

# *UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN*

*2023-2024 Annual Report*

*Presented June 2, 2024*



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## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

*Submitted by Amy Birge-Caracappa, President Board of Trustees*

### **Members**

Amy Birge-Caracappa (President), Jennifer Bellot (Vice President), John Duey (Secretary), Sharon Mafuru, Yvonne Marlier, Abbey Porter, Paul Teti, Phillip Bullard, Carla Campbell

In these days when the height of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us and we've called Reverend Hannah Capaldi to be our new settled minister, it may be tempting to say that Unitarian Society of Germantown is also starting to "settle." But I don't think that's the case. I think that USG's real transition has only just begun. Interim Minister Reverend Cheryl M. Walker came in in September 2022 and blew the doors off the place. She made us stand up straighter, speak louder, and take a closer look at who we are and who we want to be. She put us—some more comfortably than others—on a path that I think will lead *not* to USG recovering its former glory, but to a new and better day where we work together to make USG the nurturing and safe place that these uncertain times cry out for today—and in the future. The Board has done a lot this year to keep us moving toward this goal. Early on, the Board did what it could to ensure that the Ministerial Search Committee got off to a strong start, when the seven members of the search team were elected at the June 2023 meeting. We welcomed three new Board members in July and then worked through the UUA Board Checklist for congregations in search (e.g., attending a UU program online, working out funding sources for the search, setting up a negotiating committee). We said a tearful but joyful goodbye to Reverend Latifah Griffin, following her ordination by the congregation. We elected Jenn Bellot as Vice President and John Duey as Secretary. We continued the conversation about a Finance Committee (still an ongoing conversation, but it's getting there!) and decided to take another look at USG's Mission Statement and Covenant of Right Relations and continue the previous year's work on reviewing policies. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, the Board held a retreat with the express purpose of developing Board Goals for 2023-2024:

1. Start the Congregation's process of reviewing and updating USG's Mission
2. Support programs and initiatives to increase the participation of families in Children's Spiritual Development (CSD) programs
3. Develop action items consistent with the recommended Board actions in the Widening the Circle of Concern report to help USG to become an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, radically inclusive church
4. Support the interim minister and the work of the settled minister search committee
5. Encourage programs and practices that help people return to USG and participate fully
6. Continue to review and revise policies and structures to ensure USG is living out its Mission
7. Inventory the strength of USG's community relationships

We approved proposed changes to the Safe Congregation Policy and approved the Reparations Committee's request for a special congregational meeting in April 2024. Throughout the fall, questions kept coming up that seemed difficult for the Board to answer on its own, and much of it led back to the Board's Widening the Circle of Concern recommended actions from the year before and the necessity of a USG leadership retreat, which we planned for March of 2024. The leadership retreat was held on March 30 and was attended by more than thirty of USG's leaders, with representatives from the Board, Widening the Circle, Reparations, the MET, Building and

Grounds, Worship Arts, Ushers, the Nom Com, Social Justice, the COM, and Feminist Theology, among many others. The retreat had four goals:

- Familiarize USG leadership with each other and with the work of the committees and groups.
- Develop processes for reviewing and revising the Mission and the Covenant of Right Relations consistent with Widening the Circle of Concern/DEI.
- Discuss the merits of committees creating, sharing, and tracking annual goals, including Widening the Circle/DEI goals.
- Discuss how we hold ourselves accountable for this work on the Mission and Covenant.

From noon to 4:00 PM, we worked in small groups and as a collective to develop processes, talk about USG's future, and, most importantly reflect on who we are, where we've been, and where we want to go at USG, with a particular emphasis on anti-racist/anti-oppression/radical inclusion work, how we might go about Widening the Circle, and what the next steps will be to get us there. In April, we hosted the Reparations vote (in favor!) and worked with the Search Committee to make sure that the settled minister vote on April 28<sup>th</sup> went smoothly—and it did! 100% of those who voted did so in favor of calling Reverend Hannah Capaldi.

In all, 2023-2024 was an exciting and challenging year for the Board of Trustees and for the Unitarian Society of Germantown. I look forward to discovering more about who we are and to the joy and commitment we can bring to each other's lives and to the community that is our home.

### **MINISTRY EXECUTIVE TEAM (MET)**

*Submitted by Jody Hill, MET Representative*

**Members:** Reverend Cheryl M. Walker, Church Administrator Celeste Lamb, and lay leaders Eric Foster, Jody Hill and Margaret Thompson

#### **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.

#### **Highlights**

The MET continued to meet every other week with Rev Cheryl at the helm for the second year. We spent a lot of valuable discussion time on the topic of welcoming new members and visitors. Radical hospitality to engage a person in every step of their journey needs to become and remain our credo. And retention of members is vital to the health of our church in many ways. To that end, the MET worked closely with and supported the Welcoming Committee. MET supported Building and Grounds in many endeavors including installing a new heat pump in the Youth Lodge, refurbishing flooring in the Dining Room, and several other building improvements. A huge hurrah arose in our community with the installation of a new beautiful

electronic sign in front of USG which had been years in the planning and supported by the Capital Campaign.

We spent a long time working on refining a balanced budget initially outlined by Eric to be presented to the Board on May 28.

MET worked with Mike after last year's closet clean out to establish another Church clean up day to be scheduled in the summer.

We reviewed and oversaw rentals and fees charged for USG space and equipment. These rentals continue to be managed by Carolyn Cotton.

We approved display and fee payment for "Memorial to the Lost". This was initiated by the congregants involved in the Gun Safety efforts and involved display for several weeks of tee shirts with the names of Philadelphia residents who had lost their lives to gun violence.

Supported Jody to begin Soup Sundays after service. We managed to run two this winter with a plan to re-energize participation when colder weather begins.

MET helped to navigate a very difficult snow removal situation with exorbitant charges that needed negotiation.

We supported Sexton Mike in organizing and executing our second Sexton's Ball with music, dancing, and potluck snacks.

We supported extensive repairs to our organ which resulted in the addition of gorgeous organ music to Sunday service by Baker, our music director. It also resulted in our sanctuary and organ being rented out as a site for an organ festival which filled the sanctuary.

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

We helped to bring and sponsor a workshop and sermon by CB Beal focused on inclusion and anti-oppression at USG. We continued to work closely with Welcoming Committee on Radical Hospitality measures.

## **MINISTER**

*Submitted by Rev. Cheryl M. Walker, Interim Minister*

As I end my tenure as the Interim Minister for USG I leave a congregation ready to begin its next chapter with a new settled minister, the Rev. Hannah Capaldi. In the two years that we have been together, we have done the tasks of the interim period: explore the past, assess the present and plan for the future.

In exploring the past we discovered what matters most to this congregation, community. We also began to look how we have reached beyond the doors of the church into the larger community.

The congregation has a history it is rightly proud of. It also took some of the painful steps of recognizing when it has fallen short of its goals to be more inclusive and welcoming. As a result it has continued to make inroads into Widening its Circle.

Assessing the present it is clear that this church needs a recommitment to its mission. I added the mission to our order of service, so that we recite it each week. But saying words each week is not the same as committing to it in all aspects of the congregation. Working with the Board we planned and held a leadership retreat and made plans to reassess the mission with Rev. Hannah. I am very grateful to the Transitions Team, Maggie Birge-Caracappa, Charles Gabriel, Shobhi Kanal and Jenn Leiby, who served as my support for this interim period. As my tenure ends, so does the team, but the work they did continues. The congregation knows who they are and what

they value most. Their work laid the groundwork for moving into a new chapter seamlessly. My colleagues in the ministry of this congregation, Baker Purdon, Celeste Lamb, Kevin DeBeck, Mike Rogers and Carolyn Scott, continued to bring their best efforts to keeping this congregation on track. Along with volunteers from the MET, ASD, CSD, Worship Arts and many others, the congregation thrives.

I leave the congregation, not as I found it; it has changed as I have changed. What remains true is that its future is exciting and hopeful. It has been my honor to serve as its Interim Minister.

*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.

## **DIRECTOR OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (DSD)**

*Submitted by Rev. Kevin De Beck, Director of Spiritual Development*

In September 2023, we started with two distinct groups—elementary and youth group. For the elementary group, we implemented the Tapestry of Faith curriculum Toolbox of Faith where a tool was discussed and how it relates to the mission of Unitarian Universalism. For youth group, we implemented Heeding the Call, with an eye on educating the youth to advocate for themselves and others. By the end of the year, we used the Toolbox of Faith curriculum for all ages. The CSD committee meets once a month on second Wednesdays at 6:30 and we covenanted together that our meetings would not be more than one hour due to committee members time constraints. We started the year with 3-4 teacher volunteers and by the end of the church year, we were up to a pool of 10 potential volunteer teachers, along with 3 committed adults who will be in line to teach OWL in September 2024. Also hired a new Childcare person to oversee the Wiggle Room during worship services.

### Fellowship events sponsored by CSD

September 10--Ice Cream Social—this was a recruiting event as well as a way for me to get to know the parents of USG.

September 10—Blessing of the Backpacks during the worship service.

October 10—Community Day

October 29--Trunk or Treat held in the back parking lot of USG.

December 21—Yule Ritual and Firewheel

December 24—Family Christmas Eve Service using How the Grinch Stole Christmas, with help from the choir.

March 31—Easter Egg hunt in the grove at USG.

May 19—CSD led cake and refreshments in the grove at USG. Was thankful the weather held out.

June 9—CSD led worship.

### CSD Sunday Morning Schedule

Rock painting at the first of every month.

Curriculum Sundays most non-holiday Sundays

### Special Events during CSD

As mentioned above, Christmas Eve Family Service using How the

Grinch Stole Christmas for the Christmas Pageant.

Sending Valentine's Cards to people on the care list through Loveland, Colorado for a special mail cancellation.

Making St. Patrick's Day candles using tissue paper and electric votive candles.

Youth Group helped put candy and trinkets in Easter Eggs for the Easter Egg hunt.

All ages involved in creating and participating in the June 9 CSD led service.

Sadly, this will be my only year as your DSD. My wife was called to a church in Castine, Maine, and will be moving there in July 2024. My hope is that I've helped to put the foundations in place for CSD to continue to grow, in both child participation and expanding the pool of adult volunteers. Thank you for the opportunity to serve USG.

## **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

*Submitted by Celeste Lamb, Business Administrator*

At the end of my five-year tenure as USG's Administrator, I look back with great appreciation for the support, understanding, and camaraderie I have found here. Working alongside such a dedicated and kind group of individuals has been a truly enriching experience. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve this community.

### **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

### **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
- Assisted church members and renters with set up and use of A/V equipment
- 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 tax forms

### **PERSONNEL**

- Processed payroll and related filings

- Provided new employees with all required hiring forms
- Scheduled staff for rental events and USG services

ETC.

- Worked with Ministry Executive Team to manage practical functioning of USG
- Completed required forms and filings 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 Management

**ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Submitted by Janet Haas, ASD Chair*

**Members**

Rev. Kevin DeBeck, interim DSD; Janet Haas, chair; Susan Bockius; Jerry Caruso; Elaine Hills; Jennifer Leiby

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

**Mission of Committee** ASD is committed to providing programs, events, and communal gatherings that support members and friends of USG in finding spiritual paths that are meaningful and relevant to their individual journey. ASD seeks to promote offerings that engage the heart, stimulate the intellect and create opportunities for all to share their talents and wisdom, as we strengthen the bonds of our diverse beloved community.

**Highlights**

Faith Formation:

Exploring Elderhood, a group of over-50s, gather each month to explore a topic of interest. As this group is in transition, Rev. DeBeck led them in an exploration and discussion of the Soul Matter's Spiritual Theme of the month. The Reparations Committee hosted a 'First Steps to Reparation' session in October.

The Earth Honoring group disbanded this year, but there remained an interest in honoring the winter solstice. ASD facilitated "Welcome the Return of Light-Celebrate the Winter Solstice" on 12/16/23. The family event included a fire wheel, a service with readings held in the Labyrinth, and fellowship over food.

Feminine Theology met monthly to present historical and cultural topics reflecting a feminist perspective on theology. This year's topics examined women as composers and artists; women in the military arts; and a study of Mary, Mother of Jesus and Hildegard of Bergen.



### Community Building:

Janet Haas planned and hosted Community Day after service on 10/8/23. Held in the Grove, 20 committees and groups each shared their purpose and planned events/activities for the church year. Lunch was served and activities for adults and kids were included.

Jenn Leiby continued the monthly practice of sending cards to those who are ill or had surgery, as well as those with good news, such as a birth.

ASD sponsored a full-day workshop on 'Preemptive Radical Inclusion' on 9/20/23, led by consultant CB Beal, MDiv. Rev. DeBeck, DSD, led a 4-session workshop from 1/15 to 2/15/24 on 'Transgender Inclusion in Congregations', a video presentation with discussion put together by Rev. Mykal Slack and Zr. Alex Kapitan. Rev. DeBeck also planned and implemented, with help from ASD, 'Trunk or Treat' for families held before Halloween.

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

ASD continued their Widening the Circle initiative of providing programs of interest which are inclusive of all ages, gender, skin color, and sexual identity. These included the 'Preemptive Radical Inclusion' and 'Transgender Inclusion' workshops; meditation programs for People of Color (BIPOC); programs studying theology from the female perspective, which men also attended; and events such as Community Day and The Winter Solstice celebration which included activities for children as well as adults.

Rev. DeBeck adds that CSD used 'Toolbox of Faith' and 'Heeding the Call' and in those lessons there are stories and music that include the Widening the Circle recommendations. The same process is also used to choose what kind of story to tell during the worship service.

## **CHILD SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (CSD)**

*Submitted by Rev. Kevin DeBeck, Director of Spiritual Development*

### **Members**

Rev. Kevin DeBeck, Director of Spiritual Development; Emily Joy Goldberg –chair, Sharon Mafuru

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

Emily Joy Goldberg

### **Mission of Committee**

The mission of this committee is to support the spiritual development of children and adolescents of USG. This helps fulfill the mission of USG by developing the next generation of Unitarian Universalists and also helping to develop the next generation of activists that will not only make the world a better place, but to help spread the good news of liberal religion.

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.

### **Highlights**

- Trunk or Treat
- The Grinch Christmas Pageant
- Easter
- CSD led service on June 9

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

All lessons have included stories and images from other cultures that are not white centered, class discussions about people of color from both Toolbox of Faith and Heeding the Call.

## **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Kurt Ahrens, Chairr*

### **Members**

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

### **Mission of Committee**

The purpose of Buildings and Grounds is to operate, repair, maintain and continually improve the property, church building and AYL; assure suitability for safe congregational use and event rentals; manage costs; and assure long term viability of the entire property.

### **Highlights**

- Dining room rehabilitation including floor refinishing, noise reduction, bulletin boards, paint
- Garden shed installed
- Digital (programmable) Sign installed
- Roof, elevator addition
- Garden maintenance group convened
- Sustainable heat pumps installed in AYL (w/ removal of oil furnace)
- Playground portion of parking lot was repaved
- Dangerous trees removed

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

We are a welcoming group which is dedicated to the care and maintenance of the physical aspects of our church. Anyone who is interested in helping with this mission is welcome to join us.

## **SERVICE AUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Deborah Kish-Silver, Interim Chair*

### **Members**

2023 Service Auction: Celeste Lamb, Carolyn Cotton, Lynne Kalish, Janet Haas and Carolyn Scott

2024 Service Auction: Deb Kish-Silver (Interim chair) Carolyn Cotton, Sarah DiGioia, Lynne Kalish, Ann Milling, Judi Morrow, Nancy Radcliff, Carolyn Scott, Helena Tucker, Eileen Whelan.

### **Mission of Committee**

The service auction committee's mission is to raise funds in order to provide continued support of programming as well as giving the opportunity for members of the congregation to have opportunities to socialize with other members of the congregation, to develop friendships and learn new skills.

### **Highlights**

The 2023 Service auction raised an additional \$748 in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

In March, 2024, a new committee was formed consisting of 10 people to discuss the 2024 auction. The initial meeting was held in March 2024. The committee felt that it was too late to plan and implement a service auction in April, due to many factors, including the ministerial search and candidating week. The committee decided that the 2024 service auction would be held in October 2024 and that it will be a hybrid auction (both online and live).

## **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, Tesha Nesbit, Cynthia Schiff, Carolyn Scott, and Andre Stormont, Molly Collet

### **Who will lead this group in the upcoming church year?**

Jody Hill and Molly Collet, co-chairs

### **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**

One of the most active groups in Social Justice this year was the group involved in Gun Safety, including Mea Schiff and Andre Stormont and other congregants. They joined continued with CeaseFirePA to work toward the movement and passage of gun safety bills statewide, including

witness at large rallies in Harrisburg.

Dev Howerton continued in her liaison role at UUJustice PA, `spearheading Sunday USG postcard-writing sessions after Sunday service to legislators about current legislative issues. UUthevote recently launched a more intense effort to get congregations actively involved in GetOutTheVote efforts for this Presidential election and USG will begin participating. Dev also spread the word about the UUJusticePA Fund Drive to sustain their current initiatives.

Barbara Dowdall has continued her work with POWER and the groups toward fair and equitable school funding. They held a recent rally in Harrisburg and have worked diligently to get legislative issues to move along and be passed. Vanessa Lowe continues her work with POWER Live Free campaign, as they were crafting their Roadmap For Justice.

MLK Day of Service was again a great success and offered more than 30 projects and attracted more than 200 people to complete these at USG, at home, or two on-site large painting projects. Sara Lindmont was the new powerhouse leader of the team that included Janet Hass, CarolynScott, and Jody Hill.

Mary Kalyna continued to coordinate two weekly vigils in from of the USG building in support of Black Lives Matter for 4 years and the Ukrainian people since February 2022.

Yvonne Marlier continued as liaison to New Sanctuary Movement who are focusing efforts on passing legislation to widen availability of drivers licenses.

The Reparations Team worked tirelessly to prepare and present a proposal to the congregation-see Ending Racism report for more details.

Carla Campbell was the liaison for The Ending Racism Committee. The ERC held two Ending Racism Presents last year: on reparations occurring through Green Street Friends Meeting in April 2023 and featuring local author Solomon Jones in September 2023. We will present memoir author and orthodontist Dr. Benjamin Nero in June 2024. Other activities included the African American Read-In in February 2024 and field trips to the Bright April exhibit in Germantown and the African American Museum in Philadelphia.

Vanessa Lowe will rotate off her co-leader role next month and Molly Collet has agreed to join the group and consider serving as co-leader.

*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.

A newly organized Martin Luther King Day again brought many volunteers, both congregants and community members to engage in many different service projects.

## **SHARE THE PLATE TASK FORCE**

*Submitted by Eric Foster, Chair*

### **Members**

Jen Bellot, Gloria Guldager, Eric Foster

### **Mission of Committee**

We identify (and solicit from the wider congregation) recipients for sharing our plate every two weeks. These organizations are typically relatively small underfunded organizations that provide needed social services in the local area.

### **Highlights**

Every two weeks, the Committee reliably supplied a STP recipient - about 24 over the year. The Chair wrote copy for the Worship Arts committee to announce the collection in Service, tracked the receipts, and submitted check requests to the Office for payments. Receipts totaled nearly \$30,000, a record collection in 2023-24.

## **STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by Rick Rodes, Chair*

### **Members**

Rick Rodes, chair. Eric Foster, George Buckmann, Jody Hill, John Duey

### **Mission of Committee**

The mission of the Stewardship Committee is to plan and execute a successful Stewardship Campaign that maximizes USG member pledge participation and reaches a financial goal. The funds raised in this campaign facilitate the Financial health of USG and our Beloved Community.

### **Highlights**

Our committee planned this years Pledge campaign with a theme of Believe in OUR Future. The campaign kicked off in March and includes letters, emails, announcements, banners, and Stewardship moments from the Pulpit.

Last pledge year 2023-2024 raised about \$343,000 from 145 pledges for a participation rate of 83%

As of 5/24/24 this year, we have raised about \$300,000 toward our goal of \$350,000 with many more pledges to come in.

## **CARING TEAM**

*Submitted by Linda Bernstein, Chair*

### **Members**

Linda Bernstein, Chair, Sarah West, Eileen Teti

### **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**

We coordinated countless meals and rides and pastoral visits. Weekly notices in the Communicator let members write, call or visit with people experiencing life changes.

## **WELCOMING COMMUNITY TEAM**

*Submitted by Treva Burger*

### **Members**

Deb Kish-Silver, Emily Stordahl, Eric Foster, Susan Rizack, Treva Burger

In support of committee: Lisa Dutton, preparing new members and leading the signing ceremony, Charles Gabriel, alternates teaching UU101 with Eric, Margaret Thompson became Welcoming liaison to MET, no longer attends meetings, but receives committee emails, agendas and minutes.

### **Mission of Committee**

To welcome all and foster engagement with USG as well as manage the operational logistics of staffing the Welcome Table, providing name tags, entering member and visitor information into the church database, offering classes to educate about UUism and USG and prepare congregants for membership, facilitate new member signings and maintain membership records for the UUA.

### **Highlights**

Committee: Welcomed two new members to the committee.

Welcome Table: Processes and forms have been updated for improved accessibility, new staffers have been added to the rotation. Sign ups and scheduling was moved to SignUp Genius so that people would receive automatic email reminders. Moved materials into a more user friendly rolling cart to be kept in the Sanctuary.

Visitor/New Member Engagement: Combined UU101 with Membership Orientation and offered monthly in person and by appointment on Zoom.

New brochure created with QR codes that link to both USG and UUA websites.

We continue to work on ways to make Fellowship Hour more welcoming and accessible.

Offered two well attended Visitors and New Members Meet and Greet the Minister events in November and March.

Membership: Welcomed 10 people into membership at ceremonies in September and May.

Holiday cards: Each year the Welcoming committee creates and sends a holiday card to congregants identified for outreach with the help of the Caring Committee. 90 cards were sent in 2023.

Young Adults: USG is seeing an influx of Young Adults and is working to make sure they connect with each other. A 20's, 30's and 40's Small Group Ministry group has been created. There will be a Young Adult table at the celebration of Rev. Cheryl on June 9. And we will work with them to plan another event this summer.

Welcoming/Widening the Circle related education: Engaged CB Beal with support of ASD for 6 hour workshop on Preemptive Radical Inclusion in October, 24 people attended. Offered workshop on Welcoming Persons with Disabilities Seen and Unseen in March, and have a discussion planned on Radical Hospitality and Resilience for June. Encouraged people to engage DEI videos from Microsoft on Allyship and Bias.

## **WORSHIP ARTS**

*Submitted by Maggie Birge-Caracappa, Chair*

### **Members of Committee -**

Lois Murphy (chair, June 2023-March 2024), Maggie Birge-Caracappa (chair, March 2024-June 2024), Minister, Director of Spiritual Development, Music Director, Steve Conrad (representing ushers), and Besty Gabriel (representing musicians and choir)

### **Mission of Committee**

The mission of the Worship Arts Committee is to plan and present worship services that feed the souls of the USG community as a key component of our greater congregation's mission of building beloved community with compassion, service, and empowerment. We are an avenue for communicating opportunities for service, uplifting and comforting the afflicted, challenging the status quo, and empowering and encouraging diverse voices and viewpoints.

### **Highlights**

Our committee continued to work with the Interim Minister (Rev. Cheryl M. Walker), our Music Director (Dr. Baker Purdon), and DSD (Rev. Kevin DeBeck) on crafting and planning services that comfort, challenge, inform, and empower our beloved congregation. We have endeavored to be a welcoming and affirming presence week after week as USG prepares for several more transitions at the end of this fiscal year. The committee spent time connecting and working with Rev Hannah Capaldi during her candidating week at USG. We have brought back the practice of placing stones in a bowl to celebrate our joys and share our sorrows with one another.

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

We have made significant efforts to connect spirituality and social justice together through the themes and services offered. We are continuing to look for readings, prayers, and music that represents diverse viewpoints, especially from under-represented communities, while assuring their contributions are acknowledged and correctly attributed. We look forward to inviting speakers from a range of identities and offering services throughout the coming year to continue widening the circle.