



Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of South County, RI



Annual Meeting

June 9, 2024

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County
27 North Road
Peace Dale, RI 02879**

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UUCSC

2023 Annual Business Meeting Agenda

June 9, 2024

Welcome

Invocation

Call to Order

Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Business Meeting

Acceptance of the Reports

Approval of the Annual Budget

Report of the Nominating Committee

Election of Officers and Directors

Election of Nominating Committee

Installation of the Board

Retirement & Recognition of Outgoing Board Member

Installation of Officers and Members of the Board

General Assembly

Leadership Opportunities

Comments for the Good of the Order

Adjourn

**Minutes of the UUCSC Annual Meeting
June 11, 2023**

Call to order: 11:24 AM by President Elizabeth Donovan.

Invocation: Rev. Denis L. Paul

A quorum of 38 members was needed. 46 were present plus 6 absentee ballots.

**MOTION: It was moved that the minutes of the 2021-2022 Annual Meeting be ratified as written.
PASSED.**

Reports from the president, minister, staff and committees were included in the Annual meeting packet. They will be posted on the website.

**MOTION: Nancy Richman moved to accept the reports as written.
PASSED: Unanimously.**

General Assembly issues:

President Elizabeth Donovan explained that the delegates wanted to gauge the intentions of the congregation. No one opposed the election of Dr. Sofia Betancourt as UUA president or the further discussion of Article II. There was discussion around the divestment of fossil fuel companies from the UUA investment portfolio. 30 members recommended opposing the resolution as recommended by both the UUA and UUCSC Finance committees. 17 proposed immediate divestment.

Health Equity as an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) received much support. Protecting Dreamers, supporting Ukraine and stopping Cop City in Atlanta all received some.

**MOTION: Sandy Ketrow moved that the budget be accepted as presented.
PASSED unanimously.**

**MOTION: Ed Burrell moved that the nominating slate be accepted as presented.
PASSED unanimously.**

Nominating slate:

President - NANCY RICHMAN 2023-2025
Vice-President - Patricia Hindley 2022-2024
Clerk - Mary Fulton 2022-2024
Treasurer - vacant
Director-at-large - CHARLIE DONNELLY 2023-2025
Director-at-large - RUSSELL STOKES 2023-2025
Director-at-large - BETHANY SORRENTINO 2023-2024

Nominee and continuing on Nominating Committee

Linda Whyte Burrell 2021-2024
Valerie Follett 2022 -2025
HARRY BUFFUM 2023-2026

Those in capital letter are presented to be elected on June 11, 2023. Others are continuing in their current positions.

Installation of the new Board by Rev. Denis L. Paul.

Expressions of gratitude and gifts were given to outgoing Board members Elizabeth Donovan and Mary Alice Kimball.

Motion: Etta Zasloff moves to adjourn.

Meeting notes taken by David Fulton. Minutes compiled by Mary Fulton, Clerk.

Respectfully submitted.

Mary Fulton, Clerk

President's Report

President's Annual Report June 9, 2024

What a phenomenal year this has been! I am in awe at the steady progress of this community. Reflecting on the past couple of years, I would give 2021-2022 the title "*Reopening and Reconnecting*," followed by the 2022-2023 chapter entitled "*Settling in and Rebuilding*". This past year's chapter, then, I'd call "*Growing and Maturing*".

This past year has brought many new members into our community: we've welcomed 13 (!) people to UUCSC, people that have already become part of the fabric of our congregation. What a joy to welcome our newcomers! Rev Denis continues to grow as our minister, always imagining the creative next step to help us move more deeply into worship and community. The recently added monthly meditation circles are just one more example of Rev Denis' responding to requests for additional opportunities to grow spiritually.

And the staff, Lee Cowan, DRE, Mike Galib, MD, Sara Kaplow, Congregation Administrator, and Sue Rogola, Financial Admin, (now Karen St Peters) are absolutely outstanding individuals with whom it is a total pleasure to work. I can't say enough about each of them! Heartfelt thanks to each of them for their wonderful contributions to this community.

I so appreciate the impressive work of our committees that are each working with strength, competence, and amazing enthusiasm. Thank you all! Because of this, the Board is able to move away from helping manage operations to taking a big picture strategic and governance focus. As such, our responsibility as board members is not to make operational decisions—the committees and staff are empowered to do that—but to share in the lives of the congregation and foster opportunities to bring people together. Strengthening our relationships, fiscal and strategic oversight, and policy management is the task of the Board.

Speaking of the Board – what an amazing group of dedicated and loving people with whom I have the privilege of working, absolutely committed to the well-being of this congregation and the individuals within. For the Board, leading this congregation is truly, a labor of love!

In January, over 30 people attended the Strategic Planning meeting, hosted by the Board, when we brainstormed our Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Hopes/Wishes. One of the key insights from this meeting that the Board has been discussing is how we can best shift from focusing on **recruiting** new members and families to **servng** the members and families already here. What is serving? Asking and listening deeply to the diverse voices within our community and responding to what people need in order to feel

connected, nourished and loved. What is serving? Enriching our members, building relationships, and weaving us together into one tapestry. Why wouldn't people be drawn to a community that serves each other in these ways?!

At the same time, our biggest challenge that we must face head on is our financial situation. We began this fiscal year with a \$21,000 deficit budget. Because of your generosity with pledges, the end-of-year holiday Gratitude House, other donations, and our various fundraisers, (at the moment of writing this) it seems likely that we will end the year in the black or close to it. However, we cannot go along as we have year after year and remain financially sound. What we bring in simply does not cover our operational expenses despite us all giving to the best of our abilities. We have been spared facing this reality by luck and good fortune over the past few years. At this point, though, our aging building requires significant financial outlay to sustain it for the future. In this year's budget the Facilities Committee has recommended that the first major project (roof and chimney repair) be added to the budget and completed this year – a significant capital expense (estimate of \$40,000). The Committee recommends that this be followed by the second high priority project of tuck pointing and sealing the bricks on the back wall to stop the moisture penetration which is beginning to deteriorate the structure.

As we move into 2024-2025, continuing our path of growth and maturity, the need to raise sufficient operational income and capital to maintain our building for the foreseeable future will be a critical issue for discussion. We can't grow without careful consideration, together, of the needs of our building and our fiscal constraints. It is time.

Just before the annual meeting last year our congregation lost two very beloved members of our community, Nancy Rose and Helene Gersuny, and EssJay Foulkrod not long before that. It was a hard way to begin the year and we grieve still. This year we grieve the loss of Ron Macy and Gerre Alderwick. We remember each of these amazing individuals as beacons of love and light in this world and in our congregation.

This is a congregation where we feel love deeply – for each other, for our earth, for the world. We express it in the many ways that we show up for each other. We affirm our commitment to love every week with the words of our Covenant, "Love is the spirit of this congregation..." Indeed, I felt it the minute I walked into UUCSC, more than two years ago, and was welcomed with open arms. I knew immediately that this was my place, my community, my spiritual home.

It is my privilege to serve as your president and I am grateful to each of you for your support. I look forward to the coming year. May we grow into the future, together, as beacons of love and light in challenging times in a tumultuous world.

Nancy Richman
President
June 9, 2024

Minister's Report

Minister's Annual Report May 2024

At an informal congregational meeting in the fall of 2022, then-board chair Elizabeth Donovan identified four ideas that summarized our mission statement: Welcoming, Loving, Growing Spiritually, Seeking Justice.

Our mission statement officially remains the same, but the six-word summary is easy to remember, and an effective tool for looking at the state of our congregation at the end of this exciting year.

Welcoming and Loving

The Membership Committee and Greeters are doing a great job of welcoming visitors, who are greeted in the sanctuary by colorful art on the front wall, created collaboratively by many hands of many sizes. Our volunteer cleaning crew continues to save us thousands of dollars a year, and thanks to the Facilities and Garden Committees leading the charge, the space looks better than ever with lots of input by energetic members and friends.

We have resumed occasional coffee hours after Sunday services. Our quarterly Friday night dinners have benefitted from broader involvement in cooking, setting up and cleaning. Through formal and informal arrangements, Helping Hands have been delivering food and giving rides and other assistance to members and friends in need of accompaniment.

Our membership has grown, as has attendance at Sunday Services and all of our programming. During that congregational meeting when we isolated our “six words,” we talked about the changing demographics of South County, recognizing that while the number of families may be shrinking, we’re likely to see growth among recent retirees and transplants to the area. That forecast seems to be playing out, and still we are seeing more families with “tweens” joining participating in RE through Dungeons and Dragons.

Growing Spiritually

Sunday Services have been alive with music and diverse voices. the Worship Committee has welcomed interesting and insightful guest preachers, including three UU ministers. Members and friends of our congregation continue to share spiritual reflections and sermons, always relearning that their perspectives, insights and vulnerability are deeply appreciated. Our Worship Assistant Grounding sessions have been fruitful and exciting.

We’ve introduced a monthly Meditation Circle which has enriched the spiritual lives of participants while creating peaceful, contemplative space to be together. Art at the front of the sanctuary gets more joyful and collaborative, as an expanding group of artists of all ages reflect on the worship theme of the month.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) has deepened our understanding of ourselves and our most important intimate relationships in ways that are appropriate to K-1 children, teens, and older adults. A group of parents and empty nesters are coming with impressive programming for *The Wunder Academy of Metamorphosis*, which will debut at the end of August, in the process expressing their spiritual connectivity in new ways. With this kind of energy and creativity, Lee and I imagine this program (which isn’t a “camp!”) will soon expand to include families not currently involved with our congregation.

Seeking Justice

The Racial Justice Study Group and the Social Justice Advisory Council continue to meet regularly for study and reflection on systems of oppression while showing up for justice, wearing our shirts, carrying signs, signing petitions and demanding change. Meanwhile, they’ve been producing educational events with people like Sandra Laub and organizations like the Tomaquag Museum.

The Hurdis Fund continues to make possible social justice events.

All of these ways in which we are welcoming newcomers as they are, loving each other and the world through all of our celebrations and sorrows has made us all, tending to our spiritual lives, studying racism and showing up for justice, I think, increases our sense of belonging to something important. Isn’t that what our UU faith and congregational life are all about?

Challenges

None of this is to say that everything is perfect at UUCSC. Once again we are facing a budget shortfall. Our building is showing its age, demanding some projects that will cost more than we have in the bank. We'll need to think about how to increase pledging, build capital for required improvements, and create endowments through legacy giving in order to secure UUCSC's future in the decades to come. All of that requires generosity, and deep reflection on what really matters.

If we are to continue really welcoming and loving new people, we'll have to be present in a way that requires we all shift from thinking about "recruiting young families" to actually *serv*ing them. The world is different now, in a ways that are easy for younger folks to articulate because they feel it more than us gray haired people. We need to listen to them, and meet them where they are if we are very to make them welcome.

I know we can do this. The energy you all give to getting it done is a constant source of inspiration for me. And I know most of you feel the same way.

In Peace,
Rev. Denis Paul

Director of Religious Education's Report

2023-2024 UUCSC RE Committee Annual Report

Religious Education Program Evaluation: May 6, 2024

This year has been one of expansion with new directions, some new participants, and new connections. Our biggest successes have been in expanding what we offer to different age groups and in continuing to build on our multi-generational gatherings to foster a sense of shared community in the congregation.

Offerings:

OWL training for elementary ages: We hosted a very successful training in November with 14 participants from 9 congregations, including 4 people from our congregation and 3 from Westminster.

OWL class for Kindergarten and 1st grade: Bethany Sorrentino and Melinda Whitaker facilitated our first K/1 OWL class this spring. It was 8 sessions, meeting every Sunday from 11-noon. We had 7 participants, one of whom came down from Warwick.

Dungeons and Dragons: Andrew White hosted a DnD campaign from January thru April for our middle schoolers. It was so highly successful that the kids are continuing to meet on Wednesdays after school just to hang out. Andrew will be joining them again in June to continue their campaign. So now we have a Wednesday middle school youth group!

Summer Program: The Wunder Academy of Metamorphosis is coming alive! We have had two meetings so far with 20 adults who are all ready to jump in and make this program a success. We have verbal confirmation from the families of 14 kids and so far have three official registrations.

Sunday Family Circle, conversations and play: We have expanded our Sunday offerings to include an hour from 11-12 of various activities. We have hosted intentional parent conversations during the kids' OWL class,

which were really well attended and met a definite need for parents. We offer extended activities and free play for kids who aren't in a scheduled class.

Gatherings:

Congregational Dinners: These quarterly dinners are a fantastic example of building multi-generational community. And now we even have many people, even kids, helping with clean up at the end.

Solstice Spiral Labyrinth Walk: This continues to be a lovely UUCSC tradition, and I'd like to see it grow into a more multi-gen experience.

Easter service, feast and egg hunt: We have several multi-gen services but this one feels especially family oriented after the service with feasting and egg/scavenger hunts. I'd like to grow this in the future.

May Day Celebration: Our first annual May Day celebration was fabulous and magical. I'm guessing we had 50 people of all generations frolicking in the backyard together. We danced around two May Poles, made May Day crowns, ate yogurt parfaits and watched the magical transformation of violet tea into magenta violet lemonade. Glorious.

Challenges:

Adjusting to changing needs of kids as they move into different stages: This is an ongoing process of assessing needs for different ages. We've realized that we need full-time nursery care again, whereas we haven't needed that in the last two years because all ages circles were working very well. We also really needed something different for our middle schoolers and so now have DnD for them, which is fabulous. We will need to continue to figure out older kid offerings when DnD isn't available and eventually high school offerings as well.

Creating the feeling of being a whole congregation, not segregated: With such a lively family circle downstairs, it often feels like we have a whole separate service in RE. This is really working well for a lot of families, but I think people also feel torn between sitting upstairs and participating downstairs. We will continue to work in TFAAs, multi-gen services and also more collaboration on topics and themes that carry over between the two groups.

Finding Nursery Staff: It's possible that Jenny Rebecca might be able to return next fall, which would be amazing. But otherwise, it's been harder than I thought to find a replacement. And for a while it seemed to be working with just me and Simon as staff and lots of parents and some volunteer congregants as the adults in the room. Now it's very apparent that we need staff in the nursery, so the personnel committee is helping me place job postings to find someone.

Creating a new structure for the RE Committee: We have moved away from monthly meetings but haven't figured out our new structure yet. The idea is for me to email the RE Committee with updates, questions and requests for input. Then we'd like to have several long-term planning meetings throughout the year, open to anyone who would like to be involved. These would take place after service, from about 11:15-12:15. We did do this a couple times, just with parents and it worked well. We need to expand the invitation to all congregants. And we need to add in a way for people to help with tasks, projects and volunteering without being on the committee. Like being a "friend" of RE.

Budget Summary

2024-2025 Projected Budget

Income

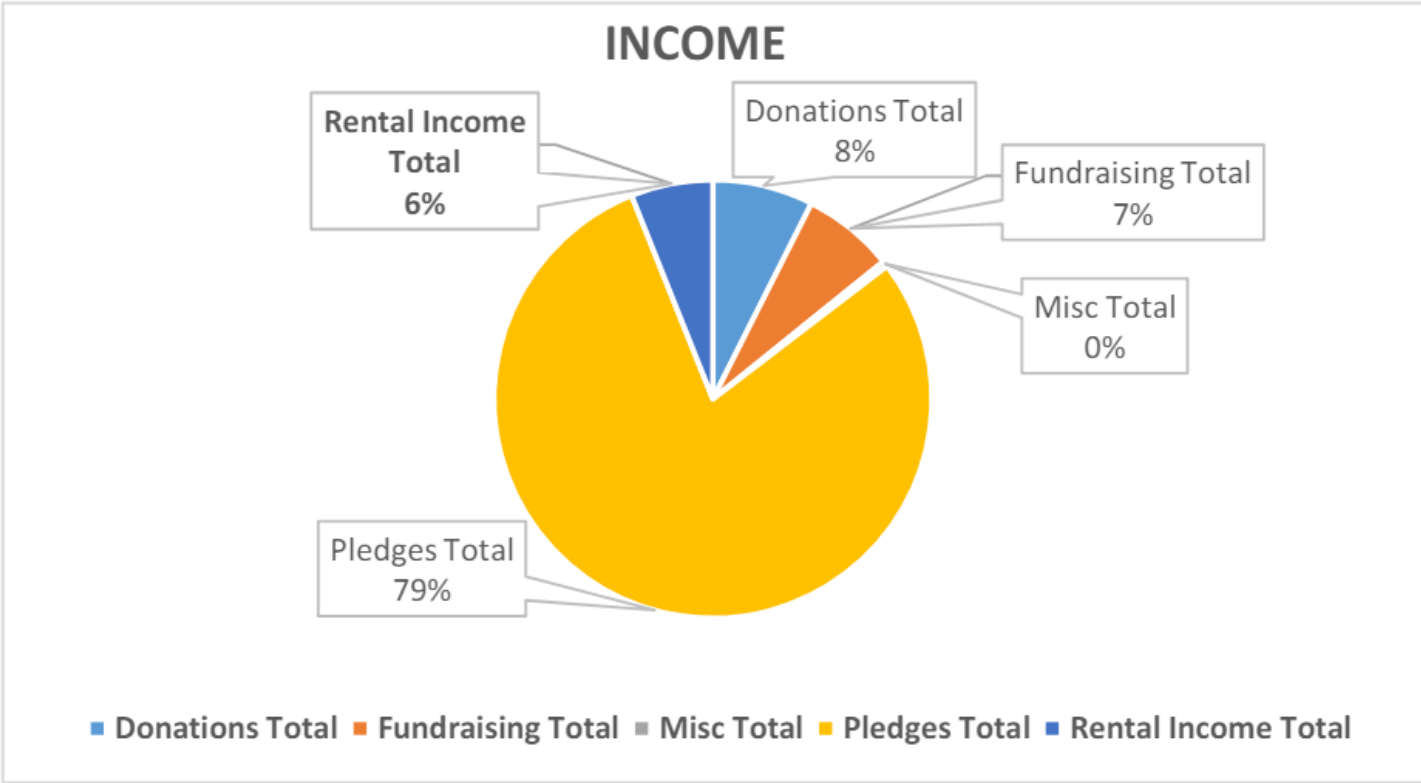
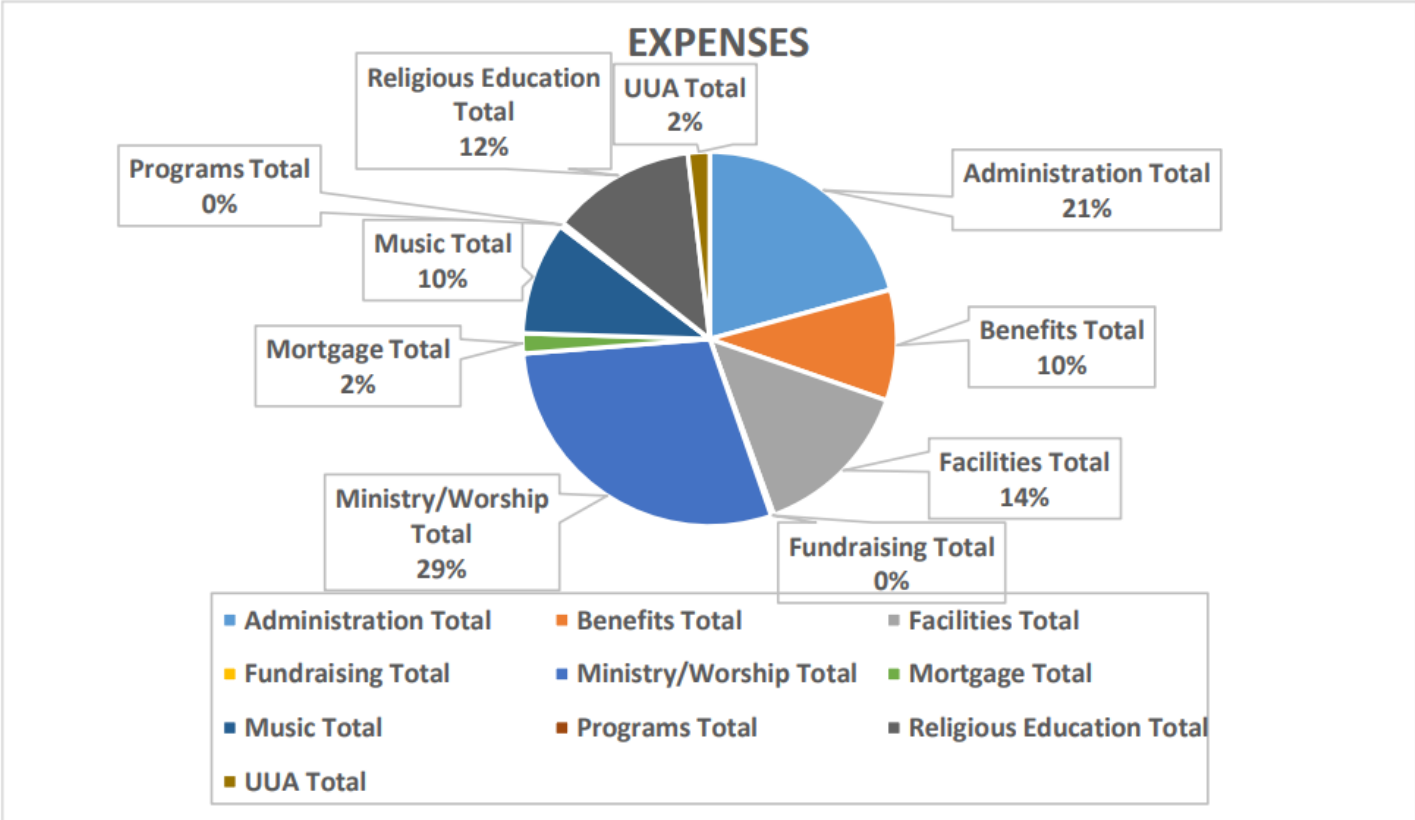
Donations Total	17,561.00
Fundraising Total	16,000.00
Misc Total	1,000.00
Pledges Total	187,418.00
Rental Income Total	14,315.00
Grand Total	236,294.00

Expenses

Administration Total	55,295.20
Benefits Total	25,481.00
Facilities Total	37,575.00
Fundraising Total	650.00
Ministry/Worship Total	77,470.00
Mortgage Total	4,620.00
Music Total	26,083.80
Programs Total	1,000.00
Religious Ed Total	33,211.50
UUA Total	5,000.00
Grand Total	266,386.50

Net Profit/Loss **(30,092.50)**

(Budget graphics on the next page)



Mary Alice Kimball, Treasurer

FACILITIES TEAM 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Team Members: Sally Barney, Ed Burrell, Jean Burke, Russell Stokes, Natalie Herbermann, and Michael Bilecki

Accomplishments:

- Michael Bilecki volunteered to Chair the Facilities Committee beginning in Feb. 2024, taking the reins from Natalie Herbermann.
- Contractor has been selected to install/repair new AC unit to be online by summer 2024
- Working with Heating contractor to repair/rehab Steam boiler heating issues and Hot Water heating issues
- Both Boilers had tune ups in March
- Upstairs Office 12 radiator trouble shooting has been completed and waiting on part to resolve
- Office 12 mildew will be cleaned and repainted once radiator has been fixed
- RE Area children's toilet has been repaired
- Fence outside of RE area has been repaired
- Determined cause of kitchen ceiling leak. Seems to be a roof/chimney issue
- Door issue in Women's restroom and lock issue in Gender Neutral restroom have been repaired
- Install a cage for the thermostat that was moved out of the Library
- Greg Crawford will investigate how to unlock outside door by the nursery
- Leak in RE Office to be repaired when heating season is over
- Repaired rock wall outside of RE Area
- Greg Crawford will Install door stops on various doors around the Sanctuary
- On Going discussion with heating contractor on how to create new zones/more efficient heating – this is a complicated proposal. It would mean trying to first find where existing zone valves are and then put in new valves. They may be behind walls? Or in the ceiling between basement area and 1st floor. May also require asbestos abatement? There is technology available that can be used with sensors that utilize WIFI signals that could turn heat on and off where there is no thermostat?
- Boiler flush/release-should be completed once a week. It means a 3-5 second valve release. End of heating season Contractor should be called to clean and flush the system.
- Facility Use Guidelines are on Review. Facilities Comm. Requested review by Board and Coordinating Council. Once comments and Edits have been forwarded, Facilities will revise and send for Council/Board vote
- Flat Screen TV was donated and installed in the Library. It is a smart TV-there is access to WIFI there. Great meeting place especially for Zoom meetings and presentations
- Spring Clean-up/Fix-up Day on April 20 was a success.
 - Upstairs/Downstairs Cleaned all baseboard heating and behind all the furniture and cobwebs on the ceilings
 - Upstairs/Downstairs vacuumed and mopped all floors
 - Clean all bathrooms
 - Clean Stairwell area outside of Kitchen vacuum/cobwebs etc.
 - Straighten up storage room opposite of boiler room
 - Cleaned Kitchen
 - Foyer entrance all windows cleaned, Oneto Room windows and screens cleaned
 - Cleaned Choir Room

- Cleaned Sanctuary Chairs
- Weeded planted areas
- Removed locust trees in the garden bed that's up against the building,
- Major Project(s) 2024-2025:

Recently we have seen some ceiling leaking in the kitchen. A Member of the Facilities Comm. reached out to a roofing contractor to come by and take a look at what may be causing the leak. Turns out our flat roofs and chimney need some major work. To the extent that after a few conversations we now think that the roof fix is our number one major priority. We are still waiting on an estimate for the roof work. The moisture issue will be dealt with when we have the funds available.

Over the past couple years the Facilities Comm. has been working on, what we determined would be a priority big fix issue. It is moisture seeping through the exterior east wall of the sanctuary from cracked bricks, failed caulk around the windows, and possibly moisture seeping through the bricks themselves causing bubbling and peeling paint that sloughs off and falls to the floor. This is more than a cosmetic issue as it is causing deterioration of the structure. We are in the process of assessing the best fix at this time. Nonetheless, we are reporting to the Congregation that it is important to address this problem as well and it will be expensive to remedy. We have one proposal/estimate that is over a year old that would run \$25-35K. At some point in the near future, after the roof work, we will be looking to get new estimates for the moisture issue, but no sense doing that now when time will more than likely change the estimate. We recommend budgeting for, and addressing this problem after the roof/chimney problems have been addressed

Finance Committee Report

Finance Committee – Annual Report – May 2024

Finance Committee members included Aline Couture (chair), Barbara Nowicki (co-chair), Mary Alice Kimball (Treasurer), Jeff Berry (Collector), Sue Strakosch (Collector assistant), Marcia Boyd (Investments)

The Finance Committee received and reviewed monthly reports from the Treasurer and the Collector and provided monthly summaries of church finances for the Board. We also monitored upcoming facilities expenses, church investments, church insurance coverage, rental income, Hurdis Fund expenditures, and Share-the-Plate distributions.

Much time was spent this year implementing the new Breeze data management system for our financial records. Annual data for all pledges and donations were transferred from Excel spreadsheets into the new Breeze data management system and then checked for accuracy. The Finance Committee agreed that a prudent approach would be to maintain parallel book keeping for our financial records using both our old (tried and true) Excel spreadsheet system and the new Breeze data management system for at least 1 year until we could be certain of the accuracy and reliability of the new Breeze system. The Finance team is continuing to work on a number of issues unique to Breeze that have yet to be resolved (e.g. PayPal donations and their associated fees, and the recording of pledges and donations from couples in a single household).

The Finance team, and in particular the Treasurer, devoted quite a bit of time to managing distributions from the Hurdis Fund in support of programs including;

- OWL programs for all ages

- Programs for elementary and high school students in our local schools
- Direct support to local students
- A grant to HERA for the NO Strangers exhibit
- The North Kingstown Uniting a Community Silk Road Program
- The South Kingstown Housing playground rehabilitation
- A grant to the Gentle Farm to support accessibility to folks of all abilities
- Anti Racism and other programs here at UUCSC

These Hurdis sponsored programs are something that we as a congregation can be extremely proud of, however they have necessarily increased the work load for Mary Alice (Treasurer). The Finance Committee spent time this year discussing ways to better manage and distribute this added burden. We suggested to the Board that some of the Treasurer's responsibilities be shifted to our paid Financial Assistant, and Mary Alice worked closely with Sue Rogala and, more recently, Karen St. Peter, to help them complete some of the regular accounting work that has been done by the Treasurer in the past.

Other work that was accomplished this year included;

- The Finance Committee recommended to the Board that rents charged on our rental units be increased to bring them more in line with current rates. Subsequently, tenants were notified and the rental increase occurred in September.
- In our investments, a \$33,000 Treasury Bill matured in April and was re-invested in a 3-month T Bill paying the best interest rate at the time.
- We replaced an expensive copier under contract with Wells Fargo with a much less expensive-to-maintain office printer.
- We received approval from the Board to spend capital funds on a new HVAC system with a cost not to exceed \$15,000.
- We provided quarterly summaries of pledge status to all members by mail, but, given rising postal costs, decided to no longer provide annual calendar year summaries. This information is easily accessible to members on Breeze.
- Stewardship chairperson Mary Fulton met with the Finance team in January and outlined plans for the 2024-25 stewardship campaign. Given an anticipated budget deficit for next year, the Finance Committee suggested asking members to consider increasing their pledges by 10%. The pledge campaign goal was set at \$200,000 and we have received \$194,000 in pledges to date.
- In preparation for the annual meeting, Mary Alice has prepared the 2024-2025 budget, the Finance Committee has reviewed it, and it has received Board approval. The proposed budget will be submitted to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in June. Without additional income from pledges, fundraising, donations or grants, we are currently forecasting a budget deficit of approximately \$30,000 for next year. The Finance Team will host a "question and answer" session about next year's budget prior to the annual meeting.

In the coming year, the Finance team would like to put additional effort into 1) creating a clear plan for legacy giving and 2) providing support to committee and program leaders to easily track and report spending and/or income for their programs, thus making the Treasurer's job just a little bit easier and reducing the need to pay for additional accounting support.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Nowicki, Finance Co-chair, and The Finance Committee

[Link to Pledge Card](#)

Stewardship Committee Report 2024/25 Pledge Campaign

The Stewardship campaign began on 2/14/24 and ended 3/17/24. 133 pledge packets were mailed to all of the addresses on the active members and active participants lists in Breeze. 50 have responded. The total pledged is \$154,830. This is \$45,170 short of the \$200,000 goal. If pledging continues to fall, as it has over the past few years, the Board will have to seriously pursue more fundraising activities.

Mary Fulton has served as the Stewardship chair for 3 years and is stepping down. She has approached a few people to take over the position but has no definite acceptance as of 3/17/24. Finance might want to consider taking on the campaign as a subcommittee.

Communications/Publicity Committee

Communications Committee Report 2024/25

The Communications Committee membership remains stable and committed to their work. The chair, with active support from the committee, continued to work closely with the staff to provide current information to the congregation and beyond, by way of our digital platforms:

- the UUCSC website, at <https://uusouthcountyri.org>
- our weekly email newsletter, *UUCSC News and Updates*, which is currently created using Constant Contact
- our Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/UUCSC/>
- our Instagram account (@uucscri), at <https://www.instagram.com/uucscri/>

For all of Rev. Denis' services, there is now a link to a Google doc for the full text of each service! The main link for that is on the front page of the website, next to the link to our YouTube Channel. It takes users to a page with individual, easy-to-find links, by date and topic. This benefits all of us at UUCSC as a community of faith, by reinforcing our institutional memory. It is also helpful to newcomers who may benefit from a written copy of our services.

Analytics of all digital platforms show continued increase in use by our congregation and beyond. It appears that the congregation is developing higher expectations for current news and accessible information, which encourages our progress forward.

The Communications Committee is continuing the review of the UUCSC website for updates and changes. Betsy Dalton has created a tool for this in Google Docs, the [Website Review Google Document](#). She has shared it with everyone as a *public* document. We welcome any suggestions of changes and updates to the website. Please forward your suggestions to Betsy Dalton as the Website Review Team Lead, by email at elizabethmdalton@gmail.com, so that she may incorporate them into our review process.

The chair, with help from the committee, also led the Breeze Implementation Team, and continues to troubleshoot and assist with the ongoing process of ensuring 100% integrity of the information in Breeze. We have also transitioned to Breeze for the UUCSC Directory, dropping the CTRN Directory expense of \$114 annually. Our goal is to transition our weekly newsletter from Constant Contact (cost: \$240 annually) to Breeze. We plan to begin this process as soon as the newsletter feature offered by Breeze is upgraded to be more stable.

The 30 radio ads on the Classical Radio Station WCRI 95.9 FM for a month in March-April 2023 as outreach for new members was not determined to be worth it. We did not include outside advertising in our budget for 2025.

Etta Zasloff and Betsy Dalton donated a large screen TV, which now hangs on the wall in the UUCSC library. We intend for all UUCSC leaders to be able to use it for sharing information, such as during committee meetings, Google Doc training, or Breeze training. No more squinting at tiny laptop computer screens!

- The connectivity features of this TV make it easy to use with a computer.
- It has an HDMI cord that can be connected to a computer, either directly using the HDMI cord, or with an HDMI-to-USB-C cable adapter.
- And, we are available to help leaders use this new feature to facilitate your church work.

We met on Zoom regularly at 4:00 PM every other month in the week preceding the scheduled Coordinating Council meetings (Sept., Nov., Jan., Mar., May). We plan to continue this schedule for the next year. In line with the revised UUCSC policy on in-person meetings, we have begun to hold more of our meetings in person. This has been favorably received by the committee members.

Kelsey Briggs joined us for our final meeting of the year, in person in the library. She is considering joining the CommComm or assisting with some website updates.

Committee Members:

Etta Zasloff – Website content, Newsletter Editor

Betsy Dalton – Facebook and Website review

Will Bender - Webmaster

Sky Kimball – Zoom Tech + Detail editor

Barbara Pagh - Photographer, Oneto Room Bulletin Board

Elizabeth Donovan – Instagram

Bethany Sorrentino - Board Liaison

The committee welcomes new members with an interest in maintaining and improving communications at UUCSC.

Membership Committee Report

Membership Committee Annual Report 2024

Members: Gerre Alderwick, Jeanne Arthur, Mary Finnegan, Sky Kimball, Patience Peck, Mary Wass and Val Follett, Chair

The contents of the Path to Membership, now called New to UUCSC, folder and the Visitor Packet were updated this year.

We offered two sessions of classes of New to UUCSC, one in the Fall and one in the Spring. There were two New Member Sundays where we welcomed a total of 13 new members. Each was given a rose, a UUCSC Directory and our own UUCSC tie-dye tshirt, designed by members of our committee.

The tie-dye t-shirts are available to buy for \$20. Please see Jeanne Arthur if you want one.

The Committee continued to greet attendees each Sunday, along with our band of merry Ushers. We continued to make new and sturdier name-tags for the congregation.

A Welcome letter was sent to anyone filling out a Welcome card. Contact was maintained in person on Sunday mornings and through emails. We worked at calling “the missing” in our Directory, to update it.

Mary Finnegan joined our committee this year and took over the task of being our “Breeze” person. THANK YOU, MARY! She oversees the content of our directory and much more. She is a very valuable addition to our team of very valuable people.

Respectfully submitted, *Val Follett, Chair*

Music Committee Report

Music Committee Report

Co-Chairs: Susan Pavlow and Nick Smith

Members: Alison Buffum, Sandra Ketrow, Jane Rubenstein

Music is a critical component for the fullness of church life. The Music Committee supports the Music Director and the music program.

It's been another wonderful year for the music program. Our Music Director, Michael Galib, continues to teach and inspire the choir to perform at our best. The choir welcomed new members. The Eve-Eve service was a great success. The featured performer at our annual fundraiser concert was the choral group "Sine Nomine," directed by Michael, with the UUCSC choir performing several numbers. Michael continues to challenge the choir with sophisticated choral pieces. We thank Jane and Lou Rubenstein for their maintenance of our music library. The annual Music Committee service will be held June 16.

Personnel Committee Report

2023-24 Personnel Committee Annual Report

Membership:

Elizabeth Dalton, Chairperson

Susan Pavlow, Member

Clare Sartori, Member

Ann Seemann, Member (through 3/1/24)

Nick Smith, Member

Note: we are seeking one new committee member

Purpose:

The UUCSC Personnel Committee (PC) recommends and maintains staff policies, procedures, and practices to promote harmonious and productive relations between staff and congregation. The PC facilitates staff needs assessments and performance evaluations annually. We ensure that the UUCSC is staffed appropriately with qualified personnel who meet or exceed performance expectations and demonstrate commitment to the UUCSC and its work, and we serve as liaisons to the staff. The PC supports and is part of every staff hiring process, but we are not responsible for oversight of or negotiation with the minister. This responsibility is shared by the Board and Committee on Ministry.

2023-2024 Activities:

Staff Contracts: In 2023-24, the Personnel Committee worked cooperatively with the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors in the development/review/revision/implementation of contracts for the following continuing staff: Michael Galib, Music Director; Lee Cowan, Director of Religious Education; Sara Kaplow, Congregational Administrator; and Susan Rogala, Bookkeeper, as well as implementing the Letter of Agreement for Karen St. Peter, who now is serving as our new Financial Administrator. Due to Karen's hiring late in the fiscal year (March 2024), it was agreed by the Board and Personnel that a Letter of Agreement would be used until new staff contracts are implemented following the 2024 Annual Meeting. Additionally, the Personnel Committee assisted in development and implementation of letters of agreement for UUCSC nursery aides, in collaboration with Lee Cowen and the Board. While Personnel is not directly involved in the development/revision of the Minister's contract, Personnel is available to assist the Board on this issue, as needed.

Staff Changes:

Susan Rogala, Bookkeeper, resigned for personal reasons. Karen St. Peter has been hired as Financial Administrator.

Jenny Rebecca, Senior Nursery Aide, resigned for other employment. Simon Travis was promoted to Senior Nursery Aide.

Meetings: In 2023-24, the Personnel Committee met regularly (approximately every 2 months) to review personnel status, current work needed according to the Personnel Committee calendar (available in the Personnel Committee Handbook on the UUCSC website), assist in staff search and hiring processes, and address any staff-related questions or other issues. Meetings were held on Zoom or in person, depending upon need and member availability.

Handbook Review, Development and Revision: The Personnel Committee supports the work of the staff and the various committees involved with the staff. To this end, 5 Handbooks are available with concise information outlining the work of these committees in collaboration with staff. All Handbooks are available on the UUCSC website. This year, the Congregational Administrator Handbook, the Music Committee Handbook, and the Search Committee Handbook were reviewed, updated, and revised to reflect current policies and practices of UUCSC and the PC. Handbooks were approved by the Board and are available on the UUCSC website.

UUCSC Background Check Policy Review: This year, it was determined that the policy that was in use at UUCSC for background checks was no longer correct with regard to the state guidelines and needed to be updated, as background checks are required for all staff and volunteers who work with children on a regular basis. The PC, with help from the Congregational Administrator and the Director of Religious Education and Exploration, researched Rhode Island guidelines and other professional guidelines for background checks, and consulted UUA materials. A new version of the UUCSC background check statement was developed by the PC, and was approved by the Board at the February meeting. This statement replaces all prior background check references in all UUCSC policies and materials. Special thanks to Nick Smith and Susan Pavlow for their efforts in accomplishing this important work.

Proposed for 2024-25:

Continuous Policy Handbook Review: The Personnel Committee will continue to monitor the timeliness of all PC manual and handbook materials and will revise and update as needed.

Staffing replacements: Due to growth in the RE program and the loss of one staff person to other work, the PC will work with the RE Director, the RE Committee, and the Board to identify and hire qualified support staff for the RE program.

PC member replacement: The PC sincerely thanks Ann Seemann for her fine service on our committee – and we will miss her important contributions to our work. We seek one individual who is interested and available to help in carrying out the work of the PC. Experience relating to human service is helpful, but not necessary. Interest in helping UUCSC in a very tangible way is the only requirement. We welcome all inquiries – just speak with any PC member. Thanks!

Submitted by Elizabeth Dalton, Chairperson

Social Justice Report

2023-2024 Social Justice Committee Annual Report

Cathy Solomon, Chair
Penny Hall, member
Etta Zasloff, member
Nancy Richman, member

Goals/Mission Learn, Educate, Advocate

Accomplishments/Highlights

- Continued the twice monthly Anti-Racism discussions
- Expanded Anti-Racism to include Anti-Semitism
- Hosted a successful community event around the 2 part Narragansett Nation History presentation with a total of 190 people registered for both events
- In collaboration with primarily Peace Dale Congregational Church (PDCC), grew the South County Social Justice Coalition
- Changed name from Social Justice to Social and Racial Justice Committee, eliminating a separate group for Anti-racism

Details

Learning. We continued to learn more about the history and nuances of racism and other “Isms”

Overview of topics:

Slavery in RI (Smith Castle)
Anti-Semitism/Islamophobia
History of Israeli/Arab nation conflict
White Privilege
Housing
Class
Intersectionality of Racism with:
Culture
Poverty
Maternal health

Housing

Education: Sharing our learning with a broader audience

9/25/23 Service - Members of ARC shared insights on what they have learned about their own racism.

3/12 and 3/25/24 - Educators from the Tomaquag Museum and members of the Narragansett Tribe presented the history of the Narragansett Nation and their treatment over the centuries by colonials and their descendants.

Advocacy: Created two successful state legislative forums on October 22, 2023 and April 7, 2024 as a member of the UU Legislative Ministry of RI. Rev Denis was the emcee of both events. 80-100 people from across the state attended

Collaborations We collaborated with several partners this year.

- South County Social Justice Coalition: The Coalition, founded in March 2023, has continued to grow, with 111 individual subscribers, representing 15 different faith groups and provider organizations to the weekly email list. Besides the email network the coalition, led by Leslie Chouinard, Joanne Haynes, Jim Moore, and Etta Zasloff, the SCSJC was formalized in Feb. 2024 with continuation of the Friday newsletter of social justice events in and around South County, a [website](#), a better email platform, and quarterly meetings featuring presentations from allies on affordable housing and good citizenship.
- Westminster Unitarian Church: Participation in two Braver Angels events/workshops
- Tabled at the Washington Community Service Event to learn more about social service providers in South County
- Attended a 9/23/23 presentation at Wakefield Baptist Church to learn more about how Jonnycake Center and Warm Welcome house serve the community.
- The Womxn Project - Participating in a network to show up at social justice events in South County
- Peace Dale Congregational Church - PDCC has a strong climate/environmental group that meets regularly. They have graciously allowed us to participate with them.
- RI Coalition for Separation of Church and State. Bethany Sorrentino has joined us on a few occasions to educate us on the focus and activities of this group. There have been no actions as of yet.
- Clothing Drive: We participated in a clothing drive in October 2023 for Tabatha's Closet, a ministry of Peace Dale Congregational Church
- MLK Day: Tabled at 1/15/24 event hosted by Towards Antiracism North Kingstown(TANK) and SK Social Justice
- Nuclear Now: 1/12/24 Film Screening sponsored by PDCC Affordable Housing Presentation at South County Social Justice Coalition quarterly meeting on 4/7/2024
- South County Habitat for Humanity: A meeting is planned for June 26 to discuss the possibility of UU group build project. Representatives from the organization will discuss the details/options for this project which will take place in August or September.

Share the Plate

Under Barbara Beckwith's direction, we donated \$4,651.11 to the following eight non-profits

Southern Rhode Island Volunteers
Friends of the Saugatucket
Jonnycake Center for Hope
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, RI chapter
Hadassah
Muslim Aid USA
Domestic Violence of South County
WARM Center of Westerly

2024-2025 Goals

- Community Support
 1. Continue to show up in support of community events
 2. Stand up against hate and prejudice
 3. Support causes that are in line with our principles
 4. Learn more about the needs in the community. Educate the congregation about it and determine appropriate actions
 5. Advocate for action. Make a difference.

Challenges

- We have been challenged to find topics and facilitators for our group discussions.
 - Bring in outside speakers?
 - Reduce meetings to once per month?
- How can we turn our discussions into actions?
 - More community events at the UU
- Advocacy
 - Getting more involved/We have an election coming up!
 - UU Legislative Ministry

Worship Committee Report

Worship Committee 2023-2024 Annual Report

Adria Evans, Chair.

Members: Amber Collins, Ann Seemann, Elizabeth Donovan, Kathy Swink, Nancy Richman, Sue Strakosch (plus Rev Denis and Lee Cowan)

We welcomed Elizabeth Donovan onto our committee this year.

UUCSC held 49 Sunday services between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. (No services on July 4th weekend, Christmas, and GA Sunday). Of these, 18 were *officiated* by members of the Worship Committee, and most included invited speakers. Lee Cowan took on some intergenerational services, often with Amber's help. And we had additional unique services totally created by others: Michael Galib's service in March; the music committee's annual service in June. Our services were interesting and diverse: from "Why Anti Racism" to "A Life in Letters," from death to the healing power of nature. Sandra Laub's sermon on "Grappling with Moral Complexity" the day after her powerful one-woman performance and Chris Johnson's description of his work in India are two other unique examples. Three ministers and a storyteller have also spoken at UUCSC this year.

In addition, members of Worship (and other congregants) have been on the *bima* (Hebrew for the stage area) throughout the year, working with Rev Denis. Several delivered “Spiritual Reflections.”

Once again, Worship (actually Kathy Swink) has been responsible for Virtual Ushers to host our services via zoom. And Nancy Richman has run our in-chapel phone camera when Rev Denis is not present. Special thanks to Jean and Aline, Mary Fulton, and Kathy whose repeated hosting has kept our zoom services available.

We have been fortunate that most speakers, except for the ministers and storyteller, have spoken to us without charge.

Producing our services also includes publicity through the newsletter and the website and organizing the Order of Service for that week.

As of this writing (May, 2024), we have our summer services scheduled. And three of our congregants (Chris Johnson, Nick Smith, & Mac Richardson) have offered to supply our music.

We’ve also had great support from Rev Denis and Lee Cowan throughout the year.

What we need: A few volunteers as Virtual Ushers at home on zoom, as well as a few folks to set up their phones as cameras. Continued zoom services will require that more folks step up.

Respectfully submitted,
Adria Evans, Chair, May 5, 2024

Nominating Committee Report

Nominating Committee Report

Board of Directors

President	Nancy Richman	23-25
Vice President	RUSSELL STOKES	24-26
Clerk	MARY FULTON	24-26
Treasurer	VACANCY	
At-Large	KELSEY ELLIS BRIGGS	24-25
At-Large	CHRIS JOHNSON	24-25
At-Large	BETHANY SORRENTINO	24-26

Nominating Committee

Val Follett	22-25
Harry Buffum	23-26
BARBARA BECKWITH	24-27

Those in capital letters are presented to be elected on June 9, 2024.

Others are continuing in their current positions.

Pastoral Care Report

Pastoral Care Committee

Among the many good things about UUCSC, one of the best is Pastoral Care.

A committee supports Rev Denis in his efforts to address the needs of our congregation. There are brief quiet times, and there are times that it takes a lot of juggling to keep up with the number of issues that need addressing.

Our work is held in strict confidence, which prevents mention of the work done. We appreciate every time that we are informed of any need in our Faith community. Thank you to all who aid us in our ministry.

Barbara Beckwith

Sky Kimball

Linda Whyte Burrell

Helping Hands Report

2023-2024 UUCSC Helping Hands Annual Report

Helping Hands Workgroup: **Bethany Sorrentino, co-coordinator**
 Randi Marten, co-coordinator

Helping Hands is a workgroup that springs into action when there is a practical need in our congregation. The coordinators maintain a list of fellow congregants who can offer rides, meals, and other support. Please reach out to the church office or email uuhelpinghands@gmail.com to request a helping hand or to refer someone else from our congregation.

We continue to maintain lists of around 30 congregants willing to help with meal preparation and delivery, transportation, friendly cards or visits, etc. This year, we have had around 10 requests, most of which we were able to assist with. We have provided meals, rides, help organizing storage areas, and respite care to congregants. For the few requests that we were not able to facilitate, we were able to provide recommendations or referrals to services in the wider community that could be of use.

For the upcoming year, Randi Marten is stepping down as co-coordinator. Kelsey Ellis Briggs will be joining the team as a co-coordinator. Thanks so much to both and to all our volunteers!

With love,

Bethany Sorrentino

Submitted May 24, 2024