

# UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

## ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



The Unitarian Society of New Haven  
700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, CT 06517  
Phone: 203-288-1807  
Email: [office@usnh.org](mailto:office@usnh.org)  
[www.usnh.org](http://www.usnh.org)

Rev. John Marsh, Minister  
Al Bosch, President of the Board of Trustees  
David Stagg, Gwen Heuss-Severance, Jeremy Hill, Management Team  
Jesse Geist, Director of Lifespan Religious Education  
Jamie Ross, Congregational Administrator  
Anna Flores, Membership Coordinator

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## **Board of Trustees**

Al Bosch, President; Nancy Apfel, Vice President; Becky Friedkin, Clerk; Linda Mehta, Treasurer; Peggy Myers, Past President; At-Large Trustees: Jeannette Faber, Craig Machado, Bernice Marie-Daly, Emily McCave, Pat Trotta

Our long-term goals for this congregational year were shaped by the Board's study and analysis of the purpose and mission of USNH last year, and are defined as follows in an abridged version:

To nourish and cultivate:

1. **Relationships within:** Respecting different spiritual journeys, the people of USNH find inspiration and develop our best selves.
2. **Relationships among:** Treating one another with respect, we create a congregation of welcome, support and connection.
3. **Relationships beyond:** Joining with our community partners, we act on our values in the larger world.

The Board and minister Reverend Megan in the previous year had focused on the second purpose and mission, namely on relationships among us, **“celebrating embracing, nourishing and supporting our community”**. What was envisioned by the Board and minister were the following:

1. Provide frequent lively opportunities for developing closer relationships among the congregation.
2. Strengthen the structure of pastoral care ministry with the addition of increased clergy support to assist as the increasing demand puts a strain on one minister and the lay ministry team.
3. Enable better connections among all congregants, including newcomers, people confined to their homes or facilities, and youth and young adults. Identify people's gifts and interests.
4. Support staff by strengthening committees using information gained from #3 and have committees develop clear descriptions of their purposes and authority.

This congregational year began with our welcoming our interim minister, John Marsh. The Board held a fall retreat in which we became acquainted with Rev. Marsh, discussed our accomplishments over the past year and our Board goals for the next 12 to 18 months, and had a presentation by Lisa Anderson about Collaborative Leadership and USNH's future. We also considered topics for the Board's self-education. In early meetings of the Board, to orient new members of the Board, we had informative briefings by Dan Gelperin and Bobbi Pace about Policy Governance and how it functions in our congregation.

To address one of our goals to work with the congregation on intergenerational relations, the Board held a well-attended Listening Circle with the Covenantal Relations

Committee. The questions raised in the Circle were about how welcome our younger members feel, how we could do better in making members of all ages feel welcomed and respected. This was an innovative exercise allowing participants to listen and ask questions from home. How valuable this ability to work remotely together would become, was not yet known to us! We shared insights gained from the Circle with the congregation in the newsletters and through the CRC's notices.

Our Board work included monitoring Governance Policies, overseeing the budget, working with the interim minister who brought to us reports on the Management Team's work. In the fall congregational meeting we introduced an amendment to the by-laws so that a youth member could serve on the Board when and if there were a candidate interested and qualified, as determined through our DRE's guidance. The Board was also supportive of the congregational efforts to be certified as a Welcoming Congregation; members encouraged to participate in workshops, while our DRE and Administrator also became certified.

The Management Team reports to the Board on progress toward our stated goals. Through the Council of Chairs, all USNH committees were asked to provide a summary of their activities that were pertinent to our above stated goals of "Belonging". These reports were impressive for the abundance of activities that were supportive of these goals. We clearly have an active supportive community life.

Rev. Marsh has been presenting us with highly creative and thought-provoking sermons this year. He has also enriched our connections by offering a class on Shakespeare, welcoming the group into his home for these. Rev. Marsh has been preparing us for our next minister by making us aware of how we need to take care of our staff and each other. Additionally, he has been helping us to be more self-sufficient as we go about our many activities together. Rather than depend on our minister to be involved in all our endeavors, he encourages us to 'try our wings'. Then after the COVID-19 crisis arrived, Rev. Marsh not only moved adeptly to creating remote sermons, he also held regular remote events. His afternoon tea party, and beer and chips evening events have become beloved gathering times, when he brings special guests from our staff and congregation to share their stories.

Our pastoral care teams added members and were joined by the Covenantal Relations Committee, and Social Justice Council members who all responded with an outpouring of support for those in our congregation and those in the community with notes, calls, masks, grocery gift cards, food drives, and more. During this time of separateness and fears, USNH members have responded with full hearted generosity. This speaks to one of the goals above that the Board had highlighted, supporting pastoral care ministry.

We held a spring retreat, led by the UUA's Joe Sullivan. A main topic of discussion was how to welcome a new minister, moderate our community's demands and allow our new minister to adjust to our congregation. Another topic relevant to the effects of COVID-19 on our community life was how to create back-ups for staff and others whose work is essential to us; and how to conduct a candidate week and vote remotely.

Our hard-working Ministerial Search Committee brought us their chosen candidate, Reverend Lindasusan Ulrich, this spring. We had a successful 'fortnight' of meeting our Reverend Lindasusan through many 'virtual' events, including town halls and smaller meetings. A subcommittee of the Board worked with the MSC to make certain that all committees and groups, staff, and leaders had ample opportunity to listen to and ask questions of Reverend Lindasusan, who also gave two remote sermons. Becky Friedkin, Emily McCave, the MSC and Board members arranged for a remote voting process, a first for USNH. On May 10, 2020, the congregation overwhelmingly voted to have Reverend Lindasusan become our next called minister.

This has been a year of ministerial transition and adaptation to new ways of doing things, as we all continue to meet the challenges created by the threat of COVID-19. There is uncertainty about how soon we will be able to gather in person. Despite the stress we live under, we have shown our strength and determination to remain strong together. Our Board goal of supporting the creation of a congregation of welcome, support and connection is ongoing and essential in these uncertain times.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Apfel for the Board of Trustees

## **Management Team**

*Management Team; A group of individuals, of which one is the minister, who are delegated authority by the Board of Trustees to run the day to day operations of the congregation and to ensure that the mission of the congregation is being fulfilled. The function and authority of the Management Team is shared equally by its members. (From our Policy Governance Handbook.)*

Membership of the Management Team changed during the Fiscal 19/20 year. Rev John Marsh joined us on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 as our Interim Minister. We continued with David Stagg as leader, Gwen Heuss-Severance as recorder and with Jeremy Hill as our other permanent member. We invited Jean Rosenthal to join us in April of 2020 and we have asked the Board of Trustees to confirm her appointment to the MT.

Following the suggestion from Rev Megan, MT worked with Buildings and Grounds to improve sound deadening for the Minister's office. In July 2019 we replaced the carpet and included a thick underlayment to reduce sound transmission. Rev Marsh reported good results.

Several projects continued throughout the year:

- 1) We reported compliance with certain Policy Governance sections at the regular monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees. We reported on sections 1.1 through 1.10 with the exceptions of sections 1.5 and 1.6 (These are reported on by the Treasurer).

- 2) We worked with members of the Mental Health Task Force on the facilitator training requirements for eventual possible restarting of the “Healing Souls” USNH sponsored support group.
- 3) We looked at several ways of improving access from the Temple Mishkan Israel parking lot including different routes for a pathway. Rev John met with TMI leaders on this topic. We arranged for a rider from our Insurance Company to cover our use of the TMI parking lot.
- 4) We met with the Council of Chairs in October 2019, February 2020 and May 2020. Gwen created the agenda and organized the meetings. The main agenda for the May meeting was a “meet and greet” Zoom session with Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich, then our candidate new settled Minister.

In September 2019 MT organized a “Finding Your Place – Committee Commitment” meeting in the social hall with help from several committees and with a related sermon topic from Rev John. It was mostly attended by existing committee members although a few new members signed up for committee work.

In October 2019 David began attending Finance Committee meetings as the representative of MT.

In December MT began discussions with the Finance Committee about the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21. The Finance Committee provided us with a first draft. We have continued this collaboration through multiple revisions of the budget as the Stewardship campaign is winding down and some effects of the Coronavirus impact planning.

A long-standing goal has been the documenting of policies and procedures. With the bulk of the work falling to Jeremy, we have revised several Standard Operating Procedures and created four new ones. The following have been newly published or updated in the “online library” section of the website:

- SOP-0001 Writing and Using Standard Operating Procedures (New)
- SOP-0005 Burials and Memorials (Updated)
- SOP-0007 Policies Concerning Behavior and Safety (Clarification)
- SOP-0008 Policy Concerning Child and Youth Protection (Revisions)
- SOP-0009 Minister’s Discretionary Fund (New)
- SOP-0013 Financial Operations. Roles and Responsibilities (New)
- SOP-0015 Building Use for Adult Religious Education (New)
- SOP-0016 Personnel Handbook (updated to SOP format)

In consultation with Shirley Dion, Terry Durham and Greg Seaman, we joined a Cooperative Purchase Agreement associated with CONECT and on 5/21 signed a 3-year contract with Constellation as our Electricity supplier.

In March 2020 the Coronavirus caused group activities in our building to cease. The Management Team has continued to meet regularly using the Zoom online tool. We

have worked on many of our usual tasks and have added Contingency plans to meet possible absences by staff. Several important projects were placed on temporary hold including the problem of excessive speed in our parking lot, access between our parking lot and that of Temple Mishkan Israel and starting the work of a Memorials Task Force.

MT May 2020

## **Buildings and Grounds Committee**

Jason Kyle and Michele DeMuisis, co-chairs, Al Bosch, Shirley Dion, John Deming, Maggie Goodwin, Gordon Daniell, James Erard, David Stagg

This is a list of Buildings and Grounds many accomplishments throughout the 2019-2020 fiscal year here at USNH. The “honey-do list” is never ending but we would not be able to accomplish any of these without the fantastic support of the congregation and the many talented folks on the Buildings and Grounds Team as well as those that have lent a hand on several of our projects listed below.

Thank you all for making this possible!

1. Steering Committee reduced electric supplier rate pricing.
2. Sheetrock replaced at the urinal in men’s bathroom and protective plastic to be installed to prevent further damage.
3. Gutters cleaned.
4. During the spring cleanup; the cement stairs were washed to remove salt and door leading to furnace room was painted.
5. Blinds were repaired to the extent possible. Need to find/order new ones: Still working on this.
6. Sign for restroom handicapped door regarding presence of diaper changing station was placed.
7. Congregation announcement occurred on Jan.16 regarding speeding issues.  
Thank you!
8. Weeds and rocks removed from west side of property.
9. Leaking faucet for right-hand sink in ladies’ restroom repaired/replaced.
10. Music holder in coat closet installed.
11. Talking/standing tables added to social hall.
12. Toilet repaired on second floor.

13. Pew repaired.
14. Cuddle Time outside door new door closer.
15. Cuddle Time internal door binds on closing was repaired.
16. Several (84) Folding chairs and storage rack were purchased
17. New Black Lives Matter banner was relocated and replaced.
18. New kitchen.
19. Upstairs lavatory modified so it is somewhat handi-accessible but we do have an estimate to re-do that space properly and install a shower as well.
20. Some boards were cut to fit in the sliding windows so the roll around air conditioners could be used in some rooms.
21. Back patio removed, leveled, drainage repaired and stones laid back down.
22. Stains on exterior Sanctuary wall were power washed away and cleaned.
23. Playscape was deemed unsafe, taken down and removed.
24. Tree removed from parking lot circle and replanted on hillside.
25. Replaced carpet in minister's office. Current carpet was moldy. Sound proofing is reported to be better.
26. Jesse wants to allow some of his students to paint a large mural on the outside wall by the patio. This was approved and we are looking forward to seeing this soon!

Thank you again for all that assisted us in accomplishing these tasks. Let's see what this next fiscal year brings!

## **Children and Youth Religious Education**

2019-20 Committee Members: Patricia McChesney (Chair, continuing), Vicki Seitz (Secretary, continuing), Chris Berman (continuing), Manya Lisse Newton (continuing) Pam Niles continues to volunteer to ensure that the day-to-day details of the program are attended to and has facilitated the CYRE program's goals. We very much appreciate her dedication to CYRE.

We are extraordinarily grateful to our over 40 volunteer teachers and helpers who have supported the CYRE program by donating hours of their time to our USNH children, youth, and teachers. We are a cooperative religious education program that relies on our volunteers. We are also appreciative of the congregants who have supported our children in many ways, including as their adult Buddies.

### CYRE Committee Goals for 2019-20:

- Support our DLRE in his leadership responsibilities managing religious education programs for our children and youth
- Recruit 2-3 new committee members.
- Work with DLRE to configure Children's Chapels for the upcoming year
- Continue to maintain our relationship with UUs in the Philippines through supporting the education of Lezter Rico and our new sponsee. We will also pursue more fundraising for them
- Expand our support of youth with extracurricular activities, including study sessions for finals weeks and continued communication after high school graduation
- Collaborate with DLRE in planning CYRE Sunday in June 2020 which will recognize children who have Stepped Up and thank teachers and other volunteers

### Committee Accomplishments:

2019-20 has been another productive and enjoyable year for the Children and Youth Religious Education (CYRE) Committee. We continue to have a very positive working relationship with Jesse Greist, Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE.) His interactional style sets a positive tone for the committee, volunteer teachers, and children and their families in our program. He approaches USNH's CYRE challenges with creativity, knowledge, and care. We look forward to our continued work with him. Special Events and Fundraisers: The CYRE committee and DLRE organized and ran five events this year:

- Getting to Know U – Buddy Program (October-November 2019)
- Community Mystery Night (January 2020) Attendance at the Community Build was approximately 75 adults and children
- Sponsorship of Lezter Rico, a new student, and UU children in the Philippines

### Stated Goals:

The CYRE committee in collaboration with the DLRE met the majority of our stated goals in 2019-20, including

- Supporting our DLRE in his leadership responsibilities managing religious education programs for our children and youth
- Working with the DLRE to carry out Children's Chapels for the year
- Continuing our relationship with Lezter Rico, our newest sponsee, and the UU children in the Philippines
- Continuing the intergenerational activities begun three years ago—the Secret Buddy Program, which included a Buddy banquet. We were excited to note

continued connections between children and youth and adult Buddies even after the end of the formal program

- Continuing the children's participation in the service
- Introduction and welcoming of our new Minister, Ref Lindasusan and their family to our congregation

### Additional Projects

- We are working with the DLRE on updating the class structure in the RE program, including contingency plans for possible virtual classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- We are working with our DLRE on updating the CYRE curricula with UU heroes and history that includes people of color
- We are working with our DLRE on updating curricula to include gender non-binary acceptance and understanding
- We are working with the DLRE on establishing a community that is welcoming to neuro-non-traditional students
- We continued to work to engage children who have Stepped Up beyond ushering and chalice lighting.
- We are supporting our DLRE with OWL classes at age grade groups K/1, 4/5 and 7/8.

### Committee on Ministry

Members: Lisa J. Anderson, Facilitator/Chair; Gregg Burton, Claire Bien, and Shayn Ember

The primary focus of our committee was to support and to serve as a sounding board for Rev. John Marsh. At USNH the COM members are chosen by the minister. We met only a few times this year. Rev. Marsh told me that the meetings were meaningful and helpful to him. Rev. Marsh asked us to participate in some of his interim activities for example the USNH Timeline evening program. He also asked for our advice individually on issues from time to time.

Since we are about to engage a new minister, I wanted to share some of our learnings about the relationship with a new minister. I think we could have done a better job understanding what Rev. Marsh's needs and expectations were with regard to our individual attendance at various USNH events. Our strength was helping him process how things were going. From time to time we helped him identify resources in the community that were helpful to him as his family settled into a new place. I believe we should have made more of an effort to know what events Rev. Marsh was planning and made sure there were COM members available to attend. Members need to "check-in"

regularly with the minister to make sure they are meeting the needs of the minister. Since we all have very busy schedules attendance at specific events need to be coordinated in advance and regularly.

### **Covenantal Relations**

Paul Trotta, Chair, Nancy Apfel, ex-officio, Bernice Marie-Daly, incoming Co-Chair, Lisa Anderson, Amanda Dettmer Erard, Maggie Goodwin, Bruce Levison, John Kennedy, Ann Singer, Karen Swanson

There have been four significant areas of activity during the year:

1. Three new members were added to the committee: Amanda Dettmer Erard, John Kennedy, and Ann Singer. As we weren't getting much response to newsletter requests for new members, we recruited them by brainstorming possible candidates and then inviting them in individually for a chat after which each agreed to join the committee. The new members contributed throughout the year and have been valuable additions. During the year they participated as co-facilitators of our monthly Community Circles and are now able to act as a lead facilitator.
2. Supporting Rev. John Marsh, our Interim Minister, was a second area. CRC met with Joh in August and we discussed our charge and activities. Rev. Marsh expressed confidence our abilities to resolve disputes without the need for outside consultants and also stated that he would not participate in the Community Circles, a monthly discussion of the month's worship themes. We respected that decision as a legitimate setting of work boundaries. Following the "Timeline" event we held feedback sessions--which was one of two that Rev. Marsh had asked that we conduct. One recurrent theme that emerged is the expression of very deep discomfort, annoyance, and even dread of the crowded situation in the Social Hall after services.
3. After we had to quarantine, close our building and start meeting remotely, members of the CRC started outreach to our USNH community. In consultation with Rev. Marsh, Jesse Geist, Anna Flores and the Pastoral Care Team, we have conducted and coordinated calls to the congregation, which have been logged on a spreadsheet. Several members who are not on the CRC also participated.
4. Our events this year before COVID-19 included conducting Community Circles, having a potluck supper, and showing "The Visitor", a movie about refugees, and the activities mentioned above.

Due to the COVID crisis, two major events had to be cancelled: A workshop on Collaboration led by Lisa Anderson and John Kennedy; and an end of year Vespers service and dinner.

Goals for 2020 – 2021:

As with all other committees we will have the two major goals of assisting and supporting Rev. Lindasusan as she assumes the role of USNH Minister and adapting all of our activities to remote methods until USNH determines that we can safely open the in-person gatherings.

1. Supporting Rev. Lindasusan
2. Work collaboratively with other groups.
3. Continue outreach efforts
4. Increase efforts to create a living Covenant that is honored by all.

#### Dealing with a Closed Building

1. Ask that the USNH Canopy be put up. This would allow small groups to meet during the day.
2. Continue to offer Community Circles via Zoom
3. Select and show appropriate movies and use breakout rooms for discussion
4. Offer the Collaborative Workshop using Zoom
5. Present a Vespers Service using Zoom

#### Other Goals

1. Publicize our role in resolving conflicts. We haven't had any issues brought to us during the last two USNH years that required more than informal conversations.
2. Participate/organize in any collaborative effort to solve the issue of overcrowding in the social hall once we can return to it.
3. Participate in and support CONECT.

## **Director of Lifespan Religious Education**

### **Section One: CYRE Overview**

The Children and Youth Religious Education (CYRE) program saw a very fruitful and challenging year in 2019-20, with the CYRE committee, teachers, volunteers, USNH staff, parents/guardians, youth and children collaborating weekly to create diverse, vibrant programming. In the spring, the program adapted quickly and efficiently to the COVID 19 quarantine.

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum for this year centered on the Six Sources, contextualizing our UU faith in history and adjacent culture. The curricula used in each class were:

“Celebrating Me and My World” (Pre-K)

“Picture Book World Religions” (K – First grade) This class continued to meet with teachers for story time during quarantine

“Six Source Super Heroes” (2nd-3rd Grade) This class met infrequently during quarantine, but all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders stepped up and many participated in virtual chapels and worship services

“Bibleodeon and Beyond” (4th-5th Grade) This class met informally during quarantine many participated in virtual chapels and worship services  
“Neighboring Faiths” (6th-7th Grade) This class almost completed the curriculum, but stopped meeting during quarantine  
“Affirmation: Coming of Age” (8<sup>th</sup> grade) They missed their trip to Boston, but finished the year, meeting weekly on Zoom  
“Young Religious Unitarian Universalists” (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) Continued to meet weekly on Zoom.

### **Teachers and Classes**

The teaching corps has been reliable, flexible, and all around wonderful. The teams coalesced quickly, and became largely autonomous as the year progressed, supported by the DLRE, the CYRE committee and Pam Niles during the week. Teams had very little turnover, with only two teacher transitions occurring, in 4-5<sup>th</sup> grade and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In general, classes ran smoothly until March, though there were some concerns about student behavior and engagement, especially in the winter/spring months. I worked together with teachers and parents to find solutions to these issues and classes ended on a high, albeit sudden note.

As is usual, the most unstable class in terms of attendance was the Pre-K. We consistently had 3-5 children, but they were almost never the same mix. The K-1<sup>st</sup> grade group was very small this year, but this was counter balanced by expert teachers, who made the 2-3 children that attended each week feel at home, engaged and comfortable. All other classes averaged 7-10 students weekly and attendance was fairly regular.

The Affirmation class, which had seven students, was taught by two veteran stalwart teachers, with some invited guest speakers. As mentioned above, they were unable to go to Boston, but they did take a trip to the UN in the fall and this was a pivotal moment for them. All seven students finished the year and wrote Credo statements, but they opted not to hold a public online service. Instead, they made “time capsules”, which include their credo statements. They will open these capsules in five years to check in with where they were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

We welcomed several new families into the RE program this year, but I continue to be concerned about the number of families that visit and don’t return or “disappear” after a couple of visits. While our membership team is doing a great job of welcoming newcomers and much has been done to streamline the sharing of visitor information, there continue to be many first-time visitors who do not return, and others who attend 3-4 times and subsequently disappear.

The YRUU youth group had only two advisers this year, and eight participating youth. The advisers have worked amazingly well with the group and continue to refine the balance between adult and youth leadership. They met at USNH twice per month, engaging in community service projects and social outings on the non-meeting Sundays. There was one overnight event at USNH, and the youth met online in the

spring. These online meetings were used primarily to check in and to plan for the youth-led worship service on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Attendance**

Attendance was consistent with prior years, though the main barrier continues to be conflicts with youth sports, theater, band and choir groups, etc. which meet more and more on Sunday afternoons and early mornings. We had 72 children register for classes this year, which is a drop from last year. We received around 20 visits (not counting “one time” visits, i.e., visiting grandchildren), which resulted in an additional 5 children enrolling in classes. During the year, two children stopped attending classes, due to both out of state moves and expressed disinterest in class. Average attendance breaks down class-by-class as follows:

Nursery/Pre-K: 6 per week  
K/1<sup>st</sup> grade: 3 per week  
2/3<sup>rd</sup> grade: 8 per week  
4/5<sup>th</sup> grade: 10 per week  
6/7<sup>th</sup> grade: 4 per week  
8<sup>th</sup> grade affirmations: 7 per week  
YRUU: 6 per week

**Summary:** RE classes and YRUU saw average weekly attendance of 44 students per week, or 61% of those registered. Total enrollment was down from prior years, but attendance percentage was up.

### **Childcare**

Jessi Rudewicz and Jenn Russenberger continued to provide quality childcare during services. Apart from Sunday mornings, childcare was offered for a variety of meetings, conferences and events this year, and feedback was extremely positive from parents. We were likewise grateful to Cathy Jackson for providing childcare for our “Millennials to Gen-X” potluck dinners, as well as monthly Pre-K classes. During quarantine, we continued to pay Jenn and Jessi for 2 hours per week. Jenn recorded stories for young children, which were shared as YouTube videos.

One other interesting note is that as we have made a regular element of our worship model to make the Sanctuary more welcoming to families with babies and toddlers, more parents have kept their children in worship and this led to a decline in the number of babies and toddlers in the nursery.

### **Budget**

The CYRE budget was adequate and was largely used to support special events and initiatives, provide snacks for RE classes, run retreats for YRUU, and purchase curriculum/support materials for regular classes and the Our Whole Lives sexuality education program.

## **Special Events and Fund-raisers**

The CYRE committee and DLRE organized and ran three events this year:

- Getting to Know U – Buddy Program (fall)
- Mystery Night (winter)
- Affirmation Fellowship Fund Raiser (spring)

See the CYRE committee report for details about these events

## **Children's Chapels and Multi-generational Worship**

The children's chapels this year were hugely successful, thanks in no small part to the support of the CYRE committee, and regular volunteers. With an average attendance of 15 children the Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> graders examined UU belief pathways as they filter through the spiritual journeys of local, national and international faith seekers. We shared the stories of laborers, environmental stewards, religious leaders, musicians, astronauts, the Earth herself and members of our congregation, finding inspiration for our own faith development and daily reflections. During the pandemic, I have produced weekly children's chapels, sing-along videos and other online resources for families and they have been widely viewed and appreciated.

Additionally, we focused on building our relationship with Lezter Rico, our pen pal in the Philippines, who kept us well informed about his family, friends, school adventures and challenges he faces as typhoons and earthquakes continue to hit near Negros island. Rev. John Marsh and I worked together to align weekly messages for all with the USNH worship themes and co-planned nine Multi-generational worship services. The final four multi-generational services have been presented online due to quarantine.

## **Adult Religious Education**

It was a pleasure for me this year to co-organize bi-monthly potluck dinners for the "Millennials to Gen-X" group with Rev. Marsh. Attendance was high, averaging between 15-20 adults and 4-5 children. Many younger adults cited these dinners as integral to their feeling welcomed into the USNH community. Unfortunately, these gatherings were unable to continue into March, April and May.

It was also my pleasure to work with Steve Evans to run the ContinUUm writer's group, which met monthly to share poetry and prose based loosely on the USNH worship themes. This has proved to be an intimate, safe space for reflection, creativity and support. A collection of pieces from this group will be added to the USNH library over the summer.

The Adult Religious Education Program ran several short-term classes, book discussions (including participating in the Common Read of *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*), and transitioned to online meetings smoothly. Tisa Wenger offered the Common Read book discussion, and co-led a class on UU History

with Claudia Elferdink through Zoom, and Craig Machado offered two book discussions online. Both in person and online ARE offerings were well attended this year and successful.

As in prior years, the ARE committee offered monthly Social Cinema gatherings through February, 2020. These were co-sponsored with Social Justice Task Forces and were largely successful. It is likely that as PJ Deak transitions out of ARE work, Social Cinema will be less frequent and will depend on other groups assuming more leadership/organizing roles in the future. PJ Deak has stepped down as ARE chairperson after 5 years of dedicated, expert leadership. No one has been identified to take on the chairperson role, but the seven members of the committee are working out how to spread leadership across the committee for next year, or until a new chairperson comes forward.

Using the generous professional development budget provided by the USNH community, I was able to:

- Attend 5 DRE cluster meetings this year, involving Religious Educators from CT.
- Help organize and attend the Transforming Hearts Collective webinar series. Also, I worked with Maggie Goodwin to renew USNH's certification as a Welcoming Congregation.
- Meet monthly with Bobbie Poole, my adviser for the RE credentialing program. I have made great strides towards my goal of achieving concurrent "Credentialed" and "Master" level Religious Educator status by April, 2021.
- Registered for the April 2020 Borderlinks Social Justice trip through the College of Social Justice, but was unable to attend due to COVID 19.
- Register for the UU History Renaissance Module in June 2020.
- Attend several of the Youth Ministry lectures offered by Yale Divinity School this year, which have been both informative and inspirational as well as provided excellent opportunities for networking.

## **Endowment & Legacies**

The Committee met in person or virtually five times during the year. The major actions taken were:

1. Conducting a mailing to the congregation as part of the campaign to grow the endowment to \$2.5 million by 2024. As a result of the mailing \$7500.00 in donations and two estate plan commitments were received.
2. Drafted a plan to provide a real estate loan to the new minister should they require one.
3. Conducted an annual review of the fund performance with our Advisor, Peter Kirshenbaum from Peoples United and revised and approved the Investment Policy Statement that guides his investment strategy.
4. Participated in monthly investor calls with the UUA Common Endowment fund
5. Conducted an appreciation dinner for members of the Legacy Society. Rev Kathleen McTigue was the speaker and 26 members attended the luncheon, which was held at the Whitney Center
6. Reviewed the monthly reports on fund performance prepared by Treasurer Greg Seaman

The Endowment funds' performance (as with the market as a whole ) after January has been negatively affected by the Pandemic on the stock market. Following the advice of our advisors at Peoples United and The UUA Common Endowment fund we have not altered our funds asset allocation. What the long-term effect of the Pandemic will be on the value of our endowment funds is not known. The assumption we are using is that the economy will eventually rebound.

As of April 30, 2020, the total value of the Endowment was \$ 1,164,224. This is the total of three funds, plus the balance of the mortgage due (as a receivable, it is included as an asset):

1978 Fund (invested at the UUA)	\$ 150,990
1989 Fund (invested at Schwab)	211,586
Winchell Fund (invested at Schwab)	452,931
Balance of loan from Endowment	<u>348,717</u>
Total Endowment	\$ 1,164,224

Investments at Schwab are handled by Peoples United Advisors, formerly Olson Mobeck. Peter Kirschenbaum is the investment advisor for USNH. Investments at the UUA are in the UUA Common Endowment Fund, pooled with assets from many Unitarian Universalist congregations and affiliated organizations. The investment allocation target is 75% securities, 25% fixed income.

During the current fiscal year there were payments to the operating budget of \$30,615 based on 3% of total Endowment value, averaged over the previous 13 quarters up through Dec. 31, 2018. Endowment received \$37,715 in mortgage loan payments, which were placed in the Winchell Fund. (\$280,000 was taken from the Winchell Fund to pay off the Citizens Bank mortgage, and \$100,000 from the UUA Common Endowment Fund.)

The total Endowment values and annual returns in recent years were:

	<b>Value</b>	<b>annual return</b>	<b>CPI (Consumer Price Index)</b>
Dec 31, 2014	\$ 920,480	0.8%	
Dec 31, 2015	\$ 899,827	- 2.2%	0.7 %
Dec 31, 2016	\$ 957,402	6.4%	2.1 %
Dec 31, 2017	\$ 1,107,937	15.7%	2.1 %
Dec 31, 2018	\$ 1,090,562	- 1.5%	1.9 %
Dec 31, 2019	\$ 1,245,526	14%	2.3%

average return over 6 years: 5.4%

Also, during the 2019-20 fiscal year there were several donations by USNH members to the Endowment, totaling \$8,278, many made as gifts “in memory of” or “in honor of” certain individuals. (Note that to be included in the Endowment Funds, the donor must specify “Endowment” with the donation.)

## **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee (FC) provides specific operational support to the Management Team (MT) and advises the MT on matters of finance. To facilitate communication a member of the MT now attends the monthly FC meetings. FC members are chair Terry Durham, Greg Seaman, Kathy Gardner, Rick Weber and Susan Godshall. The Treasurer, Linda Mehta, is not an official member, but attends most meetings and works closely with the team.

In the current COVID lockdown economy the USNH office was and still is the physical and electronic hub of our finances. FC has coordinated activity with admin Jamie and bookkeeper Antonia so that most work is now remote linked to the office hub. Bills are paid remotely and via manual checks and payroll is made electronically. Pledge contribution checks are processed and with other contributions are deposited at Citizens Bank both physically and electronically. All this is done with at most 1 person (if any) in the office at any time.

Members of the FC perform regular specific tasks and work together on larger finance-related issues. Tasks this year were:

- Cash Management & CDs – Greg Seaman manages the staggered \$25,000 TIAA CDs for USNH. CDs did earn +2.5% rates but as these renew the rate continues to drop this year. USNH also uses TIAA for our staff pension funds.
- Collection Plate – now with no weekly currency collection we do continue to reconcile checks and electronic bank deposits.
- CONNECT has joined with the Community Purchase Alliance to negotiate a COOP group rate for electricity. USNH MT and FC reviewed this and will join. The rate will be lower than we could obtain as a single customer.

- Grocery Cards and other fundraisers – Greg Seaman acquired equipment, installed the PayPal app and trained volunteers to use credit card readers. This credit card payment system is now used for grocery card sales and can be used for other fundraisers.
- Operating Budget FY 2020-21. FC provided the MT with the first draft of the Operating Budget in January. As the COVID lockdown affected finances the FC has worked closely with MT to ensure balanced budget planning. There are still many COVID-related uncertainties about revenue streams which are difficult to plan.
- Payroll – FC continues to review payroll.
- Payroll Protection Plan aka PPP – In March 2020 the US Congress passed The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Part of this act was the PPP program. Finance member Greg Seaman made the phone calls, applied, was accepted and now USNH has a PPP loan towards 8 weeks of salaries and utilities. Although the PPP money is a loan, some portion of it will be forgivable as we file the forms to prove we did pay staff and utilities with the funds. This should help with our finances next year. Greg, Jamie, and Antonia will monitor and document all expenses for our loan forgiveness application.
- Rental of USNH facilities – Cuddletime is our regular renter. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the state and local government enacted occupancy restrictions. This caused a loss of Cuddletime income and its request for a temporary rent reduction. All parties agreed to a 50% rent reduction for April and May to be extended into June and July unless government restrictions are lifted earlier. This rental reduction has affected both the current and next fiscal year operating budget planning.
- "Money Matters" monthly newsletter column is created by FC members to inform the congregation of financial operations.
- VANCO – will not be renewed July 1. For automatic bank transfers of regular monthly pledge payments, the FC encourages members to use a free direct bill pay option from their personal bank. This avoids the monthly VANCO clearing house fees and saves USNH staff the time to set up that annual authorization for each account as well as monthly time for data entry into our accounts.
- Xerox office copier – USNH uses a Xerox 7845 copier with a lease expiration in August. This costs \$7,000/year and we do not plan to renew this lease. We plan to use a Canon system donated by Carol Cheney and if needed buy a small copier for other use.

Terry Durham, chair

## **History, Archives, & Library**

Jane Platt, Chair; Toby Appel, Frank Jonientz, Kathy Lindbeck, James Platt, Peggy Rae, Yvette Scharf, Joan Silverman.

- We continue to run the Dorothy F. Harned Library collection of over 2,000 books. We are following up on books that are not returned. We have a database and a print catalog. We are still hoping to have the database searchable on our website soon, since there are frequently meetings in the Library on Sundays.

- We are writing newsletter articles highlighting our collection to promote use of the Library. We continue to organize and store items in archival format (acid free folders etc.)
- We are revising the filing system, adding new categories to reflect changes in congregational life. We have located, sequenced and labeled many photo images of people and events in the Society's history. Photos in "sticky page" albums have now been placed in acid free photo pages.
- Work continues on making digital files from recordings of worship services of past years. I have transcribed a number of histories of USNH. They were written by Oscar Weiner, Richard N. Platt, Sr., Richard N. Platt, Jr., John Wolff, Jean Winchell, and Madeline Erskine. I can send email copies of these to anyone who is interested.
- We hope to have a systematic record of the art objects in the building. A database identifying the artist, medium, donor, dates, and location of each work will be created.
- Thirty-six current or former members were interviewed on cassette tapes which are now digitized and noise reduced. We can email a file to anyone wishing to listen to them. More recent interviews include Shirley Biewald, Ed Biewald, Bill Goward, Helene Goward and Caroline Bridgman Rees. We plan to expand to past presidents and other longtime members.
- We are developing a list of deceased members, attempting to name those whose remains have been interred in our Memorial Gardens.
- I made a presentation on our early history for the New Member class. The Spring session has not been held due to concerns about the pandemic.
- I have answered a query on when we became a Welcoming Congregation and for the Search Committee about our early history.
- I prepared a display for the Committee Fair. Kathy Lindbeck staffed the display and answered questions. I am grateful to the committee members for their hard work and good humor.

Respectfully submitted, Jane Platt History, Archives and Library

## **Kitchen Project Task Force**

The kitchen renovation project approved in fiscal year 2018-19 was completed in 2019, very close to on-time, and under budget.

Many volunteers cleared out the old kitchen and pantry in May-June, storing some items on the social hall stage, moving the pantry cabinets to the USNH Tag Sale, and discarding items. Oscar removed the stove and refrigerator.

In late June, Litchfield Builders put up a plastic sheeting wall in the social hall and lobby to isolate their work. They removing the fixed kitchen cabinets, then the wall between kitchen and pantry to make one long kitchen. They moved and enlarged the pass-through window, and expanded the doorway between kitchen and social hall.

Asbestos remediation occurred during the July 4 weekend. They removed floor and ceiling tiles, and the glue for the ceiling tiles.

Electrical work was done in mid-July. The breaker panel in the kitchen was rotated to the lobby. Additional power for the kitchen was obtained from the electrical panel in the hallway between sanctuary and social hall. Cabinets from Kitchen Advantage and appliances, mostly from Art's TV & Appliances, were installed in August. Installation included drilling a hole in roof for the stove vent, and connecting the electricity and plumbing to the appliances. One advantage to the design is that the sexton now has a lockable closet for supplies, next to the former pantry area.

By Aug. 31 the kitchen was nearly complete, with all plastic sheeting removed and walls painted. Under-counter lighting was then installed. On September 8 the new kitchen was open for touring, and then dedicated by Interim Minister Rev. John Marsh.

Label holders were affixed to each cabinet and drawer, and electrical power was increased in the end panel strip to better accommodate a different crockpot configuration. The backsplash above the sinks and the fire extinguisher were installed. Security-related communication devices were located.

An interim financial status was reported at the 2019 annual meeting, and then modified slightly as more expenses were reported and there were more donations.

<b>Expenses</b>	<b><u>Fall meeting, 2019</u></b>	<b><u>Final</u></b>
Litchfield Builders (including asbestos remediation)	\$114,715	\$114,715
Appliances	11,929	11,929
Consulting fees (asbestos, structural)	1,773	3,203*
Miscellaneous	471	471
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$128,888</b>	<b>\$130,318</b>

(Total expenses of \$137,000 were approved by the congregation.)

<b>Income</b>		
Pledges received (99.8% of amount pledged)	\$103,305	\$103,505
Fundraising	7,071	7,071
Donations	5,563	6,901*
From Gifts and Donations fund	12,949	12,841
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$128,888</b>	<b>\$130,318</b>

\*Since fall 2019 there were additional asbestos fees and additional donations.

Our appreciation for KP TF Members Linda Barrett, Anthony Clark, Pam Niles, Becky Sandmann, David Stagg, Paul Trotta, and Architect David Thompson and Fund-Raising Professional Carol Cheney (both USNH Members providing their expertise pro bono). And thanks to the Green Sanctuary Committee, all those who worked on the tag sale, and especially the Sunday Morning Team and Columbus House leaders, for their hard work, flexibility and patience maintaining critical program elements during a summer of kitchen work in progress.

And thank you to all of USNH's generous members and friends!

Project Manager Greg Seaman and Task Force Coordinator Lois Smith

## **Membership Team**

Christine Durham (co-chair), Deb Selden, Anna Flores (membership coordinator), Debbie Smith, Kathy Haskins (co-chair), Dan Wade (member at large), Patrick Korth, Joan Lane.

The membership team works alongside the membership coordinator to provide a welcoming path from new visitor to full membership.

During this year, the membership team had some attrition, mostly of our younger members and mostly due to relocation, but we have got a solid core that we are always looking to expand. Feedback from visitors and new members shows that friendly faces and greetings upon entering the building really make an impact.

Membership continued to maintain the Welcome Corner as a place for new visitors to chat and ask questions. We offered 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Welcome Chats to deepen visitor connection with USNH. Attendance fluctuated month to month but the Chats generally attracted multiple visitors who viewed the informational video introduction to UU and shared their personal stories with team members (usually coordinator Anna Flores, Joan Lane and Deb Selden). The brochures in the lobby and welcome corner were updated to make them both more current and more eye catching.

One session of New to UU classes was conducted in the fall, was well attended and resulted in eleven new members. These numbers reflect the average number of new members joining and we considered it an extremely positive effort, considering that USNH was in a period of transition.

The classes were as follows:

- "A Living Tradition" facilitated by Rev. Marsh. Participants shared their own spiritual journeys; Rev. Marsh gave a brief overview of Unitarian Universalism history and the Platts shared the history of USNH.
- "Sharing the Journey" facilitated by Rev. Marsh. This class addressed the big questions of 'Why are we here?' and 'Where do we stand?'; and focused on member commitment to USNH. This is a required class for membership. Attendees shared their thoughts, values, and beliefs through a variety of activities. A representative from Stewardship walked the attendees through the ins and outs of pledging and USNH finances.
- "Jump In!" This class is designed to share information on how congregants can become more involved at USNH. Presentations were given for Social Justice, music, management, financial structure, Board and RE.

The Spring classes were postponed due to the covid-19 closure of USNH but the people wanting to become members were happy to wait until fall. We are waiting to confer with Reverend Lindasusan as to format/content of the classes and any input she might have before we make any plans.

The First Sunday Summer Barbecues membership usually sponsors were unfortunately cancelled due to the kitchen renovation. We promoted hospitality by providing lunches for several of the new to UU classes and breakfast before the new member recognition ceremonies.

We will continue our function of checking in with new members at least once a year to see how they are settling in and to provide any assistance they may need in being directed to interaction with teams/committees they may have interest in. Generally, that is to Social Justice, but recently has included Building and Grounds, Library and Child Care.

Membership has had success in working with a few groups to help integrate new people. Specifically, Small Group Ministries has been very proactive in this practice. Additionally, we continue to emphasize that visitors are welcome to participate in many of the activities and events at USNH, and we are thrilled to see the 'open to all', 'all are welcome' type features in many of the announcements and events. Throughout the year, we continued to connect visitors and new members with specific groups, mostly in social justice.

Progressing through the spring with the difficulties not having a physical presence at USNH engenders, we have plans in place to take the weekly welcome corner and monthly visitor chat online. We have set up a Zoom channel specifically for visitors to meet with the Membership coordinator and team members after service every Sunday. As with everything, it will probably have some bugs to work out, but it will keep us connected and able to inform visitors of everything USNH has to offer. Also, a message from the pulpit will direct visitors to the membership e-mail to be welcomed and given information for getting involved at USNH.

In summary, the Membership Team has enjoyed a productive year. We fine-tuned some activities and initiated new events which are helping to integrate and connect new members into the USNH wider community. We are increasingly aware that visitors are coming to USNH for a variety of reasons, ranging from a need to act on social justice issues to finding a spiritual home.

Submitted by Kathy Haskins May 21, 2020

## **Music Committee**

Music Directors: Jeff Douma and Erika Schroth; Associate Music Director: William Braun;

Committee Members: Linda Pawelek, Carol Holloman, Jane and Richard Platt, Sylvia and Marty Lipnick, Linda Mehta, Toby Appel, Christine Shadle, Ann Levison, Jackie Trimble Shapiro, Chair

We have enjoyed a good year with our Interim Minister John Marsh. Our adult choir with approximately 40 members rehearsed about every two weeks and presented one

anthem for most services. Since March when COVID-19 closed our doors we have met most Thursdays on Zoom as a choir check-in. Jeff and Erika have also provided a song for us to sing "together-apart" by following their shared screen. It has been a nice way to be connected and do some singing. Erika and Jeff are hoping to have us create a virtual choir for one piece before the end of the year.

- We offered a holiday music service accompanied by the Haven String Quartet during which we sang works by Ola Gjiello and Hildegard von Bingen. We had begun practicing and would have sung Eric Whitacre's Five Hebrew Love Songs as well as shorter works by Rene Clausen and Sireen Abu-Khader in April if we were still attending in person.
- Erika continues as our wonderful Youth Choir Director. The youth performed once a month and delighted us with their musicality
- Since going virtual the entire Schroth-Douma family, Jeff, Erika, Fi and Will have chosen, practiced and performed wonderful weekly quartets or duets for our virtual services.
- Bill Braun continues as our Associate Music Director and until March selected pieces which he played for our prelude, interludes, coming out of meditation, during the collection and to accompany the adult choir and youth choirs. He is responsible for organizing the *Sundays at Four* series which held two of three concerts scheduled this year: Violin Insanity: Lisa Rautenberg and Gretchen Frazier, as well as Ellie Bond on Clarinet and cellist Diana Wuli. Flutist Sergio Pallottelli accompanied by William Braun was scheduled for May and had to be cancelled. Since March Bill has arranged for several great guest musicians as well as played more himself during our virtual services. Claire Bien completed many years of doing wonderful advertising for Sundays at Four. Ann Levison took up that role and did a great job for our two concerts this year.

The Music Committee, along with Jeff and Erika, support using the Apfel Fund as agreed with the Management team for next year: to pay the \$500 for Paid Instrumentalists. As previously discussed, and presented in last year's report, when the Apfel Fund decreases to \$5,000 there will be a fund raiser to maintain it. We continue to agree with keeping the line item for Paid Instrumentalists. We welcome having the \$500 restored to that line whenever possible.

## **Nominating Committee**

Members: Robb Camm, Chair; Carol Anastasio, Lurline deVos, Maggie Goodwin, Jim Peters, Becky Sandmann, and Becky Friedkin (Board of Trustees representative)

The Committee met regularly beginning in January. Siobhan Pokorney resigned from the committee when she moved to New York City. Becky Sandmann was appointed by the Board to replace Siobhan.

The Committee considered and contacted numerous USNH members about open positions, also focusing on developing possible candidates for future years. The full slate of candidates was completed by late April.

## **Pastoral Care Team**

Susan Meredith and Sarah Whitson, Co-chairs.

The Pastoral Care Team has been very active during the pandemic. We are making efforts to keep track of congregation members (and, of course, friends of the congregation whether or not they have signed the membership book) who are ill or are feeling the effects of isolation during this time. Each member has been calling and visiting with those members of the congregation.

We have followed up on people who have been brought to our attention by others. There is no question that this virus has had a significant impact on the physical and mental health of our congregation. The Pastoral Care Team is very involved in efforts to mitigate the effect as much as possible for as many people as we can.

## **Personnel Committee**

Jean Rosenthal (ch.) and Carol Stockton

GOAL FOR 2019-2020 - To support the USNH mission by enhancing congregational infrastructure by providing support on personnel issues as requested by the Board of Trustees, Management Team, and Minister as head of staff.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2019-2020

- Support Interim Minister, Management Team, and Finance Committee on staffing budget and other personnel issues
- Reviewed personnel files and record-keeping for programs and individuals
- Met with Search Committee on issues related to contract for new minister
- Responded to questions around employee benefits

### GOALS FOR 2020-2021

- Work with new called minister as needed for support and research on personnel issues
- Develop an Operational Planning and Procedure document for maintaining, reviewing, and storing key documents for personnel records.
- Work with Congregational Administrator to establish a procedure to review changes and updates in UUA or legal requirements for existing personnel benefits.
- Examine the overall structure and activities of the Personnel Committee

## **Small Group Ministry**

Steering Committee: Jesse Greist staff coordinator; Gwen Heuss-Severance, Leigh Powers, Karen Swanson.

Purpose: Small Group Ministry (SGM) provides a more personalized opportunity to examine the meaning of spirituality in your life and to [join](#) others in the search for connection and understanding. Newcomers and long-time members find it to be a good way to get to know a few people better, particularly in a large congregation like ours. Most small groups meet during a fall and a spring semester, lasting approximately four months, with groups [meeting](#) at regular intervals throughout each month.

In both the fall and spring semesters, a menu of Small Groups was well-subscribed and met either monthly or bi-monthly. In March 2020 when we closed the building and began to practice social distancing and meetings by zoom and/or Face Time, most of the Small Groups continued to meet and facilitators were in touch with members who were not able to participate on line.

This year's Small Groups and their facilitators were:

**Spiritual Explorations for Women** – Jean Rosenthal

**Tuesday Spiritual Topics** – Dee Arneth and Natalie Keating

**Mindfulness and More** – Karen Swanson and Ellen Mahoney

**Men's Group** – Harvey Weinstein

**Buddhist Lens I** – Jeannette Faber

**Buddhist Lens II** – Larry Rizzolo and Joan Gilbert

**Introduction to Western Buddhist Teachers and Practice**– Leigh Powers

**Humanist Thought and Perspectives** - Gayle Walter

### Goals for 2020-2021:

- Expand the menu of offerings by recruiting more facilitators and topics.
- Increase participation in the Steering Committee.
- Work closely with Rev. Lindasusan to develop the vision and sustain the program.

## **Social Justice Council**

The Social Justice Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis has been to focus on the immediate needs of our community and the communities of people with whom we have a partnership relationship. Our primary concern has been providing for basic needs for food and safety. We are also concerned about supporting the emotional well-being of congregants and folks in the community. Finally, we are exploring new ways to do what we do: zoom meetings, drive-thru collections, delivery of supplies, and work-from-home social justice.

Drive-thru Collections: We have held two drive-thru collections for the foodbank and to support the needs of our community. In addition, we donated money for grocery store gift cards for congregation members in immediate need of food.

The Kids' Service Team partnered with Food Bank on 3-26-20 for a food drive. We also gave families with kids fleece no-sew blankets to make for low income families. We hoped that this would both support USNH families and provide blankets for folks in need this fall. Following the Food Drive, we delivered 2 car trunks of food to the Keefe Center and collected \$450 in grocery store gift cards for USNH folks that have been given out by the minister.

A second drive-thru teaming KST members, Food Bank, and Heart was held 4-18-20 to support Columbus House homeless shelter clients and staff and the foodbank. We received a trunk load of food and \$150 for grocery store cards for USNH folks. In addition, we received 34 facemasks, 25 pair of socks, boxes of puzzles, paperback books, and two bins of toiletries.

We also approved additional money for the USNH foodbank if it is needed.

Masks: We have partnered with Bushra Mahdi, a refugee who is a professional seamstress to create facemasks for the congregation and our partner organizations. She created 50 masks for Columbus House staff and clients. An older couple in the congregation donated the fabric and cut the pattern for these masks. In addition, Bushra has sewn masks for the Waverly program and for the Integrated Refugee and Immigration Service. Finally, she has made over 30 masks for congregation members many of whom have donated to help her cover the cost of materials. Several congregants have also made over 100 masks for the homeless and the Waverly program.

The Waverly/USNH partnership: In addition to providing face masks for community members, the Waverly group is providing frequent check-ins and ensuring that families have adequate food and cleaning supplies given the increased pressure on local food banks.

Meeting the needs of immigrants: The Immigration and Refugee Task Force has been contributing to ULA's efforts to provide for the needs of undocumented folks. Members delivered diapers and food to families who do not have access to benefit programs and are unemployed due to the virus.

The task force members are also partnering with Junta to teach survival English remotely.

Through our participation in the Refugee Resettlement Coalition, we supplied refugee families affected by COVID-19 with Tylenol for 10 children and 10 adults; C,D,E vitamins for six families; laundry detergent for 10 families; hand soap for six families; and paper towels and toilet paper for a family.

Advocating for the vulnerable: Through our work with Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut, CONECT we are writing letters advocating the release of imprisoned people who are elderly, at risk, near the end of their sentence or waiting adjudication to reduce the spread of COVID19 among them and prison staff.

CONNECT is also working with us to resolve issues with difficulties receiving unemployment benefits for members and friends of our community.

Racial Disparities in COVID19 illness and death: The Green Sanctuary Task Force in partnership with CONNECT is beginning a dialogue on the environmental justice issues implicit in the high rates of asthma among People of Color in the New Haven area. These conditions have made people more vulnerable to other illnesses like COVID. The pandemic calls us to reflect on these conditions and to work to change them.

A CONNECT group is focusing efforts on accurate data collection, testing, and treatment of African Americans who have COVID due to documented disparities in illness and death when data has been collected. They are seeking to reduce rates of infection in the African American community through contact tracing.

We are also working with CONNECT to seek the release of prisoners who are close to their release date, are elderly or have a pre-existing condition that increases their risk of illness and death from COVID19. We are concerned about the risk to prisoners and prison staff many of whom are people of color,

Unemployment difficulties: Through our relationship with CONNECT, we arranged a meeting with the Department of Labor to address difficulties Bushra Mahdi a friend of the congregation and several other CONNECT affiliated folks were having. We learned that 2200 folks were having the same problem. We received an e-mail within three hours that the problem for those on the call was resolved. Many prior attempts to resolve this had not worked, leading to our reaching out to CONNECT.

Supporting Columbus House and the Homeless: March 9-16 AT week was cut short. Guests returned to CH March 13 due to concerns about virus transmission. March 18 - we (I) delivered & donated all food & paper goods in stock at USNH to CH (approx. 8 boxes of food): freezer items (incl. 6 frozen hams), pasta, cookies, cans & leftover AT items. March 31 - 25 USNH members pledged financial donations to Columbus House on the Sign-Up Genius (Liz); May 1 - Items collected from 4/18 drive-thru were delivered to CH and a quick link for donation to CH was added to USNH website.

Mental Health Support: The Mental Health Awareness group is holding a bi-weekly Sunday evening online group to share best ways to navigate these uncertain times.

UU the Vote from home: The UU the Vote group is organizing both postcard writing through Reclaim our Vote and letter writing through Vote Forward to allow congregants to work on electoral justice from home. By mid-May, 35 congregants signed up to mail over 750 postcards to folks to check on their voter registration and participated in a zoom call explaining the process. It is hoped that this will not only help ensure a just election, but also help congregants feel empowered during this uncertain time. Given the initial response it is assumed the program will grow.

Report submitted by Lurline deVos.

## **Stewardship Committee**

Co-chairs: Dan Gelperin & Sally Connolly, Laura Patey, Becky Friedkin, Mary Donohue, Sophie Tworkowski and Jeremy Hill (Management Team Liaison).

Report for 2020-21 Pledge Drive: This program report is presented in advance of the completion of the USNH 2020-21 Pledge Drive. Final data and program analysis will be available after June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### Introduction

We anticipated a relatively stable year conducting year-round planning that would build on last year's campaign and anticipate the arrival of a new minister. We revised our theme to be: All IN: LOOKING FORWARD WITH 20-20 VISION. While the scourge of COVID - 19 altered the nature of our campaign and perhaps reduced the amount of funds raised, our attention incorporated our deep, strong concerns for the health and safety of members and the stability of USNH.

### Primary Components of the 2020-2021 Stewardship Campaign

Team Members: While Dan Galperin and Sally Connolly continued as Co-chairs, our group significantly altered. Cindy Chelcun and Meredith Fahey were elected to the Ministerial Search Committee and Gwen Heuss-Severance left to focus on her Management Team leadership and was replaced by Jeremy Hill from the Management Team. Sophie Tworkowski and Laura Patey remained as superb members. Becky Friedkin and Mary Donohue joined broadening the depth and scope of our skill sets. Additionally, we were fortunate that Interim Minister Rev. John Marsh added a critical perspective and years of experience in Stewardship. Administrator, Jamie Ross, skillfully and quickly attended to correspondence, updating information, and communicating with committee members.

Early meetings with members of the Finance Committee were held and it was recognized that all the reserved/restricted funds would be depleted in 2019-2020 and it was essential that the Stewardship Campaign raise \$500,000 just to maintain our present level of functioning and ensure fiscal solvency. Given that reality, data analysis showed that the level of pledging would need to increase substantially. We adopted the goal of 100% (ALL-IN) participation with increases by each member over pledge amounts for the current fiscal year (FY20). We decided that leadership needs to provide specific information on the financial status of the congregation and to speak more openly about money matters.

It was imperative that our access to the data improve so that we could obtain updated information as soon as possible, without requiring Jamie to respond to every one of our queries. Fortunately, members working with Jamie were able to successfully achieve this. We were able to closely track pledges submitted, pledges outstanding, rates of change (increase, decrease, no change) and amounts of funds pledged. Additionally, web-based documents were improved.

Early in the fall, we met monthly to begin planning and then in early February moved to weekly meetings. When in-person meetings became impossible we switched to zoom meetings accompanied by frequent emails and the use of google documents. Additionally, members attended webinars/workshops on generosity and stewardships and sought and received thoughtful assistance from Liz Coit.

Initially, basic components of the campaign included: An introductory meeting after a Sunday Service, outlining the current financial situation of USNH; opening the campaign through announcements from the pulpit by Rev. Marsh and the Stewardship Team; regular presence in the social hall to answer questions and encourage support; correspondence to members and contributing friends; ongoing Sunday testimonials; stewardship reports in the newsletters; and, plans for hosted dinners in members' homes followed by a dessert gala at USNH. Obviously, the arrival of the pandemic negated the feasibility of all in-person activities and events beginning in mid-March. Although we cancelled the dinners and celebration, we were able to engage members in several ways.

Early in the campaign, we met with task forces and committees to describe our campaign and the increases needed to support a strong budget and welcome a new minister. We specifically focused on members' strong affinity for groups/activities stressing the importance of increases to ensure support in these areas. Initial correspondence was developed that could be individualized to include information related to a pledge unit's unique attachment (ex: choir, RE, social justice). Importantly, each letter, provided the amount of the current pledge (FY20) and a suggested increased pledge. As pledges came in, Rev. Marsh issued letters thanking people for their generous support. Detailed follow-up on non-respondents was conducted by committee members through individual phone calls reaching out to people asking about their health status and concerns, noting the ongoing activities of USNH and emphasizing the value of and need for their pledge. Continued follow-up included emails, personalized letters and handwritten notes, and more calls.

Public aspects of the campaign included:

- Weekly, inspirational testimonials provided by members emphasizing generosity and stewardship during Sunday Services along with specific updates by members of the Stewardship Committee. (Plans to display poster photos of "testifying" members accompanied by excerpts from their Sunday statements were cancelled by the pandemic.) When on-site services were terminated, recorded messages were included in the Sunday services. We also used Susan Frederick-Gray's excellent recorded message on generosity and stewardship.
- Status updates in the weekly and monthly newsletters were accompanied by excerpts from the testimonials, graphics, next steps and links to online pledging. In response to the concept of more open financial disclosures, we included a graph showing the distribution of pledge amounts.

During the end of the pledge campaign, a member came forward with a \$2000 match challenge offer, which we gratefully accepted. The offer was followed by recruitment of

others, increasing the challenge fund to \$6400. This match challenge was publicized and new pledges, one-time gifts, and pledge increases raised an impressive \$24,599. The Stewardship Committee is truly grateful for this unexpected gift and all members who responded with generosity.

We have come close to 100% participation by members but some remain “unpledged” and we have not successfully contacted these members. Discussions have transpired that we might regard some members as Emeritus. We will also encourage a more formal process to remind members of the pledging requirement and the policy of Ministerial exemptions and implement a schedule for removal of members from active status if pledging has not occurred.

As of the submission date of this document (5/8) the Stewardship Campaign had raised \$483,000, regrettably \$17,000 short of our goal; however, we were gratified that the amount raised was larger than the total in 2019-2020. We are still striving to meet our goal of \$500,000 and 100% participation.

## **Sunday Morning Team**

Chair: Becky Sandmann, Committee Members: Pam Niles, Sally Connolly, Greg Feeley, Karen Swanson, Theresa Childs, Dee Arneith, Ray Zalenski, Barbara Orrok, George Deming, Michele DeMusis, James Erard (new 2019-2020), and Lauri Patey

Number of new Committee Members sought for 2019-2020: We can always use new members to assist with the tasks on Sunday Morning and with other activities we host. These activities include: Greeting at the door Sunday Mornings, organizing the coffee hour, helping with ushering and helping to organize Sunday morning activities. We also encourage all ages to join and support our group, including our younger folks.

Additional Comments/Information: The Sunday Morning Team believes that working with other committees, such as in hosting joint activities, and in assisting with visitors, new folks and members of USNH become a more connected congregation.

Actions/Events completed during 2018-2019: Along with our usual Sunday Morning activities, this year we have sponsored “First Sunday’s” with either potluck soups (salads and snacks did not happen this year). Other activities we have been involved in have included the Chocolate Auction and assisting with the used book sale.

### Goals for 2020-2021

To provide support on Sunday mornings with:

- o Greeting
- o Ushering
- o Assisting with used book sale

To further assist with making a community by: Organizing monthly potluck soups or snacks or salads on the first Sunday of each month,  
Assisting and organizing the annual Chocolate Auction which is also a fund raiser for USNH,  
Facilitating and ordering supplies for the kitchen.

So, no new planned dates for any event for this congregational year due to the COVID 19 virus. However, when we can get back to USNH, we plan to jointly host a Welcome Back Gathering that will also include a Welcome for Reverend Lindasusan and a Thank You from the Stewardship Committee.

## **Worship Committee**

Rich Stockton (ch), Rev. John Marsh, Loren Fields, Tom Hardin, Sue Linsley, Deb Pascale, Jim Peters, David Jones, Deb Selden , Aimee Cotton Bogush, Jenn Kapranov, Rev. John Marsh has been our interim minister for the 2019-2020 church year. As chair of the Committee, Rich Stockton joined Rev. Marsh, Director of Lifespan Religious Education Jesse Greist and Music Director Jeff Douma on Tuesday mornings to plan the Sunday services. The full worship committee (Rev. Marsh is ex-officio member) meets the 1st Tuesday of every month. Members of the committee take turns in being the worship associate each Sunday.

The Committee's monthly meetings focused on the calendar, the selection of the monthly themes, the advance planning of the Worship Associate schedule, review of the budget, and developing and refining guidelines for the elements of the order of service (OOS): the gathering, welcome and announcements, the chalice lighting, the Our Faith in Action speaker, the reception of the offering, reading from the Book of Joys and Sorrows and connection and meditation.

At services this year we have averaged 188 adults and 36 children, with a maximum of 256+52 people. During the summer of 2019 we averaged 109 (75-152 min-max) people. During the pandemic (starting on 3/15/20) the worship committee continues to provide whatever support is needed, and the worship services have been provided mostly by John, Jesse, Jeff and Erika, with technical support from Robb Camm and Mary Donahue. We end up having to have the service completed a little sooner than before and we end up worrying more about the background and eyeglass reflections and things like that. There is definitely a lot more technical support needed than previously. The preferred approach has been to pre-record a YouTube program and follow up with a Zoom meeting as a virtual coffee hour.

Lay and guest led services since June 16, 2019 are:

June 23  
June 30

Ashley Makar  
T Humphries & E Loewi

Practices of Resilience  
The Work to Come

July 7	Kimberley Debus	Holy, Holey, Wholly
July 14	Jackie Trimble Shapiro	Poets Among Us
July 21	Lurline deVos & PJ Deak	GA 2019: The Power of We
July 28	Jim Peters	Elementary Lessons
Aug 4	Sharon McBlain	Waverly USNH Partnership
Aug 11	Melinda Tuhus	The Migrant Crisis
Aug 18	Sue Linsley	Tapestry
Aug 25	Gwen Severance/Cindy	Peace of Mind, Peace of Heart
Sept 1	Sue & Writers Group	Reflections
Oct 20	Beth Roth	Compassion & Belonging
Nov 10	Amanda Schuber	Beyond Categorical Thinking
Dec 1	John Pawelek	Life of Trees
Dec 29	Bill Braun/Peggy Myers	Emerson & Bach
Jan 26 2020	Bruce Knotts	Gender
Feb 2	Lurline deVos	CONNECT
Feb 9	Rev. Kathleen McTigue	Unlikely World
Feb 2	Rich Stockton et al.	Your One Wild and Precious Life
Apr 19	Melinda Tuhus et al.	Earth Day
May 3,10	Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich	Candidate Fortnight
May 24	Jim Peters, Bill Braun	Sondheim

We have maintained a subscription to the UU theme-based ministry programs *Soul Matters*. We will decide in the fall whether to continue this membership.

We appreciate the gifts of committee members Tom Hardin, Loren Fields, Sue Linsley, Deb Pascale and Deb Selden who resigned this year. We are happy that Aimee Cotton Bogush and Jenn Kapranov have joined our committee this year. Rich Stockton has chaired the committee for 3 years and will step down from chair but stay on the committee. Going forward Jim Peters and David Jones will serve as co-chairs. We continue to seek new members through newsletter ads and personal contacts. In the midst of a pandemic, the challenge of providing a summer program, and then transitioning to a new minister are noteworthy.