

# First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco

2023 - 2024 Annual Report



## **Table of Contents**

### **Senior Minister's Annual Report to the Congregation**

### **Minister for Congregational Life's Annual Report to the Congregation**

### **Minutes from 2023-24 Congregational Meetings**

- June 4, 2023 - Annual Meeting
- May 19, 2024 - Budget Meeting (minutes will be added before the Annual Meeting)

### **UUSF Committees and Groups Reports**

- 20s and 30s Community (TnT)
- Affiliated Community Ministry (Rev. Seanan Fong)
- Affiliated Community Ministry (Rev. Millie Phillips)
- Animal Ministry
- Facilities Advisory Committee
- Finance Committee
- Forum
- Human Rights Working Group
- Interfaith Food Pantry
- Journey to Wholeness/Racial Equity Task Force
- Membership Committee
- Music Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Partner Church Committee
- Pastoral Care
- Rheiner Award Committee
- Society for Community Work Council
- Winter Shelter

## Annual Report to the Congregation

Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern, Senior Minister

June 2, 2024

**Overall:** The church feels to me like it is in a very strong place right now. We have a team of deeply competent, warm and gifted **staff**. Emma Wakeling's start as Membership and Young Adult Manager filled our last big hole in programming and administrative support. We are putting in place systems and following up on members and figuring out how to support our ministries and lay leaders in ways that are repeatable. The staff is committed to our vision and works seamlessly together — which takes intention and attention to happen as well as it does — and we enjoy working together.

We are also in a strong **financial position**, something that is due to a few key efforts:

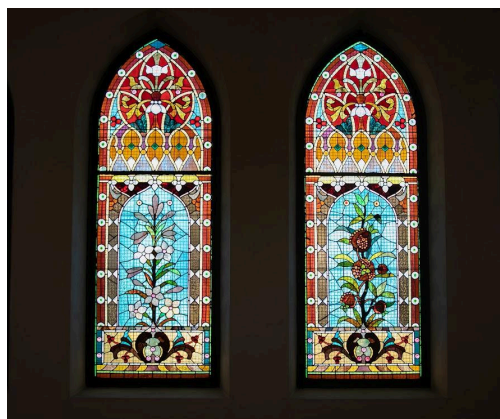
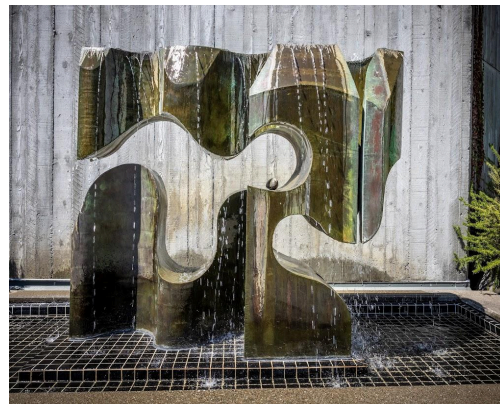
- First, the negotiation and signing of the Montessori Lease with so much skilled leadership by Kathleen Quenneville, whose superpower is negotiation;
- Second, our successful pledge campaign, led so ably by Jack and Sherry Delo who reminded us of the joy and gift and truth of “UU’ve Got a Friend in We.” We also have Alicia Cover to thank for coordinating and supporting so many of the logistics with Jack and Sherry for this campaign! As of the writing of this report we reached the pledge goal with almost full participation;
- Third, thanks to Susana Bernahola, our Reservations Manager, and Dan Barnard, our Facilities Manager, and our team of full and part-time sextons — Roberto Dela’o, Thomas Brown, Matías Pineda, Francisco Castellanos, Remigio Flood and Kelvin Jones — we are making great headway in recovering to pre-pandemic use of our space.
- Finally, Laura Ludwig, our Director of Operations, has helped us clean up our financial practices and records over her 4 1/2 years at the Society (with lots of help from Judy Strachan). She brings her financial, HR, operational and administrative gifts to UUSF but also a guiding sense of what it means to do this work in the milieu of a value-centered community.



We are also growing incarnationally together in a key way that Paula Cole Jones named as vital to cultural changes we UU's need to make. We are learning how to lean into healthy, good disagreement and conflict. **I see us having more and more hard conversations in ways that build deeper understanding and a shared way forward.** We are learning practical tools and having leaders trained in what it means to hold one another lovingly accountable for our covenant (which itself was created this January). And we are developing more and more trust in one another as we do this work. To me, all of this helps position us to being able to serve our mission more boldly, risk change, and reach out and welcome new folks more faithfully, all of which is vital for a vital future at UUSF.

**Worship:** This year we launched the Worship Advisory Group to help look at the start of the year at what we include in worship, how we lead worship, who is involved and whether this serves our mission and vision and how to make sure we ensure it does! That team included Kat Liu, Carlowe Connolly, Bill Lowell, Laura Shennum, Mark Sumner and Reiko Oda Lane and the amazing Worship Associates who unfailingly created meaningful reflections, were co-creators of so many worships, and this year also supported all the sabbatical services in my absence. Thank you Dennis Adams, Carmen Barsody, Richard Davis-Lowell, Daniel Jackoway, Sam King, and Mari Magaloni Ramos. I'm so grateful to Mark Sumner and Reiko Oda Lane, who lead our vocal and bell choirs, respectively, and also bring both the expertise of their craft and a vision and enthusiasm for the quality of our music program. They also build community through the music program at UUSF in ways that deepen all members who are involved and connected to those programs. Mark and Reiko are treasured partners in creating beautiful services each week!

This year we have also created a group to look at Arts in Worship and Our Shared Life, in hopes of infusing more of the arts into our "search for truth and meaning" together at U USF. I expect you'll see more fruits of that effort next year — the Dirty Cello concert after service was one of the first of our efforts, and more are coming up in early June. Thank you to everyone who contributed at last year's Auction to the Fund-a-Need that will give us the money to help launch some of these efforts. Stay Tuned!



## **Larger Service: The Interfaith Council of San Francisco:**

This is my 6th and final year on the SF Interfaith Council. It is also my last year as Chair of that organization. My ability to serve with the SFIC has been a wonderful chance to get to meet and work with religious and civic leaders of all different faith traditions, serving the common mission to build a stronger San Francisco, infused by the best of our shared values. I will leave the SFIC with a strategic plan outlined, and one year of objectives under our belt. I am proud of that work which positions the organization, in its objectives, for taking the



next step in its organizational evolution. And I also look forward to having some time freed up to pursue other ways to serve in a larger, public capacity — likely rekindling our connection to Faith in Action, a more activist faith alliance in the city, and reaching out to support the San Francisco and California Reparations Advisory Councils and that work.



**Sabbatical:** I suppose it is safe to say that this year the congregation felt strong enough and stable enough (for all the reasons named above and others) that I felt comfortable taking three straight months of sabbatical. That also meant I missed 1/4 of our year together. What I found, however, when I returned, was a sense of pride in all that had been accomplished in those three months — the worship services, the covenanting process, creating a process for hanging banners in public witness, and weathering all else that arose in that time. I suppose that is always part of what sabbatical does: it gives the minister a chance to replenish the well, reflect (“get up on the balcony” as Kennedy School Professor of

Leadership, Ron Heifetz would say), and come back with fresh eyes and energy; and it also breaks some patterns of how the minister and congregation are together. For example, when ministers are forced to step out and members are allowed/needed to step forward, all of that can shake roles and dynamics up in good ways.

We were lucky to have the Rev. Sonya Sukalski for some of the time as a sabbatical support minister (made possible by the Hinckley Grant money we received) and Aisha Hauser to lead our covenanting workshop (also paid for with Hinckley money). Most of all, though, we had Rev. Shennum at the helm, holding it all together and deepening her ministry with UUSF and leading and holding the community with aplomb. Her leadership and partnership has been such a gift to me. I cannot imagine anyone with more wisdom and grit and warmth who can step in capably in so many different ways. Much gratitude for you, Laura!

For my part, as you may know if you heard my March 24th sermon, “Lessons from the Road,” sabbatical was a gorgeous reset. After all that these last six years have required it was such a gift to slow down, let go of the vigilance that I had started to make my norm (waiting for something to go wrong), and to reconnect with family, reconnect with myself, heal, and be inspired in gorgeous natural places. I am still reflecting on what my next chapter will look like at UUSF. Certainly more arts at UUSF, more reclaiming of our civic role (and mine as part of that), and perhaps the book that I have been circling around for the last 10 years that is the one I most want to get out into the world (a draft of which I had when I arrived in San Francisco). Thank you all for making a sabbatical time possible for me.

### **8th Principle Work:**

When we approved the 8th Principle work we affirmed the “accountability” part of that too. We placed the locus of that at the Board/Executive Staff level but also created the the Journey Toward Wholeness/Racial Equity Select Committee of the Board, to be our partner in coordinating and supporting that work. I want to thank JTW/RE for being in the work of figuring out together what accountability for our commitment to dismantling white supremacy culture in our institutions and in our lives, and making Beloved Community more operational in how we are together looks like. I will let Cal Ball, the new chair, expound on the JTW/RE work in his report. I have also seen our commitment to the 8th Principle reflected in other ways that include things as broad as:

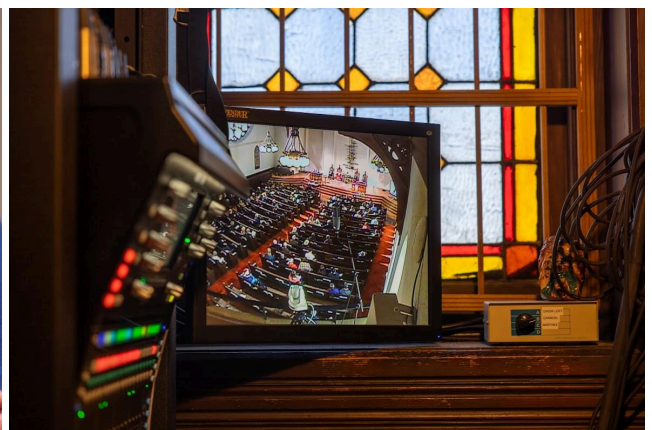


- Hiring Practices: Putting into practice the equity-infused practices that came out of our work last year with Edgility Consulting in the hiring of our Membership/Young Adult Manager and our Intern...and constantly reflecting on and tweaking those practices;
- Minister’s Book Group: Including in the books we read more and more authors who are non-white, non-straight and also subjects of use to us in this work. This year, among the books we read were Solito by Javier Zamora, Gender Queer by Maia Kobabe, Starry Messengers by Neal deGrasse Tyson, and the UUA Common Read, Repentance and Remorse by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (with whole chapters on national and societal harm and that work of repair and repentance). We’ll finish the year with Hijab Butch Blues by Lamya H.;
- White Fragility: Continuing our commitment to giving the congregation some common vocabulary for this work we led another group in discussion of White Fragility this fall.
- Interrupting Harm: We continue to introduce tools for interrupting harm, including training leaders, discussing the “Oops, Ouch, Whoa” tool, and inviting Daniel Jackoway to lead a bystander training workshop in the fall.

## Thanks also:

There are so many particular groups, whose efforts I see and appreciate, to thank; I'll name just a few more. Thank you to....

- The Board of Trustees, who are the real partners to the Executive Team (me, Rev. Shennum and Dir. Ludwig) as we steer the work and ministries of the church at the highest levels. We are so grateful for all the hours you put in and the important role you play in keeping us honest to our by-laws and our dreams for ourselves as a community;
- The Committee on Ministry for being a trusted set of advisors and important conduit for feedback and accountability;
- The Personnel Committee for being another trusted set of advisors as we make sure we are living our values as UUs in our policies, benefits, and role as employer. Also, this group did a big lift in creating with me and carrying out an extensive professional evaluation, that was both affirming and gave me some ways to focus my professional development and ministry going forward. I'm greatly appreciative of all this took;
- The AV Team under the leadership of Jonathan Silk, who does so much to make our online presence, livestream worship and digital outreach strong and always growing stronger. His regular team of Eric Shackelford and Shulee Ong are devoted to those we reach only through cameras and Wi-Fi!



- Our Human Rights Working Group and Forum leaders, especially Jeff Pekrul, Dolores Perez Heilbron and Bruce Neuberger. You have kept many issues in front of us this year. The Forum draws 20 people regularly to breakfast and to learn from amazing speakers you arrange each week, who address issues from animal rights to housing, highlighting human rights issues local

and around the globe. In addition, this year, when lots of churches and communities have been divided around the violence that began on October 7th and the unfolding of the horrific destruction and loss of life in Gaza that was Israel's ongoing response, you have kept this issue in front of the congregation, moved to get a banner in support of ceasefire hung, and stayed in the work of being in conversation with people in ways that invite others in. These are painful and challenging times for dialogue. But modeling how to weather complicated moments of political and other differences as they arise in the world and among us is a gift not just now, but in all the issues to come. I hope we find ways to use our shared power to move efforts for an end to suffering and a lasting peace in Israel and Palestine. Thank you all for leading us in many of these hard and crucial conversations and debates, and finding places for shared action;

- You. Each year it takes me forever to sign the pledge thank you letters (sorry Jack and Sherry and Alicia) mostly because each one has me looking at the name(s) on top and caught up thinking about how much I appreciate each of the people each letter is addressed to. I am

grateful not only for each person's generous pledge but more rattling off in my head all the ways they give and serve. Everyone gives so much of themselves to our common life. And even if your only act of service is your presence on Sunday, your warmth and welcome to others, your thoughtfulness and invitation to connect — that is also an incredible gift. I cannot write all of what I love about all of you, but please know that I am aware of how the beauty and strength of our community is better — is anything at all worth celebrating — because of each of you. To those of you who are new, I know the same is already true of you, and look forward to getting to meet and know you.



For all that is our life, as the hymn goes, I give thanks. It was another beautiful, hard, rich, gorgeous, painful, brutal, full life together — an Extravaganza, you might say. Blessings and gratitude to all who made it so.

In faith, Vanessa





**Annual Report to the Congregation**  
**Rev. Laura Shennum, Minister of Congregational Life**  
**June 2, 2024**

Children/Youth Programming

We had 39 children/youth register for our programming this year, which included 28 families.

Our Nursery/Pre-K class explored simple themes through the Rainbow Connection curriculum led by teachers Brenaja Cates, Conor Shennum, and recently hired Vivien Ng. This classroom is our fastest growing class at this time.

Our Elementary Class explored the values identified in the proposed Article II through a Soul Matters curriculum. The K-2 class was led by new teacher Charu Sharma with a volunteer assistant. In February and March, the K-1 graders participated in Our Whole Lives Sexuality curriculum led by Christine Patch-Lindsay and Simmy Cover. The 3-5 graders were led by Sam King and a volunteer assistant.

Our Middle School and High School classroom explored values in the proposed Article II through a Soul Matters curriculum. This class was led by teachers Diana Bacon and Helen Everbach.

In addition, the K-12 graders had a monthly service project they did. They have made toys for dogs/cats in shelters; caring bags for people unsheltered; cooked treats for coffee hour and many more. We also had two Children's Chapels with themes of loss/grief and beloved community.



We had a full event calendar, and here is a list of the many events from this year:

August - Extravaganza of Joy

September - Annual Waffle Breakfast & Opening Sunday

October - Parent/Guardian Education Event; Halloween Party

November - Elementary Field Trip; Extravaganza of Joy

December - Parent/Guardian Night Out; Christmas Eve Pageant

January - Parent/Guardian Education Event; Monthly Parent Group started

February - Monthly Parent Group; participated in Interfaith Food Pantry

March - Cooked Winter Shelter Dinner; Monthly Parent Group; Annual BBQ; Easter Egg Hunt

April - Monthly Parent Group

May - Youth Worship Service; All Church Retreat; Extravaganza of Joy

June - End of Year Party!



My collaboration partners were the Family Ministry Committee, chaired by Sara Ferree. Other members were Denielle Kronenberg, Jay Gupta, Robert Jumonville, Christine Patch Lindsay, and Alicia Cover. The committee held a retreat in August 2023 and identified the following goals:

1. Welcoming and supporting families;
2. Growing and maintaining retention in classrooms;
3. Intentionally increase visibility within the wider congregation. They helped greet new families on Sunday mornings and created a bulletin board in the gallery.

Sara is stepping down as chair of the committee and Dennielle Kronenberg has agreed to step into the position. Thank you, Sara, for your leadership over the past two years! We will be joined in the summer by new committee members Vicki Lang and Diana Bacon.

Our Religious Education staff have been amazing! Alicia Cover, as the Religious Education Coordinator, ensured our classrooms are ready, planned the curriculum for our PreK/Nursery class, and so much more. She is an asset to our staff and manages the chaos of her positions so well.



Our littlest UUs were cared for by long-time staff member Brenaja Cates and Conor Shennum. A new staff person was hired for this classroom, Vivien Ng, to ensure we have safe staffing for the ages who attend. I also hired Charu Sharma to lead our K-2 grade classroom. All have done a great job in providing a nurturing, joyful environment for our children to thrive. In addition, we had three super volunteers (meaning they volunteered almost all Sundays over the past year): Sam King, Helen Everbach, and Diana Bacon. They worked with our older students and provided a great space for the students to explore, question, and have fun. In addition to the paid staff and super volunteers, we have had over 13 volunteers help in our classrooms.

### Adult Spiritual Growth

The Minister's Book Group was led for part of the year by Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern; when she was on sabbatical, Asani Seawell stepped in to lead. Rev. Vanessa and I led a 3 week group for the UUA Common Read, "On Repentance and Repair." In addition, Rev. Vanessa led a discussion of "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo.



Rev. Jon Buehrens led two classes this year. The first in the Fall focused on Hebrew Scripture and the second in the Spring focused on Christian Scripture.

The Small Group Ministry launched in October. We had 4 groups with 25 participants total. Groups met in person at UUSF or on Zoom depending on the comfort level of the facilitators and participants. Two groups disbanded or combined with another group in January due to lack of a facilitator or no longer being able to meet at scheduled time. This program will be re-imagined for the Fall of 2024.



Elena Perez continues to lead two meditation groups, one on Thursday mornings and the other on Friday mornings over Zoom. There has been consistent attendance and many participants are grateful for the space.

I coordinated and helped facilitate a workshop for UUSF to develop a Congregational Covenant along with Aisha Hauser and Rev. Sonya Sukalski. We then presented the draft covenant to the congregation on Sun, Jan 28.

### Pastoral Care

I continue to partner with our Senior Minister and Lay Chaplains to provide pastoral care support to members and friends of the congregation. In addition to visits and phone calls, I have officiated memorial services for Don Williams, Cathy Lyon, and Claire Horn.

A Lay Chaplain, Bruce Clements, offered a grief group in the fall and I continued to facilitate from January through May. This group will pause until the fall.

### Ouch, Oops, and Whoa Work

We continue to step into this difficult work as a congregation. I was asked to provide space for 5 different conversations which involved an ouch, oops, or whoa this year. I am working with our Healthy Congregations Team (formerly known as Right Relations) to develop a charter and to start bringing the team into this work.



### Staff Hiring

I led the hiring process for the new Membership & Young Adult Manager. This process took from October through December. I was assisted by hiring team members Jordan Ong, Sam King, and Carrie Steere-Salazar. We used materials and processes developed by our racial equity consultants, Edgility. For a full report on that hiring, you can visit [this document](#).

In addition, during Rev. Vanessa's sabbatical I stepped into lead the hiring of a new Intern Minister for the 2024-25 church year. The hiring team members were John Meliska, Shulee Ong, Luanne Schulte, and Mary Jane Mikuriya. For a full report on that hiring you can visit [this document](#).

Overall, it was a very full year! I am grateful for our staff, who work beautifully together to provide a consistent, energetic atmosphere for our congregation. I am grateful for the partnership with Rev. Vanessa and Director of Operations Laura Ludwig as fellow Executive Staff Team members.

Thank you for a great year and I look forward to our continued journey together.

Blessings,

Rev. Laura Shennum

**FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO ANNUAL  
MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION  
HYBRID MEETING, HELD IN-PERSON AT UUSF AND ONLINE ON ZOOM  
JUNE 4, 2023**

The meeting was brought to order by Jonah Berquist at 12:55pm.

Rev Laura read a poem.

The Parliamentarian Bob Bacon was introduced.

Tellers were introduced: Scott Benbow and Linda Enger.

Jonah referred to the agenda which was posted on the big screen on the stage. No changes were requested by the assembled members.

It was moved by David King and seconded by Amy Kelly to approve the minutes from last year's annual meeting. Motion carried.

It was moved and seconded (didn't get by whom) to approve the Board Candidates: Sam King, Megan Lehmer, Linda Enger, Galen Workman and Lori Lai and the Nominating Committee candidates: Hannah Hart, Rob Packenham, Teresa Goebel, and Erica Murray. Motion carried.

Bob Bacon read the required text for the May Treat Morrison annual gift. The amount for FY 22/23 was \$9241.00.

Annual Reports:

From Rochelle Fortier Nwadibia was read by Jonah because she is ill and was unable to attend the meeting.

Rev Vanessa referred to written annual reports she and Rev Shennum.

Vote on bylaw amendment introduced by Scott Benbow. There was discussion. Vote taken. Motion passed.

It was announced that Amy Kelly and Scott Benbow would be leaving the board.

Rev Vanessa named the people who had died in the past year:

Sonia Dufoo

Charles Freas

Janine Bray

Raj Desai

Carol Johnson

Don Heyneman

Louise Heyneman

Meeting was adjourned by Jonah at 2:00pm.

## 20s and 30s Community (TnT)

Staff Member: Emma Wakeling, Membership & Young Adult Manager



### Overview:

During the months that the YA Group didn't have a staff lead, members of our Young Adult community stepped up to help keep the group active. A big thank you to Santana McBride for organizing social events during this time! Another big thank you to Alicia Cover for getting people connected to the WhatsApp group and sharing communications about activities. Others participated by maintaining good energy in the group chat and showing up for events.

Since joining the staff team as Membership & Young Adult Manager in January, I've been working on getting regular activities and communications back on track. I've focused on learning from current members and by reviewing past activities about what has worked and what changes could be brought in. I'm looking forward to doing work which will aim to deepen relationships, reach more young adults, and support members to take more ownership of the group. Thank you to all for your warm welcome and open sharing of ideas!

### Activities:

#### 1. **Young Adult Meet-Ups**

Since March we've increased our meet-ups from once to twice a month, holding 5 events so far. Two of these were co-organized with young adult members. Thanks to Ruth Wong for organizing a lunch with the Bay Area Effective Altruists. We got to meet young adults new to UUSF and have great conversations about some of the biggest challenges of our time. Thanks also to Tad Hopp for inviting us to his softball team's (triumphant!) first game of the season. It was an exciting game in a beautiful setting.

In the past, most events have taken place on Sundays after service. This is often a busy time for church-wide programs, so we've tried holding our meet-ups during other times of the week as well, so that young adults have the chance to attend these events too.

There have been challenges around low attendance for some events, with turn-out ranging from 22 people to 2. We will continue experimenting with different kinds of activities and schedules to see what works best for members.

## 2. Staying in Touch

The Young Adult newsletter (The Dynamite) has been revived, with a full edition sent every two weeks, and event reminders going out in between. As well as young adult events, it has been a great place to share opportunities from the wider UUSF community who have wanted to reach this part of the community.

We have an active WhatsApp group which has been a great place to have conversations and check in about ideas and upcoming events. The Facebook group has also been revived. Although the group is very quiet, a few people have found out about the young adult group through this page, so it's good to have it active again for people looking to get involved.

## 3. Gathering Feedback

An anonymous survey has been sent out via the various communication channels, to gather feedback and ideas from the young adult community. Although there have only been a few responses so far, they have been very insightful and have informed activity planning and goals of the group. This survey will stay open and be shared regularly.





## Affiliated Community Ministry

Report by Rev. Seanan Fong



It has been a blessing to re-engage with my ministry and the community of UUSF over much of the last year, since my Affiliated Community Ministry agreement was approved on September 24, 2023 at a special congregational meeting.

I am honored to have the support of UUSF as I seek to serve the spiritual needs of the broader SF community in formats that meet them where they are. To that end, my community ministry is to build the San Francisco Contemplarium, a new civic institution tending to the hearts and spirits of San Franciscans through contemplative public spaces, programming, accompaniment, and community-building. Made by and for San Franciscans and serving the public across diverse backgrounds, practices, and beliefs, the Contemplarium will become a contemplative “third place” that anybody can go to for human support and solidarity at any moment in life.

As an individual who both happens to be a UU minister and who happens to be the founder of the SF Contemplarium, I am grateful for the moral support of the UU community in San Francisco in pursuing this work. The work it will take to build a civic institution like the SF Contemplarium must draw from the strength of San Francisco’s spiritual communities, and I am so grateful for UUSF’s power as a “religious center with a civic circumference” to be a pillar of inspiration for my work contributing to this cause.



Highlights of the past church year include:

- Transitioning from my previous role as a designer to work on community ministry full-time
- Continuing to host Reflection Stands in public spaces, including at UUSF after Sunday service (pictured), and other pilot programming
- Connecting with many of the new in-person communities popping up after the pandemic to initiate collaborations to serve their spiritual needs
- Participating in the UUA's new UU Cultivators Collaborative to incubate innovative spiritual communities, and securing fiscal sponsorship from the UUA's partner Beloved
- Receiving the generous support of the Hinckley Fund to help make our next steps possible

In the coming year, I look forward to engaging the congregation in more of the Contemplarium's work as that unfolds.



Over the past year at UUSF, I have also had the pleasure of preaching for the Lunar New Year on February 7, "The Dragon's Might: A Lunar New Year Celebration," which explored our spiritual response to seeing the suffering of homelessness. In preparation for that sermon, I was blessed with the wisdom of our own Carmen Barsody of the Faithful Fools, and with a joyful collaboration alongside worship associate Kat Liu.

I have also greatly enjoyed showing up for other congregational events and slowly getting to know more of the congregation. I hope to have many more conversations with folks at UUSF – please say “hi” the next time you see me around – I would love it! UUSF continues to inspire me personally as a wellspring of spirit and care.

Thank you again for your support of my community ministry.



## Affiliated Community Ministry

Report by Community Minister Rev. Millie Phillips



I am happy to report that I have now been working for 2 ½ years as the “faith-rooted organizer” in Contra Costa County for the Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy (FAME), a project of the Oakland-based nonprofit the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE). Highlights of the last year include passing significant tenant protections in the cities of Concord and Antioch. Currently, I am working on preparing a large event: an all-day training on faith-rooted organizing, to be held June 1, preceded by a FAME dinner on May 31.

Another significant accomplishment this past year was receiving my first renewal for preliminary fellowship (i.e., maintaining my status as a minister in good-standing with the UUMA).

In addition to leading a May Day-themed service last 4-30-23 – sermon entitled a “A May Day Convergence” – I have planned and preached at two services for our church:

- 9-3-23 Good Job! (Labor Day theme)
- 1-7-24 Promises of the Heart (kicking off our covenanting process)

As a person who identifies as neurodivergent/low-needs autistic, I assisted with the planning and delivery of the 4-21-24 service “Understanding Autism, Each Other, and Ourselves.”

In service to the broader UU community, I also planned and guest-preached at the following services:

- 5-7-23 To Trust or Not to Trust, Lake County UU
- 7-23-23 I Didn’t Mean To, Palo Alto UU
- 10-8-23 Heritage and Legacy: A Complicated Relationship, San Jose UU
- 11-26-23 The Sun Never Says You Owe Me: a Reflection on Generosity, San Jose UU
- 1-14-24 A Dream and a Legacy, Piedmont Gardens Assisted Living, Oakland

I am scheduled to guest-preach 6-23-24 at Sunnyvale UU.

I also conducted a memorial service in Bodega Bay on 5-26-23 on referral from the Bay Area ministers list.

My other activities at SF UU include:

- Participating in UUs for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME). I have been a supporter of the Palestinian cause since the 1970s and helped lead our work in responding to the current crisis in Gaza via a series of forums and film showings, joining demonstrations, and initiating the hanging of the church’s ceasefire banner.
- Human Rights Worker Group (HRWG): While not a regular member, I participate often in the group’s discussions and spoke recently on behalf of the group Socialist Organizer at a forum sponsored by the HRWG.
- Member of the church choir.
- Backup to the ministers and lay chaplains care list, specifically for East Bay members, though my only related tasks have been occasionally giving rides.

## All-Church Retreat

The 2023 All-Church Retreat was attended by approximately 70 members of our community. As in previous years, it was held at the CYO camp in Occidental. Big shout outs to my committee co-chair Robert Jumonville and to Rev Shunnum. Also to Eric Shackelford who has made our Saturday night campfire songs so wonderful these last many years.

Missing this year were the Most family, due to ongoing health issues. The gourds are greatly missed! But big thank you's to the many persons who put on workshops which definitely make the retreat the favorite that it is.

As a congregation, we try to run the All Church Retreat as a net zero item in the budget. Unfortunately, the last couple of years we have been unable to do that. Part of the problem is the pricing has been set up to allow adult ticket prices to subsidize children's ticket prices. With the price increases this year and the poor financial performance of the retreat the last couple of years, we're going to try something different this year.

Sincerely,

Gino Fortunato  
Co-chair



## Animal Ministry

Chair: Dolores Perez Heilbron

Members: Dennis Adams, David Heilbron, Wayne Hsiung, Lori Lai, Jordan Ong, Robin Larsen, Bruce Neuburger, and others.

Webpage: <https://www.uusf.org/animalministry> Email Contact: [uanimalministry@gmail.com](mailto:uanimalministry@gmail.com)

Mission Statement:

**To affirm our 7th UU Principle of Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part, by producing educational events and advocacy efforts focused on protecting all species of the earth.**

Activities:

The UUAM participates in educational events throughout the year, often with the Forum, regarding the importance of maintaining the natural habitat for all wildlife, and especially at this time of global climate crisis. The methane produced and water pollution caused by the animals we eat impacts the climate and the earth itself. We have focused on compassionate agricultural practices concerning animals for slaughter by exposing food production systems that are not only a danger to the environment, but are cruel and dangerous to both animals and agricultural workers. We believe our species has the responsibility to educate the public to protect domesticated animals, wildlife, and the earth itself.



Our annual Blessing of the Animals was held on October 8, 2023, celebrating the Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and of San Francisco. The Reverend Doctor John Buehrens gave a beautiful sermon “The Great Animal Orchestra” and music specially prepared by Dr. Mark Sumner, with soprano Nancy Munn and other choir members singing special songs in honor of this day. An overflow crowd and our animal companions of mostly dogs were very well behaved and appreciative of the event.

This past November 30, 2023, we awarded one of our members, Wayne Hsiung, as Hero for Animals for outstanding devotion in his life work as an animal rescue activist and lawyer for animal rights and justice. He has won several court cases on behalf of animal rights activists who rescued suffering and injured pigs and fowl at large farm processing plants. His articles on behalf of all creatures have appeared in the New York Times and many other

publications, challenging the ethics and dangerous practices of our factory farm food production systems and laws. He has appeared at our Forums explaining the connection of these practices not only as cruel to many creatures, but as a danger to our health. Wayne was found guilty in November 2023 and sentenced to 90 days in the Sonoma County jail for rescuing sick and injured chickens and ducks from poultry facilities outside Petaluma. Members of our UUAM committee and Rev. Vanessa Southern traveled to Santa Rosa to attend his court sentencing to support him and this cause, and we appeared at the Right to Rescue event held in Wayne's honor.

We are thankful for the support we receive from Rev. Vanessa Southern and our UUSF staff, especially Jonathan Silk, Communications Manager, and many other activists who join us from outside of our UUSF community.



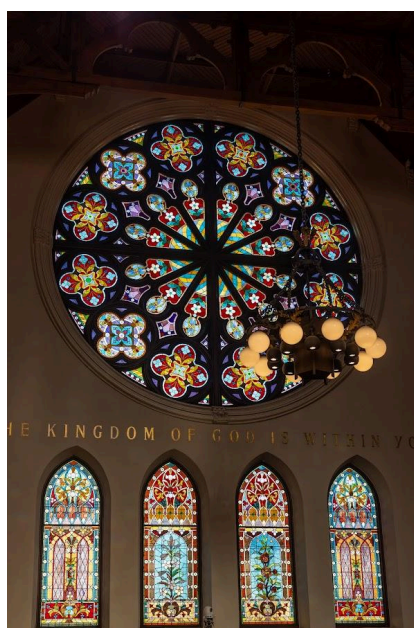
## Facilities Advisory Committee

Committee members:

Dan Barnard, Linda Enger, Laura Ludwig, Scott Miller, Maric Munn, and Marc Theobald

The Facilities Advisory Committee works with Dan Barnard to plan and offer guidance on facility projects required to maintain and improve our building. The projects completed during this program year were:

- Flood detectors, shut off valves, and protective cages were installed on our irrigation system to prevent damage and alert the staff when water is leaking. Identified leaks were addressed and plants were replaced as needed.
- We met with a representative from Mission Development Fund to learn about the potential for building affordable housing on our site. The committee referred the matter to the Board of Trustees, leading to the creation of the 1187 Task Force.
- A better camera was installed to monitor the South Franklin entrance in an effort to record any vandalism of the building.
- The sextons did an excellent job of refinishing the wood doors to the sanctuary.
- Completion of the repair of stained glass windows in the balcony stairwell was delayed when it was discovered the frame of one of the windows had been damaged. This project was finally completed in May.
- Repairs made last year to address water intrusion into the chapel and the Thomas Starr King Room skylight were determined to be effective. The same repair was made to the other two other sides of the skylight in the Thomas Starr King Room.
- We replaced the fire alarm pull stations and are in the process of upgrading our wi-fi configuration.
- Shades were installed in Vanessa's office to limit the heat from sunlight. We continue to work on the HVAC project intended to replace our boiler, provide emergency power, and improve our energy efficiency.



**Finance Committee**  
Fiscal Year 2023-2024  
Submitted by Lori Lai  
Treasurer, Board of Trustees

**1. Financial Overview Fiscal Year to end of March 2024**

- a. UUSF continues to be revenue over expenses due to prudent management of expenses, combined with solid pledge revenue, successful fundraising event and generous donations including bequests and a quasi-bequest.
- b. The Society's Financial Position is strong, with positive direction in investment value (markets have been trending higher since late 2023) and total net assets compared with that of March 2023.



**2. Operating Reserve Fund**

- a. As per a Board of Trustees policy amendment adopted last fiscal year, UUSF is making progress towards the goal of reaching an Operating Reserves amount of six months' worth of budgeted expense for the coming fiscal year.
- b. As per the same policy amendment, an approved draw is taken from the Operating Reserves to be used for budget expenses.

**3. Financial Planning related to Mission and Vision Task Force**

- a. Long range planning for the Center began in early FY24.
  - i. The Lease Negotiating Committee successfully renewed the Montessori School lease which was set to expire on June 30, 2024.
  - ii. An 1187 Committee was formed to explore options to optimize the use of the UUSF Center in the medium to long term.

Since the committee's work is likely to have a significant impact on UUSF's finances, a member of the Finance Committee has joined this committee.
  - iii. Long range financial planning will be partially contingent on the outcome of the 1187 Committee's work.

Besides the evaluation of possible uses of the Center, another financial variable that may impact long range finances is the (post-COVID) decline in UUSF membership.

**4. Fiscal Prudence as UUSF positions itself for growth**

- a. Conservative balanced (net-zero) FY25 budget was developed and reviewed by Finance Committee and BOT; budget vote set for late May
- b. Event rental income is on track to reach the FY24 goal of \$150K; although increasing, rentals have not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels.
- c. With relatively few households contributing a significant portion of the total pledge amount and the average age of congregants now likely to exceed that of the San Francisco population as a whole, growing the membership at UUSF could be a great



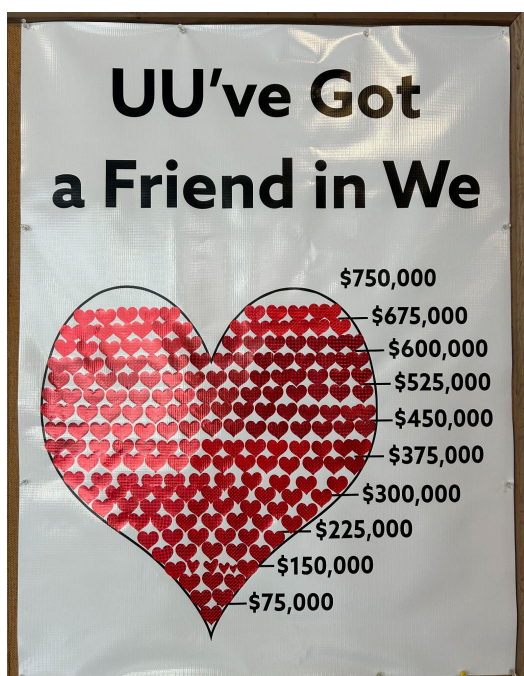
step on a path to financial sustainability.

## 5. Annual Operating Fund Pledge Drive

- Great collaboration between AOF leads Sherry and Jack DeLo and the Stewardship Committee
- Target was \$750K and we are just short of this goal in mid-May 2024
- For FY24, UUSF is again on track to achieve 100% collection on pledged amounts
- Thank you for the stalwart support of UUSF Congregational members

## 6. Finance Committee Membership

- Lori Lai, Treasurer, and members Matt Anderson, Marc Theobald, David Jones have served as committee members in FY24.
- Committee membership will be in slight transition in FY25 with most of the members expected to continue serving on this committee.



## Forum

For the current Forum "season" which began in September and will end in mid-June (when we go on hiatus for the summer), Forum will have hosted 28 speakers. We've had some great speakers on a pretty wide range of topics. Some talks focused on international issues, others local, and all in some way connected to social justice, which is the agenda and perspective of the HRWG committee that collaborates to produce Forum. Attendance averaged about 20 people in person and another 10-20 on Zoom, so pretty good engagement.

Thanks to Director of Communications Jonathan Silk, all the Forum sessions are recorded and available on our Youtube channel. You can view them [at this link](#).



## Human Rights Working Group

Co-Chairs: Dolores Perez Heilbron, Jeff Pekrul, Melvin Starks

Members: Dennis Adams, Mary Castiglia, Larry Danos, Ralph Fenn, Linda Harris, David Heilbron, Wayne Hsiung, Robin Larsen, Margaret Levitt, Veronica Masterson, John Meliska, Bruce Neuburger, Marty Vanderlaan, Meg Whitaker-Greene

Webpage: <https://www.uusf.org/hrwg>

Email Contact: [humanrights@uusf.org](mailto:humanrights@uusf.org)

The Human Rights Working Group was active on several issues in accordance with our stated Purpose during the past year:

***“To identify and address current human rights violations locally, nationally, and internationally in accordance with our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Values; and***

***“To provide opportunities to engage in discussions to develop practical strategies to ameliorate unjust abuses and policies through education, advocacy, and actions to protect the rights of all peoples; and***

***“To unite and collaborate with other organizations in support of these aims.”***



For the past 12 months, new events in the world have brought our focus to bear on national policy, with the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. We have sought to research and present public events featuring speakers on international peace and justice concerns. Our continuing focus efforts are: **Racial Justice, Immigrant Rights, Voting Rights, with new emphases on War & Peace and Climate Crisis & Sustainability.**

HRWG this past fall continued to provide Forum speakers to promote our educational efforts such as ***California, A Slave State*** by author Jean Pfaelzer and presented by Steve Seltzer, on our state's participation in racial injustice historically; ***Humanizing Immigration*** authored by Prof. Bill

Hing of USF; on world sustainability with ***Climate Crisis & Militarism***, with Vets for Peace; and we have presented author Richard Becker twice with his updated analysis of the crisis in his book, ***Palestine, Israel & the U.S. Empire***; and Prof. Stephen Zunes of USF, Professor of Politics and International Studies speaking on the history and current realities of the conflict in Palestine.

The wars in the Middle East and Ukraine are of primary concern not only because of the deaths caused and civilian rights abuses being committed, but because our taxes contribute directly to the nations involved in both full-fledged military conflicts. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian open conflict, history shows that the Indigenous Palestinians have been unjustly treated for many years

using apartheid restrictions, driven from their lands with many still living in refugee camps. The Israeli government is breaching the rules of warfare resulting in the slaughter of over 35,000 innocent civilians, including women and children. As a result of researching this conflict and joining with our national UUs for Justice in the Middle East, we have aligned with their strategy and goals to stop this inhumane violence. In accordance with our UUA 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Principles, we adopted a **Statement to the UUSF Board of Trustees and the Congregation on November 5, 2023**, that the UUSF HRWG has committed to work toward and endorse the following requests to our government representatives and parties in conflict to:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire!
- Ensure humanitarian aid and assistance be made available immediately to Gaza.
- Abide by the United Nations Geneva Conventions.
- Stop the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank.

We also presented special programs on this international human rights cause as follows:

- On January 11, 2024, the HRWG along with other community representatives, hoisted a Love Demands a Ceasefire Now! banner on the front of our UUSF building with a special program explaining our actions.
- On April 7, 2024, the HRWG and UJME held a special fundraiser for the West Bank Jenin Freedom Theater that attracted a wide audience, and which raised over \$10,000 for this theater group in Palestine, whose theater was badly damaged by IDF forces.
- Every Wednesday morning, HRWG continues to vigil from 8 to 9 AM, with signs calling for a Ceasefire Now in Palestine, an end to the conflict and the obvious annihilation of innocent civilian populations in Gaza and the West Bank.
- Continue to work with and support other groups in many demonstrations throughout the City and country to demand an end to this war and devastation.
- Continue to identify, educate, discuss, and advocate for workable solutions for justice to protect the human rights of all, as we strive for peace in the world.

We hold monthly HRWG meetings via Zoom on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. See our webpage for future events. <https://www.uusf.org/hrwg>

We work closely with the UUSF Forum, and appreciate the technical support and media platform participation of Forum Chair Jeff Pekar, who is also a member of HRWG. We are thankful for the advice and help we receive from our UUSF staff, especially Jonathan Silk, Communications Manager, and many other activists who join us from outside of our UUSF community.

Respectfully submitted,

Dolores Perez Heilbron, Co-chair



## Interfaith Food Pantry

Lead: Hanna Hart

The Interfaith Food Pantry distributes food to 325+ households every Saturday at Old First Presbyterian Church on Van Ness & Clay. Five churches (UUSF, Old First, St. Mark's Lutheran, St. Luke's Episcopal, and Calvary Presbyterian) share responsibility for leading the volunteer crew on a rotating schedule. Hanna and Ben have shared the coordination duties for the last couple of years. This year, Ben stepped away from leadership due to health issues. The leads from all the churches meet periodically and communicate frequently by email and text throughout the year. They have been very supportive, and several volunteers have stepped up to help with coordination. However, we are looking for a capable and reliably available second lead. I'm very encouraged to report that stalwart volunteer Christine Valentine has agreed to join the me on UUSF leadership team. Hanna continued to lead volunteer crews and recruitment approximately once a month. This year we have seen a drop-off in UUSF volunteers and have relied more heavily on community volunteers.



The SF Marin Food Bank is relying more heavily on community pantries as they phase out their COVID-era “pop-up” pantries. The need is great and our pantry is working with the Food Bank to add participants, as our wait list has grown to 25+ people, with a wait time of 3-4 months. In the coming year we want to focus on expanding our UUSF volunteer base, particularly engaging with families, and we should look into cultivating additional leadership beyond Ben and Hanna.



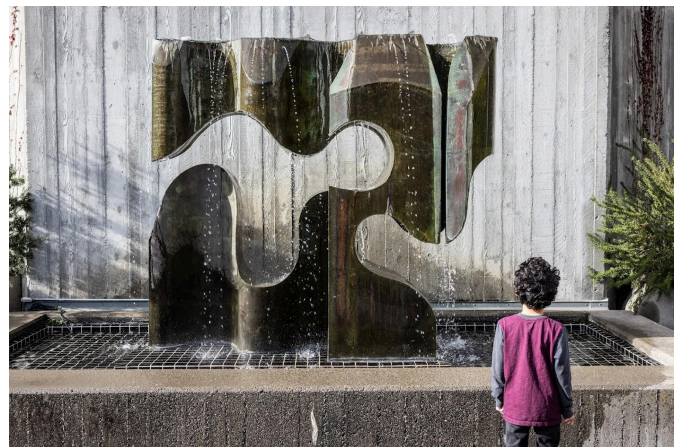
## Journey To Wholeness (JTW)

### Overview

The JTW Select Committee was chartered by the UUSF Board in August of 2019. Since then, JTW has undertaken the support of a number of initiatives within our ongoing congregational work to be an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive, Multicultural community. This work includes:

- Journey to Wholeness Study group - deep dive into Widening the Circle of Concern - recommendations and methodologies for lasting structural change within our Association
- UU the Vote 2022 Midterms - Good Trouble Congregation Letter Writing and Georgia Runoff
- 8th Principle Adoption
- WEAV training - Starr King congregational education program
- Right Relations team formation
- Congregational Covenant
- Article II

In late 2023 JTW revisited our charter and developed new Vision, Mission and Strategy statements. This was done to bring a sharp focus to our work and build energy for the work to come.



### Vision

Our vision is to inspire and guide our congregation on a transformative journey toward becoming Beloved Community. We envision a future where every member experiences profound connections, embraces diversity as a source of strength, and actively contributes to a just and compassionate society. We aspire to create a community that exemplifies love, equity, and respect. Our vision extends beyond our walls, envisioning a world where the principles of unity, acceptance, and harmony guide our interactions, fostering a global Beloved Community founded on justice, compassion, and understanding.

## **Mission**

Our mission is to foster a nurturing and inclusive community that embodies the principles of our Beloved Community vision. We are dedicated to inspiring and guiding each member of our congregation on a transformative journey towards personal and collective growth. Through intentional dialogue, meaningful connections, and a commitment to lifelong learning, we aim to create an environment where diversity is celebrated as a profound source of strength.

We pledge to actively engage our congregation in initiatives that promote justice, compassion, and understanding within our community and beyond. By cultivating a culture of love, equity, and respect, and equipping one another with the analytical tools and frameworks of constructive engagement we strive to empower every member to contribute meaningfully to dismantling systems of oppression in ways and toward the creation of a just and compassionate society.



## **Strategy**

Different but related, we have three prongs to our strategy, all of which must be present to realize our mission and vision: awareness, advocacy and activism.

### **Awareness**

We recognize that fostering a Beloved Community requires a deep understanding of the historical roots of oppression and a commitment to dismantling systemic inequities. To achieve this, our strategy is to curate a comprehensive knowledge base that illuminates the history of oppression and provides actionable insights on dismantling systemic barriers.

This knowledge base will be a dynamic resource, serving as a platform for education and understanding, enabling our congregation to engage in intentional dialogue and self-reflection. We aim to empower our members with the knowledge and tools needed to recognize, challenge, and dismantle oppressive structures.

By promoting awareness, we strive to create an informed and compassionate community capable of advocating for justice and equity both within our walls and in the broader society. This strategy aligns with our mission to inspire and guide our congregation towards a transformative journey of personal and collective growth, ultimately contributing to the realization of our vision for a global Beloved Community.

### **Advocacy**

In alignment with our commitment to justice, compassion, and the principles of a Beloved Community, there must be proactive advocacy for and with marginalized communities, including but not limited to BIPOC folx, LGBTQAI+, and people with disabilities. In addition to this, we recognize the critical importance of advocating for democracy as a foundational element of a just and inclusive society as well as access to legal and other resources that are the guarantor of some of our democratically given rights..

We will actively engage in advocacy efforts at local, national, and global levels, leveraging our collective voice to raise awareness about the challenges faced by marginalized communities. This includes advocating for democratic principles, such as equal representation, protection of civil liberties, and the right to participate in the decision-making processes that impact our lives.

By collaborating with like-minded organizations and community leaders, centering the voices of those we wish to support and following their lead, we will find our place within a network of advocates working towards a more just, compassionate, and democratic society as accountable allies.

Our advocacy strategy involves supporting and in some cases, creating spaces within our community for open dialogue, sharing experiences, and building empathy and trust that creates the fundamental strength and connections our congregation needs to have to work effectively together as a body of aligned advocates.





## Activism

As champions of justice and advocates for a Beloved Community, the third prong of our strategy focuses on active engagement through grassroots activism. We recognize the power of 'showing up' and the impact it can have on dismantling oppressive systems. We will support the congregation as they mobilize to participate in various forms of activism, including protests, phone banking, letter writing campaigns, and community canvassing, extending our reach beyond our immediate community to address systemic issues across the country. We will bring an awareness of our power and privilege to our place in this work, leveraging both to support the agenda set by those we seek to ally ourselves with.

This strategy emphasizes the tangible actions required to bring about societal change, aligning with our mission to inspire and guide our congregation on a transformative journey towards personal and collective growth. Through activism, we aim to make a visible and impactful contribution to the realization of our vision for a global Beloved Community founded on principles of trust, justice, compassion, and understanding. *How* we do this work, not just *what* we do, will seek to reflect those same principles.



## Initiatives

### Congregational Covenant - Jan 2024 - Mar 2024

#### Action 1: Coordinate Workshop

- This was a meeting open to all members to come together and write a UUSF specific covenant
- The covenant was to be put in place in advance of undertaking the Article II revision initiative.

#### Action 2: Marketing Communications for Covenant Workshop.

- Covenant Workshop on Fri, Jan 26 - Sun, Jan 28
- Emails, The Flame and Order of Service

- Coordinate facilitation of the workshop by Aisha Hauser
- 20+ members participated over the two-day workshop. Covenant delivered to the congregation on Jan 28th



## Article II - July 2023 - June 2024

*The Article II Study Commission completed the final draft of its proposed revision to Article II in October 2023.*

*Amendments to the Article II Study Commission's proposed revision may be submitted by completing this amendment form by no later than 11:59pm Eastern on February 1, 2024*

JTW will facilitate communications and coordinate events designed to educate the congregation regarding the proposed changes to our principles and articulate the inspiration and sources that underpin the revised principles.

### Action 1: Marketing Communications for Article II Meetings

- Emails, The Flame, Order of Service
- Canvass active members through phone campaign
  - Recruit volunteers to make calls
  - Scripts developed and delivered to volunteers
  - ~155 calls made by volunteers

### Action 2: Coordinate visit by Rev. Cheryl M. Walker

- Saturday seminar to learn about and discuss the Article II changes to the existing principles
- Guest sermon from Rev Walker

### Action 3: Coordinate Congregational Survey and Meeting

- ~32 survey responses received. Two responses with strong objections and the rest a mix of approving of the revisions and some regret over the change to our existing Principles



### UU the Vote - Advocacy - March 2024 - Nov 5, 2024

#### Action 1: Meet with newly hired Political Director

- Cal to coordinate a Zoom meeting for volunteers across the country to come and meet the new Director
- Integrate UUSF into national efforts

#### Action 2: Letter Writing and Phonebanking Campaign - Activism

- Develop letter writing campaign beginning in June
  - Issue oriented phonebanking and letter writing
  - voter registration
  - plan to vote
- Canvass in Arizona - October timeframe



## Ongoing Initiatives Planned for 2024 - 2025

### Education - Awareness

To coordinate our Education and Activism around this work. The group by no means wishes to control (and limit) what we might explore or plan around our work to be liberating and healing around issues of race, culture and other oppressions. It would, however, hope that any educational and training efforts consult the group so that we can have maximum wisdom and synergies as we move forward in this piece of our shared work.

#### Action 1: Web-based Multimedia Referrals

- Build out knowledge base of referrals with live links to either access or purchase materials

#### Action 2: Ongoing Education Offerings

JTW team members have each taken one or more of the following courses

- WEAV
- Beloved Conversations
- Tending SOIL (Leadership Development)

### Measurement - Awareness

#### Action 1: Develop Metrics

- Courses taken by each member (e.g. [Anti-Racism Training Record](#))
- Metrics around each action e.g. letter writing

#### Action 2: Monitor (record and curate?)

- Lectures and presentations sponsored by other groups within the congregation (including some that can be listed in our curated library of resources)
- Actions taken by other groups e.g. Right Relations, WEAV



## Membership Committee

### Membership Committee Members:

Bill Lowell, Gino Fortunato, Jordan Ong, Judith Stoddard, Nancy Hardies, Robert Packman, Sherry Delo, Susan Anthony. Supported by Staff: Rev. Laura Shennum and Emma Wakeling.

### Mission:

The UUSF Membership Committee grows an inclusive community of diverse people by connecting people to the life of the church from initial visits through becoming fully engaged.



### Key activities & achievements:

#### 1. New Membership & Young Adult Manager

Emma Wakeling joined the staff team in January 2024. Here are some words from Emma on her work with the Membership Committee:



“Since joining the staff team in January, I’ve been spending time getting to know the way that UUSF connects with new folks and supports them on their way to Membership. I’ve been listening to the Committee’s goals, strategies and ideas and taking it all in!

I’ve been working to be consistent and thoughtful when connecting with new visitors, making it easier for people to get involved. I’ve been streamlining and rethinking some of the processes and activities that we currently have and am looking forward to trying new things, such as outreach and new member cohort groups.

Thanks to the Membership Committee for all their support, ideas, insights and work making UUSF a welcoming, vibrant community!”

#### 2. Welcoming Newcomers

We continue to hold Newcomer Orientations on the first Sunday of every month, as a way for people who are new to the church to meet other newcomers, members, and learn a bit more about UUSF and Unitarian Universalism. Members of the Committee share their stories of joining UUSF, answer any questions folks have, and help connect them to programs and ministries. We also connect them to the

New UU class, which is one of the steps to becoming a Member. So far 34 newcomers have attended orientations this year, an increase on the 19 total attendees from last year.

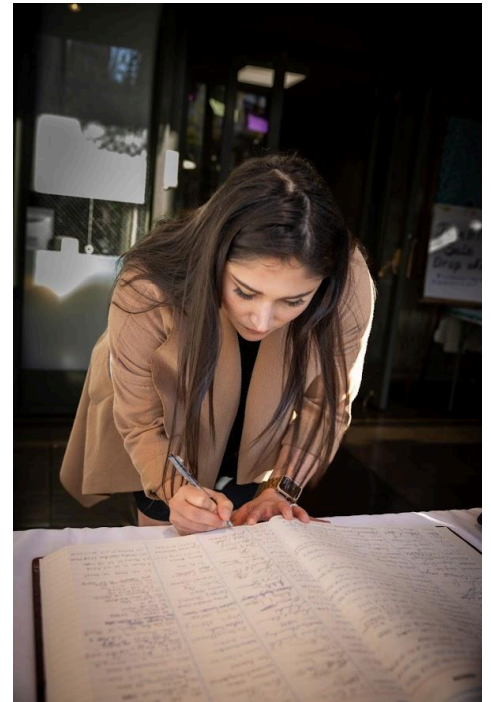
We are experimenting with new ways to refresh and advertise the Orientations. We offered free childcare at our April Newcomer, to make these sessions more accessible for our new families. We hope to continue this in the Fall. Emma Wakeling has been inviting visitors who fill out a Connections Form to the Orientations, and has begun making announcements about the sessions during the service.

### **3. Embracing New Members**

UUSF has welcomed 8 new members to our congregation so far this year. They have been getting involved in all areas of UUSF life including speaking at worship, serving on committees, coordinating and volunteering at UUSF events, teaching Sunday School, and volunteering as Greeters. Thank you for being a part of our community! We are looking forward to the final Call to Membership for the year coming up in June, with some more wonderful folks planning to join UUSF.

### **4. Creating a Membership Committee Charter and Goals**

We thank Jordan Ong for his work in creating a Membership Committee Charter, which the Committee discussed and approved early this year. Creating this charter has helped us to review and define our mission, vision and goals for this committee and will guide our work going forward.



In the past we have struggled with getting relevant data to help us to track key metrics related to membership. With the help of Emma Wakeling, this year we have started to capture some of this information, so we can use it as a baseline to track progress. This will help us to understand where we can better support people through their journey to membership and beyond.

### **5. Greeters**

We have revived the Sunday morning greeting function. Currently there are six individuals (including two new members) who are volunteering for this role. Thanks to their work, we always have at least one Greeter by the doors to the sanctuary before each worship service, providing a friendly welcome to all, and with an eye out for visitors who may have questions. Thank you to our Greeters, Liz Strand, Kathleen McClung, Joan Rost, Jenefer Hutchins, Gordon Sharafinski, and Caleb Dupree for making UUSF a more welcoming, friendly place!

## Music Committee



Music abounds at UUSF! In addition to Sunday choir and Bell choir performances during Sunday services, members of the choir (and friends!) toured northern India in January 2024, performing several concerts in Delhi, Jaipur and other cities. Watch for 2025 tour plans during upcoming months, as Music Director Mark Summer is not finished planning international tours!



Under the leadership of Mark and soprano Nancy Cooke Munn, a new performance series also had its “soft launch” this spring of the Starr King Way Performance Series (SKWPS) with a performance by Dirty Cellos, which was very well received. Upcoming SKWPS performances highlight Eric Hamilton (well known to our congregants) as well as a performance of the play “Our Town”. We hope to present 3-4 special events each church year, offering a pre-concert lunch on the Sundays we have SKWPS events.



Carrie Steere-Salazar, chair  
Janet Scott  
Mark Sumner  
Reiko Lane  
Judy Payne  
Judy Nichols  
Nancy Hardies  
Bill Klingelhoffer  
Nancy Cook Munn



## Nominating Committee

The Nominations Committee is charged with selecting candidates for the Board of Trustees and Nominations Committee. In the past several years, the committee has accepted a wider role in leadership training as well as planning for a more inclusive and transparent way to select candidates for the two committees.

This year, we improved the Finding Your Ministry page: a list of options available to those who wish to participate in volunteer work. That information is more accessible on the UUSF.org website and easier to find! Watch for our “Help Wanted” ads as well. The committee is working with UUSF staff to align the website with various committee names and to build a search function to make “Finding your Ministry” much more straightforward!

Anyone with an interest in serving on the Board of Trustees or the Nominations Committee is welcome to contact any member of the committee to express interest! We are always searching for committed volunteers.

Carrie Steere-Salazar, chair  
Hannah Clements Hart  
Erica Murray  
Teresa Goebels  
Gino Fortunato  
Nancy Hardies  
Robert Pakenham





## Partner Church Committee

The Partner Church Committee builds connections with specific overseas Unitarian churches to foster greater understanding and offer learning opportunities and mutual support. UUSF partners with two churches in Transylvania (Romania); one urban and one rural. Our urban partner church is located in Kolozsvar, and the minister is named Tibor Ruzs-Fogarasi. Our rural partner church is located in the village of Dak. The minister there is Laszlo (Laci) Major. Both ministers have spent time here at UUSF and both have spoken from the pulpit.

The 2022 Choir tour visited both Partner churches during our trip this summer, singing in Kolozsvar and visiting the church in Dak. Tibor spoke movingly of the impact of the Ukrainian war, stating that residents of Romania had lived under both democracy and communism, but wars killed young people and that took precedence in his priorities over political ideology.

In 2023, we sent funds to our Kolozsvar partner church for Christmas baskets, which s taken to elders in the community.

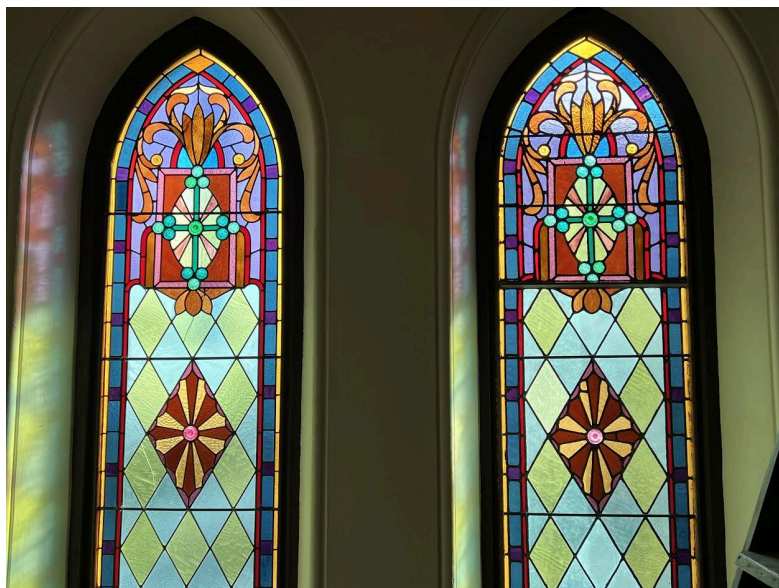
Carrie Steere-Salazar, chair

Michele Garside

Mary Castiglia

Marguerite Blumenthal

Judith Nichols



## Pastoral Care

Pastoral care encompasses several support activities within UUSF. Collectively these activities are “member to member” support and assistance with life challenges as part of being a caring community. One of the lines in our weekly covenant is to “help one another” and pastoral care is one example of how we live out this covenant. Our efforts are primarily supported by Rev. Laura Shennum, but all of the ministers contribute.

### Lay Chaplains

The lay chaplains are: Marty Vanderlaan, Linda Harris, Jan Oringer, Laura Davis, Sara Ferree, Fred Rabidoux, and Bruce Clements. We meet every-other-week via Zoom.

We respond to requests for short term assistance from members of the congregation. In providing care we often rely on a network of UUSF volunteers who have said they are available to help other members of the congregation. We wish to express our deep appreciation for all the help of these volunteers. We recently posted a request for more volunteers on the UUSF “Volunteer” bulletin board.

Many members of the congregation have made meals for other members, part of sharing the love of a specially prepared meal. We have also organized rides to medical appointments as needed. Several members of the congregation have been hospitalized, had surgery, or been treated for cancer during the year. Many of these members have received special assistance. We also help members navigate the city and other community resources that may be available to assist them. For home-bound members we arrange visits and phone calls to keep them connected.

We have helped provide emotional support for those who have lost pets. In some cases, the pets needed to be euthanized and church members accompanied the pet owner to the euthanasia appointment to be with them during this difficult parting.

### H.E.A.R.T. (Health Education, Advocacy, and Resource Team)

This project of the Lay Chaplaincy Team has developed into an informal network of health professionals, social workers, and survivors of major illnesses - especially cancer - who have helped church members deal with medical issues and related social service needs. Sometimes they have



helped members prepare for crucial medical appointments by identifying important questions to ask, issues to address, and offering emotional support. Sometimes they go to such appointments with members to take notes, make sure the member's questions and needs are addressed, review the appointment with the member afterwards, and help the member process the contents of the appointment. Sometimes they have helped members identify needed medical and social services resources. They have also helped church staff identify needed first aid supplies and other necessary emergency medical supplies.

### **Caregiver Support Group**

Jan Oringer runs the caregiver support group. The UUSF Group meets once a month, formerly at the church, but currently by ZOOM. The meetings are attended by 8-10 individuals who provide care and support to loved ones who are experiencing chronic medical conditions and/or memory loss. They share their stories of the challenges and joys they find in their roles. The people in this group lovingly support each other, and also share resources and skills they have found while finding fulfillment in caregiving.

### **Grief Support Group**

The Grief Support Group was initiated by Bruce Clemments, but since February 2024 it has been led by Rev. Laura Shennum. The group meets by Zoom on the first Wednesday of every month at 7pm. The format is that of a small group to discuss loss, death, and feelings about grief.

### **Cards of Caring and Good Cheer**

The Card Ministry sends caring cards to members of our congregation and staff who are having health or personal challenges, are grieving, or deserve a "thank you" for service to others. The cards are generously donated by members of the congregation and have been written and sent by Laura Davis. Birthday cards are sent by Sara Ferree to the "80 and up" members of the congregation.



## Rheiner Award Committee

Chair: Dolores Perez Heilbron

Members: Bob Bacon, Rochelle Fortier Nwadibia, David Jones, Lori Lai, Mary Jane Mikuriya, Jan & Howard Oringer, and Julia Wald.

Webpage: <https://www.uusf.org/rheiner>

The Rheiner Award was established by the UUSF Board of Trustees in 1989 to recognize and celebrate a member of this Society for social justice activism and community service, honoring their activities in the larger community, outside the walls of our church, that illustrate their commitment to Unitarian Universalist values. The Award was named for the Reverend Conard Rheiner (1902-1987), a Universalist minister who was an active member of this congregation during the later years of his long career in social work.



On April 23, 2023, we were honored and proud to present the Rheiner Award to Lori Lai, an outstanding member of our congregation who met the award criteria over and above its description.

This year, we will begin again to search for another awardee deserving of the unusual recognition and ask members of the congregation to help recommend possible candidates by visiting our webpage. As a reminder, here is our statement for our last award:

***“The Rheiner Awardee for 2023, Lori Lai, is recognized for supporting and organizing lesbian communities abroad and locally; and demanding justice for non-binary and transgender young people. A PhD in Health Sciences, she has challenged the status quo regarding women’s rights to improve their mental health and physical well-being by strengthening policies on these issues wherever she resides.”***

The Rheiner Committee thanks the members of the staff and all who have helped to make this Award an important part of our community.

## Society for Community Work Council

2023-2024 Council Members: Chair–Liz Strand; Treasurer–David Jones; Recorder–Laura Davis; Scholarship–Maric Munn; Community Grants–Athena Papadakos; New At Large Member–Kelli Murray.

For another year the two committees that have for so long successfully personified the mission of SCW–Scholarship and Community Grants (formerly Sponsorship)–continued to function as usual, with the welcome support of several UUSF members who responded to the call for more participation from the congregation. Committee members review grant applications for Community Grants and they review scholarship applications and act as mentors for the Scholars for the Scholarship committee. Our treasurer, David Jones stepped away from the Council after many years of dedicated service which we appreciate greatly.

### **Community Grants Committee:**

From Athena Papadakos, Chair, 2024 SCW Community Grants Committee

The SCW Board met in November and approved the SCW Community Grant Committee's recommendations for 15 new Community Grants totaling \$62,500, with Individual grant amounts ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000.

The following organizations were awarded grants:

Children & Youth: Greenlight Clinic, The Practice Space, Children's Book Project, Daly City Youth Health Center, League of Women's Voters Oakland

Theater: Oakland Theater Project, SF Mime Troupe

Film: Kirana Productions

Cultural: City Guides

Homeless People: Home Away from Homelessness

Prisons: Project Avary, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity

Environmental: CA Interfaith Power & Light, Bay Area 350

Immigration: Upward Scholars

The 2024 SCW Community Grant Committee included **Bick Simpson, Tom Brookshire, Mary Jane Mikuriya, Melvin Starks,** and **Athena Papadakos.** I want to thank each and every member of the 2024 SCW Community Grants Committee for agreeing to participate in this work. Each member brought important skills and knowledge that made this year such a success. I am particularly proud of our efforts to locate and support organizations with smaller budgets where our grants make more of an impact.



## Scholarship Committee:

- Scholarship Committee members:
  - o Scholar Selection Committee: Maric Munn (C), Stephanie Gowin, Ivy Yee-Sakamoto
  - o Scholar Mentors: Maric Munn, Stephanie Gowin, Ivy Yee-Sakamoto, Alex Strehl, Nicky Trasvina, Sam King, John Buehrens, Athena Papadakos, Mari Magaloni, Judy Strachan, Lori Lai

Of the 23 scholars funded by SCW, five will graduate this June. All of our graduating scholars faced incredible obstacles with distance learning in their early years but persevered to be the first generation of their family to attend college. Two scholars did not reapply to the program, and six new scholars were added to the roster for school year 24-25 bringing the total to 22 scholars, who all will receive \$2,800 in July 2024. Most of these students are BIPOC, have GPAs well above 3.0, and are from SF households with incomes less than \$60,000 per year. A total of \$61,600 was awarded this year.

The SCW mentors group has expanded this past year to include 3 new members who have been matched with a mentee studying in a field similar to their educational background. We look forward to welcoming additional new mentors this year to pair with our new scholars and continuing to forge good relationships between our congregation and the next generation of young scholars.



## Winter Shelter

Leads: Ben Bear, Hanna Hart, Gordon Sharafinski, Stacey Coyle, John Meliska

Once again we hosted the Interfaith Winter Shelter, for the second year open to all genders. The shelter was a success and a highlight for many in the church year. In a cold and wet winter when shelter was especially needed, our average attendance per night was 60 folks, including members of all generations. Volunteers cooked and served breakfast 5 days a week and dinner 7 nights.

### Highlights:

- We were super lucky and grateful to add Stacey Coyle and John Meliska to our leadership team, which was tremendously helpful. We continue to work to build our capacity and reduce dependence on a few key leaders.
- Ben Bear, who underwent a laryngectomy this year, got help from Stacey in handling procurement. Hanna Hart managed communications and led volunteer recruitment, and Gordon anchored the breakfast lead spot, working more 5:00-7:00 am shifts than anyone else. John Meliska supported overall operations and recruitment.
- Community commitment to this ministry remains high. At least 60 church members volunteered for at least one shift, many for more. We filled a total of 151 volunteer shifts, including lead chefs, kitchen volunteers and liaisons. Total volunteer shift hours over 350 hours (not including leadership team or procurement, which was easily another 75+ hours). However, volunteer sign-ups and recruitment takes a lot of work and some anxiety—"will they or won't they sign up?" We relied heavily on a few volunteers' willingness to take extra shifts..
- ECS staff was very responsive and well-trained.
- Our sexton staff worked extra-hard during the shelter residency, dealing with additional cleaning burden and some incidents with guests, which Dan reported to ECS staff, who responded appropriately.
- We clarified our responsibilities for purchasing upfront. This year UUSF was responsible for all dinner food costs and all food that could not be obtained from the food bank. We were concerned about the egg shortage and committed to serving eggs 5 days a week at breakfast, which we were able to do.
- One plate collection was dedicated to the Winter Shelter.
- Communication with ECS and Interfaith was overall good.



- We have not had our UUSF debrief yet, but we plan to meet with Dan Barnard, Susie Bernahola and Laura Ludwig to discuss the experience and takeaways and how to improve for next year.

For next year:

- Continue to clarify costs and budget appropriately.
- Expand the leadership committee for the shelter, specifically sharing the procurement burden.
- Discuss how to improve publicity and volunteer recruitment, assuming that the church wants to continue to host the shelter. Recruiting is stressful.





