLivesMatter vigils and protests (to which many of our members have gone), as well as getting to know many of the community leaders of various organizations in Hartford, especially those led by African-Americans. Meanwhile, Rev. Heather has developed relationships with the KNOX Foundation and begun getting to know folks in the Watkinson community garden directly below the Meeting House. We both look forward to deepening relationships with community leaders as part of our collective discernment about USH's social justice engagement.

MEMORIALS LED: We have led memorial services this year for Barbara Hellenga, Bill Rose, Janet Hill, Alice LeBel, and Janice Williams. Plans are underway for Dorothy Fowler's memorial service in the fall of 2015. Thanks to the Memorial Reception Team for consistently creating beautiful, nourishing, and generous receptions to help families and communities gather, grieve, and connect.

Observations: We have noticed throughout this first year that USH has some aspects of family, pastoral, and program-sized congregational life. These are characterizations of how congregations function based primarily on size, but impacting how people communicate with each other. Family-sized churches are typically fewer than 50 active members, pastoral-sized churches are typically 50-150 active members, and program-sized churches are typically 150-350 active members. Each size has different ways and channels for communication. The challenge that we have observed at USH is that there is some of all three styles of communication happening, which can make it very difficult to sort out for newcomers, new members, new Ministers, and even long-time members about who to talk with when they want to find out how something "usually" happens or get something done. There are lots of great articles and research out there about church-size, communication and leadership in different church sizes, and how we all need to be flexible and open to change in order to grow as a congregation. We will be looking at this material with the Board in the coming year, and if you are interested in discussing this further with us, we welcome that!

Looking Ahead: As we look ahead towards the fall of 2015 and future church years, we are excited that the new website is in-the-works as that is such an important communication tool. We both are eager to offer more lifespan learning classes, both ongoing and single session programs, and we welcome your specific suggestions or requests as we think about what makes sense. We are also thoughtful about working with the Board, Sub-Council Chairs, Sub-Councils and Committees throughout the congregation to support the whole congregation in moving towards more common, healthy leadership transitions in every aspect of congregational life. How can we all get-to-know and integrate newer faces into the work of running the congregation?

We are privileged and grateful to be your Co-Ministers and we look forward to serving you for years to come. We are still getting to know you, and encourage you to reach out and set up a time for conversation! Our cell phones and e-mail continue to be the best way to reach us.

Warmly,
Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr
Cathy: 541-390-7553, revcathy@ushartford.com
Heather: 541-390-6052, revheather@ushartford.com

Secretary's Report

Patrice Fitzgerald

As of February 1, 2015, the membership of the Unitarian Society of Hartford as reported to the UUA was 155. During the past twelve months we joyfully accepted the following individuals into membership: Katherine Ann Anderson; Will Anderson; Stephanie Briggs; Chris Callahan; Tara Cote; Rachel D'Agostino; Harriet Gardner; Phil Gardner; Marilyn Giese; Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera; Don Hope; Susan Hope; Nancy Johnson; Ted Johnson; Helen Koulidobrova; Shari Lanza; Pam Majidy; John Meegan; Gloria Francesca Mengual; Judy Robbins; Sharon Scully; Bill Simmons, Rick Tsukada; Chris Wilt. Over the last twelve months, these individuals, dear to the hearts of our Society, passed away: Bob Attenborough; Dorothy Fowler; Charlotte Harris; Barbara Hellenga; Janet Hill; Alice Lebel; Bill Rose; Jane Stone; Janice Williams. Additionally, the last fiscal year saw the following individuals transition from membership at USH: Rachel Gibson; William Keefe; Robert Nearine; Cecilia Roehl; Nancy Stuart.

Treasurer's Report

Louise Schmoll

As treasurer of our Society my weekly activities are minimal since all actual bookkeeping is done by our very capable business manager, Brian Mullen. Brian has been with us for 12 years and his deep knowledge of our many activities make my job very easy. The larger picture of my duties include management of the Finance Sub-Council and being a member of the Board of Directors. In that capacity the annual budget process is the most demanding. How to balance our hopes and dreams with the reality of dollars available will always be a challenge. Our Stewardship Sub-Council has run a very successful drive and our Finance Sub-Council and Board will soon complete a budget for 2015/16. Our ministers have been integral in the work for this new budget. We hope it will reflect the aspirations of us all. The best thing you can do to help us right now is to fulfill your obligation for 2014/15 and to renew your pledge for next year, if you have not done so.

Our entire Society must continue to support "fun"draising activities. We had a very successful auction in October 2015, very capably chaired by Ginny Allen and it was a super evening that earned about \$8000. Many people worked very hard to make it happen and I can not begin to name them all, but Brian Harvey deserves special thanks for the visual displays and organizational skills he supplied. I challenge you to get involved next year; perhaps with a Gourmet Food Auction, a Super Bowl Subway day, or a Pi day on March 14. We are always looking for a way to have fun, so offer your suggestions and your time.

Endowment Committee

Jim Venneman, Chair

Members: Jean Groothuis, David Newton, Ed Stockton

Our Mission: to be responsible for the prudent and socially responsible 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.

Accomplishments: The Endowment had a balance of \$1,014,938 at March 31, 2015, consisting of \$966,181 held with our investment adviser, UBS, and \$48,757 in the UUMSB first mortgage held by USH. The \$1,014,938 represents an increase of \$1,930 since March 31, 2014. New contributions to the Endowment totaled \$29,831 in the year ending March 31, 2015. The Endowment contributed \$53,972 to the support of USH in the same period, or 5.4% of the average endowment balance. The overall rate-of-return in the year ending March 31, 2015 was about 2.5%.

Were it not for contributions of \$29,831 received between March 31, 2014 and March 31, 2015, the value of the endowment would have declined \$27,901. During the past year a substantial effort was made to inform governance-involved members that the operating budget drain on the endowment must be reduced to conserve funds for capital improvements and reverse a continuing decline in the constant dollar value of USH's endowment. This trend has often been seen in recent years and is not healthy over the long-run.

continued

Endowment Committee

continued

Since September, 2014 our Endowment has been managed by UBS, a professional money management firm. As of March 31, 2015, 25% was in fixed income investments and 75% in equities, which is a typical allocation for a conservatively managed fund designed to provide long-term income with reasonable preservation of capital.

In 2014 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 is receiving a higher rate-of-return on a part of its fixed income assets, while UUMSB did not incur closing costs and is paying a lower interest rate than what a bank would charge. This loan is less than 5% of the Endowment, which minimizes risk to USH.

The Board asked the Committee to review a suggestion from the Green Sanctuary concerning the disposal of investments in fossil fuel companies. The Committee's recommendation was submitted in December to follow the UUA guidelines, which are to review each investment over a five-year period prior to divestiture or maintain ownership in order to participate in shareholder action. The USH Board decided to divest now. The affected stocks were sold in March. The EC has proposed a by-law change to enable the congregation as a whole to decide on any future request to restrict investments.

Our plans for next year:

The Committee will continue to review the Endowment's investment allocations to ensure they are appropriate to meet the needs of the Society.

The Committee is working with other members on a Planned Giving Initiative to grow the endowment. The Committee suggested we should aim for an endowment of \$3-5 million with endowment income to be available for USH capital improvements and/or social justice project(s). We are pleased to report that the Society has received in the current year generous donations from two active members of USH. This initiative will be continued.

USH Endowment Honor Roll:

Since 1925, 50 individuals/families have given a total of \$803,493 to the USH Endowment. Their generous gifts have greatly benefited USH and are remembered here. Following is a list, in chronological order, of the people whose contributions made our Endowment possible. We thank these people for their foresight and generosity which help us all today.

Donor	Established	Amount	Donor	Established	Amount
Frank S. Sumner	1925	\$5,000	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
Roy S. Mason	1961	\$1,000	Toni Thomas	2000	\$20,000
Hortense Hahn Guett & Monroe Guett	1963	\$40,780	Lois Stowe	2000	\$46,151

continued

Endowment Committee

continued

Donor	Established	Amount	Donor	Established	Amount
Gladys Crane	1967	\$9,313	David Schur	2001	\$24,320
Paul Dorweiler	1970	\$7,200	Joyce E. (Jones) Bauer	2011	\$3,500
William Harris	1972	\$789	Helen M. Skinner	2012	\$26,000
Edith M. Arborio	1974	\$5,000	Charles Huntington	2013	\$14,521
Freida R. Smith	1977	\$505	Rosie Rindfleisch	2014	\$4,310
Frances C. Altenberg	1980	\$500	Chris & Jeanette Smith	2015	\$2,795
Helen C. Borden	1980	\$500	E. Joan Sereda	2015	\$2,000
Frances Davenport	2000	\$1,000	Florence Grieb	2015	\$20,726
Verona Cook	2000	\$10,000	Marye Gail Harrison & John Passalacqua	2015	\$15,000

Council on Administration

Building & Grounds Sub-Council

Edward Sax, Stuart Spence, Co-Chairs

Members: Roy Cook, Vincent Hall, Fred Louis, Peter Magistri, Peter Meny, David Newton

Ron Sexton, Bill Simmons, Jim Venneman

Staff: John Bengtson, Briana Bittel, Crystal Cruz-Acevedo, Kevin Girouard

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

Accomplishments: There are tasks that get completed, those that are continuing and still others resisting easy solution for extended periods. Jobs accomplished or well on their way to completion include: recovering the heavy chairs in various rooms with a fabric resistant to water and stain damage; completing a survey of those who have “keys” to the building; regular use of the Bose Sound system; a security checklist for those closing the building; helping the ministers settle into their office; replacement of the defective light with a motion activated LED light covering the handicapped van parking area (and adding a home for a lucky bird family); moving the front pew wall into storage; two successful work parties; holding a Meeting House Birthday celebration; installing peripheral LED lighting for the Sanctuary; planting and protecting several trees; pruning or removing overgrown shrubs; maintaining memorial gardens; upgrading our internet connections.

Continuing jobs include efforts throughout the year to grapple with a persistent leak into the men’s room next to Fellowship Hall related to a disturbed drain assembly in the Library bay area. In addition, the worst winter in 100 years caused leaking into the Sanctuary when roof drain heaters failed and a heavy snow load disturbed normal drainage patterns. Efforts to modernize the phone system are not completed though the internet reassignment to a different phone number has been completed. Progress has been made in calling the importance of a healthy endowment to the attention of congregants with a eye to maintaining available funds for major physical plant repairs expected for a building of Meeting House vintage. Moving the archives from the Library to Fuller has reached the just-do-it stage.

Renewed efforts to equip the building with partial solar power are stalled at this writing as is installation of hearing loops and improvement of central lighting in the Sanctuary.

continued

Building & Grounds Sub-Council

continued

The Building & Grounds Sub-Council 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. We are particularly blessed with staff which includes John Bengtson, Kevin Girouard, Briana Bittel and Crystal Cruz-Acevedo.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work on existing unfinished tasks and such new ones as arise.

Church Office

Brian Mullen, Business Manager

This past fiscal year we welcomed to our staff the new ministry team of Rev. Heather Rion Starr and Rev. Cathy Rion Starr. They will be job sharing the responsibilities of settled ministry at USH. I believe this is the first of its kind in the history of USH and certainly is the first in my tenure here (now twelve years). The Revs. have instituted a weekly staff gathering on Tuesdays centered around eating our lunches. It has become a time to check-in and talk about upcoming events. We also share with one another (via writing on little cards that are then placed in a small box, which can be retrieved at a later date) things we are appreciative for here at the Meeting House. Rev. Heather and I have agreed to meet once a week on Wednesdays.

During the fall of 2014, the USH Board graciously accepted my proposal of reducing my hours at the Meeting House. In February 2015 we settled on a 24 hour a week schedule of Tuesday - Thursday. This has enabled me to enhance a long-term part-time relationship I have had away from the Meeting House as well as save USH some money! At present, USH is operating rather efficiently with a completely part-time staff.

We experienced another transition in the Society office during the winter of 2015 with the retirement of Helen David. She dedicated five years of her life in helping support: five different ministers, the Membership Sub-Council; Artist's Way; Festival of the Season; and me! I will miss her smile and always pleasant demeanor. I am happy to report that we have found a very able replacement in Linda Clark. Linda comes to us from a company that published church bulletins and seems to be a perfect fit into our Society. She is at present maintaining Helen's schedule of Tuesday & Wednesday as well as being here on Sundays. Linda will also become an integral part of maintaining our new website (once it is completed) as well as being involved with the creation of E-News.

Brian Harvey, as Chair of the Membership Sub-Council and active participant on the Communications Sub-Council continues to hold the position of a volunteer staff member. He is responsible for 99% of all the graphic material, which advertises USH activities, you see around the Meeting House and in E-News. He is also not afraid to interact with a maintenance vendor that might wander in if I am not around. It is also not uncommon for you to see him show a visitor around the Meeting House that might have dropped in because "...they always thought the building was unique but had never been inside...". Thank you
Brian for all your ongoing efforts in supporting USH!

I continue to: staff the office; maintain the office computers and supplies; interact with building maintenance vendors (with the help of Building & Grounds folks); support the Stewardship Sub-Council (canvass mailings and record keeping); support the Treasurer (Louise Schmoll and I continue to make a good team!) and Finance Sub-Council (regular budget review documents, giving statements, budget preparation); maintain the membership database (with the help of Administrative Assistant Linda Clark and Membership Sub-Council Chair Brian Harvey); layout and preparation of the weekly order of service and insert (with the help of Sarah Gilligan); 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; layout of the Installation Order of Service on 04.19.2015.

The reduction of my hours has enabled us to ask for volunteer support in maintaining consistent office hours. A thank you to : Kayla Costenoble; Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera; Diana Heymann; Bill LaPorte-Bryan. These folks have volunteered their time on Mondays (Kayla & Bill) and Fridays (Vanessa & Diana). A very special thank you to Esther McKone, who prior to the involvement of these current volunteers was putting together our orders of service on Friday afternoons!

Thank you for your continued support and appreciation of my efforts here at the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

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 on-boarding new co-ministers. Provided assistance to the Board or supervising manager with the hiring process for the Music Director, Choir Director, Accompanist and Assistant Administrator positions. Provided assistance to the Board or supervising manager with preparation of employment agreements for staff members. Reviewing and updating USH HR Policies. Provided advice with respect to completion of USH employee 2014 performance evaluations and job descriptions. Created USH Compensation Guideline Review Chart.

Plans For Next Year: Continue work updating USH HR Policies and job descriptions. Acquire a third person to serve on the USH HR Sub-Council. Provide assistance to the Board, supervising managers or staff as requests for advice may be received.

Stewardship Sub-Council

Peter Meny, Chair

Members: Ginny Hedrick, Helen Koulidobrova, Deb Meny, Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Joe Rubin, Ron Sexton

The role of the Stewardship Sub-Council is to encourage members and friends to actively participate in activities that further our mission and provide financial support so that the Society can continue to meet its obligations and expand its mission. Towards this end the Sub-Council hosted three after-service gatherings in March 2015 to recognize people for their financial support, volunteer efforts, and other forms of community building and outreach. In addition, we provided information about the financial needs of USH.

On Stewardship Sunday March 22, 2015 we launched the annual pledge drive. The goal was to exceed last year's total pledges of \$263,000 by 5% to enable the Society to take steps toward three important goals. These include increasing resources for our growing children's religious education program, updating our website and digital communications, and having the finances to attract the best possible musical talent to replace our Choir Director and Organist.

We are pleased to announce that as of May 1, 2015 we have received \$257,690 in pledges from 112 members and friends. This represents a 6% increase from the same pledgers in comparison to last year. Twenty-one new members and friends were very generous pledging over \$20,000 as a group. We anticipate we will receive more pledges so that our final total may reach the \$275,000 goal. If you have not yet made your pledge, please do so as soon as possible!

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

Council on Community Within

Christina Davies, Chair

When the Rion Starrs accepted their call to Co-Ministry at USH, great enthusiasm and relief was expressed in the various Sub-Councils and Committees of USH's Council on Community Within. There was a sense of renewal, of being able to resume breathing, of finally moving forward after a period of just trying to hold things together. A couple of groups scaled back planned events, trusting the excitement surrounding the new ministerial call would autonomously generate substantial interest and activity. Others used the presence of settled ministers as a springboard to examine, extend, or refine existing practices and offerings. While each Sub-Council has furnished its own report, here is an overview (alphabetically):

CARING NETWORK: One of USH's largest and most active sub-Councils, the Network nonetheless flies, by design, under the radar. The group is finely attuned to individual needs, and discreetly provides concrete help where needed. Cards, shawls, visits, meal coordination, rides to doctors, sympathetic ears... most of our membership has, at some point, experienced the generosity and kindness of the Caring Network. They will likely deflect attempts to praise their extensive efforts, so we will simply say "thank you" for being who you are, and doing what you do;

COMMUNICATIONS: these folks keep us informed of congregational issues and events, and contacts with local news outlets and social media help our presence be known in greater Hartford and beyond. This year's big project involves planning for the redesign of our website. The current site has been an invaluable resource, but may not be ideally configured for marketing and outreach purposes. Our ad hoc task force researched potential vendors and recommended a local provider, which has been contracted to give our web presence fresh "curb appeal" and greater ease of navigation. The rollout is projected for late June / early July 2015;

FESTIVAL OF THE SEASON: another successful and lively Festival, chaired by Patrice Fitzgerald, also served to introduce Revs. Cathy and Heather (and their daughter Robin) to USH's unique and traditional "performance" of the *Twelve Days of Christmas*. The usual suspects were in fine form. Interest has been expressed in forming a standing committee for FOS to enhance continuity and assure leadership from year to year;

MEMBERSHIP: 2014/15 was a banner year for the Membership sub-Council. At Rev. Heather's prompt, two "Membership Sundays" were scheduled and announced, offering prospective members some concrete opportunities to join USH. This provided a temporal framework for the "UU, USH, and You" programs (3-session orientation/introduction to UU classes) conducted by Brian Harvey and others. A sizeable group of new members was welcomed in December 2014 and, as of this writing, an even larger group is anticipated on May 3, 2015. Should those expectations materialize, 24 individuals will have been welcomed into membership this year.

A small sub-group has presented, for vote at the Annual Meeting, a proposed constitutional change in categories of membership at USH. The current categories include several options which have not been used for years, reducing the options to one (full membership) simplifies and demystifies requirements. Other accomplishments are detailed more fully under the Sub-Council report;

UNITARIAN ALLIANCE MINISTRY TO WOMEN (UAMW): the Alliance continues to support connections among women through the retreat at Senexet House (very relaxing, good camaraderie, thoughtful discussions), after-service programming, fundraising projects such as bake sales, support (along with Caring Network) for memorial receptions, joining with the Lunch Bunch for holiday pot lucks;

MISCELLANEOUS: Community Within often serves as an umbrella for activities which may not be otherwise categorized but which bring people together around some common purpose... the used book table, our Meeting House's Fiftieth Birthday Party, acting as a venue for *Art Around the West End*, plus the loosely-allied *Paint the Meeting House* event. We are happy to talk about your ideas for enriching your USH experience.

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, Joan Kemble, Kit Northup, Eve Pech, Nancy Reed, Tom Reed, Ellie Revill

Revs. Cathy & Heather Rion Starr, 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 continue to maintain our network of frequent contacts (visits and phone calls) with members and friends 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, comfort shawls and visits. We are developing a Contact Information Card and updates for informational handouts about the Caring Network. We have provided meals, rides to appointments, services and events at the Meeting House and help with errands. We have had six Memorial receptions this year. The number of Comfort Shawl knitters has declined. If you would like to join us we would love to have you! This year we have distributed twelve shawls to members and friends of USH. We attempt to provide transportation to services and would greatly appreciate any volunteers!

We are very grateful to Rev. Cathy and Rev. Heather for all the calls and visits they have made. We are especially grateful for their monthly visits to Seabury and their attendance and participation at our Caring Network meetings.

Please remember to stop by the Programs Table during Fellowship Hour where you can get a card to send to a member or friend. If the cards are not out, ask us! Help us keep in touch with members and friends of our community. We have a Members and Friends Directory so after you pick out a card you can add a greeting, address it and take it home to mail.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work on a "Final Wishes" form with Rev. Cathy and Rev. Heather and on the Contact Information Card. We will reach out to members and friends of our community to give comfort and support when needed and to share in their joys. We will encourage fellow members of our congregation to work with us so we can truly become a Caring Community. If you see a need, let us know!

Communications Sub-Council

David Newton, Chair

Members: Roy Cook, Linda Clark, Kayla Costenoble, Tina Davies, Sarah Gilligan, Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera,

Brian Harvey, Brian Mullen, Janice Newton, Nancy Reed, Tom Reed, Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Bruce Robbins

Ed Savage, Bev Spence

Mission: To enhance communications among groups, members and friends within the Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH), and to foster effective communication with external groups and individuals in the Greater Hartford community and beyond.

Accomplishments: During this fiscal year, we have continued to see Unitarian Society of Hartford members, friends and outside potential visitors as individuals with different preferred communication modes. Accordingly, we post information 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 coverage and inform people of its publication by email message most Wednesday evenings and post a sandwich board on Bloomfield Avenue. We also send email messages as necessary carrying urgent messages, obituaries and some information best not published on the web. We maintain the USH Facebook pages and prepare the weekly order of service inserts. 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 is also posted on the USH Facebook page,

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Communications Sub-Council

continued

and in the Hartford Courant. Following a Sunday service, most services in audio format become available on the password-protected area of the web in MP3 format. In addition, written sermons may be 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 approximately 20 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 from members and friends in recent years, and we believe that we are exemplary among UUA congregations for the transparency of our governance activities.

To enhance internal communication, a number of listservs, or restricted email groups, are maintained for various groups with common interests. We support the Social Justice, Programs for Adults and Families, Performing Arts, Non-Violent Communications, Green and other interests by promoting their public events.

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, write and pass along various event notices and stories concerning USH activities through submission to editor(s), followed by subsequent production or posting and distribution, truly a team effort.

MOVING FORWARD: Recognizing it was time for moving some communications functions back to the USH office, developing broader methods of web access and maintenance, while improving the aesthetics of the web, in August of 2015 a sub-group called the New Web Developers was established to bring forward a new more modern looking website while the current communication structure was maintained.

That group, under the capable leadership of Bruce Robbins, has done the arduous work of determining goals, objectives, coherent messaging, and aesthetics for a new website. The Board funded the project. Word Press templates have been selected, a vendor has been employed to design a new website, and further work is in progress to select content and photos to populate the new web design. The goal is to bring up the new website at the end of June 2015. The mechanics of shifting to the new web, dealing with the email and listservs, mailboxes and related matters will be challenging. In addition, determining the nature, maintenance, and editing of an improved USH E-News at the end of June 2015 will be a topic of additional attention.

A new balance of staff and volunteer effort shall be established. In short, we are engaged in a process similar to an Olympic relay race. We are doing our best to pass "the baton" without dropping it, and without loss of speed, to fresh racers for the next leg of the race. As chair of the Communications Sub-Council, it is my pleasure to voice the deep thanks of the congregation for the individual labors of the past, present and future Sub-Council members, who, without much notice, keep the communications of USH flowing in exemplary fashion.

Plans for Next Year: With the remarkable sedulous efforts of the Communication Sub-Council group known unofficially as dostuffers, we will emerge stronger next year with evolving effective communication modes.

Festival of the Season

Submitted by: Patrice Fitzgerald

The 37th Annual Festival of the Season was a GRAND SUCCESS! Early sign-ups were reportedly the highest ever, with 100 individuals/families making plans to come, and we estimate that around 150 people participated. On December 6th, 2014, we crafted, we sang, we worshipped, we ate, and we had a lot of fun with children and grown-ups of all ages. It was great

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Festival of the Season

continued

to see Santa Claus in our lobby again, and to see and hear Sid Garvais at the piano during the Potluck—a man who has been at every one of the Festivals since the beginning!

Helen David organized and presided over the Holiday Boutique where arts and crafts made by volunteers were donated to USH and sold to benefit the General Fund. The Gingerbread Houses were enjoyed by all the sticky architects, a few of the delicious sugar cookies were brought home before being ingested, the snowflake ornaments now adorn the green garlands in the Sanctuary, the globe ornaments made in the youth room were a hit, and wreaths were decorated. Many volunteers helped with the crafts, and it was truly a church-wide effort.

Through the afternoon seasonal music produced by Larry Lunden floated out into the craft rooms. Films of marionettes in the Chapel provided a peaceful respite for tired crafters, and dreidel games were played by clever spinners. There was a rowdy crowd of carolers led by choir member Sarah McKenzie, and Rev. Heather, with the assistance of many young people as well as the irrepressible Robin, headed up the worship segment.

We were also pleased to host a dozen visitors from The Village for Families and Children next door. Thanks to Joanne Orlando for organizing that. The delicious Potluck was topped off with the traditional singing of The Twelve Days of Christmas, under the gymnastic leadership of John Stowe. Rumor has it there is a video of this raucous rendition that may be available for viewing if you know the right people.

So many people helped, and a thank you is due to ALL the volunteers. A special shout-out goes to Janice Newton for the Potluck, John Bengtson for tireless help in setting up and cleaning up (and attending!) and Crystal Cruz-Acevedo for all the assistance in the kitchen before, during, and after dinner.

Also, mittens and hats showed up on the tree in the lobby. Some lucky children at the Village were warmer this winter because of USH. All that and we earned almost \$800 for the General Fund, which will be doubled when matched by our amazing anonymous donor. Think of joining the 2015 Festival of the Season committee, which will be gearing up in the fall of 2015. FOS is one of the biggest and best events we put on at USH all year, and we have a great time doing it!

Membership Sub-Council

Brian Harvey, Chair

*Members: Ginny Allen, Christina Davies, Ron Friedman, Zean Gassmann, Richard Groothuis, Diana Heymann
Esther McKone, Bruce Robbins, Rev. Heather Rion Starr*

Mission: To support the growth of the Society by: 1) promoting a congregation-wide culture of warmth and welcome to all visitors, newcomers and members; 2) fostering acceptance and respect for each person who enters the Meeting House; 3) providing information and orientation to visitors and new members about our faith and values; and 4) facilitating spiritual growth and community through involvement of newcomers and members in Society activities.

Accomplishments:

HELEN DAVID'S RETIREMENT: For the past 5 years, Helen David has been the face, friendly telephone voice, Sunday presence and tireless promoter of the membership efforts at USH. She handled all membership inquiries and correspondence, scheduled and assisted our welcome volunteers, kept track of newcomer and member activities in our church database, provided minutes for the Membership Sub-Council meeting, and helped in the facilitation of every MSC activity. Helen retired as Office Administrator in March of 2015 after providing the transitional training for her replacement, Linda Clark. We wish Helen the best in retirement and sincerely appreciate her contributions to our ongoing success.

EXTENDING OUR WELCOME: During the last year, about 50 USH members have taken part in our Sunday Welcoming effort, serving as ushers, greeters, and hosts at the Welcome and Visitors Tables. Linda Clark now takes care of the weekly "reminders" and "thank you's". Linda and Brian Harvey now produce the quarterly schedule of these assignments. We receive many comments from visitors and newcomers regarding how welcome they feel attending our worship services.

continued

Membership Sub-Council

continued

We made numerous brochures and pamphlets available to newcomers that answer all kinds of questions on a broad spectrum of topics. This information is both purchased from the Unitarian Universalist Association and produced by our staff and volunteers.

We actively reached out to The Village for Families and Children and enjoyed the participation and enthusiasm of the children and their supervisors at the *Festival of the Season* and the *Annual Picnic*.

NEWCOMER FOLLOW-UP: Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Linda Clark, Brian Harvey, Rayla Mattson and Brian Mullen (once a month) meet weekly to discuss our contacts with visitors and newcomers. Linda sends an email welcome to each visitor who signs the guest register. Rev. Heather also provides additional follow-up. The contact information is stored in our members and guests database.

MSC members host 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. These sessions are joined by Rev. Heather or Rev. Cathy and have grown into a small fellowship that serves as a starting point to encourage further engagement.

We worked 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 our Path to Membership series called **UU, USH & You**.

UU, USH & YOU: With the support of Rev. Heather, we continued to enhance **UU, USH & You** and offered the program in October 2014 and March 2015. This series consists of three 90-minute sessions that introduce the principles and history of our congregation and larger faith community and how they translate into ongoing church activities and practice. These workshops also provide newcomers the opportunity to begin to forge bonds and share new perspectives. The desire to start a young adult group emerged from the October 2014 series. The **Twenties / Thirties** group of young adults now has monthly meetings, a sense of identity and community and is the source for many of our new members. The March 2015 series discussed offering a little more "adventure" in our congregation's activities and we are investigating how to make that happen.

In December 2014 we recognized 10 new members since our previous new member ceremony in 2013. In May 2015, 20 new members signed the USH Membership Book.

ASSIMILATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING: We 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 2014; pancake breakfasts in November 2014, January and March of 2015; Newcomer/New Member Potluck in May 2015; and the annual church picnic in June 2015.

We coordinated with the Communications Sub-Council to produce our updated color USH Member & Friends Photo Directory in September 2014. This directory was published in both electronic and hardcopy versions and serves as a great tool for building connection within our congregation.

Plans For Next year: continue to integrate more newcomers, new members and young adults into Membership hospitality; Welcome Volunteer roles; Membership Sub-Council input and direction; research information from UUA regarding successful membership committee strategies; revisit **UU, USH and You** scheduling; conduct a family-oriented potluck and game night.

Performing Arts Sub-Council

Patrice Fitzgerald, Chair

*Members: Mattie Banzhaf, Christina Davies, Diana Heymann, Nancy Mandly
Mary-Anne Mulholland, Ed Savage, Edith Savage, Carol Sexton, Ron Sexton*

Mission: to plan for a variety of performance events throughout the year; provide opportunities for people from the

continued

Performing Arts Sub-Council

continued

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 the USH General Fund, or to break even so that no expenses are incurred; send creativity out into the universe.

Accomplishments: It has been a good if relatively quiet year for the Performing Arts Sub-Council. We have hosted a couple of very successful events, welcoming folks into our beautiful building while raising money, and plan for three more in May and June of 2015. Due to the general busyness of the church year, with the fall 2014 Auction, the Fiftieth Anniversary celebration, and the Installation in April 2015, there were plenty of wonderful doings!

As of this point in the season, Performing Arts events have earned a bit more than \$2,000.00. We anticipate that the total 2014-2015 proceeds will come to slightly more than that, since our final events include one benefit performance, one performer who is being paid, and one free event. Everything earned will be matched by an anonymous donor so that a grand total of at least \$4,000.00 will be contributed to the General Fund of USH.

Here is what we have presented this year to date: 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 thrilling benefit concert in December of 2014 that had great musical variety and was well attended. It was also wonderful to see the surprise guest, former cantor Melissa Paul—now married and pregnant—come back to visit and perform; USH choir member Richard Leslie gave a benefit concert that included classical and Broadway music, as well as a bit of trumpet. He was joined in a couple of duets by his singing wife (that would be the chair of this committee) and a good time was had by all.

Still to come this year: a “Dance Demo” featuring USH members and friends who attend the Ballroom Dance sessions Thursday nights. This will be a free event and will take place immediately after the service on May 31, 2015 down in Fellowship Hall; an organ recital by our excellent organist and pianist Cheryl Wadsworth. It will be great to hear her playing showcased at this concert, which will be held on Sunday, June 7, 2015 after the service. Cheryl leaves us at the end of this church year. The first reading of a brand-new comedy by rising playwright and USH friend Jacques Lamarre, to be followed by a reception, is also a benefit performance, and all profits will be matched. This will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2015, at 7:30.

Plans for Next Year: The Performing Arts Sub-Council will meet in the summer of 2015 to discuss how best to approach our role now that the new Co-Ministers are settled (literally) and we are getting a good grasp on our growing and evolving congregation. Exciting possibilities lay just ahead!

Unitarian Alliance Ministry to Women

Submitted by: Louise Schmoll

The UAMW, aka The Alliance, is steered by a small group of women, planning events as needed. With the extra time spent by many of us to smooth the way of our new ministers, we have had fewer Alliance activities than usual during this past year.

Mission: to 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: We began in October 2014 with our traditional retreat at Senexet House in Woodstock Connecticut. The Rev. Heather Rion Starr joined us for a few hours to learn about this unique retreat center. This is always a wonderful event and we encourage all women to join us for this weekend event next October. In December 2014 we coordinated a combined holiday luncheon for the Alliance and the Lunch Bunch. We heard holiday stories and collected gifts and gift cards for Interval House and the Open Hearth. In March 2015 Teresa Pelham presented a Program for All featuring her rescue dog, Roxy.

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Unitarian Alliance Ministry to Women

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She read one of the children's books she has written about her dogs and told us of her work rescuing puppies. In May 2015 we sponsored a bake sale for the benefit of the Society. We plan to hold our annual picnic in June 2015. We invite all women to join us for all our events.

We will again award Educational Grant(s) in June 2015, small sums of money to women pursuing additional education beyond high school; these grants have been awarded for more than 40 years. We receive no money from the Society budget but encourage all our friends to make a small donation to us annually to fund our programs. We do make annual contributions to the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, to the cost of mailing weekly newsletters to those without email access, and to the Society for the office support they provide to us.

Plans for Next Year: Watch the E-News for our June 2015 picnic date, our fall 2015 retreat date at Senexet and all other projects to come. Events stressing "Sisterhood" will always be on our agenda.

Council on Social Justice

Marye Gail Harrison, Chair

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.

Transitions marked this year for USH Social Justice ministry – transitions from Mike Winterfield's passionate chairmanship to Marye Gail Harrison's interim chair role to Rev. Cathy's arrival which brought inspiration and a larger vision of Social Justice. Rev. Cathy and I have been sorting through our list of Social Justice Sub-Councils to reflect the activity we have (as seen below) and also which Sub-Councils are dormant for now (e.g., Interweave & EquUal Access). We hope to update our organizational chart to reflect this reality shortly including on our USH updated website.

The year's primary lesson for me is that social justice is all about making life style choices to bring forth our best selves in keeping with the UU 7 Principles for living. Life style change is difficult at best but in our USH community it becomes possible as we inspire and support one another. We are not alone and we need not act alone whether the issues are the environment, gender, or racism or acting responsibly within our USH neighborhood including Noah Webster/Rawson school, The Village for Families & Children, Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry, Knox community gardens, or Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone of which USH is a part. As a congregation we have pledged ourselves to live and operate as both a Green Sanctuary and a Welcoming Congregation. These commitments require soul searching and difficult decisions collectively as we learned this year when the Board directed our Endowment Committee to divest our fossil fuel stocks at the recommendation of our Green Sanctuary Sub-Council.

In our Sunday Good Neighbor offerings of \$3,284. were also in transition this year and helped the work of Ebony Horsewomen, Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry, Knox Foundation, New England Region of GRACE, Village for Families & Children, and Zezzo House.

As you will see in the reports that follow from USH members actively involved in the issues above, there are many ways to grow personally and support a more just world. We are not alone with our life style changes creating a life of integrity in keeping with our values. Together much more is possible.

Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

Jeff Howard, Mary Sherwin, Co-Chairs

*Members: Brianna Bittel, Virginia de Lima, Gerry Dillenbeck, Lisa Galinski, Peter Magistri
Bev Prager (Chair Emeritus), Laurie Rollins, Ed Sax, Mike Winterfield*

Mission: to help our congregation live in harmony with and create a healthier world environment by spearheading

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Green Sanctuary Sub-Council

continued

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: The climate crisis continues to propel the Green Sanctuary Sub-Council. A number of us joined several thousand UUs and some 400,000 other kindred spirits in the People's Climate March on the streets of Manhattan in September 2014. We marched. We sang. We danced. We chanted. We cried. We marveled at the astonishing outpouring of humanity protesting this civilization's rush toward needless calamity.

After prolonged, difficult deliberation, Green Sanctuary's proposal for USH to purge its endowment of fossil fuel stocks was eventually resolved when the Board directed the Endowment Committee to sell all individual stocks in petroleum and coal interests. The Endowment continues to hold investments in mutual funds that contain small proportions of fossil fuel stock.

Participating in a UUA initiative on climate justice, the Sub-Council organized a well-received Earth Day service entitled "Committing to Respond." It consisted of music and readings exploring humanity's rich and rejuvenating but deeply dysfunctional relationship with "this jewel in space."

The annual holiday "Resale" raised several hundred dollars, some of which, as usual, was devoted to financing the Meeting House's purchase of electricity produced with 100 percent renewable energy.

In anticipation of 300 guests at the ministers' reception in April 2015, the Green Sanctuary Sub-Council partnered with our neighbors at the Watkinson School to borrow three recycling stations to (1) recover non-recyclable plastic flatware for reuse, (2) recycle plastic tumblers, and (3) dispose of paper plate trash.

Plans for Next Year: Green Sanctuary Sub-Council has begun an informal audit of the Meeting House's waste and recycling practices and infrastructure. When the audit is complete, we will propose the purchase of appropriately sized containers for recyclables and trash throughout the building. The Earth Day service served as a kick-off for an ongoing conversation with other members of the congregation on an agenda for high-profile congregation-wide environmental action in the coming year. We also look forward to applying for recertification of USH as a Green Sanctuary.

Information & Advocacy Sub-Council

Submitted by: Ed Savage

Ed Savage has been participating in the ongoing meetings of the Upper Albany and Blue Hills Neighborhood Revitalization Zones, the Upper Albany Collaborative, and the Boys and Girls Club located on Nahum Drive. The NRZs are voluntary associations who have a voice "at the table" about security and development issues in our neighborhood.

At other times, service teams including Brianna Bittel, Vanessa Gonzalez-Rivera, Rachel Gibson, and Brian Harvey helped promote events to local merchants and schools, wrap Christmas gifts for children, and set up and clean up for the National Neighborhood Night Out in August 2014. These services did not "do for" but rather did with key leaders and emerging voices in North Albany/ Blue Hills (an area stretching from Bloomfield Avenue down to Vine Street and over to the Bloomfield city line).

The Meeting House is recognized as a stake-holder in these neighborhoods (per the North Albany Civic Association), and we are beginning to understand the dynamics of the spectrum of players in those neighborhoods.

Dialogues on Race

Submitted by: Gloria Francesca Mengual

A group interested in social justice issues met in November 2014 to review the action steps identified during the race dialogues held earlier last year. Along with many of the race dialogue participants, several others associated with USH who

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Dialogues on Race

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are interested in racial equity also took part in this discussion. Gloria Francesca Mengual highlighted the action ideas that surfaced and reminded the group that the purpose of this first experience with race dialogues was to familiarize USH folk with the process in the hopes of having people commit to being part of a coalition to possibly move race dialogues or other equity efforts forward.

However, USH cannot 'be' the coalition, but rather, must be part of a larger effort with diverse constituencies and perspectives at the table. Growing that coalition will entail relationship-building within Hartford's communities. Having developed relationships with Hartford residents for some time now, Ed Savage noted during this meeting that we cannot go into Hartford to make recommendations to its residents about how to improve their quality of life. Rather, it needs to be more about asking what Hartford's residents want from us as we move forward together.

In January, 2015, approximately 25 from USH gathered to reflect upon the movie '*Selma*' the first of this year's *Great Discussions* series. Some reflected on Dr. King's insightful, outcome-related plans, along with his understanding of the power of the media on public perception as they moved forward. Some reflected upon scenes showing black residents being refused to register to vote, while others noted how many of us take this right for granted today. The movie's portrayal of Martin Luther King's ambivalence regarding the direction of the movement, along with his human weaknesses and doubts also were discussed, as was the role of President Lyndon Johnson. The viewing and reflections on this film served as a call to action within USH; all discussion participants requested to be added to the CONRACE mailing list (previously made up solely of race dialogue participants).

Among the items being considered for 2015 include making available to all age groups a film series about race, followed by discussions/reflections. Other ideas are in the early planning stages. Some say that we live in a color-blind, post-racial society now that we have an African American president and attorney general. That being said, police violence against unarmed black men continues in Ferguson, MO, Baltimore, MD, Hartford, CT etc., along with numerous other systemic inequities. There is SO much more to do; we are looking forward to a growing commitment at USH to work together to become aware of our own unconscious biases, as well as address racial/ethnic inequities around us.

The Village for Families and Children

Joanne Orlando, Liaison

The mission of our work with The Village for Families and Children is to expand our relationship - from neighbors to friendship. This year, the children from The Village participated in several activities at USH and became part of our family. Children from The Village attended our annual picnic, which gave many of us an opportunity to see them at play. It was described by one of the kids as "awesome". They felt right at home attending the Festival of the Seasons both in the craft rooms and the dinner that followed. During the summer of 2014 we raised \$1,635 for the Uniform and Backpack program, to help many children return to school in August 2014 proud and well-dressed. Over fifteen backpacks and pieces of luggage were donated to the Village by USH folk. Our goals for this year are to expand our relationship and involve more of our members with our next door neighbor that provides so much to our community.

Council on Spiritual Life

Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

Janice Newton, Chair

Members: Nancy Reed

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

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Programs for Adults & Families Sub-Council

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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: We have had a successful year. In October 2014, Rev. Heather led “A Walk with Henry (Thoreau)” at the West Hartford Reservoir. In spite of the rainy day, participants had a very enjoyable time. Ballroom Dance continued throughout the year with excellent attendance. The ever-popular “The Artist’s Way” was again offered. A workshop, “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven”, was facilitated by Kit Northup in the spring of 2015. We had Small Group Ministry sessions in the fall of 2014. New members and first-time SGMers as well as “veteran” participants shared the SGM experience. Susan Spaniol taught two sessions of, “Aging Mindfully.” Twenty-seven people attended one or the other workshop. One of the favorite events is the “Friday Night Pizza and Movie”, averaging 24 attendees at each movie. We appreciate all Nita Hansen does to make this monthly community interaction possible. Meditation, Authentic Connection and Communication (NVC), Tai Chi and Emei Qigong were again scheduled. A new Tai Chi class, Seated Tai Chi, was available in the spring. Great Decisions and Great Discussions, the USH Book Club, and the Meeting House Sing-A-Long were held throughout the year. Members and friends used their artistic talents in a one-time Felting class.

Our catalog is available and is constantly updated on the USH website. Printouts of our offerings are available at the Programs Table during Fellowship Hour.

We continue to offer a place to register for programs, learn about USH and be welcomed during Fellowship Hour. Many visitors, as well as members and friends of USH, stop by the Programs Table to check out the Book Cart, learn about or register for a program, or visit to get acquainted.

We have received excellent PR from Brian Harvey’s posters on the Kiosks and the TV in Fellowship Hall, the programs listed on our Website, articles about the programs and a current listing in the USH E-News of Programs for Adults and Families. Thank you to Brian and David. We also thank Brian Mullen, Helen David and Linda Clark for their help. We are looking forward to continuing to work with Rev. Cathy and Rev. Heather to provide exciting programs next year. If you have a program you would like to offer, please talk to us and fill out a program proposal form available at our webpage on the USH website.

Plans for Next Year: We plan to continue 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! Would you like to join us?

Music Committee

Mary-Anne Mulholland, Chair

The previous program year (2013/14) ended with the planned departure of our music director, Douglas-Jayd Burn. Mr. Burn left his position at USH to pursue his doctoral degree. His farewell concert and final worship service celebrations were well attended. The congregation's appreciation for his considerable talents at the organ and the piano was reflected in the generous purse collected from member donations for that specific purpose.

After a series of interviews and auditions the position of music director was offered to Gretchen Saathoff. Ms. Saathoff started in July of 2014. In August of 2014 our newly called ministers, the Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr, took office. Later in September 2014 Ms. Saathoff abruptly gave notice of her immediate resignation. The Board accepted her resignation. The music committee moved quickly to ask Rebecca Pacuk, one of our choral scholars, to conduct our rehearsals. Pi-Hsun Shih agreed to play piano on Sundays until we could make other arrangements.

The composer in residence program is on hiatus this year due to the lack of a music director. The music director oversees the work of the composer in residence, consults with the composer and the faculty at Hartt so that the composer can receive course credit.

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Music Committee

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The Board charged Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Martha Bradley, chair of the Council on Spiritual Life and Mary-Anne Mulholland, Chair of the Music Committee, to develop a plan for interim hires. The Music Committee recommended and the Board approved the hiring of Rebecca Pacuk as Acting Choral Director and Cheryl Wadsworth as Interim Accompanist to cover the remainder of the church year to June 2015. While covering our immediate need for Sunday music these hires left open the position of music director and left open the question of who has responsibility for the management of the music budget. Rev. Cathy has been making most of those decisions in consultation with the Music Committee. The expenditures for choral scholars and guest musicians has been well below the usual.

The tradition of presenting special music Sunday services twice a year continued with the Faure Requiem in the fall of 2014 and a Jazz Sunday service in February 2015. The Faure Requiem was presented in conjunction with the Fern Street Universalist choir. In April 2015 the choir joined with other guest musicians to offer music at the Installation.

Planning for the future continues. Pi-Hsun Shih will play for the summer 2015 services. The Music Committee is currently advertising for an Accompanist to start in September 2015 and continue to June 2016. Rebecca Pacuk will continue as Acting Choral Director until December 2015.

The Board has charged the Music Staffing Transition Team to assess and plan for long term music staffing needs. That team has been formed, is meeting and has plans to meet with an outside consultant sometime in June 2015. The team includes members of the music committee, the worship committee chair, a human resources representative and representatives of other stakeholders in our congregation. The team has already reviewed some previously gathered information regarding music needs including a well drafted Five Year plan developed two years ago. There will be more to come as the Music Staffing Transition Team reaches out to the congregation.

The current Chair of the Music Committee, Mary-Anne Mulholland, is stepping down from that position after two years. Patrice Fitzgerald has graciously accepted the position of Chair.

Many thanks to all who made this year possible: To Rebecca Pacuk for stepping up without hesitation; to Cheryl Wadsworth, for sharing her talents as organist and church musician; to Rev. Cathy for leading us through the first of many years together; to Pi-Hsun Shih, who has made numerous Sunday services not only possible but beautiful; to Patrice Fitzgerald for the vision and joy that she will bring to the music committee; to all the members of the Music Committee for their time, energy, steadfastness and commitment to bringing the best worship music to this congregation week in and week out; and finally, thanks to all members the USH Chancel Choir who work so hard week after week, month after month and year after year.

Religious Education Sub-Council

Rayla Mattson, Director of Religious Education

Nina Elgo, Betsy Olguin, Co-Chairs

Members: Ginny Allen, Jan Bennett, Martha Bradley, Kristen Pildis, Rev. Cathy Rion Starr

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

Accomplishments: At the end of last year (June of 2014), we had a core group of about 30 children who were regularly attending classes. As USH welcomed its new settled ministers in the Fall of 2014, the Religious Education program saw an influx of children. At present, we have 80 children who have attended the RE program, with an average regular attendance of 45. In the Fall of 2014, we hired additional nursery staff because of the influx of infants and toddlers.

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Religious Education Sub-Council

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We continued our very successful Chapel service which takes place once a month during the first 15 minutes of the worship service. The Director of Religious Education leads a separate worship service where the children assist with 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.

This year, we worked on ways of incorporating the children and youth into the worship service. The story, "Lucia and the Light" was woven throughout one service, with the children acting out the story as it was narrated. On other occasions, they have danced, used puppets and pictures and most notably, carried out a flash mob during the Installation service of our new Co-Ministers. They are developing new skills and they enjoy being a part of the service and sharing with the congregation what they are learning and how they are developing.

This year the DRE joined, LREDA, which is a professional organization for liberal religious educators. She has also joined an online cluster group with other DREs from around the country that allows for support and the sharing of ideas.

The Youth Group has once again logged over fifty hours of outreach work making soup, preparing lunch, and doing a holiday stocking stuffer/toiletries drive for the homeless at Church St. Eats. In November 2014, they raised over \$1,000 for My Sisters' Place by sleeping-out in boxes. They are developing leadership skills by choosing subjects of interest and concern to them and facilitating group discussions. They choreographed the flash mob for the Installation service and taught it to the younger children who performed with them. They are planning a visit to Ebony Horsewomen Stables in addition to planning their annual Youth Group service.

Our middle school students have used the show "The Simpsons" as a vehicle for studying social norms. The class has a focus on learning through creativity and on ways to discuss different topics. The class has increased in size and they take their time together seriously, often choosing to meet on weeks when there is no formal RE program.

The third through fifth grade class has grown in size, with 5-10 children attending each week, most of them being boys. They have focused on non-violent communication and the issue of bullying. They have performed several skits during the church service and are most proud of the one they wrote on bullying.

The Pre-Kindergarten through second grade class is currently our smallest class. Several nursery students moved up this year and new members and friends have joined in. This program looked at how the students saw the world around them and then used classics from Dr. Seuss to explore Unitarian Universalism concepts. This group will experience a larger growth next year as several of our nursery students will be moving up.

The nursery group has experienced tremendous growth, with over 10 infants and toddlers attending regularly. The program has expanded to a larger room and from two weekly caregivers to three. The vitality of this age group has had a positive impact on visitors, who have not only returned but have brought others with them. We have recently started a regular program that includes a bi-monthly theme, circle time, story telling, and an introduction to basic UU concepts and themes.

Plans for Next Year: We will continue to work towards our goals outlined in the mission statement. Our most pressing needs are for an expanded Religious Education Sub-Council, new teachers and assistants (as several long-time teachers are "retiring"), and more on-call people available to help out at the last minute. We will purchase new curriculum materials to better meet our current classroom needs. In conjunction with our Co-Ministers we will continue to involve and incorporate the youth and children in the morning worship service. The Director of Religious Education will continue making connections with other UU congregations and organizations in Connecticut and around the country as well continuing to maintain membership in LREDA and other professional groups. Finally, the Religious Education Sub-Council will continue our efforts to make more meaningful connections with groups here within the congregation as we expand on the connections and interactions we have established.

Small Group Ministry

Esther McKone, Bill Shoemaker, Co-Chairs

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

This past year was marked by new developments in SGM and in Adult Programs for the congregation. Two traditional groups were offered in Fall 2014. Ron Friedman facilitated a group in West Hartford with Kathie Ferguson as host. David Newton facilitated a group in Farmington with Janice Newton as host. Our special-topic SGM was the Spirituality SGM with readings focused on faith. Marye Gail Harrison facilitated this at our Meeting House in Hartford, with Kayla Costenoble as host.

The Family-Friendly SGM returned during the winter/spring term. Ginny Allen facilitated a group of eight adults and eight children. This SGM met six times on Friday nights at the Meeting House. It included childcare and a meal shared by all participants. A Family-Friendly SGM will again be offered in the fall of 2015.

Our new offering was the Conscious Aging SGM facilitated by Susan Spaniol. This group met for eight sessions in Hartford, at the home of Bruce Robbins, host. It was followed up by a six-session workshop on Conscious Aging, taught by Susan Spaniol and offered through Adult Programs. Plans include offering both the Conscious Aging SGM and the Conscious Aging workshop next year. Consciousness of Aging represents a topic that is growing nationally, both the SGM and the workshop were well received by the congregation.

One of the most positive events of this past year was the offering of an SGM for SGM facilitators that was guided by Rev. Heather Rion Starr. It was held at the home of Bill Shoemaker. We had three two-hour sessions in January 2015 that included readings and responses to questions. These sessions proved to be very well received by the facilitators; they were grateful that Rev. Heather offered it to them.

The need for a two-hour session every week or so, where people can reflect on their feelings, fears and joys in a trusted environment is still strong. The SGM Steering Committee will continue to try to fill that need for USH.

Worship Arts Sub-Council

Margaret Leicach, Chair

Members: Laurie Kelliher, Ann LaPorte-Bryan, Edith Savage, Sue Smolski

*Worship Associates: Katherine Ann Anderson, John Brancato, Mike Covault, Laurie Kelliher
Ann LaPorte-Bryan, Margaret Leicach, Sara Logan, Edith Savage, Sue Smolski*

Mission: to assist the Co-Ministers 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: We bid a fond farewell to our Interim Minister, The Rev. David Johnson, and welcomed with enthusiasm our new Settled Co-Ministers, the Revs. Cathy and Heather Rion Starr. Over the past ten months we have begun to get to know one another and to craft a new way of working together.

Especially during our interim years, Worship Arts had primary responsibility for about 1/3 of the services each calendar year. This year our ministers began to take an active role in designing and guiding the services that occur when they are not in the pulpit as well as leading two summer worship services. In addition, they designed and lead a training for those interested in learning more about the art of creating worship and the pool of Worship Associates increased from five to nine.

Two fiscal years ago, 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 new ministers; 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 opportunity for children of all ages in Sunday morning service.

We remain committed to last year's 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

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Worship Arts Sub-Council

continued

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; moving our worship forward into the twenty-first Century!

Plans for Next Year: learn the style and preferences of our new Co-Ministers and build a mutually supportive and collaborative working relationship; continue to work toward the seven goals from two years ago and expand on these goals in collaboration with our new Co-Ministers; continue to increase transparency to the congregation about what Worship Arts Sub-Council does and how it does it and expand our ability to incorporate feedback; continue to expand the number of members who participate in worship services, both as a Worship Associates 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.