



The Flaming Chalice

The newsletter of The Unitarian Universalist Community Church
69 Winthrop Street ~ PO Box 8 ~ Augusta, ME 04332-0008

Winter 2025

The Fall *Flaming Chalice* newsletter was an invitation for committees and groups to share startup activities of the new church year. For this Winter *Flaming Chalice* we invited leaders of committees, groups and programs, to share activities since the fall edition. The Spring *Flaming Chalice* newsletter will be the Annual Report with a focus on the Story of Our Church Year.

May we all reflect on the following questions as we read the articles about the life of our community at this time.

- How has the work of groups and committees, events and activities, and community connections unfolded since the last newsletter?
- What have we discovered about how the work contributes or connects us all to the mission and vision of UUCC?
- What are our expectations for our community for the remainder of the church year?

These give a picture of how we are becoming the Beloved Community that we envision. We are all part of the community, individually and collaboratively!

Communications Work Group welcomes you to this 2025 Winter Edition of The Flaming Chalice.

Annual Services

New Member Sunday, April 13th: This service will celebrate those who have joined UUCC as members over the last year. If you have questions about membership, please contact Susan O'Keefe, Global Hospitality Chair or the Rev. Donna Dolham (insert our contact links connected to our names)

Easter Service, April 20th: This season we will be exploring new life as we crest both the Easter season and Earth Day!

Minister's message

A View from the Balcony...

As we travel this time together, grounding ourselves in our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Values will help us center our faith in our relationships with each other and the greater Augusta Community. I witness moments of curiosity, concern, commitment and creativity. Moments of tender care for each other, enthusiastic encouragement and endless attention to details and follow up on the many aspects of keeping our community open, growing and grounded in our common faith. What do you witness from the balcony?

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church has centered its commitment to *community* as we move forward with efforts to create structures that support the growth and engagement we are offering to the greater community. This includes the development of a new website platform which is underway and a gradual movement to a new integrated congregational data platform called Breeze. We have moved toward clarifying process for lay led worship as the transition occurs to specialty graphics and tech teams under the Worship Arts umbrella. The Global Hospitality also has grown with teams including, Sunday Coffee Hour, Ushering and the Inquirers Program designed to invite and engage new UUCB folks has begun.

While the how of church life has been shifting, the why and what has remained. Fellowship lunches continue, programs both for fun/community building and fundraising are unfolding and the work of policy and governance continues at the board and committee levels.

At this time when the chaos of the nation is designed to immobilize us, UUCB continues to be a place where we are centering love through our actions and choices. Please watch for places to engage in community, knowing your presence makes a difference.

It is a joy to be in this ministry with you at this vital moment in history. Joy can be an act of resistance!

Love and Light,
Rev. Donna, she, her

UUCB Board of Trustees

Before I give a few highlights of the last few months of Board activities, I want to remind us of our UU values which are reflected in the work of so many in our church community. Now, more than ever, UU's are called to live and to act on the values we profess.

Love is at the center of these shared values:

- ❖ **Interdependence:** We honor the interdependent web of all existence and acknowledge our place in it.
- ❖ **Pluralism:** We are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience and theology.
- ❖ **Justice:** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all feel welcome and can thrive.
- ❖ **Transformation:** We adapt to the changing world.
- ❖ **Generosity:** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.
- ❖ **Equity:** We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion.



During this church year, we have invited several committees/teams to meet with the Board and discuss their work priorities, interests, and any support they might need from us. These discussions have been very informative, energizing, and much appreciated by board members.

Some of the highlights include:

Buildings & Grounds Bill Allen and Matt Foust along with several board members (Hal, Harry, Jim, & Michaela), worked through the months of December and January with dozens of volunteers to ready the Drew House for our 2nd family of immigrants who will soon take up residence through the Capital Area New Mainers Program (CANMP).

The next project they (B& G) will lead is that of sprucing up our own kitchen to support the many volunteers who work to serve many wonderful community meals.

Deb Mattson of **Social Justice** updated us on the vibrant Saturday morning breakfast going on its 3rd year of serving between 40-70 of our unhoused neighbors who come for the hot, homemade breakfast just as much as the sense of community. It was also noted and is obvious to see that the breakfast is a fulfilling, loving ministry for the volunteers who show up at 6:30 AM on 3 Saturdays a month to host our neighbors.

Global Hospitality: Susan O'Keefe reported on the success of all the teams leading fellowship coffee after services. The new system is going strong as reflected in the vibrant conversations and connections made over coffee. A staffed welcome table is in the works for coffee hour as a way to further welcome and orient newcomers. Many of the rooms of our Church have been cleared of unnecessary items to make for a more welcoming space overall.

United Community Living Center (UCLC): In response to the unmet needs of a growing unhoused population in the Augusta area, the UCLC has purchased a building at 12 Spruce Street in Augusta which will open soon to serve as a drop-in center, a place to receive needed services and respite. UCC donated \$5,000 to help fund the down payment for this important project and some of our members volunteer with the organization. To see more: <https://www.unitedcommunitylivingaugusta.com>

In closing, I remind you that joy, resting, self-care, singing, dancing, laughing and loving are all acts of resistance.

With love and gratitude,

Michaela Loisel, Board President

Board Members:

Michaela Loisel, President
Karen Allen, Vice-President
Cheryl Ring, Clerk
Nancy Fritz, Treasurer
Harry Grimmnitz, Finance Chair
Hal Booth, Member-At-Large
Jim Caldwell, Member-At-Large



MUSIC AT THE UCC Winter 2025

Our strong music program is an integral part of our worship, which creates connection inside and outside of our church walls. We build relationships through music, we share messages through song, and we cultivate an environment that bridges our communities.

The program is flourishing. We are fortunate to have so many talented musicians offering their time to our church community. Michael Atkinson has brought a committed approach to leading our orchestra, and he continues to recruit new musicians into the ensemble. Our choir is growing, and their enthusiasm and dedication is inspiring.

This winter the choir, orchestra, and guest soloist Joëlle Morris, brought a tapestry of music to our Christmas Eve service. The choir continues to sing at our Sunday services, the orchestra rehearses, and we have a beautiful service planned for Stewardship Sunday on March 2nd. Soprano soloist Sarah Tuttle will be joining us!

The UCC choir and orchestra are eager to share music with you that will lift your spirits and invigorate your hearts and minds. We are always welcoming new members! If interested or have questions, please contact Bridget Convey at: [Contact Music Director](#).

More musical updates from:

Michael P. Atkinson, UCC Occasional Orchestra Director

Our little orchestra resumed rehearsals in January, recapturing the momentum from a busy 2024. We are looking forward to joining forces with the UCC Choir on a number of pieces, including a new arrangement I've written for us based on Edward Elgar's "Nimrod" from his masterpiece *Enigma Variations*.

We are also presenting a work by African-American pianist, educator, and composer Lady Viola Kinney (1890-1945). From a historical oeuvre that included a musical comedy, songs, and a number of piano works, *Mother's Sacrifice* is the only surviving work of hers, and was discovered in 2005. It is a solo piano work that I have arranged for UCCCOO, and will feature our intrepid pianist Karen Allen. *Mother's Sacrifice* is a brilliant and sophisticated piece of music that tells a story, not unlike tone poems written by the great European composers around the same time.

For reasons that should be obvious to all (especially in 2025) it is vitally important that the music world take seriously the project of giving voice to underrepresented composers, and such a project is totally aligned with Unitarian values.

The gift of this group of volunteer musicians dedicated to contributing to worship continues to add depth and vitality to our community. Aside from the musical sounds, the commitment to practice and learn music strengthens our connections to one another, and helps remind us of the importance of working together in harmony toward a common goal. At a time when society is being tested, musical life at UCC Augusta is an oasis, and an important reminder of what is possible with good faith cooperation.

Building and Grounds Committee

Notes from Buildings and Grounds

The city cut down the big linden tree in front of the Judd House. One of our church members has offered to pay for a new tree, in the same area.

Last fall Matt, Bill and Angie Blevins worked on the ramp to address some safety concerns. Matt worked on the underlying support structure, and Bill and Angie closed off a section of the ramp which we weren't using.

We have worked hard to get the Drew House ready for the next tenants. Two of the biggest projects were painting the entire inside of the house, and removing and replacing the countertop in the kitchen.

Jim Caldwell removed the old toilet. Hal's projects included fixing broken windows, addressing the burn spots on the floor, some plumbing work, and repairing broken balusters. Bill made some trips to the dump, with some help from Matt.

Thanks to all who participated.

Here are some names of people who participated. (Apologies if I forget anybody)

Stefanie Barley, Angie Blevins, Hal Booth, Jim and Sue Caldwell, Harry Grimmnitz, George Lapointe and Hilary Neckles, Pam Lombard, Michaela Loisel, Sara Reid, Cheryl Ring, Marsha Stone, June Zellers, Sara Hodgkins, Dale McCormick, Susan Burnett, Eowyn Levene, Abigail Stratton, Diane Pratt- Rossman, Pat Pratt-Rossman, and Randi Brown Plus the building chairs, Bill and Matt.

Bill Allen and Matt Foust, Co-chairs

Committee of Committees

UUCC Committee of Committees Meets Throughout the Year

The Committee of Committees is a gathering of committee chairs and other lay leaders that meets three times a year to explore important topics in the life of the church.

In September we talked about what was new in our various areas of responsibility and discussed ideas for implementing the 8th Principle. (For more about the 8th Principle, see the note from the 8th Principle Task Force.)

In January our meeting was facilitated by Leadership Development. We shared what we most valued in our leadership roles and learned about the process for developing and nominating new lay leaders within the church.

Our final meeting for the church year will take place on Sunday, May 18, with a focus on "Leadership in Anxious Times."

Committee of Committees meetings are organized with lay leadership in mind, but any interested person in our church community is welcome to attend. Look for a note in the e-blast in April with a link to the response form for the May meeting. We always enjoy the fellowship of our gatherings as we consider how best to serve UUCC in our many roles.

--Karen Allen, Board Vice-President and Chair of the Committee of Committees

Committee on SHARED Ministry

Our committee is continuing its work of creating a process to foster understanding and collaboration among the ministries in the congregation. We envision meeting each month with one of the ministries of the church to have a dialogue about ways to work together. We are in the process of creating the final draft of questions we will use in this process. Our next step will be to create a schedule for these meetings and begin reaching out to set them up.

We are looking forward to a collaborative process involving a member of the committee, representatives from the group, the minister and perhaps a Board member. Our hope is to share information and create an evaluation of the congregation to ensure that we are supporting one another in the good work that we all do.

We hope to have our first sessions before the end of the church year!

Current members are Kathy Kellison, chair, Annie Blanchard and Eowyn Levene along with Reverend Donna.

Submitted by: Kathy Kellison

Communications Work Group

UUCC seeks to offer opportunities, connection and online safety.

The increasing use of technology adds a layer of intensity as we strive for communication that is abundant, clear, compassionate, inclusive – and safe. Several situations have been brought to the attention of the congregation in notices e-mails with the E-Blast. We would like to include several situations here.

ONLINE SAFETY: Due to the increase this year in scam emails, created in the name of church staff, UUCC is moving to remove email contacts from both our website and E-Blast. There are ways to connect! Where emails would have been, we are now placing links to a contact form. Each contact form will be forwarded to the individual(s) that are leading or organizing the program/meeting/event. For instance, if you want to sign up for the Social Justice Team, Small Group Ministry, to help with a monthly Fellowship Lunch, or other opportunities, there are contact forms for you to fill out that will be forwarded to the leaders of the activities and to staff as well.

WEATHER: We have encountered inclement weather several times and changes have been made to the Sunday Services and activities. As we encounter the possibility of snow -or other situations -- there may be times when “in person church” will be cancelled. If “in person church” is cancelled:

- An announcement will be placed at the top of our website homepage, www.augustauu.org
- An E-Blast note will be sent to those on our E-Blast list
- The link for zoom will be sent and the link on our website will be updated

Church will happen. It may include an abbreviated service and questions for contemplation and conversation as you are invited to go into breakout rooms. NO NEWS by 8am Sunday means we will be holding both in person and online worship.

BOXCAST and ZOOM: Thanks to Rev. Donna, the Worship Arts Team, and the Technicians that so adeptly make our ability to participate in church services on an ongoing basis as well as rapid changes when needed.

BOXCAST technology is within the church building. In order to use it, someone has to be on the premises. So if we have a snowstorm and cannot get access to the building— “No Access, no BOXCAST.” However, the notice about the situation WILL direct you to ZOOM, or other give other directions.

ZOOM can be accessed from anyone who has the connecting information – such as is in the notice of the event change.

Thanks to the foresight of the Minister and Leadership, we can keep connected, although in a different way.

All of us can help with this connecting. If you receive information about a change, **please spread the message to those who you think may not received it.**

Communications Work Group: Kathy Kellison; Lynn Smith, Administrator; Helen Zidowecki, Chair.

Covenant Engagement Team

Since the last newsletter, the Covenant Engagement Team has been busy integrating our Covenant promises into our ongoing congregational life. We have:

- Put up banners in Fellowship Hall highlighting various promises;
- Did a survey about where we “get to know each other” – with “Committee Work” being the surprise biggest vote category;
- Solicited stories about friendships that thrive through differences of opinion;
- Scheduled a Sharing Café to share those stories, which was upended by a snowstorm.

In March, we will focus on our commitments to each other. April will include an exploration of how to model our UU Values in the greater community.

In the planning stages are a (1) panel discussion or “services fair” to facilitate our participation with entities creating change locally, and (2) ideas about additional communications training, in line with our June promise to take responsibility for our own words and actions.

We continue to encourage all members and friends to weave our Covenant into your individual spiritual practices.

In fellowship,

Michaela Loisel and June Zellers

Eighth Principle Task Force

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

– The 8th Principle (adopted by UUCC in June 2023)

Since the last newsletter, the 8th Principle Task Force has worked with the Committee of Committees to explore ideas for implementation of the 8th Principle. We reclaimed a banner from storage that says “Love, Not Fear, Practiced Here” and hung it on the front of the church with the help of George Lapointe and Bill Allen. We are also planning to hang new Progress Pride flags both inside and outside the church. We are assessing sizes and materials to make sure we get the best flags for display.

We continue to explore additional ways to take action to implement the 8th Principle, and we encourage UUCC committees and other groups to do the same. We are happy to meet with any group to facilitate discussion.

– Karen Allen, Martha Naber, Hilary Neckles, & Jamez Riot, 8th Principle Task Force

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has oversight of multiple areas of the church's fiscal health.

Finance:

- The Committee discussed the fact that several of UUCC's cash funds were not earning meaningful interest. As a result, we moved ~\$36,000 into two 9-month CDs at 4.4% maturing in June 2025.
- The Board voted to provide a \$5,000 donation pledged to the United Community Living Center to assist in their effort to purchase a building for use as a warming center and resource center for the unhoused in Augusta.
- The Rev. Carie Johnsen Social Justice Fund currently has enough capital to be self-sustaining, so the Social Justice Committee was able to donate \$1,250 (4% of the total) to the United Community Living Center in January.
- The Committee recommended and the Board approved spending \$7,000 to replace our outdated and insecure internet system. The funds for this upgrade will come from our cash reserves.
- The Committee completed our semi-annual financial review and found no issues.
- During the Fall 2024, the Board, in consultation with the minister, reallocated approximately \$10,000 from the unfilled Lifetime Faith Formation position to increase hours for the church administrator and music director. The \$5,800 remaining was assigned to a yet unhired five (5) hour/week Sunday morning (RE) coordinator position.
- The Committee formulated a balanced draft budget for FY 25-26 and forwarded it to the Board. It includes:
 - Increased hours for our church administrator and music director.
 - A 3% cost of living increase for church employees and our settled minister.
 - A reserve account to fund the cost of health insurance for our eligible employees and settled minister if they decide to take advantage of this contractual benefit.
- A concern was raised that the draft budget for FY 25-26 relied upon \$22,000 from our cash reserves (savings) to balance the budget. This is identical to our current FY budget that also includes \$22,000 from reserves to be in balance. **IF** we need to utilize all those funds, we will deplete most of our \$55,800 in savings. This concern resulted in a combined Board/Finance Committee special meeting to discuss our use of reserves (savings) and set the pledge goal for our spring Stewardship campaign. It was decided that:
 - Our cash reserves serve a vital need, preserving our ability to respond to unexpected financial events without having to take out bank loans at high interest rates
 - Relying upon our cash reserves to balance our operating budget and potentially depleting those reserves is not in keeping with our fiduciary responsibility to the church community
 - The cash reserve commitment to the FY 25-26 draft budget was reduced to \$11,000 and the pledge goal was set at \$198,000.
- The United Community Living Center obtained their own 501(c)(3) status and UUCC is no longer their fiscal sponsor.
- MUSSAN has applied for their 501(c)(3) status and UUCC has agreed to continue to serve as their fiscal sponsor until the end of June 2025.

Invested Funds:

- There have been no significant changes in our invested funds program since the last newsletter.

Fundraising:

- We now have a CLYNK business account that will provide quarterly automatic deposits to our account.
- The Holiday Fair raised \$3,100 and provided an incredible team building community event involving a number of new people.

Stewardship:

- The Annual Appeal was a tremendous success, raising over \$15,000 including an anonymous match of \$6,000.

- The Stewardship sub-committee:
 - Has produced an inspiring Pledge letter to be sent to the church community to initiate our annual Stewardship campaign in March
 - Is formulating activities and events to highlight the Stewardship campaign.

Planned Giving and Legacy:

- The Planned Giving and Legacy sub-committee has created a trifold brochure from the UCC Guide to Holistic Stewardship. This will be included in the Stewardship campaign packets, given to new members and be available in the brochure rack in the church foyer.
- They will work with the Worship Committee to periodically spotlight past benefactors and ministers of the Augusta Unitarian and Universalist churches.

The Finance Committee:

Betty & Terry Cairn – Stewardship
 Marilyn Dunn – Invested Funds
 Karen Foust & Nan Bell – Fundraising
 Nancy Fritz – Treasurer
 Harry Grimmnitz – Chair
 Marsha Stone– Member at Large.
 June Zellers – Planned Giving & Legacy

Global Hospitality Committee

Global hospitality was created this church year, therefore it has been a growing year. Initially we had separate membership and hospitality committees but these were merged under the global hospitality umbrella with Susan O’Keefe as the chair. The major focus is to make our church more welcoming spiritually and physically.

- Hannah Faulkner continues to make the name tags.
- Denis Thoet sets up for greeting prior to church and assists with greeting on a regular basis.
- Stefanie Barley is in charge of Sunday hospitality. She has done a phenomenal job of organizing our new system. About 60 people have assisted in the kitchen providing drinks, snacks and fellowship since we began the new system. The majority follow up feedback has been very positive.
- Susan O’Keefe has initiated The Inquirer Series. Eleven or twelve individuals have volunteered to be presenters and facilitators. This is our new endeavor to welcome and educate new visitors and members.
- Martha Naber is sending out cards to welcome new visitors to our community.
- A group of volunteers have been working on organizing and de-cluttering various areas of the church. This will be an ongoing process, always looking for more volunteers!

The plan is to continue with the above activities. We hope to have a volunteer available after church services to answer any questions from newcomers. We plan to have a neighborhood BBQ in the spring to get to know our neighbors.

Respectfully submitted, Susan O’Keefe

GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

Since *The Flaming Chalice Newsletter* in October, the focus has been spiritual practices which celebrate the cycles of the earth throughout the year and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. We have been compiling our annual Wisdom Book, with writings and selections from Goddess/Earth Circle participants. With the sense of chaos at this time, we titled the book, "Turning of the Year Toward Hope". The reflections for the book focus on how we connect with the earth, how we gather strength from the earth, and how cycles of the earth impact our lives and spirituality. The books are for participants of Goddess/Earth Circles who contribute reflections or writings that are particularly meaningful to them.

Earth-based spirituality is one of the spiritual paths that is imbedded in Unitarian Universalism. The work on the Wisdom Book with the cycles of the earth, the writings and reflections of our own lives and beliefs and the non-authoritarian approach to structure and leadership follow and enhance the UUCC Mission and Vision statements on the website ("About").

We also want to note the readings and hymns in *Singing the Living Tradition* that relate to the earth-based spiritual connections, such as #51 "Lady of the Season's Laughter" by Rev. Kendall Gibbons and #55 "Dark of Winter" by Shelly Jackson Denham. And add to this #1067 "Mother Earth, Beloved Garden" by Amanada Udis-Kessler in *Singing the Journey*, and other selections from the Earth-centered traditions.

In the upcoming gatherings this spring, there is a renewed concern for female spirituality. The gatherings topics include specific celebrations on the Earth-cycle calendar and

--**Feb 23** Celebrating our Wisdom Book: Turning of the Year Toward Hope (UUCC zoom)

--**March 23 and April 27** Women's place in UU: Cakes for the Queen of Heaven, UU Women's Heritage Society, Library resources

--**May 25** Memorial Book and readings

An additional resource is *Pagan and Earth-Centered Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, by Shirley Ranck and Jerrie Hildebrand, Skinner House. The focus for our gatherings is the impact earth-centered spirituality and Unitarian Universalism have had on each other, respectively.

Goddess/Earth Circles usually meets on the fourth Sunday of the month from 1-2:30pm as a hybrid meeting in the Fellowship Hall and Zoom, unless noted otherwise. For example, we met on UUCC zoom during several winter meetings.

All ages and genders are welcome. Resources are found in the Library in the Committee Room. Scripts and schedule of gatherings are available. Announcements of programs are in the E-Blast.

Contact: Helen Zidowecki

History Committee

Capturing our history as we make it.

The History Committee collection of Unitarian Universalism in Augusta is in Judd House. (Universalist Church of America was founded in 1793 and the American Unitarian Association was founded in 1825, and they consolidated in 1961 to become the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

In Augusta, the Unitarian Church organized in 1825, the Universalist Church in 1836, and the two consolidated in 1992 as UUCC.)

Since *The Flaming Chalice Newsletter* in October 2024, we were asked for a comparison of the historic timelines for the churches in Augusta. We developed this from timelines for the respective churches on the old website from organization to consolidation in 1992. This included essential notes, such as the dates of organizational events (structure, name changes), building locations, ministers, and other notes of interest.

The combined timeline gives deeper understanding of our respective histories and growth as an emerging religious tradition. There are some significant differences as well as commonalities as both Unitarians and Universalists played significant parts in the development of this country socially, politically and religiously. Aside from the notations in the combined timeline noted above, what would you like to have included in a timeline? What questions do you have about our history and heritage?

The History Committee looks forward to collaborating with the Legacy Project to "memorialize" the history of bequests to UUCC. Legacy Project is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Planned Giving and Legacy Subcommittee of the Finance Committee.

History and Heritage and Legacy are terms that encourage us to establish a tradition of honoring people and events that have paved the way for us today. This includes gifts and donations, as well as contributions of time and energy. The current History Committee was established in 2004, after the consolidation, so that there has been sorting and organizing items from three congregations: All Souls and Winthrop Street Churches and the Unitarian Universalist Community Church. It is exciting to collaborate with the Legacy Project as we consider where "we have been" historically, where "we are now" and the "legacy that we will build" for the future.

Richard Bridges, History Committee Chair

Leadership Development Committee

Co-Chairs of the Leadership Development Committee (LDC), Hilary Neckles and Kathy Shaw, collaborated with Board Vice President Karen J. Allen and Rev. Donna to organize the January 19th Committee of Committee's meeting around leadership development. This meeting offered the opportunity to discuss the goals and evolving processes for UUCC leadership development in the 2025-2026 church year and beyond.

Hilary and Kathy introduced the meeting with a short presentation on the ***Hopes and Expectations for Congregational Leaders***. These guidelines, developed in consultation with Rev. Donna and Board leaders, outline the ways in which congregational leaders are invited to lean into leadership as a spiritual practice and the process in place for current committee chairs and Board members to participate directly in leadership development.

Following this introduction, meeting participants broke into small groups to discuss how leadership inspires them and how they might expand leadership opportunities within our church. As the small groups shared their responses to discussion questions, many common themes emerged. The responses to the questions discussed in small group are synthesized below, offering a snapshot of the state and health of UUCC leadership.

What excites and inspires the congregational leaders at UUCC?

- **Community:** Leadership offers new and deepened connections to our church, opportunities for personal growth, and rewards reaped by helping others develop skills and engage in our community.
- **Service:** Leaders recognize they are doing important work with positive impacts.
- **Shared ministry:** Leaders are inspired by the energy and commitment of those they lead.

How might you share this enthusiasm for leadership with others?

- **Gratitude:** Express appreciation to others for their good work.
- **Communication:** Offer a service in which leaders can share testimonials about the rewards from serving in leadership,

demonstrate a sense of fun in leadership roles, and find ways to inform people about opportunities to volunteer their skills.

- **Curiosity:** Engage with church members and friends with an open mind about new approaches.
-

What support do you need to invite people into leadership positions?

- **Connections:** Leaders need help identifying both new and long-term members and friends with certain skills and interests and making them aware of opportunities to lead.
- **Training:** Leaders need to learn how to ask others to help with the work of the church.
- **Clarity:** Develop clear expectations about the skills needed and time required to assume leadership roles, as well as a “road map” or set of operations for leading a certain committee or assuming a Board position.

The timeline for the LDC, in partnership with others throughout the church community, throughout the remainder of the church year is as follows:

1. Late Jan through Feb – Current congregational leaders invite others into leadership positions.
2. By Early March – Current congregational leaders have forwarded names to LDC for consideration.
3. March and April – LDC is having conversations with individuals about serving in leadership positions (i.e., LDC is filling out the nominations slate).
4. May 1 – LDC has submitted the full slate of nominations.
5. June – LDC presents the slate of nominations at the annual meeting for congregational vote.

Leadership development at UUCC will benefit from participation by current congregational leaders. Hilary and Kathy look forward to working with everyone in our church to expand leadership opportunities, strengthen connections, and enrich leadership as a shared ministry.

With appreciation,

Co-chairs, Leadership Development Committee
Hilary Neckles and Kathy Shaw

Pastoral Ministry Team Report

The Pastoral Ministry Team has been very busy this fall! We would first like to say a heart-felt “thank you” to our helpers. Many of you have given rides to appointments and church events and have provided meals when needed. We also appreciate the compassionate listening shared among church members and friends day in and day out. This, too, is pastoral care.

We warmly invite all UUCC members and friends to consider offering rides or meals, as you are able. Please take a moment to consider what you have to offer. It does “take a village,” as they say, or in this case, an

entire church community, to care for each other. Our covenant recognizes the need for shared ministry, so that we all feel supported during difficult times and valued always.

Our team's start-up activity this fall is an online volunteer spreadsheet where folks can indicate the kinds of services they would like to offer, as well as preferred times and locations for rides and meals. We are working to expand that database, so that pastoral care will be shared among more people. As the Pastoral Ministry Team looks to the future, we continue to work on defining the scope of our work and on communicating that to our UCC community.

Blessings,
Martha Pelletier, Pastoral Ministry Team Chair

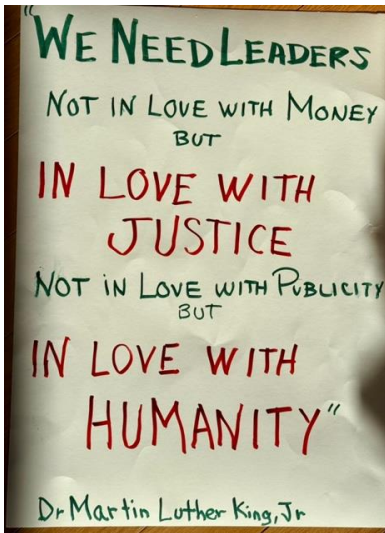
PEACEFUL HEART SANGHA



Some of the sangha members who visited Blue Cliff Monastery for Thich Nhat Hanh's Memorial on Martin Luther King Day weekend



Some of the sangha members who attended Kaira Jewel Lingo's talk at Bowdoin College in February



Taking part in the peaceful No Kings Demonstration at the Capitol on President's Day

Peaceful Heart Sangha is a mindfulness meditation community free and open to all. We practice stopping, calming, resting and healing which helps us to settle so that we can respond more skillfully to the challenges in our lives and in the world. The sangha was created at UUCU in 2001 and we donated the bell that is used to begin every UUCU service.

We gather every Monday evening (6:30-8) and Thursday morning (8-9:30) for a time of meditation, learning, and sharing. Every Monday we meet on zoom **and** we also have an **in person sangha at UUCU every First Monday**. On Thursdays we meet in person at River Studio, 332 Water St, Hallowell, except on the last Thursday of the month when we meet on zoom.

If you have questions, please contact peacefulheartsangha@gmail.com or martysoule@gmail.com

Read, Learn, Share Book Group

I struggle to write this article because I am never sure if our group is Read Learn Share or Read Share Learn. Either way it sums up what we do.

Whether we are reading fiction or nonfiction, the discussions are illuminating. We are a collaborative group with everyone sharing ideas and reactions. We all gain new perspectives on the book of the month and on the wider world. We also connect more deeply with one another. What we do not do is argue about interpretation.

I invite anyone who enjoys reading and talking about books to consider joining us.

The following are the books we will read between March and June:

- March 6: [The Frozen River](#) by Ariel Lawson;
- April 3: [Following Ezra](#) by Thomas Fields-Meyer;
- May 1: [Wandering Stars](#) by Tommy Orange and
- June 5: [Moon in Full](#) by Marpheen Chann.

The diversity in authors and subjects reflects the wide interests of the group, as we all have a vote on what we read.

Kathy Kellison

Safety / Security Committee

In our last newsletter we shared that the UUCC Board established the Safety Committee as a standing committee in January 2024. In this past year our committee was able to make good progress on improving the security of our church with support of a federal grant for \$34,540 called "Protecting Houses of Worship." We used a portion of these funds to complete projects including the installation of impact-resistant film on the windows, an alarm system and three closed-circuit television cameras, one camera at each exterior door of the church building.

We have recently been notified that federal funding allocations, including the remaining UUCC grant allocation, have been frozen, therefore, additional projects on our list such as improving the outdoor lighting, installing new locks with security codes and installing a new exit door in the fellowship hall are temporarily on hold.

The Safety Committee will continue to encourage the use of incident reports to report and track any safety concerns relevant to our church. We will also continue locking doors after worship begins on Sunday mornings and will also proceed with improvements at the entryway to the Judd House.

Our goal is to keep the UUCC community safe. If you would like to contact any of us on the Safety Committee with comments or suggestions, feel free to reach out to Jim Caldwell, Harry Grimmnitz, Nancy Fritz and/or Bill Allen.

Submitted by Jim Caldwell

Seasoned Souls

At the February 26 meeting (1:00pm) we returned to in-person meetings in the Fellowship Hall. Seasoned Souls is a group of UUCers 65 and over who gather the twice a month (second and fourth Wednesdays) to share our lives, with a special emphasis of the challenges and joys of aging.

Submitted by Hal Booth

Small Group Ministry Updates



Since The Flaming Chalice Newsletter in October 2024 we have continued working on the messages that we want the UUCC and the broader community to know about Small Group Ministry (SGM). The Small Group Ministry participants provided the Sunday Service on November 17 that focused on Bonding or being together in a unique way; Going deeper with topics of life, and Service to UUCC and the greater community. The sharing from the groups is available from SGM Committee.

In addition, we had a Continental Breakfast for SGM participants and those who may be interested in joining a group in January. Several groups have new members. We hope to develop more ways for participation with SGM. All of the groups are engaged in service activities. Ongoing services include: CLYNK bags provided by one group, and the Hannaford cards were started by an SGM group. And there are ongoing service activities throughout the year.

One group manages the Library that is located in the Committee room. The focus of the Library is Unitarian Universalist resources, specifically those written by or about Unitarians and Universalists.

The Library:

--Includes items and writings from over two centuries of liberal religious history in congregations in Augusta (Winthrop Street and All Souls), UUCC, and contributions from individuals. Meet the leaders and engage with the issues that have an impact on liberal religious traditions in our lives today!

--Makes resources available for engaging with a values-based community that encourages many paths and choices of spiritual practice through worship, social justice and covenantal relationships. The Library provides background for newcomers and visitors and members.

--Supports opportunities to serve UUCC and the greater community in addressing a variety of life challenges and social justice concerns.

The Library has a FREE BOOK section for items that may not meet the definition for being included or multiple copies. This will be a designated section of a bookcase in the Committee Room, and a display during Fellowship Hour, such as the fourth Sunday of the month.

We look forward to increasing participation with the Library as part of the process of going deeper in understanding our UU heritage. And being able to provide resources for the congregation.

Brochures about Small Group Ministry and the Library are available in the front hallway.

Co-Chairs: Linda Findlay, Helen Zidowecki

Social Justice Committee

The Social Justice Committee chairs, Debbie Mattson and Mary Kane present the following in response to the proposed questions in the newsletter solicitation.

How has the work of your group unfolded since the last newsletter?

We presented the Climate Revival Service in collaboration with the UUA Climate Revival. The service was co-created and presented by Rev. Donna, the Social Justice Team, and other members of the church. We also presented the service on "Radical Kinship." The structure of the service was inspired by the book "Tattoos on the Heart" by Gregory Boyle. "Tattoos on the Heart" was read and discussed by the Read, Learn Share, UUCC book group.

We hosted a post card writing event for "get out the vote" during the U.S. presidential election. The event included church members and community members. Postcards were sent to voters in swing states.

We continue to organize and serve breakfast every Saturday for our unhoused neighbors and are joined by many church members, community members, St. Michael's Parish, and Temple Beth El communities. The Monday Sewing Group made 75 fleece hats to be distributed to our guests during breakfast.

We continue our involvement with the Augusta Area Interfaith Social Justice Group—finding ways that we can work together towards a more just community and world.

We manage Share the Plate collections each month. We coordinated a church wide appeal to increase the capacity of the Rev. Carie Johnsen Social Justice Fund. The 2025 award was given to the United Community Living Center for the amount of \$1,250.

What have you discovered about how the work contributes or connects to the mission and vision of UUCC?

Our Radical Kinship service, January 26, 2025 was a very moving experience for many people. We shared the Saturday Breakfast Program through video, spoken word, and readings from Gregory Boyle's book "Tattoos on the Heart." Also, a member of Temple Beth El and a member of St. Michael's Parish presented their theology of serving the unhoused. The choir, pianist and entire congregation joined in joyful song.

The Radical Kinship service & the Climate Revival service are both a direct connection to UU values and the mission of UUCC. We provide information about these important justice issues and give folks ways to become active in solutions and healing.

What are your expectations for the remainder of the church year?

Our next church service, “Finding Purpose in Climate Action During Times of Change” is on March 30, 2025. The service will focus on climate justice and is a follow up to our fall UUA Climate Revival service. The service is being developed by the Social Justice Committee with two young adults, Josh Caldwell and Miriam Nielsen. They both grew up in the UUCC and work in the field of climate justice. The Monday Sewing Group is contributing handmade, reusable produce bags to attendees, symbolizing one small step in reducing the use of fossil fuels.

We are hosting another “get out the vote” postcard event. We are targeting local and statewide elections that have various rights at stake.

Website Work Group

UUCC currently has a new website! If you haven't checked it out already, please visit www.augustauu.org. Over the next several months, the website team will be working to build the website. Our use of videos, capacity to update information easily as well as engage online safety measures are just a few of the developments!

You'll notice an increased use of forms instead of emails as we move toward more online safety as well as building a congregational structure to support our ongoing growth and transparency for our newer folks. We appreciate your spirit of adventure and patience as we continue to develop the website.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out to Rev. Donna Dolham, click here: [Email Rev. Donna](#).

We look forward to working with you, your group in the process.

The Website Team,

Rev. Donna Dolham, Helen Zidowecki, Angie Blevins and Randi Brown.

Worship Arts Team

The Worship Arts Team is always evolving, and we are continually learning new ways to create worship experiences for our in-person and online communities. It's exciting that more folks join us every week! We are growing. In that spirit, our team has restructured itself and developed processes that support UUCC's shared ministry and growth. A few items on our ever-expanding list that we accomplished since the last newsletter:

- Developed a Worship Arts team covenant at our November team retreat.
- Split the Worship Arts team into two sub-teams with team leads. Angie Blevins is the team lead for the Tech Team and I am the team lead for the Worship Associates Team. I also have overall responsibility as chair of Worship Arts.
- Created a written process for lay leaders and guest worship leaders to educate and support them in the elements of developing a worship service at UUCC.
- Established a Sunday announcement request form. The online form is available under the Events & Calendar section of the UUCC website. By centrally locating the form, we can better manage the UUCC Sunday announcements process.

- Eliminated the paper Order of Service for Sunday worship as a “green” practice. The OOS is available online prior to Sunday service for those who would like to print or view a copy.
- Rev. Donna and I are co-facilitating a Shared Pulpit class with the intention of training lay led participants who want to learn to craft thoughtful, faithful sermons/reflections anchored in their own experience.

Worship is an essential piece of our UUCC community. It serves many purposes since folks attend worship for a variety of reasons. By incorporating different components and diverse voices, worship offers connection through a shared emotional experience. Worship touches almost every aspect of our UUCC Mission and Vision statements.

UUCC Mission Statement: worship, learn, and minister together, embracing diversity and religious freedom.

UUCC Vision Statement:

We seek to:

- Enhance Spiritual growth;
- Provide a respectful religious home for all ages;
- Join in celebration and friendship;
- Be a common voice for justice;
- Share the light of our principles with the wider community.

My expectations for the remainder of the church year are to learn together, support each other, and expand the Worship Arts team. We strive to provide quality, engaging worship that is inclusive, welcoming and promotes a safe environment for all folks who seek the UUCC as their spiritual community. We will continue to work with lay and guest worship leaders to include diverse voices and subjects that support our 8th principal work.

Curious about exploring worship on a deeper level? Please join our team as we always welcome new members. It’s a great way to become involved in the church and develop close connections in our community!

-Sara Hodgkins, Chair, Worship Arts Team

*** If you have any questions about the work of the Board of the committees OR have an interest in joining with a committee or group, please reach out to the leaders as listed below. ***

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Capital Area New Mainer's Project

UCC has a number of Mentor Teams that work with CANMP

Maine Unitarian Universalist Social Action Network (MUUSAN)

Saturday Breakfast for Unhoused
Held at UCC each week

<Feel free to reach out to the Social Justice Chairpersons for more information on UUCC's involvement in any of the social justice endeavors>

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Angie Blevins

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Newsletter Submissions

Submission Deadline for Annual Report is May 5th

Submissions received after this date may not be able to be published.

Please submit all articles as an attachment in a Word document using Arial font size 11. Don't forget to give your article a title and sign it. Send an email to admin@augustauu.org with the article as a word attachment! ***Photos of church activities are welcomed! *** You will receive a confirmation e-mail as receipt of your submission.

Board President: Michaela Loisel
[Email Board President](#)

Music Director: Bridget Convey
[Email Music Director](#)

Church Administrator: Lynn Smith
Phone: (207)622-3232 or email: [Email Admin](#)

Open "Walk-In" Office hours:10am–2pm (Tues & Thurs)

Rev. Donna Dolham

Call or email to set up an appointment:
(207) 623-3663 – [Email Minister](#)

Contact the minister for pastoral emergencies on her cell phone. She will return your call as soon as possible.