

Members Handbook

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

Office: 27 North Rd
Peace Dale, RI 02879
401-783-4170 uucscri@gmail.com

A guide to our organization, policies, and frequently asked questions about the practices and procedures of the UUCSC

Available on our website and hardcopy

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WELCOME, WHO WE ARE AND A BRIEF HISTORY

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County (UUCSC). We are a welcoming, loving, spiritual community practicing Unitarian Universalist principles. We offer a safe, respectful environment for personal and spiritual growth for children and adults. The UUCSC serves as a resource for social and environmental action, peace, and justice. We practice the 7 Unitarian Universalist principles. Our congregation has voted to adopt the 8th Principle, which is still under review by the UUA.

We are people of many beliefs and backgrounds. We are diverse in faith, age, ethnicity, history, gender identification, sexual orientation, and spirituality, but aligned in our desire to make a difference for the

good. Guided by our belief in the worth and dignity of all, our community welcomes you in your wholeness, from the religious, racial, or cultural backgrounds and/or life experiences and identities that you bring.

Our congregation was founded in 1989, when Joan and Tom Patterson and Winnie and Pete Bennis decided to start a Unitarian Universalist congregation that would fill the need for a liberal religious voice in southern Rhode Island.

With financial support from our denomination, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), the RI Secretary of State approved the congregation's Articles of Incorporation on July 1, 1991. We are currently in the process of applying for 501(c)3 status as a non-profit corporation.

Regular Sunday services led by guest ministers began in September of 1991. Our first gatherings were at members' homes. When our numbers grew, we began to meet at a local library, and later moved to St. Augustine's Church, on URI's Kingston campus, where we held Sunday afternoon services. Our next meeting place was the American Legion Post 39 in Peace Dale. In August of 2008 we bought our current home at Lily Pads. We began services in February of 2009.

Music has been an integral part of our congregation from the beginning, with our first Music Director (MD), Vicki LePree, who joined us at St. Augustine's. Our current MD, Michael Galib has been with us since 2009. We are grateful to Helene Gersuny, Music Director Emeritus of Westminster, who graciously volunteered for years to provide the music for summer services.

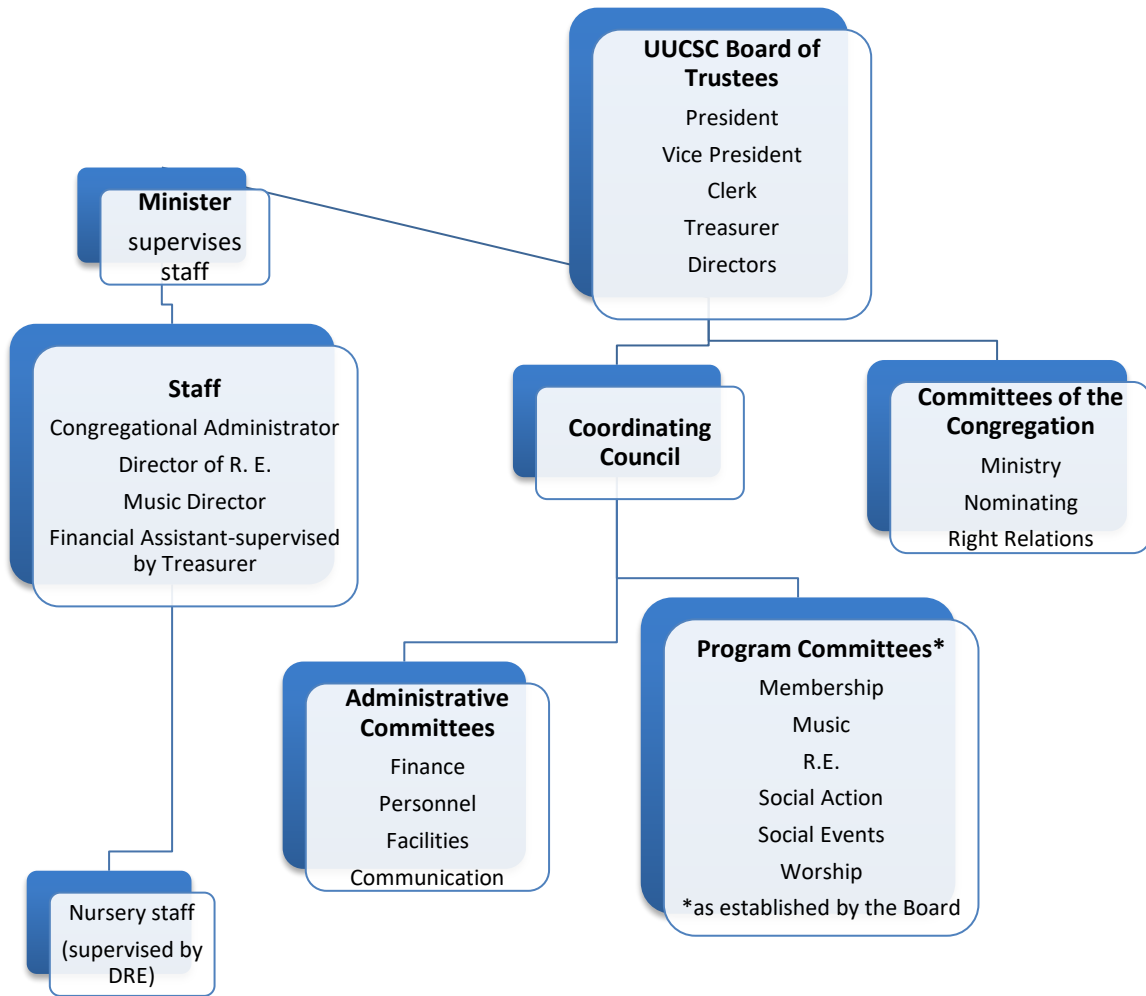
St. Augustine was also the place we began our Religious Education program with Sally Barney serving as the first of many wonderful Directors of Religious Education (DRE).

Between 1995 and 2004, a series of part-time interim ministers served the congregation. In May of 2004 we reached a major milestone when Rev. Betty Kornitzer became our first settled minister. Rev. Kornitzer retired in June of 2013, and we began a period of exciting transition. Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley served as our interim minister from August 2013 to June 2014, followed by Rev. Jan Knost, who served a two-year term as our interim minister from September 2014 to June 2016. From June 2016 to June 2021, Rev. DL Helfer served as our second settled minister. Our current minister, Rev Denis Letourneau Paul, began in January 2022.

Social action has always been an important part of our mission. The UUA recognizes us as a Welcoming Congregation, one that has taken intentional steps to welcome people of all religions, ethnicities, racial or cultural backgrounds and/or life experiences, and all sexual orientations and gender identities. We are accredited by the UUA as a Green Sanctuary community committed to living in harmony with the Earth and creating sustainable lifestyles.

Friends and Members are encouraged to become involved by participating in small groups, committees, religious education, choir, attending Board meetings, and congregation wide activities.

UUCSC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Note: All committees and Minister report directly to the Board. All Staff report to the Minister. Group headings and titles are in the UUCSC Bylaws.

CONTACT INFORMATION

UUCSC Office/Congregational Administrator (CA): 401-783-4170 Ext. 1 uucscri@gmail.com

Call, email or go to our website to reach the Congregational Administrator, Board President, Minister, Director of Religious Education, Music Director, Financial Administrator and /or Committee Chairs.

Our website: <https://uusouthcountyri.org> Home, About, Worship, Ministry, Connect, Justice, Give.

Find the following information and more on our website:

Board of Directors, Minister, Staff, Committees/chairs, Congregational Directory, Church Calendar, Church Documents, History, and descriptions of our Mission and Principles.

A printed Members Directory can be purchased from our Congregational Administrator. The online directory is password protected. Contact the CA or Communications Chair for the password.

We send weekly emails for services, news, events, emails for cancellations and updates.

GOVERNANCE AND DOCUMENTS

Bylaws: The UUCSC Bylaws is the central document of our congregation. It defines who we are, our relationship to the UUA, sets out our structure and explains our procedures. Find It on our website: Home>About>Documents>Organizational Church Documents.

UUCSC Board of Directors (BOD): This is the governing body of our congregation. The Board consists of the President, the Vice President, the Clerk, the Treasurer, and three Directors. The Board meets monthly throughout the year and convenes Board Retreats. Board meetings, as well as all committee meetings, are open to members and friends, unless there is a confidentiality issue. Meeting Minutes are posted on our website. The minister attends Board meetings to counsel and advise but does not have a vote.

Committees: There are three types of committees: Administrative, Program, and Committees of the Congregation. See our Bylaws, website, or Organizational Chart.

The Coordinating Council: The Coordinating Council consists of committee chairs that meet bi-monthly to discuss and coordinate committee functions and activities.

Annual Business Meeting: Held in June. Members of the congregation vote on the following: Minutes of the last annual meeting; the annual reports of the Board President, Minister, staff, and committees; the election of the incoming Board members, amendments/changes to the Bylaws, and the new budget.

The following documents are available on the UUCSC website: Documents Page: Organizational Church Documents such as the Bylaws, Board Minutes; Handbooks; Policies; Job Descriptions; and Additional Documents. <https://uusouthcountyri.org>

A copy of the Annual Budget is available from the Treasurer or Finance Committee Chair

To access the “Members Only” page of the UUCSC website contact the Webmaster or the Congregational Administrator for the username and password.

For issues or concerns contact the President or a Board member.

Contact the President to be placed on the Board agenda.

Contact the Board Clerk or check the UUCSC website for past BOD meeting minutes.

To schedule an event or meeting, check the church calendar on our website (hyperlink) and contact the Congregational Administrator, who is the keeper of the church calendar, by phone or email.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Pledging

We ask but do not require our members and friends to contribute financially on an annual basis. During our canvass in March, you will be asked to pledge for the next fiscal year (FY). The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. However, you may make a pledge at any time during the year by contacting the Finance Committee Chair. Pledges may be paid in any installment desired: weekly, monthly, quarterly, or a lump-sum annual payment. Most pledgers begin payment for the Fiscal Year after July 1 completing by June of following year.

When preparing your payment please include the following information:

- To pay in cash place the money in an envelope with your name, date, and stating “Pledge”
- To pay by check, make the check payable to UUCSC, include in the memo line “Pledge FY” (fill in specific fiscal year)
- Place the cash envelope or check in the Sunday service collection plate, or mail to UUCSC, 27 North Road, Peace Dale, R.I. 02879, Attn: Collector.
- To change your pledge, contact the Finance Committee Chair.

All information pertaining to your ability to complete pledge payments is held strictly confidential.

To track your pledge contribution the Finance Committee will send you a statement indicating what your total pledge amount is and how much has been received toward that amount. This is done to check our records against yours. If you have any questions about this statement, or the amount shown, please call or email the Finance Chair.

If you become an “Inactive Member,” it will not affect your relationship to the Congregation or the Congregation’s relationship to you, except that you will be unable to vote at congregational business meetings.

Contact the Finance Committee for specifics on how to donate stocks, bonds, mutual funds or other assets to UUCSC.

There are special funds established (e.g., Our Living Legacy) which can be named as allocations for payable-to-UUCSC donations. The Treasurer and Finance Chair can identify these funds to which the Collector can accept and allocate gifts.

The Board must formally accept any donation before it can be transferred to the UUCSC account.

Consult with your estate planning professional for specific advice about naming UUCSC in a bequest.

Overview of the UUCSC's Financial Management

The Congregation's finances are handled by the Finance Committee, the Treasurer, Financial Administrator, and the Collector.

The Financial Administrator maintains the congregation's financial records and works closely with the Finance Committee, Treasurer and Collector. The Treasurer supervises the Financial Administrator.

The Treasurer maintains the financial records and reports to the Board monthly.

The Finance Chair, the Congregational Administrator, and Board President administer the congregational bank accounts. They make deposits, withdrawals, and manage allocated expenses.

The Collector secures and classifies all funds received. This includes the cash and checks received in the Sunday service collection plate as well as payments received through the mail. The Collector records all income, prepares bank deposits, and reports these deposits to the Chair. The Chair forwards the deposit information to the Treasurer.

The Chair also maintains the pledge status of each pledging unit for the fiscal year.

The Finance Committee includes other volunteers who provide general oversight of the Congregation's financial status, including fundraising, investments, annual budget preparation and organization of the annual pledge canvass. Contact the Congregational Administrator at uucscri@gmail.com for a complete list of committee members.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Religious Education (RE) program, also known as "Spiritual Exploration," is led by our Director of Religious Education (DRE), Lee Cowan. Our goal is to support children, youth, and families on their spiritual journey. We strive to create a safe container to explore our spiritual beliefs as well as foster a strong connection to each other, the wider community and to the earth.

Registration

Babies, children, and youth are required to be registered. The Director of Religious Education (DRE) makes sure every family receives a Registration Packet in September each year. The Registration Packet contains a current RE program brochure, a registration form, a photo release form, peaceful behavior guidelines for both children and adults to sign, an emergency contact card and, for the youth groups, a generic permission slip. Every child is welcome in our church and in our program, including those with special needs. List any special needs or requirements on the RE registration form.

Curricula

We pull inspiration from many sets of curricula and are happy to share those sources with anyone who is interested. Our time together on Sundays pulls from these sources, as well as from what is happening with the seasons and holidays during the year. We almost always start with an opening sharing circle, sing songs, and allow a lot of space for free play and exploration.

DRE

The DRE's contact information is on our church website, in our directory, and in this document in our Contact Information section. The DRE is available during weekly office hours listed in the church calendar.

Adult Volunteers

We invite adults to join us on Sundays whenever they are interested. Some parents stay with us for the whole time, some split their time between RE and the upstairs worship service. Adults without kids are always welcome to join us for our sharing circle and/or for our crafting and exploring time. If any adult has a skill, craft, or passion that they would like to share with us, we would love to schedule a time for that.

Background Checks

Volunteers who plan to be one of the two adults in charge of any group of children, need a Background Check done through the Rhode Island Attorney General's BCI Division. The background check forms are available from the Congregational Administrator and the DRE. They are completely confidential.

The Nursery

We often start out with all ages together in a sharing circle or free play time. When we do split into age groups, the nursery is staffed with one adult supervisor and one paid teen caregiver. Parents are asked to sign their children in and out during drop-off and pick-up. The sign in/out sheet is by the entrance door to the nursery. Parents are asked to sit towards the back of the sanctuary during service in case a caregiver needs to come get them. Parents are always invited to stay in the nursery if they wish.

RE Committee

The RE Committee's charge is to support, enhance and evaluate the RE program. To become involved, contact the Committee Chair or the DRE. The RE Handbook is available on the UUCSC website.

MUSIC PROGRAM

Led by our talented Music Director of 14 years and counting, Michael Galib leads and accompanies our choir. Michael is a highly accomplished pianist. Musical selections range from hymns to World to Pop to Musicals to the great composers.

Join the Choir

Contact the Music Director or the Music Committee chair to learn more about the choir. The choir rehearses on Thursday nights from 7 to 8:30 p.m. and Sunday morning at 9 a.m.

The Music Director's schedule is from September through June of the church year. The choir sings regularly on Sundays from September through June, as well as for special events such as the Christmas Eve, Eve service, and concerts.

BECOME MORE FULLY INVOLVED

Volunteer My Time and Talent

When interested in a committee, contact the chair of that committee whose name and contact information are listed in the directory on our website at <http://uusouthcounty.org> . For information about all committees contact the Membership Committee chair. They will guide you using the Gifts and Interests Survey to find your best match(es). There are many ways to help committees and volunteer your time. Contact the chair and start the conversation. You are most welcome to assist for a single event to see if you enjoy the group or tasks. You do not have to be a member of the committee sponsoring an event to volunteer or to help. Committees frequently seek additional help for projects or events.

Women Of Wisdom (WOW)

All women are invited to attend the WOW luncheon, which meets on the first Monday of each month except in the summer, at local restaurants or on Zoom. Contact the group coordinator on our website and/or our weekly e-newsletter.

Men's Group

The Men's Group meets regularly on the first Saturday morning of the month for breakfast at local restaurants, unless otherwise notified. All men 18 years of age or older are welcome. Younger males are

welcome with an adult. Contact the group coordinator listed on our website or check our weekly e-newsletter.

Wellness Team

Our Wellness Team offers programs to enhance wellness in body, mind, and spirit. Peggy Huddleston's Mind-Body-Spirit technique helps people prepare for surgery, heal faster, and use less pain medication. This technique can also be used to lessen the side effects of chemotherapy, radiation, and the challenges of acute and long-term health issues and anxieties. UUCSC members can request a free session by contacting the Congregational Administrator.

Other Groups

Throughout the congregational year there are unofficial groups that meet for specific purposes based on the individuals' interests. Example: Book Groups and Circle Dinners.

SEEK HELP AND COMFORT

Pastoral Services from the Minister: Make an appointment with our Minister email uucscri@gmail.com or call the CA at 401-783-4170, ext. 1 Congregational Administrator-office.

Pastoral Service When the Minister is Away: The Pastoral Care Committee (PCC) is trained in providing Pastoral Care supplementing the work of the minister. Contact the PCC leader for a pastoral care referral.

Help for Someone Experiencing a Crisis or Needing Temporary Assistance

Call or email the minister. In the absence of the Minister, contact the PCC or Helping Hands Committee Chair (HHC). The HHC ministry relies on referrals from concerned members and friends to identify folks needing help or personal support during times of crises, emergencies, or illnesses. The HHC sends cards and makes telephone calls to provide a friendly and caring personal touch to those in need of help or assistance. The HHC can provide meals and rides to church, shopping, and medical appointments. Each intervention is tailored to the person's specific needs.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

To respond to or resolve an issue or complaint with a member, friend, or staff member:

Speak to the person directly. If the unresolved issue is with a staff member (CA, DRE, or MD), speak to the Minister, who is their supervisor. If the issue is not resolved after speaking with the person or the Minister, contact the Board President, who may call on the Committee on Right Relations (CORR) to investigate. The CORR is responsible for conflict resolution and maintaining congregational harmony. For an issue with the Minister, contact the Committee on Ministry (COM).

Disruptive or Threatening Behavior

For any behavior that can be characterized as disruptive, threatening, or unacceptable contact the Board President. The President may call upon the Committee on Right Relations to investigate. See the POLICY HANDBOOK to refer to the UUCSC DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY 5/18/22.

COMMUNICATION

Sunday Service Announcements:

To have an announcement read at a Sunday service, download the announcement form from the website <http://uusouthcounty.org/wp/church/documents/> or fill out a blank announcement form, which is located on a table inside the rear (main) door of the sanctuary. Place the form on the lectern.

Congregational Emails

The Minister, President, DRE, MD, Communications Chair, and in some cases the CA are the persons designated to post emails. Email or speak with them to request a posting.

The Sunday Order of Service (OOS)

The OOS is printed every week for Sunday services. Contact the Congregational Administrator at uucscri@gmail.com by 6 pm on Wednesday to submit the OOS or inserts into the OOS.

UUCSC E-News and Updates

Submissions to our weekly e-news, or all submissions, need to be received by the CA no later than 6 pm Wednesday. All submissions are reviewed and approved by the Communications Committee.

Please note, images with young children may require a release signed by the parents before they can be added to the site. Check with the RE Director.

Event Notifications

Events are time dependent. Examples are concerts, holiday fairs, congregational dinners, etc. Events need to have a one-to-two-month notice whenever possible. To put an event on the calendar, first check the interactive calendar on the website, then email or call the CA.

Posting on the Website

All requests for posting information on the web site must be approved by the Communications Committee. Once the posting has been approved the information is sent to the webmaster.

<http://uusouthcountyri.org>

Affiliated web sites: For a full list visit this page > <http://uusouthcountyri.org/wp/links/>

UUCSC Facebook Page

Access our Facebook page on the homepage of our website or use the link below.

<https://www.facebook.com/UUCSC/>

Facebook Posts for the UUCSC: Please contact the Communications Committee. Facebook posts should include text, photos, videos, and links.

COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

Committee Purchases

After reviewing committee requests in the spring for the upcoming fiscal year, each committee is allocated an annual budget by the Board. Committees may allocate spending as needed to meet their annual goals, but the Board must approve purchases that are \$1000 or more.

To find out how much of the committee's budget remains available, the committee chair should contact their Board liaison, or the Finance Committee chair. Be sure to obtain a copy of our RI Sales Tax Exemption Number Form from our Congregational Administrator.

Reimbursements

Reimbursement forms are in a folder on the office door. Fill out the form, attach the receipt to the form and place it in the folder on the door of the office. You may also leave it with the Congregational Administrator.

To Collect and Account for Money from a Fundraiser or Event

Submit a document with the following information to the CA and obtain a receipt for funds collected:

1. Name of Function and Date.
2. Amount collected.
3. Expenses.
4. Dollar figure that is to be paid to UUCSC.
5. Allocation of funds collected (e.g., Social Events).

JUSTICE, EQUITY AND PEACE IN THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Social Justice Committee

The Social Justice Committee (SJC) meets on a regular basis. All forms of hate, oppression, inequality, and discrimination are important; however, they prioritize Climate, Racial and Women's Justice knowing

that each of them intersect with other injustices. Their mission is to Learn about an issue, educate others in the congregation and the community based on what they've learned, and advocate for change. The SJC invites members and friends to join in specific activities through our e-newsletter, Sunday announcements, and other venues. Contact the SJC Chair for more information.

Climate Justice

The Social Justice Committee follows climate issues and legislation closely, looking for opportunities for advocacy on a local level, sharing information and activities through the weekly [UUCSC News and Updates](#) newsletter.

Racial Justice

The Anti-Racism Group meets on the second and fourth Mondays of the month on Zoom at 7pm to learn about the effects of racism in our society and explore ways to overcome it. Anyone is welcome to join or drop in for a visit. The Zoom link can be found on the [UUCSC Calendar](#).

Women's Justice

The Social Justice Committee follows women's justice issues closely, sharing information and activities through the weekly [UUCSC News and Updates](#) newsletter.

Share the Plate

Our congregation has a "Share-the-Plate" donation for charitable causes the first Sunday of every month. Fifty percent of all non-pledge monies are donated to a specific cause. The Social Justice Committee is charged with developing, implementing, and monitoring Share-the-Plate guidelines, and these collections. These contributions are made to local and Rhode Island organizations whose missions are consistent with the social mission of the UUCSC. Contact the Social Justice Committee Chair for more details about the process for recommending and approving specific charities.

LAY SERVICES AND SUMMER WORSHIP

The Worship Committee plans and organizes all lay-led and summer services. The Membership committee schedules a volunteer team of 2-4 people, as ushers for Sunday morning services.

Contact the Worship Committee chair to participate in a lay service, request a template for the Order of Service (OOS), to suggest or offer a sermon, or to invite a guest speaker. The Membership committee

handles welcoming and ushering assistance for lay and summer services. There is no childcare or RE available at summer services. Families are invited to bring their children to services and/or use the nursery themselves if needed.

To request music for a lay service or event such as a wedding or memorial service, contact the Music Director, who has the right of first refusal. The Music Director is paid for their services beyond their contract. If they are unavailable make other arrangements.

Permission for special collections or donation boxes are granted by the Board of Directors. Contact the president at least two weeks prior to the monthly Board meeting to request permission.

Contact the Aesthetics Committee to arrange for special artistic or floral displays.

FACILITY USE

Our facility is available to our committees, members, and friends for meetings, events, and other uses. Some uses require a fee. Contact the Congregational Administrator to schedule an event or meeting. Always check the Calendar on our website for available dates before contacting the CA. See our Facilities Use Policy on the Documents page on our website for complete guidelines on set-up, clean-up, kitchen use, sound system, heating, lighting, security, building access, alcohol, drug, and tobacco policies.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety Concerns in the Building: Contact the Board President or Facilities Committee Chair

Safety Concerns Regarding Policy and Procedure: Contact the Board President

Cancellations Due to Weather*

In the event a service is cancelled, the congregation will be informed in the following ways:

- a. You will receive an email notification of the cancellation.
- b. The website will have a prominent posting regarding the cancellation, closure or postponement.
- c. You may check the following TV and radio stations: Channels 12 and 64, AM station: WHJJ (920) and FM stations: WWBB (B101), WHJY (94.1) and WSNE (93.3).
- d. The information will be posted to the UUCSC Facebook page.
- e. A sign will be posted on the front door, if it is possible to do so.