



# The Flaming Chalice

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

Winter 2023-24

## Worship at UCC

**Sunday Services each week at 10:00 a.m.  
In-person and on Boxcast**

Information on Sunday services is included in the Weekly E-blasts.  
A couple of service dates to note:

Sunday, March 3

Stewardship Sunday

Sunday, March 10

Matt Myer will lead worship followed by a songleading for Justice event.  
<See next page below the Minister's article for more details.>

### Upcoming Worship Themes

<b>March</b>	Generosity
<b>April</b>	Transformation
<b>May</b>	Equity/Justice

**Sunday worship service is held IN-PERSON in the Sanctuary.** Please be aware that the church doors will be locked 10 minutes after the service begins. The greeter will be at the front door to let anyone in after that time.

***If you want to watch the livestream of the service, please visit:***

<https://boxcast.tv/channel/mtifpthOutvesiqgijvej>

If you missed a service or want to watch a service again, the link above also allows access to prior services. Click on the play button on the video of the "broadcast date" you are interested in watching. Services may be viewed by Boxcast for a week after the service is live.

## Minister's message

Driving in from Portland offers opportunities for noticing the beauty of Maine and reflecting on the wonderful life with UUCC. What have you been reflecting on? What are you curious about? What do you wish for?

We are imagining our way forward with lifespan faith development and conversations are underway highlighting the importance of what we have to offer the community within UUCC and beyond. Please watch for more opportunities to take part in imagining our way forward together.

I will be taking a study week next week (the week of March 4<sup>th</sup>). During study time offers space for me to ground myself as I go about the work of planning and the spiritual restoration and exploration. I look forward to returning and joining you for the March 10<sup>th</sup> service and workshop which will be offered by Matt Meyer. Matt has offered worship at the Unitarian Universalist Association's National General Assembly and facilitates worship and workshops around the nation. We are fortunate to welcome Matt into our pulpit!

And please don't miss out on this coming Sunday's Stewardship kick off service and programming. We are fortunate to have a full worship team including the choir and orchestra.

Love and light,  
Rev. Donna, she, her



Updated Minister's Message: [https://youtu.be/gDrRf3jr\\_Sc](https://youtu.be/gDrRf3jr_Sc)

**Save The Date!!**

**Matt Meyer**

**March 10th!**

**Worship &  
Community Workshop to Follow!**

Matt has led music and worship for  
hundreds of services  
in congregations all over the U.S.  
and Canada.

Matt is an active community  
organizer and educator.



## Songleading for Justice -- March 10th following Sunday Service!

A fully participatory workshop designed to build skills and confidence for leading music in worship or in the streets. We'll share best practices for invitational leadership and gentle encouragement to singing. We'll also expand your repertoire for singing without accompaniment.

Join us for an experience of leading and following, rhythm and words, and the sound of a community in harmony together.

A goodwill offering to help defray the cost of the workshop will be accepted. A \$10.00 donation recommended for workshop.

Pre-registration recommended:

<https://forms.gle/3nEgZPVrcdJp4T758>



### Notes from the UCC Board of Trustees

#### Update from the Board of Trustees

**Heartfelt Connections** Prior to the Sunday February 11th congregational vote to call Rev. Donna as our settled minister, several Board and Settled Ministry Search Team members made outreach calls to at least seventy members of the congregation. The purpose of these calls was to remind members of the importance of having a quorum at the meeting. Given that we were well over the needed 82 members and 111 voted unanimously to call Rev. Donna, the outreach was not in vain. Perhaps of equal importance, to the delight of several callers, was the heartwarming connection with many of our members. It reinforced the idea that a sense of community such as what we have here at UCC is a special gift to be cherished.

**Living our Covenant** For the past two years, our Board has been paying attention to our relationships (process) so we may do our best work for the church. This involves learning what it means to be in covenant with one another. Following Rev. Paul's recent workshop on living our covenant, the board discussed ways to put ours into practice by pausing and reflecting when we are derailed during moments of disharmony or frustration. We have learned over the recent years, that attending to our relationships leads to a cohesive, trusting team - making our work together more productive and supportive. (And sometimes, even fun!)

**Support for the United Community Living Center** Lastly, the board was recently asked to join other faith communities in making a financial contribution to support the United Community Living Center; A Sanctuary for All (UCLC). We are currently serving as fiscal sponsor for the UCLC which is in the process of purchasing the Green Street United Methodist Church of Augusta and establishing a shelter for our unhoused neighbors. At our February 8th board meeting, the Board discussed our fiduciary responsibility to ensure that our church is financially solvent and that pledging unallocated church funds to the UCLC will in no way undermine our progress toward our own goals and financial stability. We also reflected on our UU values, principles, and our UCC Covenant that states, in part:

*Because we value our relationships with our greater community, we promise to: Model our UU Principles and Covenant in our relationships with the greater community. (and) Respond to the needs of our community and seek to engage others in helping to make the greater Augusta area a safe and supportive place.*

Following this discussion, the Board voted unanimously that UUCC pledge \$5,000 from cash reserves to the United Community Living Center (UCLC).

Gratefully yours,

Michaela Loisel  
Board President

On behalf of: Susan Burnett, Vice President; Nancy Fritz, Treasurer.  
Cheryl Ring, Clerk; Harry Grimmnitz, Finance Chair; Jim Caldwell and Hal Booth, Members-At-Large

### UUCC Affiliated Community Minister

**Bio:** Rev. Claire Curole serves as a Staff Chaplain at CMMC in Lewiston, ME. Claire is a minister in fellowship with the UUA and in covenant with the UUCC Board as our Affiliated Community Minister. Claire lives in Augusta and has been a part of the UUCC community since 2007.

Members of the UUCC community:

As I shared with the congregation last fall, I have been granted Board Certification by the Association of Professional Chaplains. This is a significant professional milestone for me and one that I am delighted to share with our community. I had originally hoped to share this update in the fall newsletter but the timing of the certification process moved slower than I had originally expected.

I also want to thank the members and friends of UUCC who reached out to me after the shooting in Lewiston last October. Your concern and well wishes are very much appreciated, as is your advocacy for safe and reasonable firearms legislation, mental health care access, and the other work you do toward building and sustaining the wider Beloved Community.

I am sometimes asked, especially by folks who have joined the UUCC community in the last few years, "What's an affiliated community minister? What does that mean?" "What do you do?" "You're a minister?" and occasionally "Are you -our- minister?"

So, to clarify: Yes, I am a minister, and no, I'm not -our- minister. I am absolutely delighted that our congregation recently voted to call Rev. Donna Dolham, who is currently serving as our contract minister, to become our settled minister, making that relationship long-term. Rev. Donna is my colleague in fellowshipped UU ministry and a written covenant between us is on file in the church office, formalizing the collegial relationship between us. Her ministry is with our congregation; mine is out in the community, specifically as a health care chaplain.

It sometimes surprises people that the UUA does not, itself, ordain ministers. In our tradition, only a congregation (or a group of congregations acting jointly) can ordain a person to the ministry. But the UUA has long recognized that making sure people who seek to be ministers are properly prepared for this work, and "in fellowship" is the name we give to ministers who have been recognized by that process.

Fellowship is not a one-time credential but a relationship of accountability between a minister and our wider faith tradition, through the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) of the UUA. When a minister is newly admitted to fellowship, they continue in a process of supported ministry called preliminary fellowship until admitted to full fellowship. This may take as few as 3 or 4 years for someone serving as a congregation's lead minister, but often takes a lot longer for ministers serving outside the congregation. I've been in fellowship for five years, am still in preliminary, and will probably continue to be for another year or two at least.

One of the requirements for ministers in preliminary fellowship who are serving outside the congregation is that they enter into a covenant of affiliation with a UU member congregation, and I am grateful to the UUCU board for continuing to support my ministry in this way. That written covenant is also on file in the church office.

I hope this helps clarify my professional relationship to our congregation. Thank you for being the church I come home to.

- Rev. Claire

## Updates from Music Director



### MUSIC AT THE UUCU – Winter 2024

The UUCU choir and orchestra are preparing for Stewardship Sunday which will take place on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our new orchestra director, Michael Atkinson, has brought inspiration and invigoration to the music program at the UUCU. Our orchestra members have been enjoying his arrangements and weekly rehearsals, we are truly fortunate to have Michael in our presence. The choir and orchestra will be combining forces to bring Michael's own arrangement of Finlandia by Jean Sibelius, using the words from *We Would Be One* in our hymnal.

Our musicians are also busy rehearsing music for Easter and the remainder of our season, including our UUCU Benefit Concert on May 18<sup>th</sup>, time to be determined.

Our music program is flourishing, we are so fortunate to have so many talented musicians offering their time and talents to our church community.

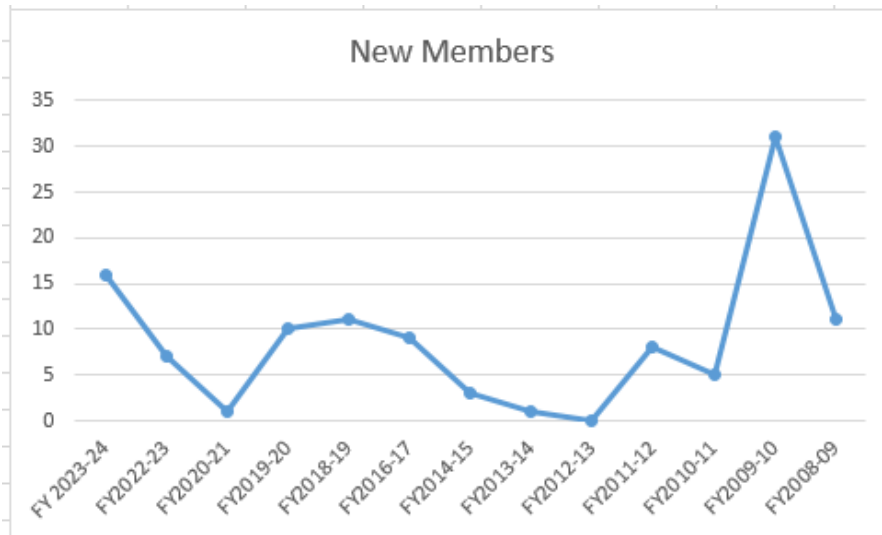
The UUCU choir and orchestra are eager to share music with you; music that will lift your spirits and invigorate your hearts and minds. We are always welcoming new members! If you are interested or have questions, please email Bridget Convey at: [musicdirector@augustauu.org](mailto:musicdirector@augustauu.org). All are welcome!

## Updates from Church Administrator

I don't know about all of you, but it feels like this church year is flying by! So much has changed already this year! The excitement and energy in our community is contagious and fills our spaces with joy, comradery and reinvigorates our commitment to our values to ourselves, our church community and our broader Augusta community.

### We have grown and changed in so many ways:

- Rev Donna has been officially called to be our settled minister and we are all breathing a collective sigh of relief and much gratitude.
- Our community is growing – we have added 16 members this year, which is our largest influx of new members since FY2009-10 when we had 31 NEW members. <See chart below>



- And... to our delight, our new members are jumping right in to join committees as well as attend and sometimes LEAD services, activities, programming and events.



--- Welcome to you ALL! We are so glad you are here! ---

- Our message of love and commitment to equality and justice is being shared in cyberspace in more ways than ever. We are posting events and information on our website, our Facebook page and on Instagram. We are also sharing inspiring content and events from others who share in our work. Examples are the Poor People’s Campaign, the Maine Council of Churches, MUUSAN, the UUA, Side with Love, UUA General Assembly and many more... We are truly leveraging the ways we can communicate with each other and the ways in which we can all participate in “living out faith”.

**The efforts to increase our online presence is paying off – in a BIG way. Consider the following:**

- Since Oct 2023, Google stats show that we have had 754 people who looked at our Google profile. Fifty three (53) of those people called the office directly for additional information, Four hundred and ten (410) people clicked on our website from Google and two hundred ninety-one (291) people asked for directions to our church.
- The new welcome form (using the QR code) reports that a whopping 42.9 percent of the people found us in an online search or by visiting our website.
- Our members and friends are talking about us to their friends and in the community! Our welcome form reports that 23.8 percent of the newcomers in our community are here because of information shared by a friend! Thanks to those that are sharing our message!
- AND...(as if that weren’t enough!!) 90% of new people connecting with us through the welcome form wanted to be added to our mailing list right out of the starting gate...THAT’S HUGE!

WOO-HOO! We have much to celebrate there!

I am continuing to build a good working relationship with our new minister, Rev. Donna. Our discussions of new ideas and plans are coming to fruition and it’s paying off. All of YOUR hard work is paying off! I can’t help but be excited by Rev. Donna’s energy and commitment to our community and the momentum and energy of this church community!

So what’s ahead? For a couple of years now we have considered moving to a new Church Management System. It is our intention to actually begin this task in earnest starting in March 2024. A team is also being considered to embark on the journey to create a completely new website.

Peace,  
Lynn

Until next time...

## **Congregational Engagement Team**

The Congregational Engagement Team originally came together as the Restorative Justice group in 2022 to implement the many suggestions of Rev. Paul Langston-Daley, including the church's new Covenant. We started this fall energized by many interesting ideas, a number of which were offered by our new contract minister, Rev. Donna.

Life, both at church and elsewhere, often unfolds in unpredictable ways. Our first program was scheduled for October, and we planned to have Rev. Paul return to explore the next steps in living our Covenant. But the Sunday he was scheduled to be in the pulpit was shortly after the Lewiston mass shooting. He and Rev. Donna did a skillful pivot to address the shock and grief that was most alive in our hearts on that day and left our other work for a more appropriate time.

We were happy to have Rev. Paul back on February 4<sup>th</sup> to share the pulpit with Rev. Donna and to offer a 2-hour follow-up workshop that afternoon about our healing process and our Covenant. Our Team awaits his next recommendations, which will inform our work going forward both this spring and into next year.

So far this year we have offered two Sharing Cafes, one about Hospitality and one with questions from the morning's sermon that Rev. Donna crafted. Both were well attended. Our Team is discovering that we learn something new each time about how to host these explorations in an effective and inclusive way.

We have just completed a Survey of the congregation, asking for input about new Sharing Cafes. And we are talking about adding new members to this Team to keep the programming fresh and our perspective innovative.

Respectfully submitted by the Congregational Engagement Team:

Rev. Donna Dolman, Susan Claska Burnett, Michaela Loisel, Kathy Ann Shaw, and June Zellers.

## **Building and Grounds Committee**

Winter Notes from Buildings and Grounds

We had a lot of rain in the December storm, and water leaked into the cellar, causing some damage. Marilyn and Nan Bell cleaned up the basement, and Harry Grimmnitz replaced some shelves. We are trying to determine how the water made its way into the basement.

Angie built some shelves for the fellowship table room.

Marilyn placed some runners inside the entryways, to keep folks from tracking dirt onto the carpeting.

Marilyn has also drawn up a project list. Tasks may include carpentry, painting, or tidying up. If you can help on any of these tasks, let her know.

Here is our new Vision Statement:

Our buildings and grounds should be a welcoming space that reflects the care we have for our community and visitors. To that end they should be safe, uncluttered and accessible. They should reflect our values of hospitality and environmental sustainability. Everyone who uses the space is a steward of this space.

Bill Allen

## **Safety Committee**

The UUCB Board established the Safety Committee as a standing committee during the January 2024 Board meeting. We recognized that it was important to continue the good work and progress that had begun after a select few Board members attended a “Safeguarding our Houses of Worship” gathering provided by the Federal and Maine Emergency Management Administrations (FEMA and MEMA) in October 2022. Members of this workgroup applied for a federal grant, “Protecting Houses of Worship” in the amount of \$34,540, which was approved in 2023. These funds will be used for projects such as improved outdoor lighting, doors with new locks and security codes, impact resistant film on windows, and installment of CCTV. The other recommendations from FEMA include locking doors after worship begins, training and preparedness in the event of an active shooter or bomb threat and initiating a practice of writing incident reports (for accidents and/or congregant concerns on church property). Some of these suggested procedures have been implemented and others will be forthcoming.

In November we met with two members of the Augusta Fire Department for a walk-through of our church building. They had good suggestions for us regarding fire extinguishers, safety signage and electrical fixtures. All of these have been addressed. We plan to meet with them again soon for a similar check of the Judd House. One of the next steps for the Committee is to update our fire emergency evacuation plan and include that with a write-up of all safety updates to the building along with descriptions of any procedural changes. This will be part of a church safety and security manual. We will also work with the Communications Work Group on revising portions of the “How Our Church Works” document on the topic of safety.

Our goal is to keep the UUCB community safe and to communicate our steps in attempting to achieve that outcome. We intend to be open, respectful, and loving in our relationships within our church and with our neighbors. We welcome input and dialogue regarding these suggested new practices. If you would like to contact any of us on the Safety Committee, feel free to reach out to Jim Caldwell (Chair), Susan Claska Burnett, Harry Grimmnitz, Nancy Fritz and Bill Allen.

## **Settled Minister Search Team**

The work of the Ministerial Search Committee has been officially completed, and the following is a final summary of the last 8 months. It has been an interesting, sometimes challenging, journey beginning in June of 2023 when the six of us were elected at the annual meeting to search for and find our next settled minister.

The UUA appeared to set up endless obstacles to our goal, but in reality those perceived obstacles are proven guidelines that help ensure the search process is fair for everyone and that each minister and church finds the best partner to settle in together. We fulfilled each guideline (covenant, meetings, retreats, surveys, contracts, documents package, congregational record, and more) and during that process we had hints that Reverend Donna might be interested in our opening for Settled Minister. We met with her, and she was clear that she was very interested, but did not want to go through the full UUA ministerial search process. Instead, she wanted to pursue full time settled ministry with our church as what the UUA calls an “Inside Candidate.” This involves doing everything we did to jump into the big pool of churches for the big search by December 1, but then dropping out at the last minute because we found someone “inside” who is our first choice. It is quirky, but that is the UUA rule, and we followed it.

In late November we conducted a full interview with Rev. Donna, made reference calls, did background checks, talked to church members about their perspectives on Rev. Donna, met with UUA staff for advice, and more. By December 1 it was clear we could not find a better partner for Settled Minister than Rev. Donna no matter how far and wide we searched, so we dropped out of the UUA Search process with the full support of the UUA staff in Boston who cheered us on. Finally, after UUCB Board approval of our recommendation in December, we were able to share our, until then, secret process with all of you.



The Board set the date for the Special Congregational meeting for February 11, and we made plans with Rev. Donna for a process of “candidating” for her to focus on sharing her goals and plans for us with various groups in the church. She met with many groups, including small groups, orchestra, choir, Saturday breakfast, sewing group, open forums in person and on Zoom, and last but not least was a big Q&A session and supper with 40 attendees on February 9 when she answered so many new questions and concerns people raised, and she was so gracious, clear, and concise in her responses. It was a warm and friendly church gathering during supper after the Q&A.

As we all know, the turnout for the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, 2/11/24, was outstanding, with 110 members who voted unanimously to call Rev. Donna to be our new Settled Minister (which will not officially begin until August). During that meeting the Search Committee stated their reasons for choosing Rev. Donna (printed below and written by Harold Burnett and spoken by Stefanie Barley at the meeting) before the vote. And as Rev. Donna walked in the room after the vote count, the choir sang: “Hallelujah, we now have a new Settled Minister, Reverend Donna, Hallelujah, Hallelujah” (to the tune of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus,” written by Hal Booth) followed by cheering and festivity. Thank you all for sharing this search process with great understanding and patience.

Ministerial Search Committee February 11, 2024 statement to the Congregational Meeting supporting the Call of Rev Donna:

We, of the Ministerial Search Committee, unanimously endorse the candidacy of Rev. Donna Dolham as the next called minister of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church. In support, we’d like to let her introduce herself, by reading the headline from her website: “All that you touch you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change.” Rev. Donna then explains this introductory choice, and I quote “Science fiction author, Octavia Butler’s statement points us in a direction of growth in this ever-changing world. It’s necessary for us to continue to be awake to how we engage our expressions of faith. As we ground ourselves in the familiar, we can prepare for the possibilities that lie in change. The moments are waiting to engage transformation in us and in our communities. As we develop relationships, engage curiosity and work together for more justice, the beauty of beloved community unfolds.” End quote.

Beloved community ... not a goal but a journey. We believe that Rev. Donna is the one to lead us along that path. She champions the underserved and often ostracized, quietly but emphatically challenges and comforts us worshipers, and will happily, relocate, embrace, and contribute to making the capital area a more welcoming, equitable, and spiritual home for us all. Let her be that change that inspires us.

## Pastoral Ministry Team Report

Greetings from the Pastoral Ministry Team!

Guided by the minister, our team serves the community by providing rides and meals and offering compassionate listening in times of need.

We continue to work on publicity and recruitment of volunteers. We are in the process of updating information about our work and look forward to offering sign-up opportunities online. As always, feel free to approach us in person, by phone, or by email to request support or to volunteer.

Our team meets monthly to organize responses to pastoral needs beyond those met by the minister. We are thankful for Reverend Donna’s ongoing involvement in our team and are excited to welcome her now as our settled minister. Peggy Lamb continues to make beautiful hand-made cards that support folks in times of sorrow or celebration. Helen Zidowecki, Lori Milner, and I provide ongoing support and ministry as needs arise, and I coordinate rides and meals. Please let any of us know if you need pastoral services or support.

In mid-December, we held our annual Quiet Refuge service, holding space for feelings of loss that arise during the holiday season. As in other years, this service included soulful music, readings, and reflections, as well as opportunities to share what is in our hearts. To me, this service always feels sacred.

We are ever grateful for our volunteers, whose generosity continues to flow when others need help. It is a blessing to be part of such a caring community.

Martha Pelletier, Chair

Other PMT members: Reverend Donna Dolham, Reverend Helen Zidowecki, Peggy Lamb, and Lori Milner

## Communications Work Group

Communication keeps us connected. Transparency keeps us engaged.

The Winter *Newsletter* focuses on how our work and ministries have evolved during this church year. The Spring *Newsletter* will be the *Annual Report* with a focus on the “Story of Our Church Year”. This schedule is intended to give anyone interested in connecting with us information of opportunities available. What we are doing, where we are going, and how we may get there.

This edition of the Flaming Chalice Newsletter may be called an “Energy and Engagement Edition”! Thanks to everyone who participates in our church, from attending services to adding your gifts to the ongoing activities of this community. Welcome to visitors and new members.

A key to this thriving community is communication. We communicate individually by expressing our appreciation during services, greeting each other and interacting during Fellowship Hour, participating in the many events, asking questions about UUCC as a community and offering ways the community can be more inclusive. This is our “community communication” or the relational that can stem from “individual communication”.

Below is some highlights of new programming and other program changes this year:

- Jan. Lectio Divina Meditation (Tuesday, 10:30 zoom)—Donna and Lori
- Feb.-Apr. Tues 4-5 (10 week) Introduction to Sustainable Health - Susan Roberts
- Wed. Jan. Yoga 5-6 Changed from zoom to Hybrid
- UUCC Occasional Orchestra increased rehearsal to from twice a month to every Saturday morning.
- Contemplative Worship on Tues. 6:15pm, culminating in a worship service

There are other changes, and these show that the community is living and moving. The largest change occurred on February 11 when the congregation gathered to approve Rev. Donna Dolham as our full-time minister starting in August. This was the first time that we voted to call a minister both in-person and by zoom – a not to the understanding of technology that we were not even using when our previous ministers were voted in. It also may have been a first time – at least in since consolidation to UUCC in 1992, that the vote to call has been unanimous! A major contribution was the number and variety of events planned by the Ministerial Search Committee and the activities to include members in the decision, from using zoom to offering transportation. These are exciting communication factors.

As the congregation enlarges, we will be looking for ways to ensure that communication keeps us all up with service and event information as well as important changes and challenges we face as a community. Information is shared through the E-Blast and other publications, website postings, and other specific communications with the listing of members and friends. There may be some specific communications to be used to ensure smoother attention within the community. Several recent examples of this are:

- Incident Report Form in the Jan. 17 E-Blast for safety concerns.
- Program Request Form to offer events, in the Feb. 7 E-Blast
- Accessibility article in the Feb. 7 E-Blast

## **Review of Policies**

The Communication Work Group is organizing a review of the “How Our Church Works” policy and practices manual. Our intention is to update and clarify the roles of committees, task forces and other groups as well as review the policies and procedures of the UUC. The last revision of this manual was done in August 2017 and so much has changed since then! Copies of the “How Our Church Works” binder can be found in the Committee Room next to the mailboxes and in the church kitchen.

For this review, the CWG is giving groups an opportunity to describe their functions as we look at policies and procedures. The update process will also delineate a process to keep communications current. Your questions, comments, and considerations are important in this process.

Contact: Lynn Smith, Administrator; Kathy Kellison, Helen Zidowecki, Chair

## **Finance Committee**

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

### **Finance:**

- The Annual Appeal exceeded our expectations by \$6,000.
- The FY 24-25 draft budget was assembled. Highlights are the Committee:
  - Budgeted for a FULL TIME SETTLED MINISTER.
  - Raised staff salaries by a 3.2% cost of living adjustment.
  - Projects a \$2,500 decrease in our electricity bill due to our solar farm investment.
  - Proposes to create “Rainy Day” and Facilities Contingency funds to prepare for unexpected expenses such as we experienced this church year.
  - Presented this budget to the Board and they set the pledge goal for the upcoming Stewardship Campaign at \$180,500.
- The Committee completed our semi-annual financial review and found no issues.
- The Committee is working to formulate changes that will simplify the job of the church volunteer Treasurer. This job now requires nearly ten (10) hours a week of time and highly specialized skills and is no longer compatible with a volunteer position.

### **Invested Funds:**

The Invested Funds chair and the Committee are reviewing the differences in our returns on investment between our accounts with the UUA Common Endowment Fund and the Maine Community Foundation. The UUA fund has been consistently underperforming the Maine CF. Much of this difference seems to be due to the UUA fund making heavier investments in minority and women owned businesses which are frequently smaller and do not provide as much of a financial return. The Committee and the Board are reviewing options of how we will proceed.

### **Fundraising:**

- Our fall fundraisers (the Pie Sale and the Holiday Boutique) significantly outperformed our expectations.
- A February Dance and Dinner event was a new fundraiser and a huge hit with attendees.
- Plans are underway for our Spring Auction and work crew sale, the Plant Sale and our Garage Sale.
- The Hannaford card program remains in full swing. If you haven’t participated, you should talk with any of the many members of our church community who do.

### **Stewardship:**

- As noted above, the Annual Appeal was a phenomenal success.
- The Stewardship Chairs, with a little help from their friends, have created a seven (7) minute YouTube video explaining our FY 24-25 draft budget. This video allows folks to review the information at their leisure and address questions to the Finance Committee as needed.
  - You can access this video by clicking on this link.

- Stewardship Kick Off Sunday will be March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Following the service there will be a pizza party and some fun time including games to liven up the Stewardship experience.

#### **Planned Giving:**

- The Committee reviewed and updated the UUCC Guide to Holistic Stewardship.

The Committee is mindful of the fact that change is a necessary and inevitable part of life and in that spirit the members of the Committee have been working on succession documents to help new members be successful in assuming their roles.

#### The Finance Committee:

Betty & Terry Cairn – Stewardship  
 Marilyn Dunn – Invested Funds  
 Allison & Karen Foust – Fundraising  
 Nancy Fritz – Treasurer  
 Harry Grimmnitz – Chair  
 Wick Johnson – Planned Giving  
 June Zellers – Member at Large.

### History Committee

We welcome Hannah Faulkner to the History Committee. She is interested in creating an historical scrapbook. We have scrapbooks from previous congregations and some pictures and articles from early UUCC. It will be nice to create the scrapbook in a consistent manner again.

The History Committee, along with other committees are reviewing and updating the policies of UUCC. The last item on the list of History Committee functions is “Prepare a chronological record of the UUCC and its antecedents.” This can come in various forms. And to keep this clear, we have three distinct congregations to consider to fulfill this function at the juncture in June 1992:

- All Souls (Unitarian historically)
- Winthrop Street (Universalists historically)
- Unitarian Universalist Community Church

The chronological function impacts the current congregation. It gives a sense of belonging over a period of time, a sense that there was something before we arrived and that we have a role in the present that will determine the future. The motto of the History Committee has been “Capturing our history as we make it.”

Chronology comes in different forms. One is published histories, frequently for specific time. The latest is *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UUCC* that covers 1992-2017. It was developed primarily from Annual Reports, Newsletters and other information from within the community. Compiling part of the chronology ongoing can capture the depth of life within the UUCC. Perhaps we should update the chronology within definite time periods, such as every 5 or 10 years.

The specific timelines for each of the congregations are found at <https://augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/history/>. Take a look. Talk with the History Committee about items that you feel should be added or your general comments. We can track notations on the UUCC website. We hope to update the UUCC and minister timelines before the Annual Meeting 2024, and have this as an expectation each year.

So the process for compiling the chronological record is:

- Information is in the E-Blast, newsletters and other communications ongoing.
- Key items are added to the timeline ongoing or at the time of the Annual Meeting.
- An update like a history be compiled every few years.

When we connect with a church, we talk about how things are from our own experience. Before that time, we rely on the stories of others; after that time we tell the stories—the history—from our own experience and perspective. Our telling of that history is enriched as our stories mingle. The more open and transparent, our writing and visuals are, the more comprehensive our understanding of the depth of life in the community that we call UU Community Church!

For additional information and if you are interested in joining in the work of the History Committee, please contact: Richard Bridges, Chair (207-626-8134 H, 207-458-3784 C, [Auglaw@roadrunner.com](mailto:Auglaw@roadrunner.com))

Additional members are: Heide Munro, Helen Zidowecki, Hannah Faulkner

## **Social Justice Committee**

The two goals for the Social Justice Committee (“SJC”) this year are:

1. Maintaining the Saturday Breakfast Program; and,
2. Continuing to work with other committees to bring the promise of the 8th Principle to fruition.

We recognized the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Saturday Breakfast this January. The most guests we have served on a single Saturday morning is 72. Most Saturdays are between 55 and 65 guests. We share this ministry with Saint Michael’s Parish, Temple Beth El, and the United Church of Christ, Augusta. We continue to deepen community connections between guests and volunteers (both within and outside of our UUC membership). While SJC has taken the lead in developing this work, it is, indeed, a ministry of our whole church.

The annual fund drive for the Carie Johnsen Social Justice Fund (CJSJ Fund) was coordinated with the Finance Committee. This November our congregation donated another \$4,275 to the fund. The church uses the interest accrued each year in the fund to donate at least \$1,000 to a Maine grassroots non-profit organization. The recipient for this year, Wabanaki Alliance, was announced during the Social Justice Committee service, “Living Into the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle: A Call to Beloved Community” held on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

We joined the Search Committee in co-sponsoring the UUA Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop in November. The goal of “Beyond Categorical Thinking” is to recognize our biases and challenge our assumptions, especially as we prepared to call a settled minister.

We participated with the Congregational Engagement Committee in a Sharing Cafe to discuss working with and welcoming the unhoused people of the Augusta area in our church community.

In December the SJC presented the Sunday Worship Service, “Radical Love.” Both Courtney Gary-Allen from Maine Recovery and Advocacy Program and Jon Reynolds from Mobilize Recovery presented during this service. They each spoke of the profound power of human connections. Jon concluded the service with teaching us how to interrupt an accidental death by overdose using Narcan. Sixty bags with Narcan were distributed to individuals during Fellowship Lunch.

Once a month the Social Justice Committee names an organization to “share the plate” with during worship service. The organizations with the amount donated are: Wabanaki Alliance, \$193.12; Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, \$300; Maine Children’s Home, \$314; New England Grass Roots Environmental Fund, \$335; KVCAP Poverty Action Coalition, \$538; Mobilize Recovery, \$624; United Community Living Center, \$785; and Maine Equal Justice, \$361. We are, indeed, a generous congregation.

The February 25<sup>th</sup> SJC Sunday Worship service focused on moving forward with living into the 8<sup>th</sup> principle, a call to creating a diverse multicultural community by consciously dismantling racism and other forms of oppression within ourselves and our institutions.

We look forward to working with Rev. Donna to continue and strengthen the Social Justice work of our church.

Debbie Mattson, Chair

## Worship Committee

### Worship Committee Tech Updates Improve Accessibility and Diversity

The Worship Committee has been busy the past few months updating and expanding our use of technology to support worship services. We have worked with Rev. Donna to take better advantage of the large monitor in front of the sanctuary. Posting words to hymns and readings has been well received by both in-person attenders and live stream participants. We have become more comfortable and adept at using videos and holding Zoom events. Broader use of technology has made it possible to bring messages into our worship space from across the Unitarian Universalist Association, including from ministers of color. To aid this effort we purchased an additional laptop which is designated for media use by the worship team. The previous laptop will continue to be used for the Boxcast live streams, and is available to other church groups who need a laptop for their meetings. Check the pink labels to be sure you have the right laptop for your needs.

We are very pleased to have added some new members to the Worship Team. Lindsey Wiehl and Cheryl Ring are new tech assistants, and Jamez Riot will be joining as a worship associate. We held a tech training at the end of the January for old and new techs, and used that opportunity to update our manuals and tech instructions. Worship associates and others will reflect on our presence and participation in worship at a workshop the end of February.

In November the UCCOO (UCC Occasional Orchestra) was delighted to welcome Michael P. Atkinson as our new Orchestra Director. Rehearsals under his direction are uplifting and instructive. The choir also continues to thrive and grow, and now fills the front of the sanctuary. The choir and UCCOO will present music both together and separately on Stewardship Sunday, Easter, and a spring concert. We also look forward to enjoying the music ministry of guest UU musician Matt Meyer in worship and a workshop in early March.

Looking to the future, Sara Hodgkins has agreed to be nominated as Worship Committee Chair for the coming church year. She brings several years of worship team experience and her own warm presence to the position. I have accepted nomination for a position on the Board, but offer Sara and the team my full support as the Worship Committee continues to evolve toward the future at UCC.

--Karen Allen, Worship Committee Chair

## Small Group Ministry Updates



Several things are coming together to highlight the contribution that UCC has made to Small Group Ministry throughout UUism in the last twenty-five years. As we talk about encouraging attendance at the virtual General Assembly in June 2024, we realize that our most robust attendance at GA as a congregation was in the early 2000's when we offered workshops on SGM to overflowing crowds several years in a row. This included several of the early handbooks on SGM that actually contributed to the church budget! And we did workshops at regional meetings and with individual congregations. SGM has been one of our major connections with UUA.

SGM is an important part of our lives at UCC. Historically, we have close to 300 session plans generated at UCC, 200 of which are on the UCC website. These have been part of several series using SGM for specific themes, such as Parenting, Teens, and older adults (Where Will We Live?). Session plans are being used by other groups or meetings. With this perspective, we all can participate in using session plans as a method for engaging with topics. Do you have a topic that you would like to see developed into a session plan?

We also access the over a thousand session plans on the UU Small Group Ministry Network website

<https://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.php>

– over 40 of which were contributed by UUCC. SGM session plans are a unique type of literature that can be created and experienced by anyone, and builds relationships and deeper engage with a topic.

As with all things touched by culture and change, we wonder about keeping every session plan. Notebooks of session plans were created several years ago and the session plans created by UUCC have been added to the SGM section of the UUCC website. Newer plans and updates have been added to the website rather than the notebooks. As you decide whether to keep older session plans, consider these things:

Does the session plan draw your attention to content and approach? Still meaningful?

Can it be updated to reflect a newer perspective or include additional resources?

This spring we anticipate a couple of SGM activities.

The SGM Committee has meetings with SGM group leaders three times a year, and all SGM participants are welcome. We are in the process of arranging such an event this spring.

SGM has been invited to create baskets for the Chocolate Auction being planned. Please look for upcoming information on these events so that you can participate.

Please contact Linda Findlay or Helen Zidowecki, SGM Co-Chairs, if you are interested in exploring Small Group Ministry. Information is on the UUCC website, in a brochure in the front hall of the church, and in E-Blast.

### Read, Learn, Share Book Group

Our group was started by people who love to read and talk about books. We meet on the first Thursday of the month (October through June) both in person and on Zoom. Anyone is welcome to join us for any session that appeals to you. We keep an email list of regular attendees and anyone who wants to know our plans. To get on the list, email June Zellers [jzellers@roadrunner.com](mailto:jzellers@roadrunner.com) and let her know you are interested.

The book group year really starts in June when we collect suggestions for books to read starting in October.. Anyone is welcome to submit as many titles as you wish. We create a ballot and circulate it to the email list. Voting is by ranked choice. We will read four of the most popular titles in both fiction and nonfiction. The ninth title can be in either category and has the next highest vote total after the first eight are chosen. We announce the list in the Fall Newsletter and put monthly reminders in the E-blast.

Over the years we have read an amazing variety of titles. Most of us have discovered that other group members can be counted on to find themes and ideas that we completely missed. Our connection to the books is thus deepened. We also get to know one another in a unique way as we share reactions to the books and sometimes explain how the book connects to our personal background.

The remaining book titles for this year are:

- March 7: [The Creative Lives of Animals](#) by Carol Gigliotti
- April 4: [Mad Honey](#) by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan
- May 2: [Our Migrant Souls](#) by Hector Tobar
- June 6: [Lessons in Chemistry](#) by Bonnie Garmus.

We will vote over the summer and be ready to begin talking again on October 3. Please join us!!

Kathy Kellison [kell6787@gmail.com](mailto:kell6787@gmail.com) or June Zellers ([jzellers@roadrunner.com](mailto:jzellers@roadrunner.com)).

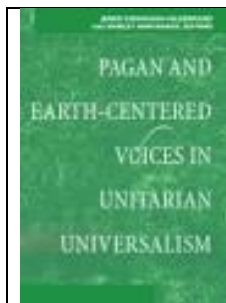
### GODDESS/EARTH CIRCLES

Goddess/Earth Circles usually meets on the fourth Sunday of the month from 1-2:30pm in the Fellowship Hall, unless noted otherwise. The gatherings on February 25 and March 24 will be by UUCU Zoom. All ages and genders are welcome. Resources are found in the Library in the Committee Room. Scripts and schedule of gatherings are on the website at <https://augustauu.org/minister-staff-and-church-life/goddess-continuing/>

We celebrated Samhain on October 29 with the sharing of wisdom and introducing Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom. We discussed starting a Memory Book of Goddess/Earth Circle participants over the years, using “the veil thins” awareness of spiritual connections over the ages. This was followed by the Wisdom celebration and creating our Wisdom Books in November.

On December 31 we had a “Celebration of Cards” with introduction of Tarot cards and ways we anticipate the future. We may do this at another time, possibly during a summer session.

The January session celebrated Imbolc, incorporating the Nine Noble Virtues from Norse Paganism to carry into the new year, stressing the harmony of the natural world and the search for harmony in the life of individuals. This also broadened understanding of pagan or earth-based spirituality around the world.



This was followed on February 25 with exploring *Pagan and Earth-Centered Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, by Shirley Ranck and Jerrie Hildebrand, Skinner House. We will be integrating material from the book into gatherings, and may offer discussions for the broader UUCU community. The theme for this session is the impact earth-centered spirituality and Unitarian Universalism have had on each other, respectively.

March 24 gathering will honor Women’s History/Heritage Month with:  
Continuing work on Goddess/Earth Circles Memorial Book  
Engaging patriarchal – continuing with book selections  
The emergence of the crone as a woman of wisdom

April 28 will be discussion/preparation for Croning and recelebration for those who have been croned over the years. This will be followed on May 19 (Note change to third Sunday because of Memorial Day) Croning celebration/recelebration. Please join and contribute to the discussion and celebration. Contact for more information and interest in Croning: Helen Zidowecki (207-582-5308, [hzmre@hzmre.com](mailto:hzmre@hzmre.com)).

Celebrations through the cycle of the year, traditions and stories from various goddesses, and spiritual practices are included in the sessions.

## Peaceful Heart Sangha

### Mindfulness and Meditation practice in community

**A reminder – even though we are not currently gathering weekly at UUCU for our evening of mindfulness and meditation (as we did for more than 20 years), we are still practicing together twice/week and are ready to welcome you and your friends at any time.**

Our calming practices can help us do our best to find peace within ourselves. This can help us to increase our capacity to show up, stay open, and respond skillfully to whatever is happening.

A sangha exists to create a safe place for us to face our own suffering and to transform it – to practice fearlessness.



Our practice is not about having religious beliefs. It can be helpful to people from all different faith communities or with no religion. It is about increasing our awareness of how our thoughts, words, and actions can create suffering or happiness. It helps us to see that we have a choice.

Our usual pattern is:

- Candle Lighting & Opening; Settling in
- Sitting meditation 20 min (sometimes guided, sometimes silent)
- Then when in person - Walking meditation (sometimes also on zoom)
- Introductions
- Dharma focus - first of month - 5 Mindfulness Trainings recitation
  - second & third of month - a reading
  - third & fourth of month - Facilitator/Bell Minder's choice
- Dharma Sharing - sharing from our hearts in confidentiality (for those who would like to share)
- Announcements; Closing

We meet **on zoom Monday evenings**, 6:30-8pm with option of settling in at 6:15.

We meet **in person most Thursday mornings**, 8-9:30am with option of settling in at 7:45 at River Studio at 332 Water St, Hallowell. **The last Thursday of the month we meet on zoom.**

Reach out to [peacefulheartsangha@gmail.com](mailto:peacefulheartsangha@gmail.com) or to [martysoule@gmail.com](mailto:martysoule@gmail.com) for our zoom link or if you have questions.

***Unitarian Universalist Community Church  
P.O. Box 8  
Augusta, Maine 04332-0008***

### **Newsletter Submissions**

**Submission Deadline for SPRING Annual Report is February 19<sup>th</sup>**

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 your Annual Report submission to [admin@augustauu.org](mailto:admin@augustauu.org) with the article as a word attachment! \*\*\*Photos of church activities are welcomed! \*\*\* You will receive a confirmation e-mail of receipt of your submission.

**Contract Minister:** Rev. Donna Dolham

**Board President:** Michaela Loisel

**Rev. Donna Dolham**

**Choir Director:** Bridget Convey

Contact information for Committee chairs and other leaders can be found in the UUCC directory or obtained by contacting the Church Administrator.

**Church Administrator:** Lynn Smith

Phone: (207)622-3232 or email:

<mailto:admin@augustauu.org>

Office hours: 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. (Tues, Wed & Thurs)

No office hours: Monday or Friday

Call or email to set up an appointment:

(207)623-3663

[minister@augustauu.org](mailto:minister@augustauu.org)

Contact the minister for pastoral emergencies by phone.

She will return your call as soon as possible.

(207) 701-1581 (pastoral emergencies)