

2025-26 Personnel Committee Annual Report
Submitted by Elizabeth Dalton, Chairperson
Prepared for the UUCSC Annual Congregational Meeting, June 2026

25-26 Membership:

Elizabeth Dalton, Chairperson
Sarah Dinklage, Member & Congregational Admin Liaison
Susan Pavlow, Member & Music Director Liaison
Lisa Richter, Member & UUA Benefits Liaison
Nick Smith, Member & Religious Explorations Director Liaison

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 at the beginning of the UUCSC season in the fall, and supports performance evaluations by the minister/supervisor annually. We work to ensure that the UUCSC is staffed appropriately with qualified personnel who meet or exceed performance expectations and who demonstrate commitment to the UUCSC and its work. The PC develops and maintains documentation manuals and handbooks that guide and support the Personnel functions of UUCSC. We also serve as liaisons to the staff and to the UUA re: benefits. The PC supports staff searches and is involved in all staff hiring, but is not responsible for oversight of or salary or contract negotiation with the minister. This responsibility is shared by the Board and Committee on Ministry.

2025-2026 Activities:

Documentation Manuals and Handbooks

Existing manuals and handbooks developed and maintained by the Personnel Committee currently include:

Personnel Policy Manual
Personnel Committee Handbook
Staff Search Committee Handbook
Congregational Administrator Handbook
Music Committee Handbook
RE Committee and DRE Handbook

All manuals and handbooks are reviewed annually and updated as needed. In 2025-26, the Personnel Policy Manual and the Staff Search Committee Manual have been updated. Current copies are publicly available on the UUCSC website at <https://uusouthcountryri.org/handbooks-policies-plans/>

Staff Contracts: In 2025-2026, the Personnel Committee worked cooperatively with the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors in the review, updating, and implementation of contracts for the following continuing staff: Lee Cowan, Director of Religious Exploration and Ami Pienknagura, Music Director. The PC also assists in the development of letters of agreement, in coordination with the Religious Exploration Director, for the nursery staff each year.

The PC will generate a contract, in coordination with finance and the Board, for a new Congregational Administrator, once the current search process has been completed and a successful candidate is selected.

NOTE: While Personnel is not directly involved in the development/revision of the Minister's contract, Personnel is available to assist the Board and the Committee on Ministry on this issue, as needed. Currently, a Ministerial Search Committee has begun its work to locate a placement for Rev. Denis, who is moving to Michigan and leaves us as of June 30, 2026.

Staff Changes:

Congregational Administrator: Sara Kaplow, our current Congregational Administrator, will retire as of August 31, 2026, after nearly 5 years of service with UUCSC. We thank Sara for all that she has done for our congregation over the years to keep us well organized and moving forward, and we wish her the very best in her retirement.

Minister: We sadly will say goodbye to our minister, Reverend Denis Paul, at the end of the season of June 30, as he is moving to Michigan with his family. His husband, Reverend Joseph Cherry, has accepted a ministerial position in Flint, Michigan. We love and will greatly miss Reverend Denis, but we wish he, and his family the very best in this new and exciting life adventure.

Personnel Committee Changes:

The PC is pleased to share that as of June, 2026, we happily welcome a new committee member, Cathy Soderstrom. Additionally, as of July 1, 2026, Lisa Richter will take on the role of Personnel Committee Chair - Congratulations Lisa! Betsy Dalton steps down from this role after 5 years of service, and will continue to serve on the PC for 2026-27.

Meetings: In 2025-26, 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), to assist in staff search and hiring processes, and to address any staff-related questions or other issues. Meetings were held on Zoom or in person, depending upon need and member availability.

Proposed for 2026-27:

Regular 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 hiring: It is anticipated that a new Congregational Administrator and a new Minister will be hired over the course of the summer (or as soon as successful candidates have been found) and the Personnel Committee, in collaboration with the Search Committee(s), the Finance Committee, and the Board, will work to develop and/or assist in the development of contracts for these positions.

Staff support: Throughout the year, the PC will work to maintain regular contact with and support to all UUCSC staff, in our roles as liaisons to UUCSC staff members.