

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN

2022-2023 Annual Report

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Submitted by Lee Meinicke, President Board of Trustees

Members

Lee Meinicke (President), Amy Birge-Caracappa (Vice president), John Duey (Secretary), Sarah Frazier, Dev Howerton, Sharon Mafuru, Yvonne Marlier, Abbey Porter, Paul Teti

We welcomed four new Board members and worked together on four primary goals for the year: implement changes at USG consistent with those in the Widening the Circle of Concern Report; support the interim minister; encourage programs and practices that help people return to USG and participate fully; and continue to review and revise policies and structures to ensure USG is on a firm footing.

It's been quite a year! We had hired Reverend Cheryl M. Walker, but she didn't start until September. Our first two board meetings were during the time when church administrator Celeste Lamb and many volunteers were holding USG together. We reviewed and prioritized the recommendations from the Widening the Circle task force that were deemed to be the Board's work. In December, we voted to proceed with the ordination of Latifah Griffin, former intern minister and interim director of spiritual development, and in April joyfully joined with the congregation to give her the formal title of Reverend.

Board members pledged 100% participation in both the Foundations for the Future Capital Campaign and the annual Stewardship campaign. We voted to set a minimum annual distribution amount from the Sullivan Assistance Fund of 5% of its running 3-year average balance; the Sullivan Committee is revising its procedures and structure to implement this new policy. To make the selection of delegates to the UUA General Assembly (GA) more explicit and open, we revised the GA policy and actively recruited volunteers. We also voted to re-institute a Finance Committee to support the Treasurer and assist the Board with fiscal oversight. We reviewed Reverend Cheryl's performance and voted enthusiastically to renew her contract for a second year of Interim ministry. It's been a year of rebuilding, re-joining, and rejoicing.

MINISTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM (MET)

Submitted by Janet Haas, MET Representative

Members: Reverend Cheryl M. Walker, Church Administrator Celeste Lamb, and lay leaders Eric Foster, Jody Hill and Janet Haas who will step off once a replacement is found.

Mission of Committee

The Ministry Executive Team (MET) manages the day-to-day operations of the church. MET works closely with committees such as Building and Grounds, Stewardship, Worship Arts, Welcoming, Ending Racism Committee, Adult and Child Spiritual Development and the Social Justice Council to help ensure they meet their goals. In addition, MET is responsible for preparing and maintaining an operating budget.

MET had a rewarding year meeting on a revised every other week schedule. Highlights include:

1. Changing the Share the Plate to a weekly 50/50 collection split with USG, allowing us to assist 26 organizations within a church year
2. Identifying unused special project accounts so those funds became usable line items within the

budget; drafted and submitted procedures to the Board for implementing the handling of Special Project Accounts going forward, as required in the Financial Policy

3. Supporting the efforts of the long-term Capital Campaign, which entailed also working with B&G and the Safety Committee on logistics and funding of large maintenance projects and the securing of federal and state grants

4. Working on submitting a balanced budget to the Board for 2023-2024

5. Supporting the work of Archives by approving and finding \$2000 in the budget, which allowed them to continue their work

6. Organizing a small group of volunteers and working with them to enable another successful online auction this year

7. Approving and working with a group of volunteers to hold what we hope is an annual Sexton's Ball... a fun evening of music and dancing

8. Working with Mike, our Sexton, to identify church areas and closets that need cleaning out and reorganizing; initiating the process of finding the time and people interested in doing the work needed to fulfill this long-term initiative

For the church year 2023-2024, MET will continue to support and work closely with all the groups and committees that make USG such a vibrant place.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

MET held several conversations on the Widening the Circle initiatives. We submitted two suggestions which they adopted: use the concept of 'radical hospitality' to engage a person in every step of their church journey; and have 2-3 ambassadors greet and converse with new visitors immediately after service.

MET also sponsored those interested in attending this year's Philadelphia Reparations Intensive event by paying most of their entrance fee.

MINISTER

Submitted by Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, Interim Minister

I started my first year as the Interim Minister in September of 2022. My first task was to get to know the congregation. I attended meetings of every group / committee where it was appropriate. I learned the names of many people and introduced myself to the congregation.

My first-year goals were to get to know the congregation, analyze the systems in place, make changes, and help the congregation to get a sense of who they were and who they are now. In the second year we will get a better sense of who they wish to be as a congregation.

I invited trusted members of the congregation to form the Transitions team to help lead the congregation in the transition process. We held appreciative inquiry gatherings to help this congregation understand who it is, and what its strengths are. We have also learned about the history of this congregation through a history wall project.

We welcomed a new music director, Baker Purdon, thanks to the excellent work of the Music

Director Search Committee. Baker has brought a vibrancy to our Sunday morning worship service and is in the process of rebuilding the choir after nearly three years of absence due to COVID.

Rev. Latifah Griffin was ordained and has now accepted a position as the Minister in Palm Beach Florida. We are currently in the process of searching for an experienced Religious Educator. I am grateful for the work Rev. Latifah did during the Interim period and we all wish her well in her new position.

This congregation is essentially healthy. It has a dedicated and committed membership and is known in the community as a welcoming and justice seeking congregation. As with most congregations it is still emerging from the effects of the COVID pandemic and needs to know how big it is and isn't. And most importantly what is its calling in these times.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

I regularly include the voices of BiPOC authors and writers in my selections for readings, chalice lightings and other segments of the worship service. Working with Baker we also present the music and hymns from diverse sources. Engaging the congregation in examining the new Article II which emphasizes justice, equity and incorporates the language of the 8th Principle.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Submitted by Celeste Lamb, Business Administrator

My fourth year here at USG has been eventful as we transitioned to a new Music Director, Interim Minister and new Interim Director of Spiritual Development. Our building experienced ever-increasing activities by both Church members and renters.

In the coming year I look forward to our expanding of in-person activities and events. I hope to continue to increase revenue through rental income. I also look forward to continuing to assist and manage our tech team with livestreaming our Services from the Sanctuary and multiplatform services and events.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Assisted with website updating, creating new pages and troubleshooting when necessary
- Created congregation wide emails using Mailchimp CRM
- Used Canva software for making attractive advertising for events and internal communications
- Continued use of Instagram and Facebook
- Promoted events via social media

TECH

- Assisted and instructed employees and members on uses of software, troubleshooting issues with emails, Zoom, Breeze and USG website logins

- Implemented streaming of Sunday services via YouTube Live and posted to the USG website
- Continued to develop uses for VMix software to be able to produce more dynamic online services
- Assisted church members and renters with set up and use of A/V equipment
- Assisted Service Auction Committee by setting up of online auction website, entered data, coordinated raffle drawings and
- Continued to schedule Zoom meetings for groups and committees

BOOKKEEPING

- Paid bills, including necessary taxes
- Processed staff and lay reimbursements
- Recorded expenses and income in QuickBooks
- Continued working as de-facto bookkeeper for the Philadelphia Interfaith Peace Walk
- Filed necessary tax forms
- Applied for Employee Retention Tax Credit

PERSONNEL

- Processed payroll and related filings
- Provided new employees with all required hiring forms
- Maintained records of employee proof of vaccination
- Scheduled staff for rental events and USG services

ETC.

- Worked with Ministry Executive Team to manage practical functioning of USG
- Worked as member of both Moving Ahead Steering Committee and COVID -19 Task Force that created policies and made decisions on Church policies and use of building by other groups, as well as protocols for use of building and in-person attendance
- Completed required forms for insurance companies and licensing entities
- Facilitated USG as a polling place, coordinating with Philadelphia Board of Elections
- Worked as MET representative to B&G as well as helping coordinate building access to contractors
- Maintained presence in building, fielding phone calls, drop-bys, and requests for building access, and item drop off or pick up
- Attended AUUA Pro-Days and GA sessions and programming
- Maintained Nest thermostat timing and scheduling
- Oversaw work of wonderful Assistant Administrator and Sexton
- Assisted rental coordinator with scheduling rental events and managing the rental calendar
- Assisted with State and Federal Grant Applications

ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Rev. Latifah Griffin, Interim Director of Spiritual Development

Members

Rev. Latifah Rogers, Interim Director of Spiritual Development; Susan Bockius; Jerry Caruso; Carolyn Cotton; Justy DeForest till 4/30/23; Sarah Frazier as of 5/1/23; Janet Haas, Chair; Elaine Hills; Jennifer Leiby; Vanessa Lowe; Michael Moran

Who will be the chair of this committee in the coming year? Janet Haas

Mission of Committee ^[L]_[SEP]To provide programs, events and communal gatherings that support members and friends of the Unitarian Society of Germantown in finding spiritual paths that are meaningful and relevant to their individual journeys as well as to the community as it moves forward compassionately in defining, refining and strengthening our diverse Beloved Community.

Highlights

Adult Spiritual Development can be seen to support programs that fall into three categories: faith formation, community building, and spiritual practices.

Faith Formation:

Community Building

ASD planned and hosted another successful Community Day after service on 10/5/22. Held in the Grove, the event featured 15 informational tables set up by various committees, a luncheon table, a drumming circle, and games for the kids.

Rev. Latifah Griffin and Treva Burger led a UUA Common Read, Mistakes & Miracles, with several book discussions on what a UU church community needs to create a multicultural, diverse, antiracist Beloved Community.

Elderhood, led by Mike Moran, held monthly gatherings that featured personal sharing on such topics as: poetry that speaks to you, family immigrant experiences, exploration of “Who Am I?” based on lyrics of Nina Simone’s song.

End of Life Planning workshop, led by Philadelphia counselor Isabel Knight, was held in January

USG and UU Mt. Airy co-hosted an Intergenerational Seder dinner in person at USG on Saturday 4/8/23.

Two ASD committee members continued the practice of sending cards to those who are ill or had surgery, as well as those with good news such as a birth. A few Covid care packages were also made and delivered again this year as part of this ongoing caring initiative

Spiritual Practices and Mindfulness

In-person monthly meditation sits, in collaboration with Springboard Meditation Sanga, were re-started in the Sullivan wing on Sunday mornings

Our relationship with Delaware Valley Insight continued with co-sponsoring monthly online events, such as a 2-day retreat on ‘Awakening Together: An Introduction to Insight’ by Yenkuai Chuang and Janet Surry; a 2-day retreat by Suvaco Hanson on ‘The Silence of the Heart’; a Community Sit with Amy Ward Brimmer on ‘Four Elements in Meditation’

A new initiative began this Spring with Delaware Valley Insight and USG - ‘Walking in Nature With Awareness, led Samuel Johns, are monthly afternoon walks in the Wissahickon Reiki In Person Sessions, led by Metilde Scoccoa, a Master Practitioner, were held in person at

USG on two dates in March

A 2-day in person retreat will be held in June at USG on the topic of ‘Who Am I Really’, presented by Josh Korda and Kathy Cherry, founders of Dharma punk NYC

The following USG programs continued: Meditation for the Midweek with Deb Cooper; Thursday Night Meditation with Jesse Freschette; Morning yoga sessions several times during the week with Esther Wyss-Flamm, who also held periodic Restorative Yoga workshops.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

Lisa Dutton attended CSD’s meeting in October and presented a very informative presentation on the work of WTC and its suggested initiatives for CSD and ASD. DSD was asked to provide a list of resources/recommendations for people to engage in anti-oppression/multiculturalism including a workshop/training/course at least once a year.

Rev. Latifah submitted anti/oppression multicultural list to Lisa Dutton on 2/17/23. Preemptive Radical inclusion was chosen. Service with CB Beal occurred on 5/21/23

CHILD SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (CSD)

Submitted by Rev. Latifah Griffin, Interim Director of Spiritual Development

Members

Rev. Latifah Rogers, Interim Director of Spiritual Development; Becky Horner co-chair (until November 19, 2022) Brandi Kirksey co-chair (from December 12, 2022) Sharon Mafuru co-chair, Emily Stordahl (10/11/22), Emily Joy Goldberg (5/10/23), Jane Nevins (5/10/23), and Blew Kind (began 5/10/23)

Who will be the chair of this committee in the coming year?

Brandi Kirksey

Mission of Committee

- Provide developmentally appropriate education that supports the lifelong process of learning to cultivate goodness, compassion, empathy, and love for oneself and others.
- Offer safe and caring spaces for introspective work, connecting to nature, and building right-relationships in community across generations.
- Put into practice hands-on, experiential education for children, facilitators and parents that cultivates respect, stewardship, service, mindfulness, responsibility, justice, and the search for truth and beauty.
- To welcome young people into the UU community, help them find their way into becoming active members, and provide opportunities to learn the rich history and guiding principles of Unitarian Universalism.

Children's Spiritual Development can be seen to support programs that fall into four categories: faith formation, community building, spiritual practices, and fun!

CSD initially began the church year with a four-room school house model, which was based on

the ages of the youth that registered for the fall. We began the church year with 13 registered children, one part time nursery staff person, and 3 dedicated volunteers. By October, we consolidated into a one room-school house model with varied programming to limit volunteer burnout. The CSD committee meets one per month on the second Wednesday at 7:30pm.

Faith Formation and Spiritual practices:

CSD hosted Buxmont for their Neighboring Faiths program on community day 10/16/22.

Monthly Chapel service by CSD youth (youth were encouraged to choose their own liturgy, learn songs, create a covenant, and learn how to participate in Unitarian Universalist worship).

Social Justice Sundays (collected items to be donated to Covenant house)

Initially began with the 'Circle of Trees' curriculum in the fall and switched to 'Love Will Guide Us' curriculum (Jan 11, 2023).

Coming of Age was held this year with five youth from grades 8 to 10. They met roughly twice a month, including five sessions with mentors. They enjoyed one lunch with Revs. Cheryl M Walker and Latifah Griffin talking about faith formation and a second lunch with Rev. Cheryl and the mentors to talk about credo writing. Two of them met with a group of youth and their teacher from the Germantown Jewish Center's 10th grade confirmation class who came to USG to learn about UUism. They participated in an MLK Day service project and met individually with Rev. Cheryl to talk about their credo drafts. They presented their credos in a worship service they created and ran on May 14. Treva Burger ran the program with the assistance of Parvathy Menon on non-mentor Sundays and nine mentors: Mark Bangela, Coreen Davis, Andrea Durham, Eric Foster, Alan Gardner, Lucinda Lea, Jim Salom, Tammi Talda and Kay Weiser.

Community Building and Fun:

Backpack blessing for youth during service 9/18/22.

CSD participated in Community Day after service on 10/16/22. Held in the Grove, CSD provided a moonbounce and treats for all youth.

CSD Pumpkin carving party with Elderhood and Earth Spirit Circle Group in the parking lot on 10/29/22.

Greens Workshop led by Deb Kish-Silver on 12/4/22.

CSD Holiday play 12/24/22

UU Rocks in the Grove (Rock painting on the last Sunday of each month; consistently the highest attended Sunday of the month).

CSD hosted Winter Movie Night 1/13/23.

CSD hosted Family Fun Night 3/25/23

CSD Sunday 6/4/23

Rev. Latifah hosted two volunteer trainings in October and January.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Submitted by Baker Purdon, Music Director

I continue to be honored and thankful I was selected to oversee the next generation of USG's musical journey. This congregation is undoubtedly in a time of transition, and it behooves us all to embrace this liminal time to explore, experiment, and re-evaluate our priorities as a worship community.

We have re-started the USG choir post-pandemic. Attendance is slowly but surely growing, and we now have a regular group of between 6 and 12 singers. Choir anthems took place roughly once a month in the Fall, Winter, and Spring.

As we prepare for the 2023-2024 choir season, we intend to have anthems every other week with weekly rehearsals. The USG Choir will lead hymns each week during worship. The members of the USG choir will vote on a rehearsal time for next season later in the summer. We continue to encourage choir members to invite and recruit other USG (and non-USG) friends and family to join the choir. As evidenced in our final anthem of the current season, for which we invited 4 guest singers to join us, everyone enjoys a vibrant and full-voiced choir. We look forward to achieving that with our USG member singers next year.

Repairs on the organ continue. A replacement blower (the piece that moves air through the instrument) was ordered and, after a delay, received and installed. However, the organ builders identified significant electrical concerns which must be addressed prior to use of the organ. This work has not yet been completed. We continue to hope to have the organ back in service this Fall.

There will be a time later this Summer in which choir members (and all who are interested) will be invited to help us clean out and reorganize the music closet just outside the sanctuary. We will create a library and catalog for all the music USG owns and ensure there is a well-established system for the continued cataloging and purchasing of music for all aspects of USG.

As staff transitions continue and budget constrictions take place, we will continue to explore the role of music in this congregation. I welcome requests, conversations, and ideas if you have them -- you are always welcome to e-mail musicdirector@usguu.org.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Celeste Lamb, Member

Members

Bill Blasdel, Kurt Ahrens, Lynne Kalish, Carolyn Cotton, Scott Smith, Howard Silver, George Buckmann and Celeste Lamb (MET).

Mission of Committee

Operate, repair, maintain and continually improve our historic, beautiful property, working within constraints according to the following priorities:

- Assure a safe facility, including Covid mitigation.
- Preserve & protect the property from degradation (biggest threat – water leaks)
- Reduce/control operating costs (including utilities)
- Enhance the property for members' use, accessibility, and for rental income
- General cosmetic improvements and refurbish one space each year.

Highlights

- Management of property survey
- Management of painting of Dining Room, repair and refinish of DR woodwork, beginning of refinishing of DR floors
- Management of tree removal, trimming, and cabling
- Beginning of project to install new Lincoln Drive sign
- Beginning of project to install shipping container for storage
- Overseeing of many plumbing projects at Church and Lodge
- Management of installation of new Curtis Window light

ENDING RACISM COMMITTEE

Submitted by Carla Campbell, Co-Chair

Members

Carla Campbell, (Co-Chair), Treva Burger, Barbara McDowell (ERC Librarian), Dev Howerton, Eileen Teti, Margaret Thompson, Rosita Johnson, Jim Salom, Chris Downs, Tesha Nesbitt

Mission of Committee

ERC works toward dismantling racism in all its forms; individual, institutional, and systemic; through self-examination, education, advocacy, public witness, and service.

Significant Accomplishments of Past Year

- Restructured the committee to better share the work with a librarian who is creating a catalog of ERC books to increase their accessibility to the congregation.
- "ERC Presents..." speaker series, which invites organizations and individuals working in anti-racism and anti-White supremacy work in Germantown and beyond. Recent speakers have talked about the lawsuit about inequity in funding education in Pennsylvania, POWER's 2022 priorities and proposals for a public bank in Philadelphia and the work of the Reparations Committee at Green Street Friends Meeting to enact reparations to the Germantown community.
- Involved with monthly zoom meetings with the UUA 8th Principle originators Paula Cole Jones and Bruce Pollack-Johnson, where representatives from UUA congregations nationally share their progress leading up to votes, actions and activities after votes.
- Participated in the annual National Council for Teaching Education's African American Read In, where UU members read books by various Black authors during the month of February and share book reviews during our monthly ERC meeting. This is our 6th (is this updated?) year of participation and Barbara submits our reading list to the NCTE.
- The Racism Book Study Group, which meets monthly to discuss books based on anti-racist and anti-White Supremacy subject matter. This year they read the Love Songs of WEB DuBois and Mistakes and Miracles, which profiles congregations in their journeys toward multicultural, antiracist Beloved Community.
- ERC put on a worship service on August 28, 2022 which informed the congregation about ERC positions and activities and invited new folks to join our journey.
- Support BLUU (Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism) programs such as BLUU Box sessions, which highlight and celebrate African American UUs in congregation and national history, as well as BLUU Havens which establishes a Black-only social space for UUs.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

Goal C1 Institute Congregational Practices to Increase Equity, Inclusion, & Diversity.

Recommended Action

C 1.4 Promote UUA caucus offerings to people of diverse identities to achieve.

ERC has tertiary responsibility and could help with sharing information.

Goal T1: Center the theological perspectives of people from diverse communities (incl BIPOC, LGBTQ, disabled communities and those living with economic distress) in worship services, ASD/CSD and communications.

Action T 1.4 Highlight the lives and teachings of members of diverse communities in the newsletter or in sermons.

ERC has secondary responsibility after Communications and was envisioned as helping to provide resources.

Engaging the BLUU Box is one way this action is accomplished. The ERC worship service in August was another way.

FEMINIST THEALOGY

The Feminist Thealogy Program conducted its fourth consecutive year of programs. A Leadership Group composed of Gale Gibbons, Tara Webb Duey, Tiffany Hill and Susan Bockius developed this year's offerings based on volunteer presenters, suggestions from the congregation, or our personal interests. This program year has included:

WITCH INSPIRATIONS: HOW OUR LIVES TODAY ARE ENRICHED BY OUR SPECIAL SISTERS by Tara Webb Duey, Tiffany Hill, Susan Bockius and Maggie Beaumont.

- THE CULTURE OF RAPE IN THE BIBLE by Eileen DiFranco
- DISCUSSION OF THE BOOK by Anita Diamant, "THE RED TENT," led by Tiffany Hill.
- . BIRTHING THE WILD FEMININE WITHIN by Esther Wynn Flamm
- THE CAILLEACH: THE ENERGY THAT DANCED THE UNIVERSE INTO BEING by Justy DeForest.
- DISCUSSION OF THE BOOK by Delores Williams, "SISTERS IN THE WILDERNESS" led by The Rev. Cheryl M. Walker.
- A LOOK AT GODDESSES ACROSS HISTORY, by Andrea Durham.
- FIELD TRIP TO GODDESS GUIDED TOUR AT PENN MUSEUM

The program will continue next year.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Submitted by Eric Foster, Chair

Members

Eric Foster (chair), Dev Howerton, Rick Rodes, George Buckmann

Mission of Committee

The committee was formed to raise funds for a number of important physical projects that have been desired for years but which had no funding mechanism in place to initiate them. A capital campaign is an appropriate means of paying for these projects. The pledge goal is about the same as the elevator project's: \$362,000. (The elevator received additional funds from a bequest and UUA grant.)

Highlights

We have been pledged 48% of the pledge goal and have raised \$107,000 in cash. To date, these funds have paved the parking lot, surveyed the property boundaries, and completed critical tree work for safety reasons. There remains sufficient cash to pay for a new Lincoln Drive sign and almost enough to cover matching funds from a PA State grant for significant security installations and upgrades.

Soliciting additional pledges has been on hold to avoid conflict with the Annual Stewardship Campaign (and Summer hiatus) but will resume in the Fall of 2023.

INVESTMENT FUND COMMITTEE

Submitted by Eric Foster, Chair

Members

Eric Foster (chair), Vanessa Lowe, Bill Morrow, Lee Meinicke, Phillip Bullard

Who will be the chair of this committee in the coming year?

Eric Foster

Mission of Committee

Monitor investments, interface with outside investments manager firm (Trillium), meet with Trillium 3-4 times per year to review market conditions, investment fund policies, positions, etc.

Highlights

Re-forming the committee after nearly 10 years was a good start. We are now familiar with the CIF portfolio and tracking its progress, making recommendations for ongoing investments, etc.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

We are considering community development financial investments (CDFIs) that supply capital to historically marginalized groups.

SERVICE AUCTION COMMITTEE

Submitted by Celeste Lamb, Member

Members

Carolyn Cotton, Lynne Kalish, Janet Haas, Carolyn Scott, Celeste Lamb.

Mission of Committee

To raise greatest amount of funds possible to assist USG in meeting its overall goals. To build fellowship and encourage community across all age levels within USG.

Highlights

This year our Auction was again online. However, we were able to reach our \$12,000 goal. This year we set up a table after Services during Fellowship Hour to sell raffle tickets and register bidders. This seemed to be a good strategy.

SHAPING JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Submitted by Jody Hill, Co-Chair

Members

Jody Hill (co-chair), Vanessa Lowe (co-chair), Carla Campbell, Barbara Dowdall, Chris Downs, Marilyn Dyson, Janet Haas, Devery Howerton, Mary Kalyna, Yvonne Marlier, Julie Morrison, Tesha Nesbit, Cynthia Schiff, Carolyn Scott, and Andre Stormont.

Who will lead this group in the upcoming church year?

Vanessa Lowe and Jody Hill

Mission of Committee

Newly crafted in 2023 after extensive discussion: The Shaping Justice Committee is a collaborative of members and friends of the Unitarian Society of Germantown committed to actively supporting and advocating for individuals and groups who are working to dismantle the systems, programs, and practices that oppress or marginalize the most vulnerable.

Highlights

Members of the Social Justice Committee re-named our effort Shaping Justice Committee(SJC) and moved forward under new leadership of Vanessa and Jody.

Members of SJC collaborated with POWER and UU theVote to set up and coordinate several GOTV (Get out the Vote) phone calling efforts at USG before the crucial midterm elections of November 2022. Mary Kalyna also served as liaison with POWER before the May 2023 mayoral primaries. She participated in a large public forum and brought results back to USG members to assist them in making educated voting choices.

Vanessa Lowe continued her work with POWER's Economic Dignity efforts, which include working on establishment of a public bank.

Dev Howery continued her work with UUJustice Reproductive Justice team: efforts were made to pass a constitutional amendment in the fall of 2022 which did not happen, and efforts switched to GOTV.

Several USG members became active in the gun violence prevention effort statewide. Andre Stormont and Mea Schiff and others worked and continue to work with CeaseFire PA, including

attending a Harrisburg rally on March 23 with >400 others. This resulted in significant advancement of important bills in the PA legislature. They also contacted Heeding God's Call and are proposing a "memorial to the Lost" tee shirt display in front of USG- not finalized yet. Mary Kalyna has continued to coordinate two vigils in front of USG weekly: Black Lives Matter for 3 years and Support Ukraine since February 2022.

USG led another very successful MLK Day in January with many projects completed at USG, onsite at outside agencies, and in members' homes. Carolyn Scott, Janet Haas and Jody Hill were co-leaders in the effort.

Our SJC committee coordinated a wonderful Social Justice Sunday on October 9 and worked hard to make Community Day on Oct 16 successful, strengthening our community.

SJC continued to work with USG's established projects such as Rebuilding Philly in October. There was much work in USG concerning Reparations, with Carla Campbell at the helm of ERC. (See Ending Racism Committee report).

Committee members worked to create better electronic communication tools to get information to the congregation more smoothly.

Yvonne Marlier, liaison with New Sanctuary Movement, continued to promote participation in accompaniment of migrants and assisting with needs of new arrivals.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

Our action was to "identify a couple of social justice focuses, ideally led by those most affected by our justice work, and encourage everyone to get engaged in some way."

The Gun Violence Prevention effort has brought out many USG members to join with CeaseFire PA in continuing efforts to affect statewide legislation and policies.

Get Out the Vote efforts with both POWER and UU The Vote also recruited and touched many USG and community members who joined in canvassing and calling.

In addition, Martin Luther King Day brought out the best of everyone volunteering and spread joy and good will to those who received assistance and support.

SHARE THE PLATE TASK FORCE

Submitted by Eric Foster, Chair

Members

Eric Foster (chair), Yvonne Marlier, Gloria Guldager, Margaret Thompson

Mission of Committee

Identify and vet suitable recipients for sharing our plate every Sunday

Highlights

The transition was made from STP once a month to every week. Additional recipient organizations were sought and found to fill the weeks. An efficient method of tracking information and funds was set up to administer the frequent donations.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

We are keen to local recipient organizations that can benefit from USG's plate, some representing historically oppressed groups.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FACILITATORS

Submitted by Jody Hill, Chair

Members

Treva Burger and Jody Hill, co-chairs, Mark Bangela, Anne Bower, Carolyn Cotton, Maryann Helferty, Shobhi Kanal, Eileen Whelan, Adrienne Wolkenberg

Who will be the chair of this committee in the coming year?

Jody Hill and Treva Burger

Mission of Committee

To provide visitors and USG members a relevant and vibrant program of small groups that nourish our souls. To assure that these forums provide space for sharing our stories, deep listening, and discussion of assigned monthly spiritual themes. To carry this work out into the larger community of service and to draw in new members. To assist new facilitators in their roles.

Highlights

Our leadership group continued to meet every 2-3 months to share progress and issues that may need work and assistance.

We maintained robust attendance of around 80 members distributed among 8 active groups.

We added several new members, some during our fall Community Day outreach, who have expressed a lot of satisfaction and joy.

The Soul Matters program adopted a "de-centering whiteness" goal which we are working to integrate more and more into our program.

Feedback was continuously encouraged by Treva, especially to decide how groups wanted to spend their group time in July and August when there is no specific assigned curriculum.

As the pandemic waned, a few groups transitioned to in person attendance in members' homes with the hybrid option to ZOOM in also; other groups continued with ZOOM meetings for lots of reasons, especially so that those who cannot travel or want to stay at home can remain involved. Members of both venues expressed satisfaction with their choices.

Treva's group name changed to Facing Racism Together.

Latifah started a Young Adult Group which struggled and eventually disbanded, offering members other options.

Mer began a Monday evening ZOOM group which is growing.

Mer stepped up to take on the task of editing the monthly Soul Matters curriculum from 12 pages to the two-page version.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

Our program is driven by our Soul Matters offerings. And, as, above stated, that program has adopted a "de-centering whiteness" goal which we have also adopted.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Submitted by Rick Rodes, Chair

Members

Rick Rodes, chair. Eric Foster, George Buckmann, Sam Stormont, Carla Campbell, Amy Birge-Caracappa

Mission of Committee

To foster financial and congressional ownership among our members.

Highlights

Launched 2023-2024 Pledge campaign on March 26, 2023 thru Sunday Service and luncheon, testimonials, mail, email, OOS/eCommunicator announcements. Pledge goal \$350,000.

Campaign theme: Generosity.

Results to date: May 17, 2023: \$321,000 from 124 pledges. (Last year:- Goal \$400,000, results \$360,000 from 144 pledge)

TRANSITION TEAM

Submitted by Jenn Leiby, Committee Member

Members

Rev. Cheryl – Chair, Maggie Birge-Caracappa, Charles Gabriel, Shobhi Kanal, Jenn Leiby

Mission of Committee

The Transition Team assists the Interim Minister and the congregation in using the time between settled ministers effectively (according to the Transition manual).

Highlights

The Transition Team has been busy meeting with the congregation multiple times on two specific projects.

The first project was engaging in Appreciative Inquiry, where we asked attendees of many listening sessions three questions: 1) What brought you to USG for the first time? 2) What two or three things do you most like or love about our congregation? 3) What in particular kept you coming back during the pandemic?

From the answers, we created a word cloud highlighting the most common answers given (Community, service, people, love, etc), and hung chalices around the building reminding us of why we're here.

Our second project explored our church's history, from the standpoint of our personal (or oral history) experiences, with a great cross-section of attendees. We learned a lot about being at USG through the decades, and had an opportunity to engage in appreciation for Kent's ministry and to grieve together.

Our next steps include creating a comprehensive summary of all we've learned, meeting with the Search Team when it's formed, and continuing to talk to members of the congregation about our church's future.

WELCOMING COMMUNITY TEAM

Submitted by Lisa Dutton, Former Chair

Members

Treva Burger, Lisa Dutton (former chair. Term ended December 2021), Eric Foster (MET representative), Elaine Hills (resigned in April 2023), Brandi Kirksey, Deb Kish-Silver, Margaret Thompson (liaison to Worship Arts committee), Charles Gabriel (supports the committee by facilitating UU101 sessions)

Mission of Committee

To welcome all and foster engagement with USG as well as manage the operational logistics of providing name tags, entering member and visitor information into the church database and maintaining membership records for the UUA.

Highlights

Welcoming (table) – The materials and processes to staff the Welcoming table have been updated, and a shared Google doc to coordinate volunteers is now used. Since there are fewer volunteers to staff the welcome table post pandemic, we have heavily relied on Board members to staff the table.

Letters to Visitors - The process of sending letters to new visitors from the minister post Co-Vid resumed with Rev. Cheryl.

UU101 - Welcoming offers Introduction to Unitarian Universalism (UU101) sessions monthly. Fewer people attend the sessions than in the past. Many months no one shows up. Most people who took the sessions were on the path to new membership.

Visitor, New member event - The committee hosted a new member and visitor event in the fall 2022. The target audience is new visitors from the prior 6-8 months and newer members. Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, Rev. Latifah Griffith and Board president, Lee Meineke and several members of the welcoming committee participated. A second new members and visitors event is scheduled for June 11, 2023.

Membership - Welcoming conducted orientation sessions and coordinated the ceremony to welcome seven new people into membership during November and April.

Welcome Card - In May we started a new process of sending welcome cards to new members from Rev. Cheryl.

Holiday Cards - Each year the Welcoming committee designs a holiday card for congregants identified for outreach. 100 cards were sent to members of the congregation.

Young Adult outreach – A big challenge for USG is engaging young adults. We no longer have a facilitator for the Young Adult Facebook group, and the Small Group ministry for Young Adults disbanded. An additional challenge is having contact information for people who age out of CSD programming (during CSD the parents contact information is stored). On May 21, 2023 we offered a meet and greet for young adults (20 - 35) to give them an opportunity to meet each other and hopefully engage with USG. This activity also addressed the Widening the Circle recommendation (C1.6 engaging and welcoming new people), as well as outreach to young adults. The turnout was small, but they had engaged conversation. Two were people who had attended CSD, the others just starting attending in the last year. We will assess if there is interest to offer young adult meet and greets at least twice a year.

If you received any Widening the Circle recommendations, how have you integrated them into your work?

The Welcoming team has responsibility for three recommendations.

H2.1 - Offer/Do radical hospitality education each year for membership related functions, worship planning and the congregation.

C1.6 - Reinforce the desire for "widening the circle" by engaging and welcoming "new people."

G1.4 - Offer UU201 session(s): content - covenant, governance (deferred until covenant is updated by the Board)

In conjunction with Adult Spiritual Development, we identified a consultant recommended by the UUA, CB Beal, to conduct sessions to educate the congregation in support of the WtC initiative for radical hospitality education (H2.1). CB Beal gave an outstanding engaging sermon on "bearing witness" on 5/21. We inserted "bookmarks" with information on welcoming vs. othering (basic intercultural hospitality practices) into the Order of Service as an additional resource for everyone participating that day. We are delighted that CB Beal will lead another sermon and a workshop about preemptive radical inclusion on site in the fall. Everyone will be encouraged to attend.

WIDENING THE CIRCLE

Submitted by Treva Burger

Members

Andrea Barsevick, Treva Burger, Lisa Dutton, Shobhi Kanal

Mission of this committee

Our mission is well stated by the proposed 8th Principle: "Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse and multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

Specifically, we are using the Widening the Circle of Concern report from the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change to identify USG specific anti oppression goals and actions, and develop plans to put them into action and remain accountable to them.

Highlights

In the fall, we began engaging with each USG entity that WtC had made a recommendation for. We asked each group to let us know whether and how they would be able to work toward the goal. We held two leadership check in meetings to talk to the different groups about how they were doing and answer questions. We keep a document to track everyone's updates and progress. We held a congregational meeting to update the broader congregation on WtC's work. It was well attended and there was much interest in hospitality training.

We engaged CB Beal for this year's WtC worship service. They will return in the fall to deliver a second sermon (9/17) and lead a workshop (9/30) about preemptive radical inclusion in support of the WtC recommendations for Welcoming and ASD, in addition to worship.

A Reparations Committee developed to "look at what others are doing and make recommendations for USG actions toward reparations." Several USG members attended an intensive course on Reparations offered by the City of Philadelphia Office of Faith-based Initiatives that drew over ninety people from local churches, synagogues, mosques, and meeting houses. After feedback from church and Widening the Circle leadership, the Reparations Committee will be moving forward with activities to engage the whole congregation in thinking about reparations in the context of USG with the goal of discovering what a reparation proposal for USG might look like.

Two book groups were run by WtC leaders. The White Anti-Racist Discussion Group which began in 2022 to process feelings of anger, hurt & confusion about white supremacy culture & to understand what is being asked of white people at this moment, continued using the book, *The Darkness Divine* by Rev. Kristin Harper, as a basis for discussion. The hope is to resolve these concerns so white people can engage productively to create an anti-racist community at USG. A group reading and discussing the UUA Common Read, *Mistakes and Miracles* met several times this spring and will complete their time together by talking about what lessons USG could take from the book.

A Young Adult Meet and Greet was organized in May 2023.

WORSHIP ARTS

Submitted by Lois Murphy, Chair

Members of Committee -

Minister, Director of Spiritual Development, Music Director, Margaret Thompson (representing Welcoming), Steve Conrad (representing Ushers), and Betsy Gabriel (representing musicians and choir)

Mission of Committee

The Worship Arts Committee (WAC) meets on the first Thursday of each month. Each month we review the previous months' Services, and address issues related to worship and CSD, Ushers, Music. Our mission is to plan and present uplifting and spiritually relevant worship services that meet the needs and feed the souls of the community and contribute to our mission of Building Beloved Community with compassion, service and empowerment. The committee is responsible for working collaboratively with the Interim Minister, Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, to schedule Worship Associates and engage guest speakers when the minister is not in the pulpit. Further, the WAC Chair also supports the development of Service during the week when the minister is not involved in building a Sunday Service, and assures communication among the participants.

Goals Established for Past Year

Goals include strengthening each component of our Sunday Services, including: • Full review of the UUA Widening the Circle Report • Improvement of technology (including cameras, audio and lighting) in the Sanctuary and for hybrid Services • Explore having a member of a local Lenape Nation address the congregation. • Continuing to achieve excellence in our worship services including in music and spiritually relevant sermons and other components of the service

Significant Accomplishments of Past Year

The past 18 months have been a time of tremendous transition, from the pandemic period, and with saying goodbye to a long term Music Director, a long-term Senior Minister and a Director of Spiritual Development. Through this transitional period we maintained high standards in presenting diverse live music and diverse speakers in the pulpit, addressed important issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in our services, presented speakers identified by the widening the Circle working group, and welcomed our Interim Minister, Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, and a new Music Director, Baker Purdon. We also had the privilege of celebrating the ordination of Rev. Latifah Griffin in our Sanctuary. We have welcoming people back to in-person services in the sanctuary and have made improvements to our on-line experience by offering YouTube for

viewing of services remotely. We have made several adjustments to the organization of the worship service, under the guidance of Rev. Cheryl M. Walker and the music director is actively recruiting and rebuilding the choir and developing other music offerings.

Goals for 2022-2023 Church Year

Continuing to implement innovations such to widen the circle -- Continuing to improve our tech capacities to continue to present multi-platform services effectively -- Building our connection to musicians in the community to incorporate a wide variety of musicians and musical genres -- inviting more families and members to participate in readings and in chalice lighting, and in other ways – and increasing our efforts to include attendees who are participating remotely. This coming year we hope to have a member of the Lenape Nation invited to address the congregation.